Incredible Individual

MYTH: You're either "normal" or "mentally ill"

FACT: Mental health is a spectrum, and we all go through periods in our life where we feel distressed, worried, or disconnected. People who have a mental health diagnosis might experience few symptoms or find that their symptoms don't interfere with them being able to live the life they want, and some people without a diagnosis might experience mental health symptoms which impact many areas of their lives. Instead of just thinking about illness, it's useful to think about distress and impact, anyone can feel distress, and we can all benefit from good, accessible support for our mental health.

Community Champion

MYTH: People with a mental illness are dangerous

FACT: People experiencing mental health issues are far more likely to be victims of violent crimes than they are to commit them. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population. In addition, people in need of urgent support and treatment can be victims of Police violence (a risk which is compounded if they are also a person of colour), and people seeking help can also be victims of coercive treatment, such as being placed in isolation.

School Superstar

MYTH: If you have a mental illness, you'll never get better

FACT: Many mental health issues are temporary, but even for people who experience ongoing symptoms, with access to the right support most people have an alleviation of symptoms and find ways to manage their symptoms so that they can still live the life they want. For some people getting better means having no symptoms that interfere in their lives, and for others, getting better means finding ways to work with their symptoms, rather than trying to suppress them.
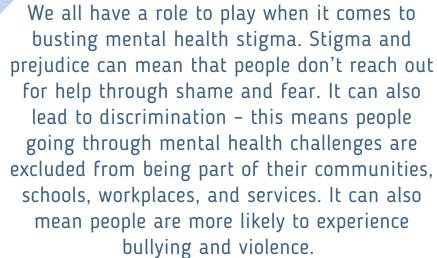
Workplace Wonder

MYTH: People experiencing mental illness are unemployable

FACT: People diagnosed with a mental illness are in all professions, at every level. People whose symptoms are particularly severe may require help in finding a job, or reasonable adjustments within their workplace, but many people will experience symptoms and it will never negatively impact their ability to work. What does make it difficult, though, is stigma and shame. The impacts of prejudice mean that people aren't able to disclose what's going on in order to ask for any adjustments they may need, and a culture of mental health stigma can make people feel uncomfortable and unsafe at work, even if they haven't disclosed their condition to anyone.

we all have a role to play in busting mental health stigma

Amazing Ally

MYTH: Mental health is the individual's responsibility

FACT: Many things contribute to mental health and wellbeing, and whilst there are things we can do as individuals to improve our mental health, some things are beyond an individual's ability to change, and can have severe impacts on mental health. Prejudice and discrimination, such as racism, the inaccessibility of basic needs, such as safe, stable housing, the intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through colonisation and the stolen generation, and the lack of appropriate, accessible mental health services can all have negative impacts on an individual's mental health. We can help counteract this by ensuring that we consider the mental health impacts in our communities, policy development, and ensuring that what we do is accessible to as many people as possible.

We all have a role to play when it comes to busting mental health stigma. Stigma and prejudice can mean that people don't reach out for help through shame and fear. It can also lead to discrimination – this means people going through mental health challenges are excluded from being part of their communities, schools, workplaces, and services. It can also mean people are more likely to experience bullying and violence.

Challenging mental health stigma as well as self-stigma is one of the most important ways to play your role this mental health month!

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH OCTOBER

WayAhead