

Moving Towards Stigma-Free Healthcare

Video Discussion Guide (Click on Dana's photo below to watch the 11.5 minute video)

Participant story summaries.



DANA:

Labeled as crazy for seeking help, yet her school counselor said she was strong. Started self-medicating. Psychiatric hospital worker comment – “I’m at work dealing with a bunch of crazy people.” While in a general medical facility:

- Staff was encouraging.
- It felt like her second home.
- The recovery stories from people who provided her care, helped Dana feel hope.

MACKENZIE:

Her dad commented that the stigma was in him and his wife more than the providers. Mackenzie had 6 or 7 therapists before she found the right one. She started to grow with the right therapist. Comments from psychotherapist (Mary):

- We should see the patient/client as the expert.
- We need to recognize our biases.
- We can be proven totally wrong!

Educate people instead of getting angry at them for not understanding your illness.



MARY:

A doctor's first comment in their first meeting was on the number of meds she took. It seemed that the same doctor was uncomfortable with Mary because she was so open. Understanding and peace can come from the right doctor. The orthopedic doctor's comments (Dr. Joel):

- Less stigma because of his past contact with people with mental illness.
- Had a mother who worked in the mental health field.
- Believes mental health and physical health are linked.
- To overcome apprehension to talk about mental health, learn about the person.



ELLIE:

Ellie and Dr. Chris, her neurologist, began their relationship when Ellie was in her 20s. She came to him with severe symptoms of Tourette's syndrome; he listened and respected her priorities of which symptoms troubled her most. Ellie gained the most help from peers:

- Dr. Chris sees importance of neurologists and psychiatrists working together.
- He was “fired” by parent who felt he separated neurological symptoms from mental well-being.
- We cannot be led by what makes society uncomfortable!



Moving Towards Stigma-Free Healthcare

Video Discussion Guide

Discussion questions related to the Steps for Compassionate Action:

- 1. Step 1 – Notice:** How does the stigma a provider might hold impact the ability of the provider to deliver the best care possible in both physical and mental health challenges? (How might it keep a provider from being present to notice psychological and/or physical pain?)
- 2. Step 1 – Self-check:** What “gut” reactions did you have to each of the four people sharing their story? What biases did you notice in yourself?
- 3. What can you do when you notice internal bias to avoid expressing it?** How might you expose yourself to experiences that will alter such biases? How do you monitor and uncover your own bias?
- 4. Step 3 – Seek to understand:** What does a person with a mental health challenge hear from you in your first encounter – skepticism about prior care, diagnosis before relationship, respect for patient’s wisdom...?
- 5. Step 4 – Cultivate empathy:** What stigma did the people in the video encounter in prior contact with service providers? What were the people’s experiences and/or concerns around their current health? What feeling can you relate to from your own life experiences?
- 6. What level of hope do they have around their illness?** Can you share realistic hope? Do you know enough about recovery to share hope? What are your past experiences with mental illness and recovery?
- 7. Step 5 – Discern best action:** How can you tell when a listening ear, psycho-education (education about the illness and recovery), and/or advice is appropriate?
- 8. How do you avoid diagnostic overshadowing in order to make an accurate diagnosis?** (Diagnostic over- shadowing refers to the process of over-attributing a patient’s symptoms to a particular condition, resulting in key co-occurring conditions being undiagnosed and untreated.)
- 9. How can you reconnect with your reasons for being in your profession?**
- 10. How did your rotations in training** (college, med school and/or residency) impact your beliefs and approaches to people with mental illness?
- 11. As a professional, how do you make decisions about if and how to disclose your own experiences with mental health challenges?**
- 12. How can you act as an agent of change to reduce stigma in the environment in which you work?**