



Mental Health Stigma

One in five Americans currently have a diagnosable mental illness. And most of us feel some degree of stigma about mental illness. Here are some myths and facts about mental health problems.

Myth: There is not effective treatment for mental illness. **Fact:** There are clear evidence-based treatments, both therapies and medications, that very effectively treat mental problems.

Myth. There is a lot you should learn and know before interacting with someone with a mental illness. **Fact:** There is no specific knowledge required, although knowledge can help. Consider the person first and the illness second. Your support and respect matter most.

Myth: People with mental health "pull themselves out of it." **Fact:** A mental illness is not caused by personal illness, nor can it be cured by personal strength. Proper treatment is needed.

Myth: Mental illness does not affect the average person. **Fact:** No one is immune. Many adults and children experience some form of this in any given year.

Myth: People with mental illness are dangerous. **Fact:** Most people are no more dangerous than someone suffering from cancer or diabetes. In fact people with a mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than cause it.

What to do

- *Learn and share the facts about mental health problems
- *Treat people who have a mental illness with dignity and respect, just like you would anyone else
- *Avoid labeling people with derogatory terms like crazy, wacko, retard, schizo, nuts...
- *Support people by helping develop community resources to assist them
- *Respect the rights of people with mental health illness and don't discriminate
- *Teach children about mental health and help them see mental health problems are treatable
- *Understand that racially and ethnically diverse populations may especially be targets of stigma, including mental health stigma
- *Use person-first language. For example, "person with schizophrenia" instead of "schizophrenic."