

# Metal Health Stigma – Part III



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This is the third column addressing mental health stigma. Today's

column will provide you with a variety of things that you or I can do individually or in a collaborative effort to help eliminate mental health stigma on Lebanon County. This will probably involve a change in your view of mental health and mental illness or mental disorders.

1. Acknowledge that mental illness and mental disorders are real disorders; they have a biological basis; mental illness and mental health disorders can be treated like any other health condition
2. Accept that mental health is not just about mental illness or mental health disorders; it is about how we feel, how we behave and how we think; mental health is as important as physical health to our overall well-being
3. Accept that people with mental illnesses or mental health disorders have the same needs as you or I do; basic needs such as food and shelter and advanced needs such as meaningful work, decent and affordable housing, an education, and acceptance by family, friends and society
4. Recognize that people with mental illness or mental health disorders want to be treated as a person not a diagnosis
5. Treat others as you would like to be treated – focus on the person not her/his situation, illness or disorder
6. Accept that people with mental illness or mental health disorders can and will make valuable contributions to society

7. Become involve – join an organization that fights stigma such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the MHA; volunteer with an organization like Compeer who matches persons with mental illness with friends who help to build respect, self-esteem and social connections in the community; work with or develop an outreach program focused on helping individuals with mental illness to succeed in the community
8. Learn about mental health, mental illness and mental health disorders
9. Help education others in your circles of influence
10. Listen to those with mental health disorders or mental illness – they sometimes just need someone to listen to them
11. Pay attention to your language – are you describing the person or the illness; eliminate using language such as lunatics, psychos, or crazies when talking about persons with mental illness or mental health disorders
12. Be supportive of persons with mental illness or mental health disorders – give him/her a chance
13. If you have a mental illness or mental health disorder let others know; hiding mental illness promotes the believe that it is shameful and needs to be concealed; you will be empowering others with mental illness or mental health disorders by helping to relieve the internal stigma they may feel about his/her illness or disorders
14. Fight for changes to policies that promote stigma and discrimination.
15. Acknowledge a person with mental illness or a mental health disorder the same as you would any other person
16. Speak up when you witness stigma in your community and workplace
17. Support and help promote recovery oriented mental health services for persons with mental illness

18. Learn about recovery from mental illness
19. Eliminate myths about mental illness or mental health disorders by learning and stating the facts
20. Seek out and participate in programs that promote the inclusion of persons in recovery from mental illness or persons with mental illness or mental health disorders
21. Recruit family members, friends and associates to help promote mental health, the prevention of mental illness and recovery for persons with mental illness
22. Attend a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) training program

We can effectively eliminate mental health stigma in Lebanon County if we each do our part. It is something that requires daily attention at work, at home, and in the community. Help us to promote hope to those individuals with mental illness or mental health disorders.

My next column will address what mental health stigma feels like to an individual with mental illness.

More information about mental health stigma can be found at [www.openmindsopendoors.com](http://www.openmindsopendoors.com) and [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/action/stigma-watch](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/action/stigma-watch).

The Mental Health Association encourages everyone to get involved in the efforts to eliminate mental health stigma. We believe that prevention of mental illness is better than any treatment plan.

*By Shem Heller, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of Lebanon County*