

What is stigma?

There is much stigma around mental health problems including psychosis. But, in fact, there is nothing to feel shameful about because you have experienced psychosis – but stigma results because other people don't understand psychosis.

When people hold stigma about psychosis they feel that a person who has experienced psychosis is different in a negative way.

This usually results from a lack of understanding or misinformation. For example, others may think that somebody with psychosis is violent or has a split personality. In fact, you may have once thought this way yourself before but you now know that this is simply not true.

Once somebody is viewed as “different”, they are less likely to be accepted. So stigma can make it more difficult to make and keep friends or to find and keep a job. Stigma can result in many other forms of unfair discrimination.

Perhaps the worst thing about stigma is that it can affect how you feel about yourself.

Somebody who experiences stigma may actually come to believe that there is something unacceptable about himself or herself. Once somebody believes this, they may lose their confidence and feel badly about who they are.

Remember that the negative attitudes that others may hold toward psychosis are the result of misunderstanding. Work hard at not allowing stigma change how you feel about yourself.

How Have You Experienced Stigma?

With your EPI Clinician, think about the ways in which you have directly experienced stigma.

From friends?

From family?

From people at work?

From people at school?

From myself (my own thoughts)?

Plan for Coping with Stigma

With your EPI Clinician, come up with a plan for coping the next time you experience stigma.

Things to do when I experience stigma from others

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Things to do when I have thoughts about stigma toward myself

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____