Ways to fight mental health stigma

Below are different ways that we can all help to fight against mental health stigma.

Talk openly about mental health.
Talk about what it's like to have a mental illness, or to live with someone who is struggling with mental illness. This makes others who may be dealing with mental illness feel less alone. Talk openly about treatment that you may be receiving for mental illness. Just like saying you have an appointment with your primary care doctor, you should be able to speak openly about seeing a mental health professional.

Educate yourself and others.
Learn the facts about mental illness. Find opportunities to pass on facts and dispel myths about people with mental health concerns. If friends, family, co-workers or even the media present information that is not true, challenge their myths and stereotypes. Let them know how their negative words and incorrect descriptions affect people with mental health concerns by keeping alive the false ideas.

Be conscious of the language that you use.
Refrain from using mental health conditions as adjectives. These illnesses and conditions do not define a person. The way we speak can affect the way other people think and speak. Avoid using hurtful or derogatory language.

Be aware of your attitudes.
We've all grown up around prejudices and judgmental thinking. But we can change the way we think! See people as unique human beings, not as labels or stereotypes. See the person beyond their mental illness. They have many other personal attributes that do not disappear just because they also have a mental illness.

Encourage equality between physical and mental illness.
Just like physical illness, people can experience a mental illness anytime. When someone is sick they go to a doctor to get well. People with a mental illness can go to a mental health professional for help when they need it. Just like we shouldn't talk negatively about someone who has cancer or diabetes, we shouldn't talk negatively about someone who has a mental illness. Both are diseases that can strike anyone.

Show compassion for those with mental illness.
Treat people who have a mental illness with dignity and respect. Think about how you'd like others to act toward you if you were in the same situation. If you have family members, friends or co-workers with mental health concerns, support and encourage their efforts to get well.

Children's Wisconsin