

# I'm feeling hopeless

## 9 ways to fight stigma

By Laura Greenstein

**Most people who live with mental illness have, at some point, been blamed for their condition. They've been called names.** Their symptoms have been referred to as "a phase" or something they can control "if they only tried." They have been illegally discriminated against, with no justice. This is the unwieldy power that stigma holds.

Stigma causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control — and that can result in censoring or keeping quiet about how they're feeling. Worst of all, stigma prevents people from seeking the help they need. For a group of people who already carry such a heavy burden, stigma is an unacceptable addition to their pain. And while stigma has declined in recent years, the pace of progress has not been quick enough.

**All of us need to raise our voices against stigma.** Every day, in every possible way, we need to stand up to stigma. If you're not sure how, at right are nine easy ways to end the stigma surrounding mental illness and substance use disorder.



### STAND UP TO STIGMA

- 1 **Talk openly** about mental health
- 2 **Educate yourself** and others
- 3 **Be conscious** of language
- 4 **Encourage equality** between physical and mental illness
- 5 **Show compassion** for those with mental illness
- 6 **Choose empowerment** over shame
- 7 **Be honest** about treatment
- 8 **Let the media know** when they're being stigmatizing
- 9 **Don't harbor** self-stigma

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**It's OK to Not Be OK**

Source: Greenstein, L. Nine ways to fight mental health stigma. National Alliance on Mental Illness. Available at: <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/October-2017/9-Ways-to-Fight-Mental-Health-Stigma>. Accessed December 23, 2019.

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