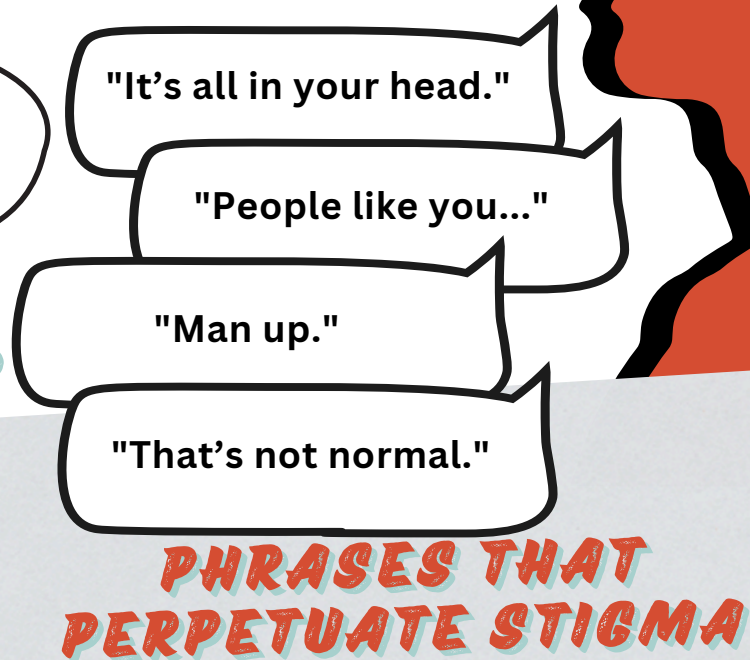


BREAKING THE SILENCE

*Being Inclusive
Mental Health for All*

WHAT IS STIGMA?

Stigma is the negative perception and discrimination against people with mental health conditions, leading to shame and isolation.



CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND STIGMA

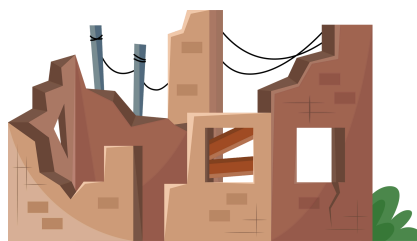
It's important to understand that mental health cannot be discriminated against or oversimplified because its causes are diverse, encompassing biological, environmental, and social factors.

For instance:



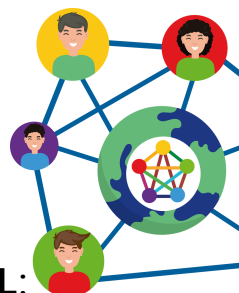
BIOLOGICAL:

A person with a genetic predisposition to depression has no control over their inherited traits.



ENVIRONMENTAL:

Life stressors like poverty or exposure to violence can significantly impact mental well-being.



SOCIAL:

Stigma, isolation, or lack of support networks can exacerbate mental health challenges.

In this newsletter, we will guide you through the concept of stigma, how it arises and actionable steps we can take to reduce it.

Decode Stigma:

Understand It to Erase It

TYPES OF STIGMA

PUBLIC STIGMA

01 Mental Health: Viewing depression as weakness and schizophrenia as dangerous.

01

02 HIV/AIDS: Linking it to immoral behavior, causing exclusion.

02

03 Disabilities: Assuming reduced professional capability.

03

SELF-STIGMA

01 Mental Health: Avoiding help, thinking one should "tough it out."

01

02 Substance Abuse: Feeling unworthy after addiction recovery.

02

03 Chronic Illness: Shame for needing treatment like insulin.

03

STRUCTURAL STIGMA

01 Healthcare: Limited mental health services.

01

02 Employment: Policies discouraging hiring rehabilitated individuals.

02

03 Housing: Exclusion of those with psychiatric disorders.

03

THESE STIGMAS INTERCONNECT, PERPETUATING A CYCLE THAT REQUIRES AWARENESS AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE TO BREAK.

CHALLENGING STIGMA

- Education: Raise awareness with facts and stories.
- Language: Use respectful, inclusive terms.
- Advocacy: Share personal experiences to humanize mental health.
- Policy: Push for supportive laws and practices.

Challenging stigma creates an inclusive society where mental health is understood and supported.

PLACES WHERE STIGMA OCCURS - HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

STIGMA EXAMPLES: ✦

Teachers or peers labeling students as "lazy" or "difficult."

HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT: ✦

→ Implement mental health and diversity awareness programs.



