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# Stigma

## What is stigma?

Stigma is the fear of what people might think. The “stigma” that surrounds mental illness is part of the reason why people are afraid to seek professional help. In 2002 fewer than half of adults with serious mental illness received treatment for their mental health problems. The common reasons people do not seek treatment include cost, fear, not knowing where to go for services, and concern about confidentiality and the opinions of neighbors and community.

Many people who do not understand mental health think that there is something shameful about this type of problem. This kind of “stigma” can stop people from getting a job, an education and even a home. Fortunately everyone can do something to reduce stigma.

## What can we do to counter stigma?

- Learn and share the facts about mental health.
- Treat people with mental illnesses with dignity and respect.
- Avoid labeling people by using derogatory terms like, “ crazy and wacko.”
- Avoid labeling people by their diagnosis.
- Support people with mental illnesses.
- Respect the rights of people with mental illnesses.
- Teach children about mental health and mental illnesses.