

SOME COMMON MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

Myth: *People with mental illnesses are violent and dangerous.*

FACT: Some people try to predict violence so they know what to avoid. However, the causes of violence are complicated. **Researchers agree that mental illnesses are not a good predictor of violence.** People who experience a mental illness are no more violent than people without a mental illness. Excluding people from communities and services is linked to violence. People with mental illnesses are often among those who are excluded.

Note: *People who experience mental illnesses are much more likely to be victims of violence than to be violent.*

Myth: *People do not recover from mental illnesses.*

FACT: People can and do recover from mental illnesses. Today, there are many different kinds of treatments, services, and supports that can help and people who experience mental illnesses can and do lead productive, engaged lives. They work, volunteer, or contribute their unique skills and abilities to their communities. Even when people experience mental illnesses that last for a long time, they can learn how to manage their symptoms so they can get back to their goals.

Myth: *Mental illnesses aren't real illnesses.*

FACT: How we describe mental illnesses have changed greatly over time. What hasn't changed is the fact that mental illnesses are not the regular ups and downs of life. Mental illnesses create distress, don't go away on their own, and are real health problems that need effective treatments.

When someone is diagnosed with Cancer, we encourage them to see a specialist, start treatment as soon as possible and we love and support them throughout their journey. We do not blame for their illness. Mental illness is like any other illness.

Myth: *Mental illnesses will never affect me.*

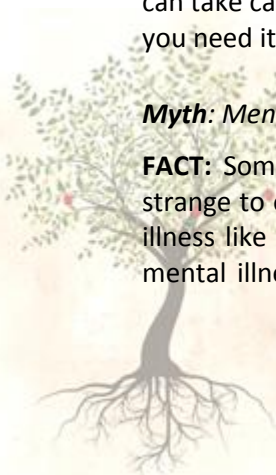
FACT: Researchers estimate that as many as one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness at some point in their life. You may not experience a mental illness yourself, but it's very likely that a friend, family member, or co-worker will experience challenges.

Myth: *People who experience mental illnesses are weak and can't handle stress.*

FACT: Stress impacts well-being, but this is true for everyone. People who experience mental illnesses may actually be better at managing stress than people who haven't experienced mental illnesses. Many people who experience mental illnesses learn skills like stress management and problem-solving so they can take care of stress before it affects their well-being. Taking care of yourself and asking for help when you need it are signs of strength, not weakness.

Myth: *Mental illnesses are just an excuse for poor behavior.*

FACT: Some people who experience mental illnesses may act in ways that are unexpected or seem strange to others. Always remember that the illness, not the person, is behind these behaviors. Mental illness like other illnesses is not a choice. People who experience a change in their behavior due to a mental illness may feel extremely embarrassed or ashamed around others. It's also true that people



with a history of a mental illness are like anyone else: they may make poor choices or do something unexpected for reasons unrelated to symptoms of their illness.

Myth: *Bad parenting causes mental illnesses.*

FACT: No one factor can cause mental illnesses. Mental illnesses are complicated conditions that arise from a combination of genetics, biology, environment, and life experiences. Family members loved ones and the community plays a big role in support and recovery.

Myth: *People who experience mental illnesses can't work.*

FACT: Whether you realize it or not, workplaces are filled with people who have or are currently struggling with mental illnesses or addiction issues. Mental illnesses don't mean that someone is no longer capable of working. Most people who experience serious mental illnesses want to work but face systemic barriers to finding and keeping meaningful employment.

Myth: *Everyone gets depressed as they grow older. It's just part of the aging process.*

FACT: Depression is never an inevitable part of aging. Older adults may have a greater risk of depression because they experience so many changes in roles and social networks. If an older adult experiences depression, they need the same support as anyone else.

Myth: *Kids can't have a mental illness like depression. Those are adult problems*

Fact: Even children can experience mental illnesses. In fact, many mental illnesses first appear when a person is young. Mental illnesses may look different in children than in adults, but they are a real concern. Mental illnesses can impact the way young people learn and build skills, which can lead to challenges in the future. Unfortunately, many children don't receive the help they need.

These myths—and many more—exclude people with mental illnesses from our communities and create barriers to well-being. If we want to reduce the impact of mental illnesses on our communities, we need to learn the facts and start with our own assumptions and behaviors.

Source

Adapted from: http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/myths-about-mental-illness/

