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**Coping with the Stigma of Psychiatric Illness**

Although stigma still exists, mental illness doesn’t need to be seen as a negative trait or a part of you. Society has become more accepting of and understanding of psychiatric illness in recent years. To help cope with stigma, you can:

**Remember that you have choices -** You can decide who to tell about your illness and what to tell them. Your confidentiality will be respected by your health care team.

**Remember that you are not alone** – Many others cope with situations like yours. People struggle with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and many other psychiatric illnesses, but there is support available.

**Be hopeful** and remember that there are effective treatments for psychiatric illnesses – Medications and other treatments are available. New treatments are also being developed and researched. Most people with psychiatric illnesses lead fulfilling and productive lives.

**Be proud of yourself for seeking help** – It can be very hard to ask for help, and frustrating when the treatments take a long time to show positive results. You can learn new ways of coping. Learn more about your illness to develop a positive, more empowered attitude.

**Be active and keep supportive people around you** – Being isolated from others can be a negative effect from stigma that may put you at risk for more depression. Have fun with positive activities, hobbies and try new social activities. Consider being a volunteer in your community. If you or your family needs further support, contact your local chapter of NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness).