

BREAKING THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH



"JUST BECAUSE YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND, DOES NOT MEAN IT ISN'T SO"

- LEMONY SNICKET

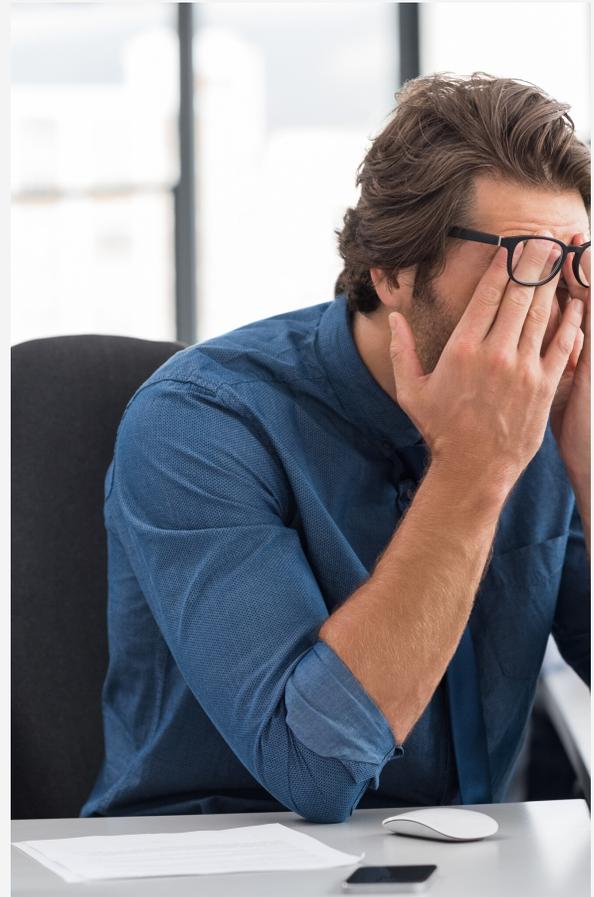
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

1 in 5 Americans experience mental illness in their lifetime. Almost 44 million Americans live with a mental illness in any given year. Still, a stigma remains. Many people fear disclosure and seeking treatment. There is a fear of being viewed as weak and unstable or being treated differently by co-workers and loved ones. There is an ever-present fear of rejection, which can lead to severe consequences if we do not challenge societal norms to remove shame associated with mental illness.

Arming yourself with the facts can help you make informed decisions that can help save you or a loved one that is struggling with mental illness. For information, support and 24/7 counseling, turn to Encompass, Amway's Employee Assistance Program.

HOW TO BREAK THE STIGMA:

- **Educate yourself and others:** Recognize that mental illness isn't a weakness, willful feeling and something that people cannot "just brush off". Not allowing others to talk down on mental illness and spreading factual information is the first step in removing the associated stigma.
- **Be conscious of language:** Be careful to not use disorders lightly in conversations. Using problematic statements like "I'm so OCD about washing my hands" can be extremely hurtful and damaging to someone battling OCD.
- **Show compassion:** Reach out to loved ones, friends and co-workers with mental illness. There is a tendency to shun people out that openly discuss their illness, likely because people become uncomfortable talking about them. This only perpetuates the stigma. Show your empathy and reach out to check on those that may feel isolated because of their condition.



HOW TO COPE WITH THE STIGMA:

- **Get treatment:** Don't be reluctant to seek treatment. Counseling and medication can significantly improve your symptoms and allow you to get back to feeling well.
- **Don't equate yourself with your illness:** Isolating yourself because of your illness can lead to preoccupation with what you are feeling. You are not your illness. Instead of saying "I am bipolar" say "I have bipolar disorder".
- **Join a support group:** Local and national groups offer resources that remove stigma and connects you with others that support and understand what it is like living with mental illness.