



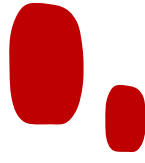
Stigma and Discrimination

Stigma: Thinking

Stigma is in our thinking. It involves stereotypes (negative beliefs about people) and prejudice (agreement with the stereotypes).

Discrimination: Doing

*Discrimination is behaviour-based — for example, turning down someone for a job, house or friendship **because** of the group they are a part of (ethnicity, culture, age, sexuality, gender, health condition etc).*



Attitude Statements Example

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Teenagers all have issues, there's no point in getting support for them as they will grow out of it.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



All people deserve support! Young people have a lot of change going on in their brain, body and world as they become adults. **The earlier someone is able to get help, the better!**

*"I thought that things had to be really bad before I deserved help — and I didn't think anything would help anyway. I was worried people would think I was just **being a dramatic teenage girl**. Now I wish I had reached out for help at the beginning and maybe things wouldn't have got so awful." — Ann*



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1. People with mental health issues are weird.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



Forty-six percent of New Zealanders will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime — 1 in 4 are experiencing one right now ... **That sounds like a pretty 'normal' experience!** Sometimes someone who is struggling acts in ways that are hard to understand. What do you think they need from those around them?

“Being queer, and having a mental illness ... there are so many labels and judgments, sometimes I feel like I’m in a double closet. I think it has helped when people have got to know other things about me first, so when I come out they realise the stereotypes don’t fit.” — Ani



2. People with mental illness are dangerous.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



People with mental illness are **more likely to be victims of violence** than they are to commit acts of violence – this includes people who have experience of psychosis (seeing or hearing things that others don't). The strongest risk factors for violence are having a past history of violence and threatening to commit violence in the future.

"I have worked with people with mental health issues for five years and I've never seen anyone get aggro! On the other hand, I need to drive a lot for my job ... and on the road, there's been lots of road rage and near-miss incidents." – Ahmada



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3. Once you're 'mentally ill' you will probably always have issues.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



People get better from even severe mental illness. Even if someone has ongoing mental health challenges **they can live an awesome life**. Many people will tell you that in the end, their mental distress experiences have made their lives better.

"I got the message from some people — including doctors — that what I could do would always be limited because of my mental illness. It was frustrating because I'm more than my illness! I reckon it made me more determined to be a success! Now I use my experiences to help people in my work." — Rob



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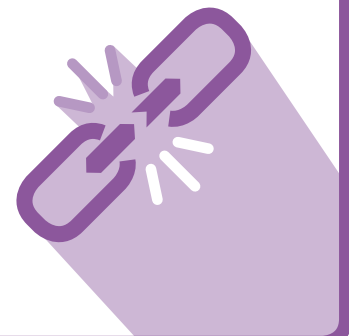
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4. We don't have mental health issues in our community.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



There are lots of different ways of understanding what mental health issues are – **but they seem to be part of being human.** They happen in some form in all cultures. It can be difficult for people if they don't feel they can talk about their experiences.

*“In my community, mental health issues aren't seen as something that needs to be addressed. ‘Toughen up’ or ‘get over it’ gets said when someone opens up ... like it's a weakness and not a sign of being human. **The person may feel they aren't supported** to share their true feelings, which could lead to a really bad outcome.” – Moana*



5. People with drug and alcohol issues only need to show a little bit more self-control!

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health/addiction issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



People start using drugs and alcohol for lots of reasons: to escape, to manage painful feelings and because it's 'normal' in their group of friends. **By the time someone has a dependency** they probably need support to change. Many young people don't realise that if they use alcohol or drugs before 21 there is a higher risk of them developing other mental health issues.

"It was so unhelpful when people would say 'just stop!' If I had been able to control my use I wouldn't have ended up in those situations. Everyone would judge me and say 'drugs and alcohol are bad', so the only people left to talk to were other people using! For me, the drinking was a way I was trying to cope — but it made things worse." — Fiona



6. People stressing with depression and anxiety need to chill out and not think so much. They bring their problems on themselves.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



The way we think can contribute to depression and anxiety — but so can stress, painful experiences, our genes, bullying, loneliness, hormones, physical illness and not enough support. **No one chooses to feel this way.** It often takes a mix of things to help someone start to feel better.

