



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).