

Implementing the EASE Education principle: Myths & Facts

EASE = Education, A wareness, S hift perspective, E mpower
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One way to help people to remember that negative stereotypes about people with mental illnesses are inaccurate and not to be believed is to provide **E**ducation about facts versus myths.

You could do this in a wide variety of ways.

Some examples:

- Use the Myths/Facts handout on the back of this sheet to prompt discussion in a meeting or group.
- Ask clients which ones they encounter most frequently and discuss those in detail to provide accurate myth-busting information.
- Discuss where such myths come from, how they are perpetuated, and what we can do to interrupt the process.
- Invite an individual client or group to add to this list by listing other harmful and false stereotypes and then the accurate information that should replace them.
- Ask clients, trainees, or staff how they want to respond when they hear someone voicing false harmful myths about mental illness: what the choices are, what one needs to consider in deciding, etc.
- Make counter-examples of the myths readily available in examples, films, literature, speakers.
- Practice gently, politely, and supportively correcting people when they express false myths – especially about themselves – and offering more accurate information
- You can come up with many others!

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESSES

FALSE MYTH	TRUE FACTS
People with mental illness are dangerous	People with mental illness are much more likely to be victims of violence rather than perpetrators. As in the general population, only a very small percentage of people with mental illness ever commit violent acts.
People with mental illness do not make significant contributions to society.	Abraham Lincoln, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Jim Carrey, Beethoven, Ernest Hemingway, Shawn Colvin, Brooke Shields, John Nash, Herschel Walker, are just some of the many accomplished people who have or had a mental illness. Non-famous people with mental illness make important contributions to society and their families and communities every day.
People who have a mental illness cannot get better.	People can and do recover from and manage mental illness, when they have the proper tools and support. Many people with mental illnesses are in recovery and leading active lives. Sometimes, people with mental illness completely recover.
People with mental illness need constant assistance.	Many people with mental illnesses live independently in their own houses or apartments, manage their own money, arrange their own social activities and hold jobs. Everyone, mental illness or not, needs assistance sometimes.
Mental illness is a sign of personal weakness - people with mental illness could get better if they really wanted to.	Mental illness is an <i>illness</i> , just like heart disease and diabetes. It is <u>not</u> a character flaw, a weakness, or laziness. Recovery from any illness is more successful when the person has the proper support.
People with mental illness are unpredictable and unreliable.	Like everybody, people with mental illness can sometimes behave in unpredictable ways. However, most of the time, people with mental illness present few surprises to those who know them. Once they know themselves, people with mental illness can be aware of what they can commit to and carry through. Most are very dedicated to their values and responsibilities.
People with mental illness are stupid	Many studies show that most mentally ill people have average or above average intelligence. Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class, or income level.

Adapted from "Anti-Stigma: Do You Know the Facts" (SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services, and the National Mental Health Association)