WORKPLACES

STIGMA EXAMPLES: ✦

Employees facing discrimination due to mental health conditions or disabilities.

HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT: ✦

→ Enforce anti-discrimination policies and provide mental health support services.



HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

STIGMA EXAMPLES: ✦

Unequal access to care for certain conditions.

HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT: ✦

→ Recognize that all individuals deserve equal access to quality care and strive for solutions to overcome systemic barriers.



PLACES WHERE STIGMA OCCURS - HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT

COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

STIGMA EXAMPLES: ✦

Social exclusion of individuals based on race, gender identity, or criminal history.

HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT: ✦

→ Host events promoting inclusivity and education on stigma.



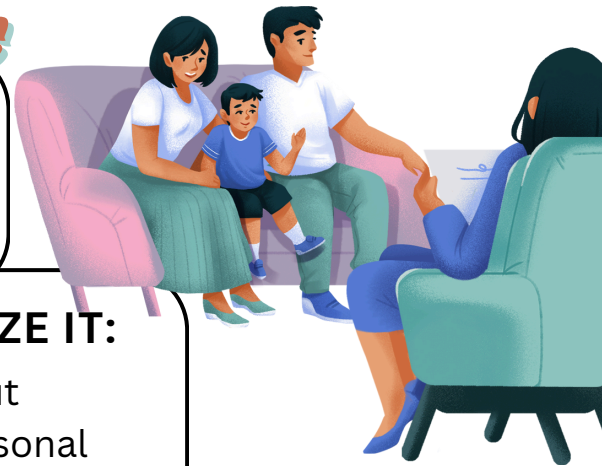
FAMILIES AND HOMES

STIGMA EXAMPLES: ✦

Families shaming members for seeking therapy or discussing mental health.

HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT: ✦

→ Normalize discussions about emotions, therapy, and personal struggles.



MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

STIGMA EXAMPLES: ✦

Stereotypical portrayals of mental illness, disabilities, or marginalized groups.

HOW TO UN-NORMALIZE IT: ✦

→ Report and address harmful comments or misinformation.



The cycle of self-stigma is a repetitive process where negative societal attitudes lead to internalized shame and isolation:



Internalization:
The individual starts to believe these stereotypes about themselves.

Shame and Guilt:
They feel ashamed or unworthy, leading to self-blame.

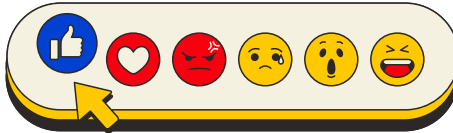
Avoidance and Withdrawal:
To avoid judgment, they withdraw socially or avoid seeking help.

Isolation:
Lack of support worsens their condition, leading to deeper isolation.

Worsening of Condition:
Without help, the condition worsens, reinforcing negative beliefs.



HOW SELF STIGMA HAPPENS?



Exposure to Stigma:
Society or media reinforces negative stereotypes (e.g., about mental illness or addiction).

Reaffirmation:
Their worsening situation strengthens their internalized stigma.



This cycle can perpetuate itself, making recovery harder unless the stigma is challenged and support is sought.

Cultural Competence:

Provide culturally sensitive care that respects diverse backgrounds.



Accessible Care:

Offer affordable, language-friendly services.

Safe Spaces:

Create environments free from discrimination and stigma.



**BEING
INCLUSIVE
TOWARDS
MARGINALIZED
COMMUNITIES**



Raise Awareness:

Educate about the challenges marginalized groups face.



Supportive Policies:

Advocate for equal access and address systemic barriers.

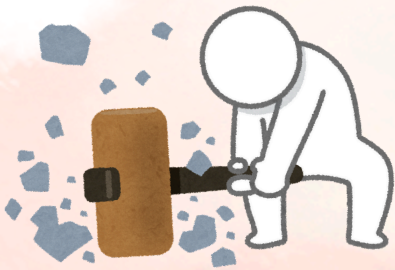
Representation:

Ensure diverse representation in services and leadership.



THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LANGUAGE IN MENTAL HEALTH

The power of language lies in its remarkable ability to shape thoughts, evoke emotions, guide behaviors, and influence social dynamics.



Breaking Stigma:

Language reduces stereotypes, normalizing mental health discussions.

Fostering Empathy:
Thoughtful words build understanding and connection.



Encouraging Help-Seeking:
Positive language motivates individuals to seek support.



Reframing Narratives:

Empowering language shifts focus from struggle to growth.

Validating Experiences:

Words can affirm emotions and make people feel heard.



