

Career Services for MH Needs

Discrimination and Stigma



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Stigma

The concept of stigmatisation describes negative social attitudes towards a specific group of people due to certain features that its members possess. The stigmatisation of this group of people manifests itself in negative, related and overlapping attitudes presented by others. Among them can be distinguished:

- ✓ **distancing (reluctance to engage in informal interactions),**
- ✓ **devaluation and stereotyping (spreading negative, simplified and harmful stereotypes, duplication), and**
- ✓ **delegitimization (legal limitation of activity in a given sphere)**

Stigma

These attitudes in turn consist of three components:

- ✓ **cognitive – which consists of judgments and opinions,**
- ✓ **affective - resulting from emotions and feelings, and**
- ✓ **behavioral - expressed in intentional behavior.**

Stigma

A stigmatizing attitude is made up by four components:

- ✓ **isolating the difference, e.g. a physical defect, and labelling the person or persons in whom this difference was noticed,**
- ✓ **attributing undesirable traits to labelled people, reflecting previously formed stereotypes,**
- ✓ **separating the group of people labelled ("they") from one's own group ("us"),**
- ✓ **experiencing loss of status and discrimination by labelled persons, e.g. deprivation of the right to employment, medical care, etc.; this entails not only social but also economic degradation**

Stigma in Mental Health

A

The mentally ill person is dangerous

B

The mentally ill person is partly responsible for his/her condition

C

The mentally ill person suffers from a disease that is chronic and difficult to treat

D

The mentally ill person is unpredictable and unable to properly fulfil social roles

The stereotype in mental health is based mainly on these four statements.



Has severe impact on

- **Self-esteem**
- **Self-efficacy**
- **Social inclusion**

Stigmatization:

Prevents MH users from assuming

- **Family roles**
- **Professional roles**



Ways to fight Stigma

A

**Understand
to overcome**

B

**Building
acceptance**

C

**Understand
to help**

D

**Changing
societies
attitudes**

Understand to overcome

Due to stigma, very often, young people with MH problems believe that they:

- **Are no longer capable of finding a job or returning to education**
- **Are weak, because of their mental health condition**



Understand to overcome

It is crucial that they:

- **Understand completely their situation**
- **Accept it**
- **Build higher self-esteem**
- **Throw stigma**

This can be achieved through educational and therapeutic activities for young persons and their families.



Understand to overcome

Main purpose of these activities is to convince young people that they can function normally in family and professional life:

“It’s Ok not to be Ok and you can talk about it”



Building Acceptance

Attitudes are shaped mainly in the primary environment (family, school) as part of the socialization process.

As a result, acquired attitudes are more difficult to change later in life.

Stereotypes of mental illness are transmitted to the young generation and stigma is reinforced by the media.



Building Acceptance

- **Educating the young generation as early as possible is an important aspect of the fight against stigmatization.**
- **It is important to prevent discrimination against children suffering from mental disorders by their peers.**
- **Education is important to help young people (if necessary) recover from mental health conditions quickly.**



Understand to help

It seems like a natural assumption that medical staff, therapists and specialists dealing with helping people with mental disorders should be fully aware of the difficulties of people with mental disorders.

But is this the truth???

Do mental health professionals carry stigma?



Understand to help

According to researches in European countries, the attitudes and knowledge of mental health professionals very often show a high level of stigmatization and misunderstanding of mental health problems.





Understand to help

Regarding work/education integration of young people with mental health problems, low expectations by mental health professionals is an important issue.

It is often reported that their work integration needs are ignored by mental health professionals or sometimes even discouraged.

Hearing from the “experts” that it is very unlikely to work again can prevent users from seeking vocational rehabilitation services and heavily affects their self-efficacy beliefs.



Understand to help

In the design of campaigns and educational programs regarding and stigma, not only children and adolescents must be addressed, but also different medical professional categories!!!



Changing society's attitudes

Experience from European countries shows that a comprehensive education and information campaign (for example, the 'See Me' or 'Time to Change' initiative) can change society's attitudes towards people suffering from mental disorders.

But these initiatives need to be permanent and not sporadic.

e.g: “Open the Doors”, WPA (1996)





Activity

Please, implement the activity no.31 from the WORK4PSY toolkit, part C (Creating a map of my strengths and weaknesses).



Thank you for
the Attention.
Questions?