

BHP Mental Health Month

Mental health myths and barriers to seeking support



What comes to mind when you think of mental illness?

There is probably a range of emotions, images and stories that this triggers for you, not all of which may be positive.

There are many myths and attitudes that surround mental illness. These can result in judgement, stigma and isolation of people with mental illness as well as create barriers to speaking out and seeking help.

Talk through some of these myths, facts and barriers with your team and colleagues and think about how you can support others, role model a culture of care and break down the stigma associated with mental ill health.



Reflection question

What are some of the potential barriers that stop people from talking about &/or seeking help for mental health conditions?

Myth: Mental ill health is a sign of weakness

Fact: This is no more true than saying that a broken leg is a sign of illness. Mental health disorders are illnesses, not signs of poor character. Similarly, people with, for instance, depression, cannot “snap out of it” any more than someone with diabetes or asthma can immediately recover from their condition. A mental illness is caused by a complex interplay of genetic, biological, social and environmental factors. Managing any illness takes a great deal of strength and seeking help is a sign of resilience.

Myth: Mental illness doesn’t really get better

Fact: Like any condition or illness, recovery will be different for everyone. With the right kind of help, early intervention and appropriate treatment, some people recover fully and have no further episodes of illness. For others consistent adherence to treatment is a strong factor in managing symptoms and leading a productive life.

Myth: Mental illness does not affect anyone I know

Fact: Given incident rates of depression, anxiety and trauma, it is likely you have a family member, work colleague or a friend that experiences mental illness. Mental health and mental health conditions are different and exists on a continuum. Everyone is affected by stressors in their life which can lead to mental health struggles even if they are temporary. Stigma surrounding mental health can often be a barrier to people feeling comfortable to disclose and talk about their experience, even to loved ones.

What are some common barriers to seeking support?

- It can be difficult to recognise that a problem is developing as it often occurs over time
- Those experiencing mental health conditions can feel vulnerable and emotional which makes it hard to talk about
- Concerns of being treated differently or less favourably
- High reliance on self to solve problems
- Some negative attitudes associated with seeking professional help
- Concerns it may have a negative impact on career
- Not knowing where or when to seek support



Where can I learn more?

- Look out for other toolbox talks in this series to understand signs to look out for and how to support others
- BHP mental health awareness e-learning (LMS)
- BHP mental health e-learning for leaders (LMS)
- Thrive Toolkit