

MENTAL HEALTH MYTHS & FACTS

Mental illnesses are common, yet often widely misunderstood. With one in five people living with a mental illness, we all likely know someone who has experienced a mental health condition at some point. However, there are still many myths and hurtful attitudes surrounding mental illnesses that fuel stigma and discrimination and make it harder for individuals to reach out for help.

The truth is that mental illness can happen to anybody. Like other health conditions, it impacts every ethnic, racial, cultural, economic and religious group, including individuals of all ages and genders. The best way to stop the stigma is to learn as much as you can about it and dispel some of the common myths about mental illness. Arm yourself with the facts, then use your knowledge to educate others and support those living with mental illness.

THE MOST COMMON MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH INCLUDE:

MYTH #1: Mental illness isn't that common. It doesn't affect me or people close to me.

FACT: Roughly one in every five adults will experience a diagnosable mental disorder during their lifetime. In Sacramento County, it is estimated that more than 300,000 residents are living with a mental illness. Therefore, it is likely that someone you know is living with a mental illness, and it's important to let them know you are there to support them.

MYTH #2: Living with a mental illness is a sign of weakness.

FACT: Mental illness does not signify weakness. A person's mental health may be affected by a variety of factors, including:

- Brain chemistry, genetics or physical illness
- Traumatic life experiences, a history of abuse, stressful work or home environments
- Family history of mental illness

Like any other physical health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, mental illness can be successfully treated and recovery is possible.

MYTH #3: Mental illness among children and teens is rare.

FACT: Children and teens can, in fact, live with mental illness at the same frequency as adults, and it can be caused by the same factors as those that impact adults. Studies show that 50% of adults who live with a mental illness show the first signs of that illness before they turn 14 years old.

Notably, early diagnosis and treatment of youth living with a mental health condition can help to prevent or mitigate the effects of mental illness and allow individuals to live full, productive lives.

MYTH #4: People who live with mental illness are dangerous and unpredictable.

FACT: Most people living with a mental illness are not violent. The fact is that someone with a mental illness is no more likely to be violent than someone in the general community and is actually three times more likely to become a victim of violence.

MYTH #5: Recovery isn't possible and those living with mental illness are unable to live successful, happy lives.

FACT: When an individual seeks treatment, recovery is possible. With the additional support of family, friends and one's own community, those living with mental illness are fully capable of working, having families, learning and leading full lives.