

How can you help?

Things we can do to reduce stigma, prejudice and discrimination against people who are struggling with mental health and substance abuse problems:

Know the facts

Educate yourself about substance use and mental health problems and causes, who is at risk, and how to prevent or reduce the severity of problems. Learn the facts instead of the myths.

Be aware of your attitudes and behavior

We've all grown up with prejudices and judgmental thinking, which are passed on by society and reinforced by family, friends and the media. But we can change the way we think and see people as unique human beings, not as labels or stereotypes.

Choose your words carefully

Our approach and method of communication can affect the way other people think and speak. Use accurate and sensitive words when talking about people with mental health and substance abuse problems. E.g. speak about "a person with schizophrenia" rather than "a schizophrenic."

Educate others

Use any opportunity that arises to pass on facts and positive attitudes about people with substance abuse and mental health problems. If people or the media present information that are incorrect, call them out their myths and stereotypes. Impress on them how their negative words and incorrect descriptions affect people and perpetuate stigma.

Focus on the positive

People with mental health and substance abuse issues do and can make valuable contributions to their community and society. Their health problems are just one part of who they are. Let's recognize and applaud the positive stories of people struggling with substance abuse and mental health issues. E.g. did you know that Ron Ellis was living with depression when he and the Toronto Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup?

Support people

Treat people with dignity and respect. Treat others how you'd like to be treated if you were in the same situation. If you have family members, friends or co-workers with substance abuse or mental health issues, support their choices and encourage their efforts to get well.

Include everyone

In Canada, it is against the law for employers and people who provide services to discriminate against people with mental health and substance abuse issues. Denying people access to things such as jobs, housing or health care violates human rights. People with mental health and substance abuse issues have the right to take an equal part in society.

Source

Adapted from:

http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/stigma/Pages/stigma_brochure.aspx

