

# BREAK THE STIGMA

## Amplifying the voices of Mental Health



According to the **Mayo Clinic**, stigma is when someone negatively views you because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people with mental health conditions are common.

The **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** says, "One in 5 Americans is affected by mental health conditions. Stigma is toxic to their mental health because it creates an environment of shame, fear, and silence that prevents many people from seeking help and treatment. The perception of mental illness won't change unless we act to change it."

On the next page are some of the things **NAMI** suggests we can each do to help amplify the voice of mental health and break down the stigma surrounding it.

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- **Talk openly about mental health.**
  - Having candid conversations helps encourage others to do the same and potentially seek the help they need.
- **Educate yourself and others.**
  - Be informed by researching information and asking questions.
  - If you experience others' sharing negative or incorrect information, share your experiences or facts that will help correct the spread of misinformation.
- **Be conscious of language.**
  - Your own words and the language you use impacts others'.
  - If you become aware of the media or someone using words that may further the stigma, take the time to nurture them in what language to use instead.
- **Encourage equality between physical and mental illness.**
  - NAMI suggests "draw comparisons to how they would treat someone with cancer or diabetes."
- **Show compassion for those with mental illness.**
  - Compassion is a significant way to take down stigma. Treat someone with a mental illness as if it were you in their position. It also can remind them that their mental illness does not define them.
- **Be honest about treatment.**
  - Being honest about your treatment allows space for others to learn from your experience. If we talk about mental health the same as we discuss other health-related issues, it helps to shatter misconceptions and stigmas surrounding treatment.
- **Choose empowerment over shame.**
  - "I fight stigma by choosing to live an empowered life. To me, that means owning my life and my story and refusing to allow others to dictate how I view myself or how I feel about myself." – Val Fletcher, responding on Facebook to the question, How do you fight stigma?

To learn more about mental health and how you can help break the stigma surrounding it, visit [nami.org](http://nami.org) or call our program.

### WE ARE YOUR HOSPITAL'S PROGRAM

We are your hospital's program, designed to meet the unique needs of individuals typically 65 and older experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging.

### CONTACT US

If you or someone you know could benefit from this program, don't hesitate to get in touch with us. Call us today.  
308-832-3400 Option 4