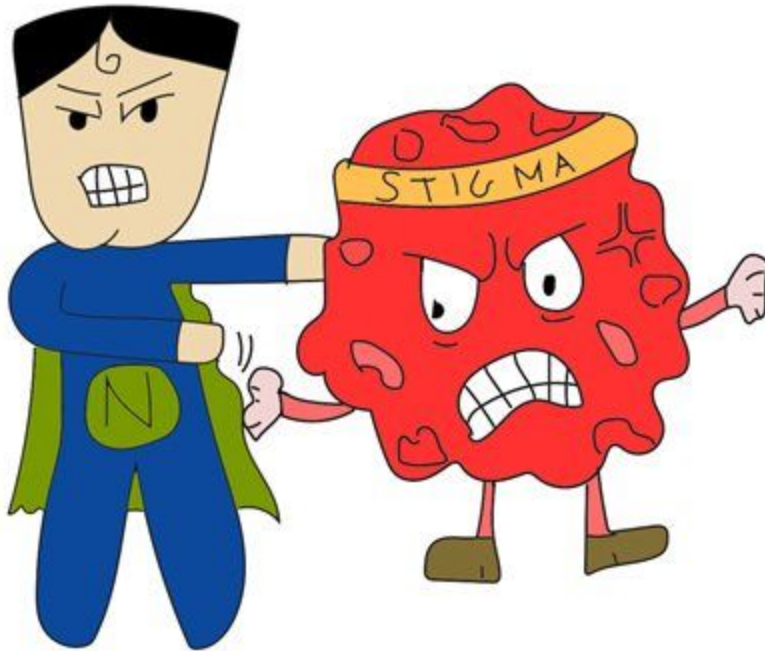


9 Ways to Fight Mental Health Stigma

By Laura Greenstein | Oct. 26, 2015

Stigma is one of the most challenging aspects of living with a mental health condition. It causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control and prevents many from seeking the help they need and speaking out. In order to address this problem, we asked our Facebook community, “What is the best



way to end stigma?” Here are some of the responses we received:

1. **Talk openly about mental health.** “Mental illness touches so many lives and yet it's STILL a giant secret. Be brave and share your story.” –Lindsey Watkin Lason
2. **Educate yourself and others about mental health.** “Challenge people respectfully when they are perpetrating stereotypes and misconceptions. Speak up and educate them.” –Yvonne Lucas
3. **Be conscious of your language.** “Saying someone is “retarded” or using (or even mentioning) the “N” word is politically incorrect, but it's still fine to throw around words like crazy, psycho, lunatic, etc.” –Michele Croston
4. **Encourage equality in how people perceive physical illness and mental illness.** “We should explain mental illness as similar to any other illness. When someone acts differently or “strange” during diabetic shock we don't blame them for moral failings.” –William Newbill

5. **Show empathy and compassion for those living with a mental health condition.** “Love, we can all use more education, but that will not make people change their opinions. When you love and respect people, love and respect all of them. You have a desire to learn more about who they are and what their life is like.” –Megan Wright Bowman
6. **Stop the criminalization of those who live with mental illness.** “Professionals and families together need to talk to neighborhood groups, law enforcement, hospitals and legal experts to share experiences and knowledge on interacting with mentally ill.” –Valerie E. Johnson
7. **Push back against the way people who live with mental illness are portrayed in the media:** “Push back hard against the media and politicians and pundits that simply deflect real social issues such as gun control to the realm of "psychos" causing mass shootings.” –Michele Croston
8. **See the person, not the illness:** “Talk about your family and friends with mental illnesses any time a conversation invites the opportunity; with an open heart, love, and real information about the real human being that they are; they are not their condition.” –Sheryl Schaffner
9. **Advocate for mental health reform.** “It's empowering people whenever and wherever you can. It's also writing legislators. It's also talking in front of a board of commissioners to advocate for continued mental health funding... It's doing the right thing and treating others justly.” –Danielle Hoover

Stigma is not something that will go away on its own, but if we work together as a community, we can change the way we perceive mental illness in our society. Do your part by pledging to be *stigmafree* today.

Source:

<http://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/October-2015/9-Ways-to-Fight-Mental-Health-Stigma#>