Mental Health Stigma

Stigma often comes from lack of understanding or fear. Inaccurate or misleading media representations of mental illness contribute to both those factors.

Harmful Effects of Stigma

- Reluctance to seek help or treatment
- Fear of being labeled (weak, crazy, psycho)
- Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers or others
- Afraid of being judged
- Afraid of losing your job
- Belief that you can control your mental health through willpower
- Societies expectation that you need to be tough and not show emotion
- Bullying, physical violence or harassment
- Health insurance that doesn’t adequately cover your mental illness treatment
- The belief that you’ll never succeed at certain challenges or that you can’t improve your situation
HOW TO CHECK IN WITH YOUR CHILD:

- Make it a habit
- Set aside 10-15 minutes and get rid of distractions
- Ask open ended questions rather than yes or no questions
- Listen - with your ears, your eyes, and your heart
- Problem solve together

TESTING ANXIETY?

- Get a good nights sleep
- Avoid caffeinated drinks that may increase anxiety
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Repeat positive statements before and during the test
- Watch a motivating video

EXAMPLE HERE

10 Critical Warning Signs of Violence

Here is a list of ten potential warning signs* that can signal an individual may be in crisis or need help:

1. Suddenly withdrawing from friends, family and activities (including online or via social media)
2. Bullying, especially if targeted towards differences in race, religion, gender or sexual orientation
3. Excessive irritability, lack of patience, or becoming angry quickly
4. Experiencing chronic loneliness or social isolation
5. Expressing persistent thoughts of harming themselves or someone else
6. Making direct threats toward a place, another person, or themselves
7. Bragging about access to guns or weapons
8. Recruiting accomplices or audiences for an attack
9. Directly expressing a threat as a plan
10. Cruelty to animals.

Words to Watch

This section on stigmatizing language was adapted from longer documents linked below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonly Used Terms</th>
<th>A Less Stigmatizing Choice</th>
<th>Why it Matters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mentally Ill</td>
<td>People with Mental Illness, People with Lived Experience of Mental Illness</td>
<td>The less stigmatizing choices all use person-first language which emphasizes the person’s humanity rather than the issue or diagnosis. The preferred terms emphasize that the person “has” a problem rather than “is” the problem. Terms that are less stigmatizing avoid negative thoughts or associations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s schizophrenic</td>
<td>He has a mental illness, He has schizophrenia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addict, User, Junkie, Drug or Substance Abuser</td>
<td>Person with Substance Use Disorder, Patient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic, Drunk</td>
<td>Person with Alcohol Disorder, Person who Misuses Alcohol</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Former Addict, Reformed Addict</td>
<td>Person in Recovery, Person who Formerly Used Drugs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Habit</td>
<td>Substance Use Disorder or Drug Addiction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean or Dirty</td>
<td>Testing Positive or Testing Negative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Commit/Committed Suicide</td>
<td>died by suicide, lost his/her life to suicide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s low-functioning</td>
<td>He has a tough time taking care of himself, He is still early in his recovery journey, He has a tough time learning new things</td>
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