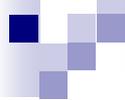




A Journey of Recovery

The Evolution of Mental Disability to Dignity

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Definition of Dignity

- *The dictionary definition of dignity is~*

*“one who has dignity is of elevated character
and is perceived as being worthy or having
self-respect”*



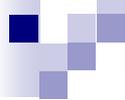
Definition of Stigma

- The attribution of unworthiness and
- Disgraceful
- Shameful
- Expectations of negative behavior
- Expectation of fear

Mental Illness

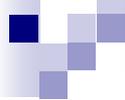
- The dictionary definition is~
- *“characterized by a disorder of the mind or emotions.”*
- *So the question is how can someone who has a disorder of the mind or emotions achieve dignity (worthiness, elevated character and self- respect?)*





Experience of Stigma

- Shame
 - Blame
 - Secrecy
 - The "black sheep of the family"
 - Isolation
 - Social exclusion
- *Results in Stereotypes and Discrimination*



Recovery from Mental Disability

- Discover:

- Hope- having a vision or a goal
- Empowerment- acting/advocating on your own behalf
- Responsibility – being free to make your own choices
- Meaningful Roles- being a partner, friend, spouse, parent, student, co-worker, assuming meaningful relationships in your life.

Barriers to achieving Dignity

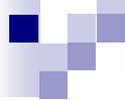
- Overcoming fear and shame





Being Invisible

- Having a mental disability has a unique challenge in that often it is invisible to the naked eye- unlike someone in a wheel chair, blind, deaf or other physical disability.
- *Often it is the unexpected self-expression or communication that alerts others and invites stigma.*



Overcoming Fear

- Winston Churchill said:
 - “there is nothing to fear but fear itself”
 - Most people when first confronted with someone who has a mental illness may become fearful or uncomfortable and fear the unexpected.



What stigma means.....

- Stigma is the negative expectations that the public has of someone with mental disability.

Real Stigma

- The stigma of mental illness is real.
- It exists everywhere: in school, work, church, and even among some mental health professionals
- Stigma robs a person of his dignity



Stigma Internalized

- Internalized stigma is the result of experiencing negative expectations from others and results in feelings of shame.





Internalized Stigma

- This too is real and is a byproduct of real stigma.
- *After years of experiencing the looks and fear in others a person begins to believe that they are less worthy in the eyes of others.*
- This results in a self-perpetuating cycle of stigmatization and reinforces a lowered sense of self-worth.

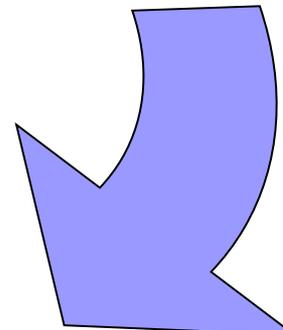
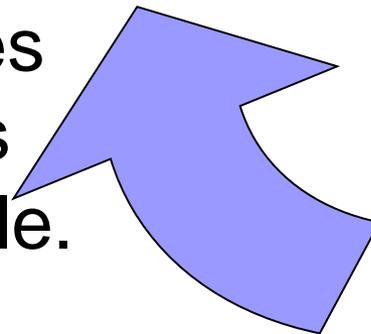
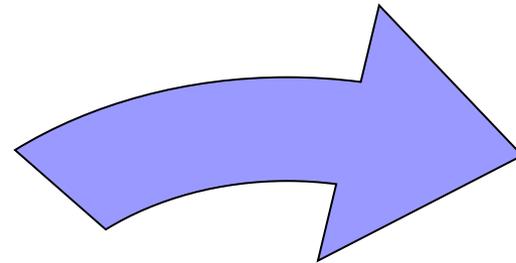
Self Stigmatization

- A person perceives the thoughts of others toward them to be negative and often brings out negative or avoidant responses from others....thus continuing the cycle.

He avoids me
He is negative
To me..

I think He is negative to

I am negative back

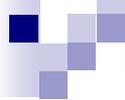




Replace Stigma

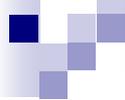
Having a place where.....

- you have Responsibility and
- a Role that is
- **NOT DEFINED**
- by your illness



Overcoming Stigma

- It's a gradual process of sharing with peers, family, and friends
- By assuming more and more roles in one's life where you are not in the role of a patient, or a disabled person.
- Rather you are a friend, student, worker, community member of church, parent, etc.



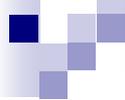
Combating Stigma

- Educating the public, clergy, friends and family is the best way to combat the stigma.
- Best done gradually one on one to those who are close.
- Sharing one's history with mental disability, challenges or lived experience can assist others in identifying with the person or remind them of a family member who may have experienced similar things.

Self- Disclosure

- A useful tool for self-disclosure is to minimize or encapsulate your story.....so as not to elicit fear and to maintain dignity
- This allows others to understand and see the successful side of your recovery story.





Choose Role Models

- A person with mental illness often has few role models for how to behave in social situations.
- They are used to being told what to do – when to do it, etc.
- Objective: Have a vision or think about who you would like to pattern yourself after
- Ask: What are the traits I admire in others?

Overcoming sense of Inferiority

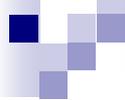
- Identify those things you are good at doing
- Discover your core gifts and share them with others



Lack of Socialization

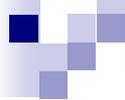
- This can be a huge barrier to achieving a sense of worthiness or dignity.
- It's hard to get respect by isolating and not engaging with others.
- Identify places and people you can be a part of, and participate in some activity that has nothing to do with your mental illness.





Overcoming loss of Dignity

- Persons with mental illness often feel a loss of status compared to others.
- Individuals may have suffered many losses or lost opportunities, e.g. work or education, relationships, marriage, or parenthood and career due to dealing with years of interruptions of mental illness.



Reclaiming Losses

- The losses may be real but often the persons lived experience gives them unique gifts including:
 - Wisdom, compassion and genuine empathy,
 - Courage and the will or determination to continue to achieve and to give of one's experience to others and be a role model.
- This leads to Hope, self- acceptance and Dignity.



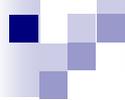
Mental illness Disguises Dignity

- There is dignity in one's
- Lived experience
- Creativity
- Character traits,
- Artistic talents
- Hopes and aspirations



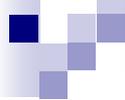
Attaining Dignity

- Thought- Ridding the internalized stigma
- Speech-Using person -first language
- Action- Taking steps to contribute to others gives meaning to life.
- Identify positive role models
- Try, work, education, fellowship, spirituality, become a member of a social group and assume a role in the group.



Disability & Dignity

- Dignity depends on functioning well and so it is contrary to “Dis-ability”.
- The more one functions well the more one achieves a sense of dignity and self-respect.
- Dignity overcomes stigma
- Internalized dignity is the best antidote to internalized stigma.



Meaning and Purpose

- “In Man’s Search for Meaning” by Victor Frankel (A Holocaust Survivor) he describes how people in the most savaged and disgraceful situations were able to hold onto their dignity. Some survivors would sacrifice their morsel of food to give to a baby or another, or give encouragement in the face of evil or death. Which gave meaning and survival value to their lives.



Self-Worth and Dignity

- Find the meaning in your life and share it
- Hold a vision of recovery
- Empower yourself to maintain dignity while living with some symptoms of disability.



Surviving and Thriving !!!

- Having a mental disability is a lot like being a survivor.
- Recovery involves personal strength, compassion and self-worth.
- Facing life's challenges one step at a time takes courage, and courage takes commitment, self-responsibility and hope.