“It was so hard when people would tell me to not think so much and to be positive. I already blamed myself for how awful I felt, and being told I was thinking wrong just made it worse. It was more helpful when friends just let me talk and hang out, even if I was feeling low.” — Sam



7. If you hear voices you're really crazy.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



Between 3% and 10% of the population hear voices. When one-off experiences are included (like hearing someone call your name, but no one has), this figure goes up to 75%. **Sometimes these voices aren't upsetting**, and people understand them within their culture or spiritual beliefs.

*"As I learned coping strategies and got stronger, how I felt about the voices changed. I began to see them as **early warning signs to pay attention to caring for myself**, or what was going on inside me. Looking at the voices this way, they helped improve my wellbeing!" — Brody.*

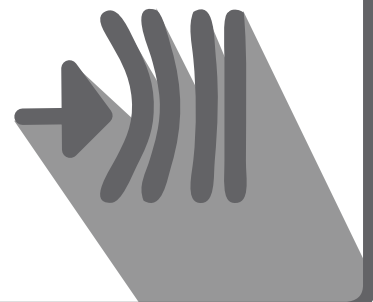


8. People with mental health issues are weak. If they tried harder, they wouldn't have issues.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



Diet, sleep habits, genes, stress, how much support someone has, alcohol and drugs, and whether distressing stuff has happened in someone's life can all affect mental health. **Many people have to be strong** just to cope with their mental illness or distress. Asking for help also takes strength.

"In my last year of uni, I was studying full-time as well as working heaps just to pay the bills. I didn't have any energy left, so my depression just took over. People told me that I needed to just 'deal with it' or 'let it go'. They didn't get that it takes energy to do that stuff, and I just didn't have it at the time." — Shreya



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9. People with eating issues just need to get more balanced about what they are putting in their body.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



Eating issues aren't simple: they can be painful, dangerous, and you can't tell just by looking at someone if they are dealing with one. Changing behaviour around food is often part of getting better — but so is **managing feelings, thoughts, relationships**, building healthy body image and finding support.

"I thought I was too fat to have an eating disorder and I was terrified others thought this too. After two years I finally opened up. My doctor said I wasn't 'dangerously skinny' and told me about others with a 'real problem'. Then he asked my sister if she had a problem because she was 'much skinnier' than me! It took a while to find the right GP but the one I have now is amazing." — Katie



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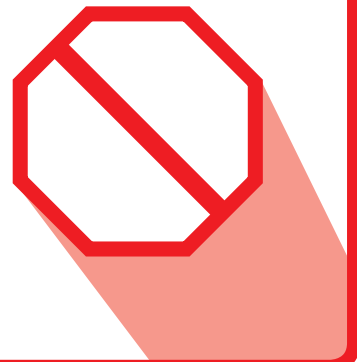
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10. When people get a mental illness it's always because they or their family have done something wrong.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?



It can be useful to seek out others you respect who have an understanding of your culture or family background but also an understanding of mental distress and what can lead to it. Even if our past actions affect our mental **wellbeing**, **blame is not helpful**, especially if people end up feeling shamed and not talking.

“Sometimes I’ve felt like I was being punished for mistakes I’ve made, but now I tell myself that I’m human, and everyone has done stuff they’re not proud of. People who are hurting don’t need to suffer more from blaming themselves.” — Tristan



11. It's best to ignore someone's self-harm, so they don't get any more attention for it.

Have you heard something like this before? Where?

What might it be like to have mental health issues and hear this idea?

What if those around you believed it?

Research tells us that sharing stories about suicide or self-harm can make it tougher if people are having a hard time — so please stick to the questions shown above. If self-harm is something you need to talk about, there are people out there who can help. Please reach out to someone trustworthy to talk to, one on one.



Self-harm often gets called ‘just attention-seeking’ but it’s usually a way someone is trying to cope. Any sort of self-harm should be seen as a serious issue and the person should be encouraged to get support. **People don’t self-harm when they are feeling good about themselves and their lives.**

“I was so worried about being seen as attention-seeking, I hid what I was doing. It made my self-harm worse because I felt like I was trying to prove to myself how much pain I was in. Now I tell anyone who is even thinking about self-harm to see it as a sign that you are needing support!” — Charlotte

