

Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Messages

Key Audience: Parents & Caregivers

One in five California adults report needing help with a mental or emotional health problem.ⁱ

Statistically speaking, it's almost certain that someone in your family is experiencing mental health challenges, and needs your support.

Children and adults alike experience a variety of mental illnesses, from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to post-partum depression to bipolar disorder, and other challenges like stress and trouble sleeping.

Key Fact:

- + Approximately 9 million children in the U.S. have serious emotional problems, but only 1 in 5 of these children is receiving appropriate treatment.ⁱⁱ

When people are able to get help, they can recover or learn to manage their mental health, and live happy, productive lives.

The parent's role is critically important in early identification, getting access to help and treatment of mental illness.

Don't let fear of stigma stop you from getting your kids the help they need. Ask your doctor for help. A referral to a mental health practitioner could be a good first step.

Key Facts:

- + With support and treatment, between 70 and 90 percent of individuals diagnosed with a mental illness have a significant reduction in symptoms and improved quality of life.ⁱⁱⁱ
- + Research shows that half of all mental disorders start by age 14 and three-quarters start by age 24.^{iv}
- + But, an average of 6 to 8 years pass after the onset of mood disorder symptoms – 9 to 23 years for anxiety disorder symptoms – before young people get help.^v

You have a lot in common with someone who is living with mental health challenges.

We have dreams and goals, worries and fears. We often feel overwhelmed and uncertain about the future. We have hope that everything will turn out OK.

People living with mental health challenges are just people. They are our family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors. They are not defined by their condition. It is just a small part of who they are and how they live their lives.

Key Fact:

- + Common risk factors that can lead to mental health challenges, according to the Mayo Clinic, include: undergoing stressful life situations such as the death of a loved one, divorce or loss of a job; traumatic experiences such as military combat or being assaulted; having a chronic medical condition, such as cancer; or being abused or neglected as a child.

Most people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness are not violent or dangerous.

It would be unfair to judge someone because he or she has been diagnosed with a mental illness.

Key Facts:

- + People with serious mental health challenges are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. More than 25 percent of people with severe mental illness report being victims of a violent crime within a given year, a rate nearly 12 times higher than that of the general population.^{vi}
- + Mental illness accounts for, at most, 3 percent of all violence committed in the U.S.^{vii}

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Stigma hurts. It can do more damage than a mental illness itself.

Fear of being hurt or isolated because of stigma impacts the whole family. Young people may be afraid to be open with their parents and vice versa. Loved ones who need help and support may suffer alone.

Stigma around mental illness is one of the primary barriers to people seeking and receiving treatment. It also prevents parents from getting help for their kids.

We pass along our stigma to our children in small ways every day. To raise them to be aware, compassionate and accepting, we first need to be role models of compassion and acceptance.

Now is the time to end the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness in California. I will be a part of the solution, not the problem.

I will support other parents who may be struggling with a mental health challenge in their families.

I will teach my children that it's unacceptable to disrespect people who are living with mental health challenges.

We will create a better tomorrow for our kids if we stand together and support those of us who are living with mental health challenges today.

Taglines & Sound Bites

These short and memorable lines can help get your point across and make it stick in the minds of your audience. Use them as key points of emphasis in your remarks or, even better, pick one and make it the central theme of your talk.

Someone you care about is suffering and needs your help.

Don't let fear stop you from getting the help you and your family need.

Daily stress, anxiety, depression... Who can't relate to that?

We can teach our children compassion with everything we do.

Let's raise our kids to be stigma-free.

ⁱ UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. *Adult Mental Health Needs in California*, November 2011.

ⁱⁱ SAMHSA, *Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative resource kit*, 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

^{iv} Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Walters, *Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication*, General Psychiatry, July 2005.

^v Wang, P., Berglund, P., et al. *Failure and delay in initial treatment contact after first onset of mental disorders in the National Co-morbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R)*, General Psychiatry, June 2005.

^{vi} Linda Teplin et al., *Crime Victimization in Adults with Severe Mental Illness: Comparison with the National Crime Victimization Survey*, General Psychiatry, August 2005.

^{vii} H. Harwood, A. Ameen, G. Denmead et al., *The Economic Costs of Mental Illness*, 1992, Rockville, Md.: NIMH, 2000.