

Mental Illness

Removing the Stigma

Mental illness is a medical condition. It affects a person's thoughts and ability to relate to others. This may reduce the ability to cope with daily life.¹

Mental illnesses include:

- Depression
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Anxiety
- Personality disorder

About one in four Americans lives with a mental health problem each year.² That equals 66 million people.

The Stigma of Mental Illness

Individuals with mental health problems may live with prejudice. And discrimination. Many people view them as unstable. Or think they are dangerous. People with mental illness may have low self-esteem. Some resist social and public settings. Many do not seek treatment.

Fight the Stigma

Fight the stigma of mental illness with knowledge. Understanding how mental illness affects people is key. More outreach is raising awareness about mental health issues. This helps the fight.

¹ What is Mental Illness? www.nami.org

² Mental illness – what you need to know. www.nami.org

Fighting the stigma—if you have a mental illness:

- **Get treatment.** Help manage your mental illness. Avoiding treatment may cause more issues. It can be damaging in the long term.
- **Reach out to others.** There is no reason to not talk about an illness. Turn to people you trust. Share your story.
- **Join a support group.** Many local and national groups can help. One of them is the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). These groups offer programs and resources. They help people learn about mental illness.
- **Speak out against stigma.** Be open. Say what you feel. This could be at public events. Or in letters to the editor. Speak out when you are with friends and family.

Fighting the stigma—to support family or friends with a mental illness:

- **Talk about your experience.** Share what you know. This shows others that mental illness is nothing to hide. Talking raises awareness.
- **Help a support group.** People with mental illness can lead full lives. Help a group that improves the lives of people with mental illness.
- **Address myths.** Many things people think about mental illness are not true. Offer facts. It may help change what a person does in the future.

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health Services does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.