

Stigma and Reaction to Illness

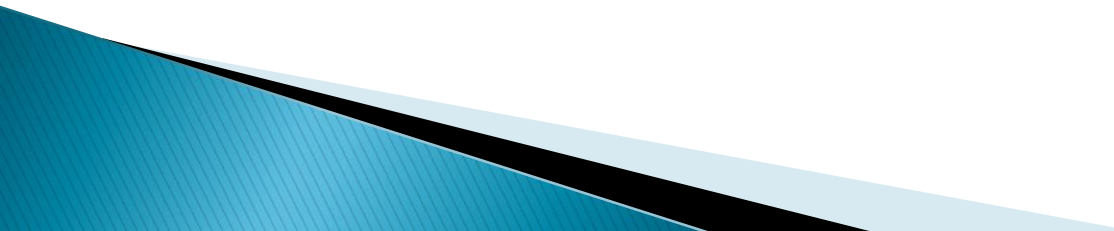
Nadia Hameed



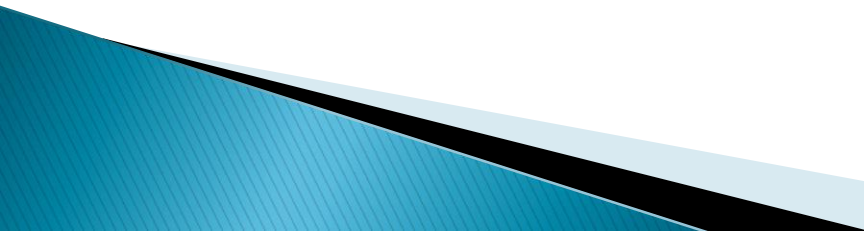
Stigma

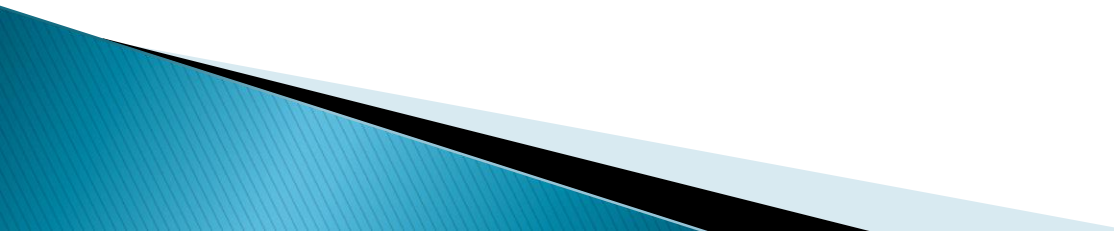
- ▶ Stigma refers to the discrediting, devaluing, and shaming of a person because of characteristics or attributes that they possess.

- ▶ Generally, stigma leads to negative social experiences such as isolation, rejection, marginalization, and discrimination.

- ▶ In case of health condition particularly mental illness, stigma may affect a person's illness and treatment course, including access to appropriate and professional medical treatment.
 - ▶ Stigma also affect patients' families or interpersonal relationship.
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Historical Perspective

- ▶ Stigma was initially described by Erving Goffman in 1963.
 - ▶ He identified stigma as any characteristic or attribute by which a person was devalued, tainted, or considered shameful or discredited.
 - ▶ Stigma is strongly influenced by cultural and contextual value systems that differ over time and across contexts.
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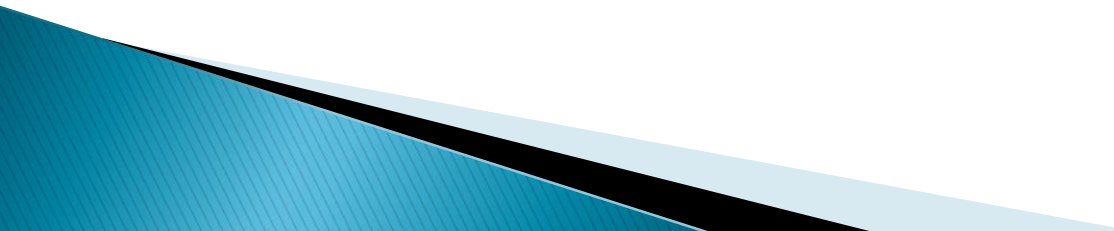
- ▶ Most authors agree with Goffman's basic definition, which identified the main elements of stigma such as labeling, stereotyping, social isolation, prejudice, rejection, ignorance, status loss, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, marginalization, and discrimination.
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Mental Health Stigma

