



OFFICE OF COUNSELING SERVICES

INDIANA UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST

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Mental Health Awareness: Stamp Out Stigma!

According to the American Psychological Association, 1 in 5 adults meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition. Despite the high rise in mental health diagnoses, our society continues to hold negative myths and misconceptions surrounding mental illness. These misconceptions are harmful because they can place a barrier for a person wanting to seek treatment.

As outlined by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), these are the most common misconceptions & myths surrounding mental health:

1) Myth: People are “faking it” or doing it for attention.

Fact: No one would choose to have a mental illness, just as no one would choose to have a physical illness. The causes for mental health conditions are intensively studied and they are real.

2) Myth: Mental illness is caused by personal weakness.

Fact: Just like any major illness, mental illness is not the fault of the person who has a mental health condition. It is caused environmental and biological factors, not a result of personal weakness.

3) Myth: Different races are more prone to mental illness.

Fact: All races and ethnicities are affected by the same rate of mental illness. There is no single group of people more likely than others to have a mental health condition. However, some people have cultural influences that may affect how they interpret symptoms of a mental health condition that could prevent them from getting.

4) Myth: You're just sad, not depressed.

Fact: Depression is not something a person can will away. People often have the misconception that a person can just "cheer up" or "shake it off." It is not just "the blues," but a serious medical condition that affects the biological functioning of our bodies.

5) Myth: People with mental illness can't handle work or school.

Fact: Stressful situations can be difficult for all people, not just those who live with mental illness. People with mental health conditions have jobs, go to school, and are active members of their communities.

In addition to mental health misconceptions and myths, there are also misguided ideas about counseling. The American Psychological Association identifies these research-based facts about therapy and counseling:

- ⇒ Anyone can benefit from psychotherapy: your concerns/problems are never too small.
- ⇒ Asking for help is the start to feeling better.
- ⇒ Psychotherapy is interactive and collaborative: together, you and your counselor will identify problems, set goals, and track your progress.
- ⇒ Psychotherapy is not forever: the ultimate goal is to empower you to function better on your own.

How can I empower individuals who are struggling with mental health concerns?

- ◇ Be an advocate - listen and support.
- ◇ Instead of judging, ask thoughtful and respectful questions!
- ◇ Don't assume. Everyone has their own personal story and experiences
- ◇ Be kind with your language. Be careful of using terms like "loony", "crazy" or "nuts".
- ◇ Put the person before the mental health condition. For example, use "the person experiencing depression" rather than "the depressed person". The person is more than depression!

If you, or one of your friends or classmates are wondering if you might benefit from counseling, The Indiana University Northwest Office of Counseling Services is just a call, step, or email away! Contact us at 219-980-6741, iunoocs@iun.edu, or stop by Hawthorn Hall #201.

References:

<https://www.nami.org/blogs/nami-blog/july-2015/dispelling-myths-on-mental-illness>

<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/psychotherapy-myths>