

The Stigma of Mental Illness

False beliefs about mental illness can cause significant problems.

Stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have a mental health condition are common. Stigma can lead to discrimination.

Some of the harmful effects of stigma can include:

- Reluctance to seek help or treatment
- Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers or others
- Fewer opportunities for work, school, or social activities
- Bullying, physical violence, or harassment

Steps to cope with stigma

- **Getting treatment**

Treatment can provide relief by identifying what is wrong and reducing symptoms that interfere with work and personal life.

- **Stigma creates self-doubt and shame in people who have mental conditions.**

Learn about Mental Illness and how to help. Family, friends, clergy, or members of your community can offer support.

- **Join a support group.** Some local and national groups, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), offer local programs and internet resources that help reduce stigma by educating people who have mental illness, their families and the

general public. Some state and federal agencies and programs, such as those that focus on vocational rehabilitation and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), offer support for people with mental illness.

- **Speak out against stigma.** Consider expressing your opinions at events, in letters to the editor or on the Internet. It can help instill courage in others facing similar challenges and educate the public about mental illness.

Others' judgments almost always stem from a lack of understanding rather than information based on facts. Learning and helping educate others can make a big difference.

This information was provided from the following organizations:

Mayo Clinic: www.mayoclinic.org

NAMI FaithNet: www.nami.org/namifaithnet

Mental Health Ministries: www.MentalHealthMinistries.net

Pathways to Promise: www.Pathways2Promise.org

Mental Health Ministry Team:

Barb Cavanaugh, Roy Cavanaugh, Michelle Cegon, Jean Gerfen, Kay Lee Grunst, Robin Marlatt, Erica McKissack, Mike Rosenberg, Penny Scheflo, Pastor Bill Timm, Evelyn Trone, Jeanie Volpe

There is a training called ***Mental Health First Aid*** on January 28 and 29. There will also be future Mental Health trainings. Please see any of the names listed above for information or questions. Also, please note the display we have in the narthex on the west wall. Please take any of the pamphlets that interest you. Thank you to all who have donated to help us continue the Mental Health Ministry Team.