- ▶ Mental health stigma is defined as the disgrace, social disapproval, or social discrediting of individuals with a mental health problem.

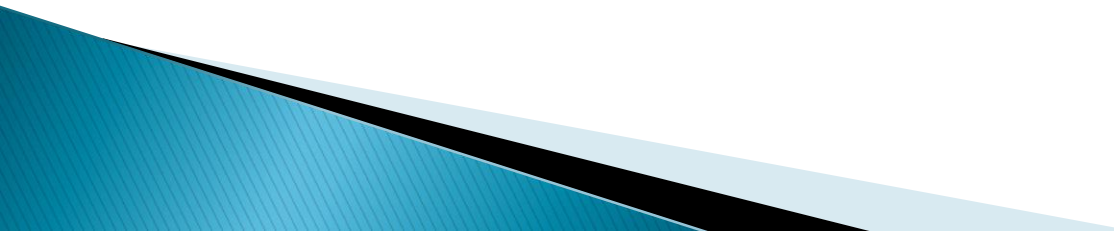
Types of Stigma

Literature identifies multiple dimensions or types of mental health-related stigma, including

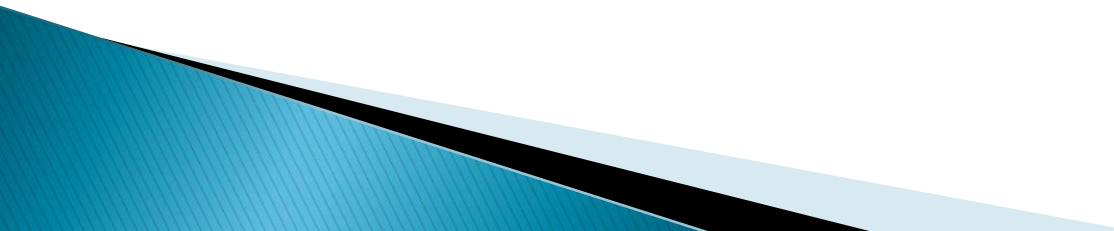
- ✓ Self-stigma,
 - ✓ Public stigma,
 - ✓ Professional stigma, and
 - ✓ Institutional stigma.
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Self-stigma refers to negative attitude of an individual to his/her own mental illness and is also referred to as internalized stigma.

- ▶ Self-stigma has been related to poor outcomes, such as failure to access treatment, disempowerment, reduced self-efficacy, and decreased quality of life.

- ▶ **Public Stigma** refers to negative attitudes towards those with mental illness held by the general public, often based on misconceptions, fear, and prejudice.
 - ▶ Related to public stigma is **perceived stigma** which is defined as individual's beliefs about the attitudes of others towards mental illness.
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- ▶ Research has demonstrated the significant impact of public stigma such as discrimination in workplaces and public organizations.

