

Tactical Communication

Stigma

# Meaning of Stigma

- A mark of disgrace or shame associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person (*POST*).
- A set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something. (*Merriam-Webster*).
- A strong lack of respect for a person or a group of people or a bad opinion of them because they have done something society does not approve of. (*Oxford*).

# Implications

- Social isolation
- Fear
- Violence
- Mistrust
- Prejudice
- Discrimination
- **Barriers to communication**

# Context

What role does stigma play in ...

- Mental illness?
- Intellectual disabilities?
- Substance use disorders?

# Context

Cultural impact on mental health treatment:

- Culture relates to how people cope with everyday problems and more extreme types of adversity.
- Culture also influences the *meanings* that people impart to their illness, which affects the services they seek and receive.
- Culture often bears on whether people even seek help in the first place, what types of help they seek, what types of coping styles and **social** supports they have, and how much **stigma** they attach to mental illness.

# Context

Cultural impact on mental health treatment:

- Research indicates that some minority groups are more likely than whites to delay seeking treatment until symptoms are more severe.
- Further, racial and ethnic minorities are less inclined than whites to seek treatment from mental health specialists.
- Instead, studies indicate that minorities turn more often to primary care physicians, clergy, traditional healers, and family and friends.

# Context

Cultural impact on mental health treatment:

- In response to societal stigma, people with mental problems internalize public attitudes and become so embarrassed or ashamed that they often conceal symptoms and fail to seek treatment
- **Stigma** also lowers their access to resources and opportunities, such as housing and employment, and leads to diminished self-esteem and greater isolation and hopelessness
- **Stigma** can also be against family members; this damages self-esteem and family relationships .

# Context

Cultural impact on mental health treatment:

- It is well documented that racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are less likely than whites to seek mental health treatment, which largely accounts for their under-representation in most mental health services.
- Mistrust was identified as a major barrier to the receipt of mental health treatment by racial and ethnic minorities.
- **Stigma** was portrayed by one study as the “most formidable obstacle to future progress in the arena of mental illness and health”.

*(Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2001.)*



# Compare & Contrast

Compare and contrast the way different cultures treat mental illness, intellectual disability and substance abuse disorder in the following areas:

## Mental Illness

- Stigmatization
- Social impact on families and individuals
- Barriers to seeking help and participating in treatment

## Intellectual Disability

- Stigmatization
- Social impact on families and individuals
- Barriers to seeking help and participating in treatment

## Substance Use Disorder

- Stigmatization
- Social impact on families and individuals
- Barriers to seeking help and participating in treatment

# Reminders

- People are not at fault for their disorders.
- Disorders are experiences on a continuum from low severity to high severity.
- People with disorders are not always in crisis.
- Don't become the trigger.
- Slow is smooth, smooth is fast.

# POST Video

- Scenario 1
- Interviews

# Facilitated Discussion

- Why might the perspectives of each officer matter?
- What should officers consider when this person?

# Facilitated Discussion

- What information do you seek when conducting a suicide assessment?
  - Does the person have a plan?
  - Do they have the means?
  - How do they want to die?
  - When do they want to die?
  - Where do they want to die?

# Key Learning Points

- Different personal perspectives can influence an officer's response to a call. Be aware of your personal perspectives.
- Anyone can suffer from a mental illness.
- There is a stigma attached to mental illness that should not exist. It's an illness, not a choice.
- Medications can have severe side effects.
- Repeated contacts can be frustrating for all involved. Officers should recognize this and not allow frustration to influence their action.

Thank you.

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