

Mental Health Stigma

Materials:

Power Point Presentation

Premade Large Post-It Notes

Markers

Instructions:

- 1) (5 minutes) Introduce yourself and your role in the UCC.
- 2) (5 minutes) Explain that today you'll be talking about stigma, and this is intended to be a very interactive discussion. The first activity is to get everyone to start thinking about health in general by word association. Ask everyone to pull out a piece of paper and divide it into sixths. Explain that you will call out a word and give 10 seconds for everyone to write down as many words as they can think of. When they have written down the answers, ask for people to shout out the words they wrote for each concept you called out. You may want to write them down on a board if available, or have someone keep track of them for you. Point out any differences or similarities you notice about the verbiage used. Ask why the class why they think there are differences? The following are the 6 words to call out are:
 - a. Doctor
 - b. Physical therapy
 - c. Cancer
 - d. Counseling
 - e. Mental Illness
 - f. Hurt or Pain
- 3) (10 minutes) Move onto the mental health continuum model. Explain that just like physical health, mental health has a continuum. Also, be sure to point out that mental health in itself, isn't any different a term than "health" or "physical health." Acknowledge the simplicity of the diagram in relation to real life, but mental or physical health can also have a wide range of complexities.
 - a. I sometimes use an example of stress to severe depression to illustrate the mental health continuum. Students seem to get that.
 - b. I also sometimes use an example of a health runner to some discomfort in the knee, to more severe pain, and then to an ACL or meniscus tear to illustrate how physical health isn't so different. Some people may or may not like this example, I find it helps to demystify mental illness and reinforcing mental health is health.
- 4) (5 minutes) Move onto defining stigma (slides 4-8). Slides 6-8 simply are examples of stigmatizing statements.
- 5) (5 minutes) Set up the activity. Your partner may put the posters up in the room in places that are easy to move about. This could be done before if you have enough time. You may also ask for some student volunteers. While that is going on, explain the activity as follows.

Ask students to write down some stereotypes or even thoughts they may have heard on TV or media or by others (this is often safer than asking them to say what beliefs they may have) about the diagnoses/words. Ask students to do this quietly, without speaking to one another. Instruct students to read what has been written on the posters once they complete the activity.

- 6) (15 minutes) Let students complete the activity.
- 7) (15 minutes) Process the activity with the group. You may want to pick out a couple of key words and review some of the things that were written and ask the group to comment on what they think was meant by that. Or ask what reactions did people have when they read certain comments? Anything surprise them? Where do you think these ideas came from? What myths seem to be out there about mental illness (you may hear things like people with mental illnesses are dangerous, unstable, the “others,” etc. Take a couple minutes to dispel myths that are not dispelled). This activity often gets a lot of conversation going, and some self-correcting within the group. Allow people to share and get at some of the things on slides 10 and 11. Slide 10 asks students why they think these statements are problematic. Share some of the reasons we’ve listed on the slide. Slide 11, asks what we can do to de-stigmatize mental health, review those if they haven’t yet brought those up.