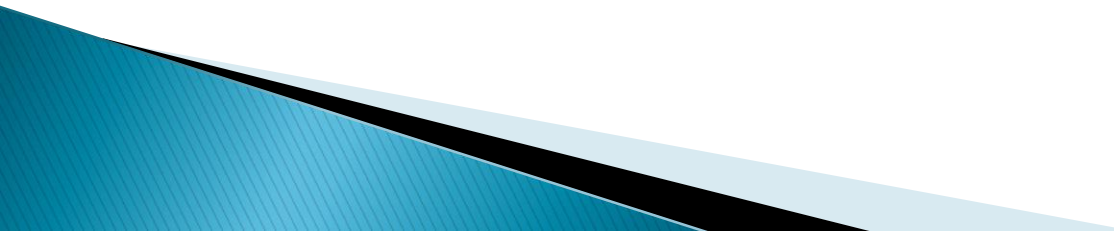
- ▶ **Professional Stigma** occurs when healthcare professionals hold stigmatizing attitudes toward their patients, which are often based on fear or misunderstandings of the causes and symptoms of mental illness.
 - ▶ Or when professionals themselves experience stigma from the public or other healthcare professionals because of their work and connection with stigmatized individuals.
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- ▶ Professional stigma is of particular concern as it may affect the care and treatment a person with mental illness receives, including treatment for physical illnesses, negatively effecting their well-being and recovery.

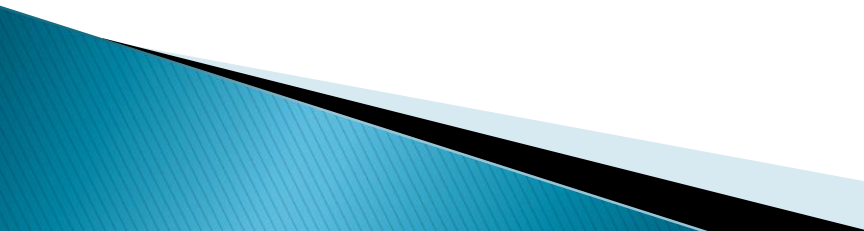
Institutional Stigma refers to an organization's policies or culture of negative attitudes and beliefs toward stigmatized individuals, such as those with mental health problems.

- ▶ Such stigma can also be reinforced by legal frameworks, public policy, and professional practices, thereby becoming deeply embedded in society.

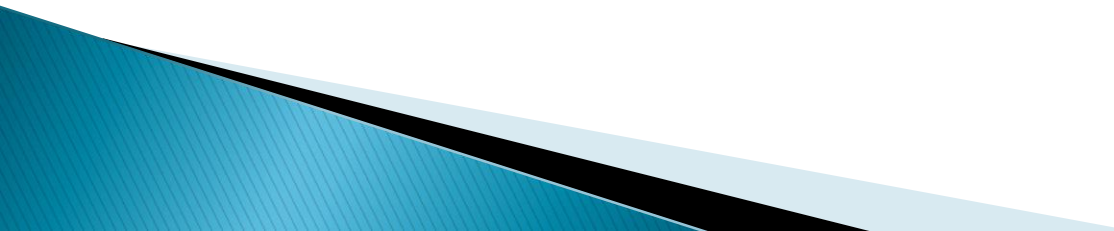
Effects of Stigma on Reaction to Illness

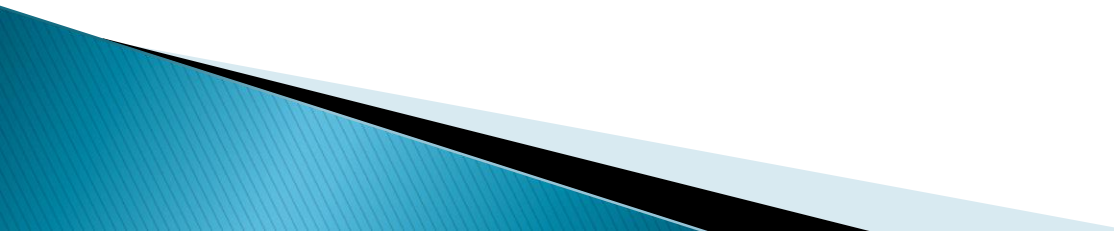
- ▶ In the context of mental healthcare, stigma has been identified as a major issue for patients and families.
 - ▶ Stigma hinders access to appropriate and professional medical and psychological treatment, and can result in a person's condition worsening or multiple readmissions.
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In general patient's reaction to illness