Shaping Perceptions:

Public discussions influence attitudes and policies.



Facilitating Healing:

Self-expression through language promotes emotional well-being.



Creating Safe Spaces:

Inclusive terms foster environments of respect and care.



COMBATTING MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

MYTH

VS

FACT

Mental health issues are rare.

01

Mental health challenges are widespread, impacting individuals across all ages, backgrounds, and cultures.

Mental health problems are a sign of weakness.

02

Mental health issues are not a weakness; they are medical conditions that require understanding and treatment.

People with mental health conditions can't recover.

03

With proper treatment and support, many people with mental health conditions can lead fulfilling lives.

Therapy is only for severe mental health problems.

04

Therapy can benefit anyone dealing with stress, anxiety, or life challenges, not just severe conditions.

People with mental health conditions are dangerous.

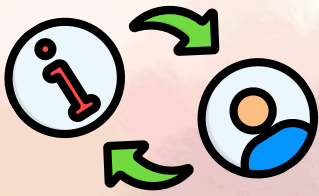
05

The majority of people with mental health conditions are not violent and are more likely to be victims of violence.

Children and teens don't experience mental health problems.

06

Mental health issues can affect individuals at any age, including children and adolescents.



Educate Yourself and Others: Share accurate information to challenge stereotypes.



Use Inclusive Language: Focus on the person, not the condition.



Challenge Negative Stereotypes: Speak up against harmful attitudes.



Share Personal Stories: Personal experiences humanize the issue.

Promote Open Conversations: Encourage non-judgmental discussions.

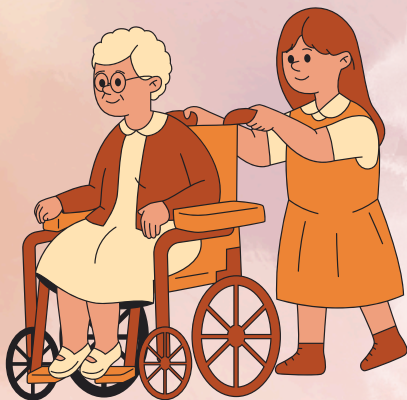


10 WAYS TO REDUCE STIGMA

Support Anti-Stigma Campaigns: Get involved in awareness efforts.



Normalize Seeking Help: Make help-seeking behaviors more acceptable.



Offer Compassion and Empathy: Show understanding and kindness.



Promote Positive Role Models: Highlight those who overcome stigma.

Encourage Inclusive Policies: Support anti-discrimination policies.



QUIZ TIME - LET'S KNOW HOW STIGMA FREE ARE YOU?

1. What is stigma?

- a) A positive stereotype about someone's abilities.
- b) A mark of disgrace associated with a condition, identity, or characteristic.
- c) A law protecting individual rights.

2. Which of the following is an example of self-stigma?

- a) A person believing they're unworthy of help due to a mental illness.
- b) Society labeling individuals with disabilities as incapable.
- c) Healthcare policies denying access to marginalized groups.

3. Which is NOT a form of stigma?

- a) Public stigma
- b) Structural stigma
- c) Informative stigma

4. What is an example of public stigma?

- a) Thinking people with schizophrenia are dangerous.
- b) Avoiding therapy due to personal shame.
- c) Limited access to healthcare for mental illness.

5. Where does stigma commonly occur?

- a) Educational institutions and workplaces.
- b) Healthcare settings and communities.
- c) All of the above.

6. What is one way to "un-normalize" stigma in schools?

- a) Punish students who discuss mental health.
- b) Train staff to recognize and address stigma.
- c) Encourage students to ignore differences.

7. How does self-stigma develop?

- a) Through internalized societal beliefs about oneself.
- b) By challenging stereotypes and seeking help.
- c) From open conversations about mental health.

QUIZ TIME - LET'S KNOW HOW STIGMA FREE ARE YOU?

8. Which approach promotes inclusivity for marginalized communities?

- a) Ignoring differences to treat everyone equally.
- b) Hosting events that celebrate diversity and individuality.
- c) Assuming all groups face the same challenges.

9. Why is language important in mental health?

- a) It has no real impact on stigma.
- b) It can reinforce stereotypes or promote understanding.
- c) It is irrelevant when addressing stigma.

10. Which is a myth about mental health?

- a) Mental health conditions are treatable.
- b) People with mental illnesses are dangerous.
- c) Seeking therapy is a sign of strength.

11. What's a practical way to reduce stigma in the workplace?

- a) Enforce policies against discrimination.
- b) Ignore mental health discussions to maintain productivity.
- c) Avoid hiring individuals with mental health challenges.

