



REDUCING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

What Is Stigma? Mental health stigma happens when people have negative beliefs or stereotypes about mental health conditions. Stigma can make people feel embarrassed, judged, or afraid to ask for help. Stigma around mental health can take different forms, such as:

- **Self-Stigma:** Negative beliefs a person has about their own mental health.
- **Public Stigma:** Negative attitudes or stereotypes from others.
- **Structural Stigma:** Rules, policies, or systems that create barriers to support.

How Can We Reduce Stigma?

- Talk openly about mental health
- Listen without judgment
- Encourage others (and yourself) to seek help
- Support friends with empathy and acceptance
- **Use respectful language:**

Instead of: "They're crazy."

Try: "They're going through a difficult time."

- **Focus on behavior you observe without labeling it as a mental health condition.**

Instead of: "I am so OCD about my desk."

Try: "I like my desk to be neat and organized."

Mental health challenges are nothing to be ashamed of. We can all help reduce stigma to create a more supportive community.



RESOURCES



Explore the [CDC's resource page on mental health stigma](#) for mental health information and related resources

VOX ATL [VOX ATL's podcast, "Mental Health: Not One Size Fits All"](#), exploring barriers faced by many minority youth when seeking mental health support.

Silence the Shame

[Silence the Shame's "Redefine Mental](#)

[Wellness"](#) campaign is aimed at breaking the stigma around mental illness.



988 is the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, offering free 24/7 support for mental health emergencies.

ACTIVITY:

Decide whether each statement is a myth or a fact before checking the answer.

	FACT	MYTH
1. People with mental health conditions can live healthy, successful lives.	☐	☐
2. People with mental health conditions are dangerous.	☐	☐
3. Mental health challenges only affect adults.	☐	☐
4. Asking for help with a mental health concern is a sign of weakness.	☐	☐
5. The words we use can affect how people feel about mental health.	☐	☐
6. Anyone can experience a mental health challenge, regardless of their background.	☐	☐
7. Mental health conditions are a personal choice.	☐	☐
8. Someone can look okay on the outside and still be struggling with their mental health.	☐	☐
9. Seeking support early can help people manage mental health challenges.	☐	☐
10. Talking openly about mental health can help reduce stigma.	☐	☐

Answers: 1. Fact: While managing mental health may require ongoing support and resources, people with mental health conditions can still thrive. 2. Myth: 1 in 4 youth aged 3-17 have a diagnosed mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral condition. Mental health challenges can affect people of all ages, including teens. 4. Myth: Asking for help shows self-awareness and courage. It is a sign of strength, not weakness. 5. Fact: Words matter, and we can either reinforce stigma and stereotypes, or promote understanding and empathy. Words can influence how people think and feel about mental health. 6. Fact: Mental health challenges can affect anyone, regardless of background. 7. Myth: Mental health conditions can be influenced by genetics, physical health, brain chemistry, life experiences, and so much more. Mental health conditions are not a choice. 8. Fact: Someone can seem "fine" on the outside while still struggling internally. Showing kindness and support can remind people you are a safe person to talk to about mental health. 9. Fact: Getting support early not only prevents mental health challenges from becoming more severe but can also improve long-term outcomes. 10. Fact: Open conversations can challenge stereotypes, reduce stigma, educate others, and help people feel more comfortable seeking support when they need it.

Reflection:

What is one thing you learned about reducing mental health stigma that you could share with a friend to start a healthy conversation around mental health?

Follow for more resources!
@freeyourfeelsga



"Free Your Feels" is a mental health awareness campaign encouraging Georgia's young people to explore their real **feelings** and **free** them fearlessly.

ACCESS MORE
RESOURCES AT
[FREEYOURFEELS.ORG](https://www.freeyourfeels.org)