

Countering Stigma and Discrimination

Overview Stigma Research Approaches to Counter Stigma

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MacArthur Mental Health Module, General Social Survey, 1996

- Greater scientific understanding.
- Able to distinguish between MI and worry.
- Mix of biological and psychological stress.
- Social stigma unchanged.

Discrimination/Social Distance

Americans are hesitant to interact with persons with mental illnesses:

- 38% are unwilling to be friends with a person having mental health difficulties.
- 64% are unwilling to have a person with schizophrenia as a close co-worker.
- More than 68% are unwilling to have a person with depression marry into their family.

Source: MacArthur Mental Health Module, 1996.

Recent Findings: Healthy Styles

- 84% Americans believe people with mental illnesses are not to blame for conditions.
- 26% agree that people are caring and sympathetic.
- Fewer than a third of adults believe person with mental illness can recover.

Young Adults

- Nearly 1 out of 5 reports having a mental illness.
- Major depression and anxiety most prevalent mental health problems.
- Shows lowest rate of help seeking behaviors.

Healthy Styles: Youth Findings

- 25% of young adults (18-24) believe that a person with mental illness can recover.
- 54% of young adults who know someone with mental illness believe that treatment helps.

Internalizing Stigma

- Embarrassment, Shame, Isolation
- Nearly two-thirds of all people with diagnosable mental health problems do not seek treatment (Regier et al., 1993; Kessler et al., 1996).

Persistence of Stigma

Why is stigma so strong despite better public understanding of mental illness? The answer appears to be fear of violence: people with mental illness, especially those with psychosis, are perceived to be more violent than in the past (Phelan et al., 1997).

Perception versus Reality

- The overall contribution of mental disorders to the total level of violence in society is exceptionally small (Swanson, 1994).

Media Coverage

- Selective media reporting reinforced the public's stereotypes linking violence and mental illness and encouraged people to distance themselves from those with mental disorders (Angermeyer & Matschinger, 1996).

Anti-stigma Approaches

- Education
- Protest
- Reward
- Contact

Anti-stigma Approaches

- Education: offering correct information about mental illness and people with mental illnesses that replaces myths that people have.

Anti-stigma Approaches

- Protest : actions which suppress discriminatory attitudes and behaviors toward people with mental illnesses.

Anti-stigma Approaches

- Reward: prize or honor is given to honor the accurate portrayal of a person with mental illness.

Anti-stigma Approaches

- Contact: challenging discriminatory attitudes and behavior through direct interactions, face to face with people with mental illnesses.
