



STIGMA BUSTERS

How we can reduce mental health and substance use stigma & discrimination with our patients & clients?



1. Know your facts about mental health and substance abuse disorders.

Educate yourself about these. Learn to discern facts from myths.

Consider visiting the following websites:

<http://tinyurl.com/ASAM-Article>

<http://tinyurl.com/NAMI-StigmaBlog>

2. Be sensitive. Our bias and attitudes influence our words and behavior.

We all grow up with certain prejudices and judgmental thinking. We can change our prejudices with awareness and knowledge. See the people you serve as unique human beings, not as labels or stereotypes. See the whole person and not just their mental illness or substance use; they have many other personal attributes that don't disappear just because they also have these disorders.

3. Words have power. Choose them carefully and avoid labels.

The way we speak to and about others can affect the way other people think and speak.

Don't use hurtful, derogatory, or judgmental language such as:

addict
junkie

crackhead
nutty person

druggie
crazy person

4. Use "person first" language and remember that I am not my illness.

Using person first language in speech and writing, such as:

a person who uses drugs

a person with depression

This demonstrates that you are not defining a person by their drug use or mental health issue. It reminds us and others to see the whole person and not just the disease/illness.



5. Education helps all of us. Use your knowledge and skills to educate others.

Find opportunities to pass on facts and positive attitudes about people with mental health and substance use problems. If your friends, family, co-workers, or even the media present information that is not true, challenge those myths and stereotypes. Let others know how their negative words and incorrect descriptions affect people with behavioral health problems and can keep people from getting the help they need.

6. Be Positive. Seek strength and offer hope.

People with mental health and substance use problems make valuable contributions to their homes, communities, and society. Their health problems are just one part of who they are. Divert focus away from the negative stories. Recognize, applaud, and share the positive stories. Help those with the problems see their strengths and gifts.

7. Support people. These problems cannot be solved in isolation.

Treat people who have mental health or substance use problems with dignity and respect. Think about how you'd like others to act toward you if you were in the same situation. If you have family members, friends, or co-workers with substance use or mental health problems, support their choices and encourage their efforts to get well.

8. Be inclusive and advocate for inclusion.

People with mental health and substance use problems have a right to take an equal part in society. Let's use our roles and skills to make sure that happens. It is against the law and violates human rights to deny people access to things such as jobs, housing and health care - which the rest of us may take for granted.

9. Be trauma informed and understand that substance misuse and mental health challenges are often linked to trauma of many types.

Seek out and utilize trauma informed models of care. Learn how your practice environment or your protocols for admission, treatment, and discharge may re-traumatize or trigger someone with a history of trauma. Educate yourself and others about the types of trauma.

10. Embrace change and incorporate current best practices.

Be aware of new treatment options such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and utilizing the skills of peer recovery specialists. Don't forget about non-pharmacological interventions such as:

art & music therapies
aromatherapy

meditation
mindfulness

yoga
acupuncture/acupressure

