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What is Stigma?



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Stigma is when someone is viewed negatively because of a certain characteristic or trait that they have.

Stigma may be experienced because of a number of characteristics, traits or experiences. For example, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, mental health or physical health conditions.

Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because they hold a particular characteristic. For example not being offered a job because of your ethnicity or a physical disability.

People who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition commonly report experiences of stigma and people with a diagnosis of psychosis are one of the most stigmatized

Research has found that stigma can be divided into two broad categories: public and internalised stigma.

PUBLIC STIGMA

Negative attitudes, beliefs and behaviour directed towards the person by society.

INTERNAL STIGMA

When a person starts to believe the negative views that society holds about them

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Psychosis and Stigma

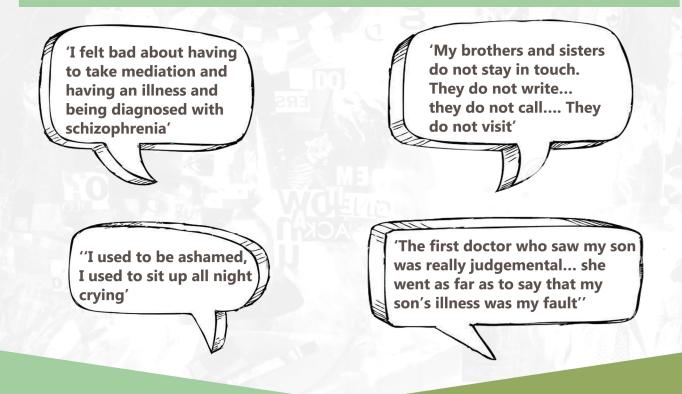
People who have been diagnosed with psychosis frequently report experiencing stigma and discrimination.

Research has found that the stigma people experience can be more damaging than the original difficulties themselves.



A report conducted in 2012 found that 87% people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia had experienced stigma and discrimination.

Below are some of the things people have said about their experiences of stigma:



Developments

The importance of tackling stigma around mental health is now starting to be more widely recognised:

A priority set out by the World Health Organisation in 2013 was the reduction in stigma associated with psychosis.

In March 2015, NHS England launched a a five-year strategy to improve mental health outcomes for people of all ages. One of their key themes was tackling stigma.

Stigma Resistance in Psychosis

There are a large number of people who do not report negative experiences of stigma and who do not have internalised stigma. This is known as 'stigma resistance.'

Research has found that a number of factors make it less likely that stigma will be internalised:

Having a good social network of friends

Disagreeing with the stereotypes/ not believing the myths about mental health problems

Feeling empowered to make choices and decisions about life, health and mental health.

It is thought that holding stigma resistance beliefs may help individuals to lead a more fulfilling life and peers who have similar experiences may be able to support others to develop stigma resistance.

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