

## Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Messages

Key Audience: Young People Ages 14-24

### A lot of people my age are dealing with painful thoughts and feelings. I'm not the only one.

Children and adults alike experience a variety of mental illnesses, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder, and other challenges like stress and trouble sleeping.

#### Key Facts:

- + One in 5 California adults report needing help with a mental or emotional health problem.<sup>i</sup>
- + Approximately 9 million children in the U.S. have serious emotional problems, but only 1 in 5 of these children is receiving appropriate treatment.<sup>ii</sup>

### Good News! Mental health challenges are preventable and treatable, and recovery is possible.

If you broke your leg playing a sport, you wouldn't just ignore it and hope the pain would go away. You also wouldn't blame yourself or be afraid to tell others. You would seek help to heal. *Why should our mental health be treated any differently from our physical health?*

#### Key Facts:

- + Research shows that half of all mental disorders start by age 14 and three-quarters start by age 24.<sup>iii</sup>
- + 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.<sup>iv</sup>
- + 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.<sup>v</sup>

### We all cope with issues differently, but we all have issues.

People living with mental health challenges are just people. They're your friends and family. They are not defined by their condition. It is just a small part of who they are and how they live their lives.

I have a lot in common with someone who is struggling with a mental health challenge. We have dreams and goals, worries and fears. We feel overwhelmed and uncertain about the future. We have hope that everything will turn out OK.

### Stigma hurts. It is not funny, not cool and not right to judge someone with mental health challenges.

This kind of ignorance is called stigma, and stigma can be more hurtful than a mental illness itself.

Disrespecting someone because they have been diagnosed with a mental illness is the same thing as bullying. When people are afraid they'll be bullied, hurt or abandoned, it stops them from reaching out for the help they need.

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.

### I won't stand for the bullying of people who are "different." Besides, who's "normal" anyway?

I know what it's like to pretend everything is ok, but it's really important to talk about feeling sad, anxious, hopeless or confused.

As a friend, it's my responsibility to help when someone I care about is hurting.

I can help to end stigma by openly accepting the people diagnosed with a mental illness in my school and in my family.

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### 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.

Stigma: It's not funny, not cool and not right.

Who's "normal" anyway?

We all cope with our issues differently, but we *all* have issues.

If you're *my* friend, it's *my* responsibility to help you however I can.

Compassion is cool.

Stigma hurts.

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

<sup>ii</sup> SAMHSA, *Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative resource kit*, 2006.

<sup>iii</sup> 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.

<sup>iv</sup> 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.

<sup>v</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).