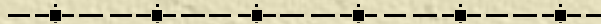


*Dispelling the Myths
of Mental Illness: Meeting
People with Mental Illness*

Meeting and Learning from People with Serious
Mental Illness

UMDNJ - CSPNJ



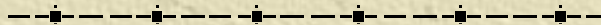
Stigma is often perpetuated by myths

- ✦ Myths create distorted perceptions of people affected by mental illnesses
- ✦ Stigma precludes people with mental illnesses from being seen as people with aspirations, competencies, and goals
- ✦ Due to the myths and stigma surrounding mental illness, people with serious mental illnesses are deterred from accessing mental health care



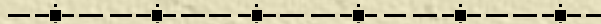
Myth Busting

How much of what you know
about people with mental
illnesses is true and how much is
myth?



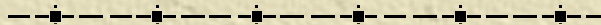
Myth 1

Psychiatric disorders are not true medical illnesses like heart disease and diabetes. People who have mental illness are just “crazy.”



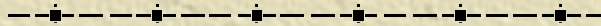
Fact

Brain disorders, like heart disease and diabetes are legitimate medical illnesses. Research shows there are genetic and biological causes for psychiatric disorders, and they can be treated effectively.



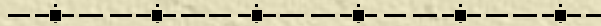
Myth 2

People with a severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia, are usually dangerous and violent.



Fact

Statistics show that the incidence of violence in people who have a brain disorder is not much higher than it is in the general population. Those suffering from a psychosis such as schizophrenia are more often frightened, confused and despairing than violent.

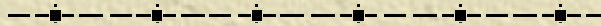


Mental Illness and Violence

✦ As a group, mentally ill people are no more violent than any other group. In fact, they are **far more likely to be victims of violence** than to be violent themselves. In a study conducted by Northwestern Medical School, only 3 out of 2,122 contacts between police and citizens involved violent behavior by a mentally ill person, while 17 involved violent crimes committed by non-mentally ill persons. The vast majority of the mentally ill are not dangerous. Taken as a whole, those who are mentally ill are less dangerous than the average person.

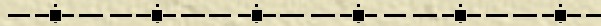
Myth 3

Depression results from a personality weakness or character flaw, and people who are depressed could just snap out of it if they tried hard enough.



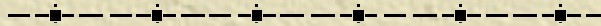
Fact

Depression has nothing to do with being lazy or weak. It results from changes in brain chemistry or brain function, and medication and/ or therapy often help people to recover.



Myth 4

Schizophrenia means split personality, and there is no way to control it.

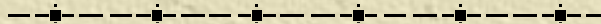


Fact

Schizophrenia is often confused with *multiple personality disorder*. Actually, schizophrenia is a brain disorder that affects people's ability to think clearly and logically. The estimated 2.5 million Americans with schizophrenia have symptoms ranging from social withdrawal to hallucinations and delusions. Medication has helped many of these individuals to lead fulfilling, productive lives.

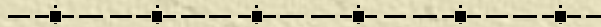
Myth 5

Depression is a normal part of the aging process.



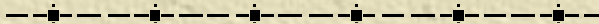
Fact

It is not normal for older adults to be depressed. Signs of depression in older people includes loss of interest in activities, sleep disturbances and lethargy. Depression in the elderly is often undiagnosed and it is important for seniors and their family members to recognize the problem and seek professional help.



Myth 6

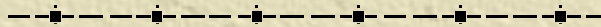
Depression and other illnesses, such as anxiety disorders, do not affect children or adolescents. Any problems they have are just a part of growing up.



Fact

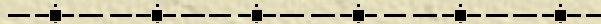
Children and adolescents can develop severe mental illnesses. In the United States, one in ten children and adolescents has a mental disorder severe enough to cause impairment.

However, only about 20% of these children receive needed treatment. Left untreated, these problems can get worse. Anyone talking about suicide should be taken very seriously.



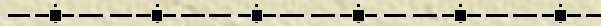
Myth 7

If you have a mental illness, you can will it away. Being treated for a psychiatric disorder means an individual has in some way “failed” or is weak.



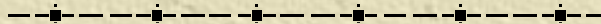
Fact

A serious mental illness cannot be willed away. Ignoring the problem does not make it go away, either. It takes courage to seek professional help.



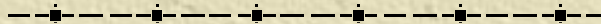
Myth 8

Addiction is a lifestyle choice and shows a lack of willpower. People with a substance abuse problem are morally weak or “bad.”



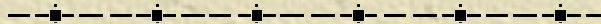
Fact

Addiction is a disease that generally results from changes in brain chemistry. It has nothing to do with being a “bad” person.



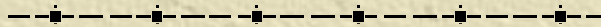
Myth 9

Someone with a mental illness is likely to get much worse.



Fact

The course of severe mental illness over an extended period of time is not necessarily just maintenance or regression. The treatment success rate for schizophrenia is 60%, 65% for major depression, & 80% for bipolar. Whereas with heart disease the success rate ranges from 41-52%.



Mental Illness & People You May Have Heard Of..

- ✦ **Ricky Williams**
 - Dolphins running back
- ✦ **Jane Pauley**
 - Broadcast Journalist
- ✦ **Carrie Fisher**
 - Actress/author
- ✦ **Winston Churchill**
 - Statesman/Leader
- ✦ **Mike Wallace**
 - News Correspondent
- ✦ **Jimmy Piersall**
 - Boston Red Sox

- ✦ **Charles Dickens**
 - Author
- ✦ **Peter Gabriel**
 - Musician
- ✦ **Kim Basinger**
 - Actress
- ✦ **Isaac Newton**
 - Scientist
- ✦ **Tennessee Williams**
 - Playwright
- ✦ **Ted Turner**
 - Media Mogul

*If you know someone with
mental illness
(or if you suspect you have a problem)*

- There is hope and resources to help.

Please reach out and find a local resource:

<http://www.njgroups.org/>

or

Your community mental health center