12. Which of the following is NOT a type of stigma?

- a) Self-stigma
- b) Cultural stigma
- c) Structural stigma

13. How does structural stigma manifest in healthcare?

- a) Limited mental health services due to poor funding.
- b) A patient feeling unworthy of care.
- c) A doctor addressing mental health empathetically.

14. What's a step toward combatting mental health myths?

- a) Relying on stereotypes to simplify understanding.
- b) Avoiding conversations about mental health altogether
- c) Spreading awareness and factual information.

MAKING INCLUSION A VERB

EXPERT DIALOGUE

Almost 25 years ago, I wrote a poem called “TO THEM...” which brought out the pain and trauma of a child with Dyslexia who wasn’t being understood by the teachers and the peers. But for me the most poignant lines of this poem are...

*I’m in their midst ... I’m really there,
I do wish they’d dare to care,
When they don’t, I shout out loud,
Hoping that someone will spot me in the crowd.
Don’t ignore me I say, if I’m not like you,
Why I am the way I am...I don’t have a clue.*

These words hold true even today , not just for children with disabilities but for anyone who doesn’t feel included because they are different. Think about this- Inclusion comes naturally to every species in nature...Except to us humans!

Why don’t we include people?

The answer is very simple. Because people are different and WE can’t handle different.

What’s the solution?

Once again the answer is very simple. LEARN to handle different.

But why should we?

Because inclusion is a very basic human need (books may not tell you this but your own lived and often painful experiences of ‘exclusion’ will definitely give you this insight!). No one likes to feel like an outsider. Not being included takes a toll on our mental health and affects us in more ways than one.

Everyone ‘believes’ in inclusion but very few can actually ‘walk the talk’.

It’s time we do.

How?

Make inclusion a verb by practising these actions and making them a habit when you are in any group:

- Listen to people genuinely
- Dare to care for those who are left out
- Watch your body language and your words
- Acknowledge and truly accept differences when you see them
- Ask , don’t assume
- Let go off biases

My poem ends with the lines...

*I have a host of abilities hidden behind my disability,
I’m not proud, I’m not ashamed and that I wish they would see,
I wish they’d care enough, to support me as I conquer my adversity
With a little more honour and grace... and certainly lots of dignity.
Where there is inclusion there is dignity and where there is dignity, “the mind is without fear and the head is held high”!*

Manjushree Patil

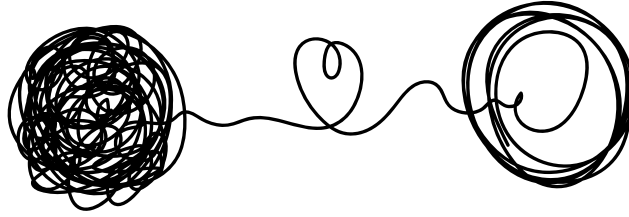
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(The author is the Founder Director of Aatman Academy, Thane, an inclusive learning centre for children with diverse learning needs ranked at India #3 in a national survey by Edn. World Magazine.



Help is a call away



PROJECT MUMBAI IS HERE FOR YOU!

If you or any adolescent you know is experiencing any mental or emotional distress, kindly call on Project Mumbai toll-free mental health helpline number:

SAMVAAD A Helpline for Adolescents 1800-102-4040

This helpline is active from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week and is handled by counsellors with varied expertise.

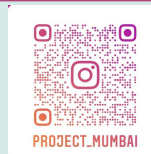
In case of any mental health related concerns, please feel free to reach us on mentalhealth@projectmumbai.org

- **SAMVAAD (A HELPLINE FOR ADOLESCENTS)- 1800 102 4040**
- **ICALL HELPLINE (GENERAL COUNSELLING)- 02225521111 (MON-SAT, 8AM-10 PM)**
- **HUMSAFAR TRUST (LGBTQIA+)- 0226673800 (MON-FRI, 10 AM-8PM)**
- **ARPAN (CSA)- +91-9819086444 (MON-FRI, 9AM-6PM)**
- **AASRA (SUICIDE PREVENTION)- +91-9820466726 (7 DAYS A WEEK, 24 HOURS)**

Do you want to contribute to making Mumbai the Kindness capital?
Reach out to us on info@projectmumbai.org
or
Visit us at www.projectmumbai.org

Do you have a subject that requires public attention?

Reach out to us through our **Instagram handle @project_mumbai** and we would be more than happy to highlight that as a point of discussion.



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