

Prevention Professionals of Northern Middlesex



May 28, 2021

May is Mental Health Awareness month! As a community we can bring awareness to mental health and substance use disorders every day. The more we truly understand the better chance we have to shape an overall healthier future.

What is Stigma?

<https://www.verywellmind.com/mental-illness-and-stigma-2337677>

Stigma involves negative attitudes or discrimination against someone based on a distinguishing characteristic such as a mental illness, health condition, or disability. Social stigmas can also be related to other characteristics including gender, sexuality, race, religion, and culture. Unfortunately, stigma surrounding mental health is still common. Attitudes towards psychiatric illnesses tend to be more negative than that toward medical conditions.

So you Want to Impact Mental Health Stigma?

https://hogg.utexas.edu/so-you-want-to-impact-mental-health-stigma-heres-your-chance?fbclid=IwAR3yjjwjcndKXiSOhdB2r3mOggYx7Wj7EHk65EEH3PIIZwtUjDPP_FdRuo

A recent Huffington Post blog post titled *We Are People – Not Addicts, Criminals, Inmates, and Convicts* by Jag Davies of the Drug Policy Alliance highlighted that today, many media outlets continue to use inaccurate and offensive language when covering important

Implicit or Unconscious Bias

[https://www.simplypsychology.org/implicit-bias.html#:~:text=Implicit%20bias%20\(also%20called%20unconscious,Greenwald%20%26%20Krieger%2C%202006\)](https://www.simplypsychology.org/implicit-bias.html#:~:text=Implicit%20bias%20(also%20called%20unconscious,Greenwald%20%26%20Krieger%2C%202006))

Implicit biases are unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that can manifest in the criminal justice system, workplace, school setting, and in the healthcare system.

WHO ARE WE?

SAPC

SAPC is a coalition of eight communities working together to help reduce substance abuse with specific intentions for youth below the age of 18.

Communities include:

Billerica—Mike Higgins
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Chelmsford—Amanda Glaser
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Dracut—Maria Ruggiero
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Words Matter-Terms to Use/Avoid When Talking About Addiction.

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/health-professions-education/words-matter-terms-to-use-avoid-when-talking-about-addiction>

This page offers background information and tips for providers to keep in mind while using person-first language, as well as terms to avoid to reduce stigma and negative bias when discussing addiction. Although some language that may be considered stigmatizing is commonly used within social communities of people who struggle with substance use disorder (SUD), clinicians can show leadership in how language can destigmatize the disease of addiction.

Stigma Reducing Language

<https://www.shatterproof.org/about-addiction/stigma/stigma-reducing-language>

You can reduce stigma, and help save lives, just by changing your language. You can help reverse harmful stereotypes about addiction, improving access to care and support for people affected by this disease. It starts with something that seems small, but actually makes a huge difference: the words and language we use to talk about addiction.

Addiction in America

<https://www.shatterproof.org/learn/addiction-basics/addiction-in-america>

The addiction crisis is deadlier than ever before. Overdoses are the #1 cause of accidental death in our country. 81,230 overdose deaths occurred in the United States from June 2019 through May 2020. That's the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a single year. Synthetic opioids like fentanyl are the biggest drivers but the use of stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamines is also on the rise. From 2013 to 2018, the rate of cocaine overdose deaths tripled.

Substance Use Disorder Stigma: What it is and How You Can Prevent it

<https://extension.usu.edu/heart/research/how-to-prevent-substance-use-disorder-stigma>

Stigma is an attitude, discrimination, or prejudice directed towards an individual or a group and can prevent a person from seeking out proper care, support, and treatment. Additionally, stigma can suppress essential evidence-based policy measures. Learn how you can make a difference.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD), is the repeated use of alcohol and/or drugs despite negative impacts or damages (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013), it is a highly stigmatized disease. In 2017, SUDs impacted nearly 20 million Americans aged 12 and older (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2018). Of that, 1.7 million misused a pain killer (i.e. opioid) and 700,000 used heroin (SAMHSA, 2018).

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