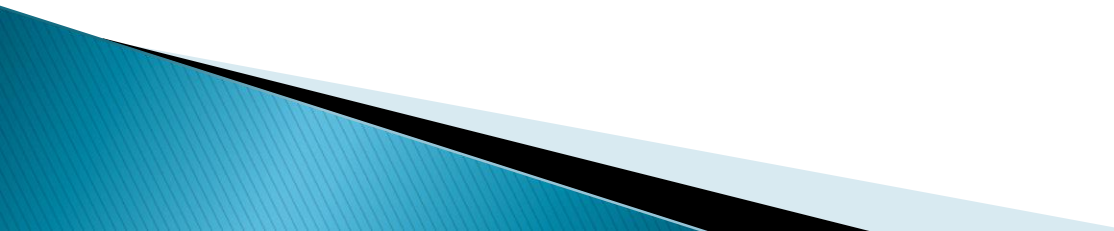
- ▶ In the circumstances surrounding the illness the patient has a myriad of different reactions to what is going on and around him/her. These include:
 - ▶ Denial (about having any illness)
 - ▶ Anger
 - ▶ Depression
 - ▶ Dependence
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Effects on Patient's Health

- ▶ Stigma and discrimination can contribute to worsening symptoms and reduced likelihood of getting treatment.
 - ▶ A recent extensive review of research found that self-stigma leads to negative effects on recovery among people diagnosed with severe mental illnesses. Effects can include:
 - ▶ Reduced hope
 - ▶ Lower self-esteem
 - ▶ Social isolation
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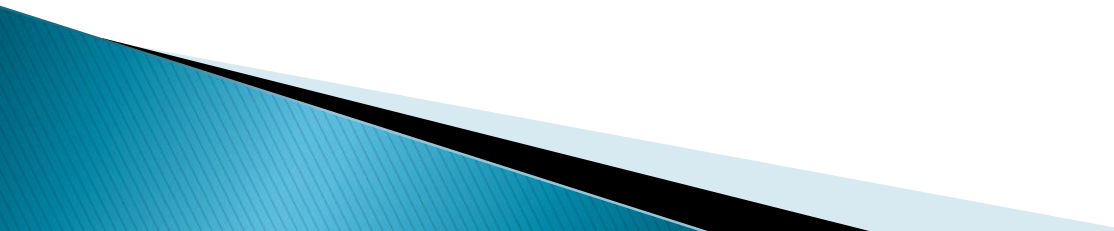
- ▶ Increased psychiatric symptoms
 - ▶ Difficulties with social relationships
 - ▶ Reduced consultation due to stigma
 - ▶ Poor drug compliance
 - ▶ Occupational issues
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Effects on Families

- ▶ Stigma also affects patients' families or relatives and the professionals who work in mental healthcare settings.
 - ▶ Larson et al. described it as; “family stigma contains the stereotypes of blame, shame, and guilt and negativity.
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- ▶ A 2017 study involving more than 200 individuals with mental illness over a period of two years found that greater self-stigma was associated with poorer recovery from mental illness after one and two years.

Furthermore stigma effects patient's overall life such as

- ▶ Lack of understanding by family, friends, coworkers, or others
 - ▶ Fewer opportunities for work, school or social activities or trouble finding housing
 - ▶ Bullying, physical violence or harassment
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How to Overcome Stigma

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers some suggestions about what we can do as individuals to help reduce the stigma of mental illness:

- ▶ **Talk openly** about mental health, such as sharing on social media.
 - ▶ **Educate yourself and others** respond to misperceptions or negative comments by sharing facts and experiences.
 - ▶ **Be conscious of language** remind people that words matter.
 - ▶ **Encourage equality** between physical and mental illness – draw comparisons to how they would treat someone with cancer or diabetes.
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- ▶ **Show compassion** for those with mental illness.
 - ▶ **Be honest about treatment** – normalize mental health treatment, just like other health care treatment.
 - ▶ **Let the media know** when they are using stigmatizing language presenting stories of mental illness in a stigmatizing way.
 - ▶ **Choose empowerment** over shame - "I fight stigma by choosing to live an empowered life."
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