

They're Crazy!!!

Understanding & Combating the Stigma of Mental Illness



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Areas of Discussion

- Stigmatization
- The stigma mental illness
- Why we stereotype and stigmatize
- Suffering is normal, not happiness
- We is they
- Being mindful of our attitudes
- Acting based on our values



Introduction Exercise

- What if I asked that we go around the room and answer the following questions:
 - Tell us what you like about yourself?
 - Tell us about the last time you cried?
 - Tell us about an experience with a loved one or close family member that has struggled with mental illness?
- What thoughts and feelings would you be experiencing right now?
- Why?



Origins of the word “Stigma”

- Ancient Greece
- Means “mark”
- Marks were placed on slaves to identify their position in the social structure and indicate they were of lesser value



Stigmatization - Definition

- Objectification and dehumanization of other human beings
- Demonstrates a lack of empathy toward others



What we do when we Stigmatize

- Labeling people with a condition
- Stereotyping people with that condition
- Creating a division – “us” and “them”
- Discriminating against people based on their label



The Stigma of Mental Illness

- Fear of stigma, and the resulting discrimination, discourages individuals and their families from getting the help they need.
- People have more stigmatizing attitudes toward individuals with psychological disorders than toward those who suffer from physical diseases, particularly if they receive professional psychological services (e.g., Ben-Porath, 2002).
- An estimated 23% of the U.S. population experience a mental disorder in any given year, but almost half of these individuals do not seek treatment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002; U.S. Surgeon General, 2001).



Common Stigmas re: Mental Illness

People with mental illnesses are:

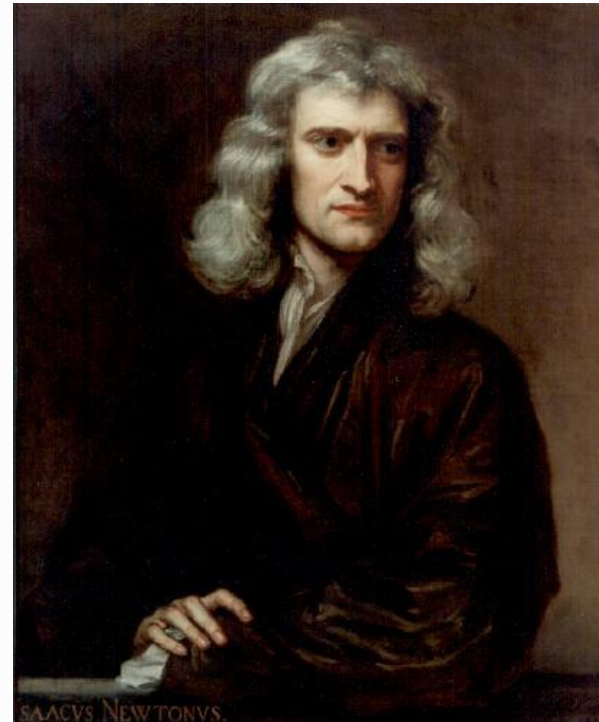
- Dangerous
- Unpredictable
- Hard to talk to
- Different
- Unable to take care of themselves
- Unlikely to recover

Source: Crisp, A. H., Gelder, M. G., Rix, S., Meltzer, H. I., & Rowlands, O. J. (2000). Stigmatisation of people with mental illnesses. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177, 4–7.



Famously Mentally Ill - Isaac Newton

He suffered from several “nervous breakdowns” in his life and was known for great fits of rage towards anyone who disagreed with him which some have labeled Bipolar Disorder.





Famously Mentally III - Ludwig van Beethoven

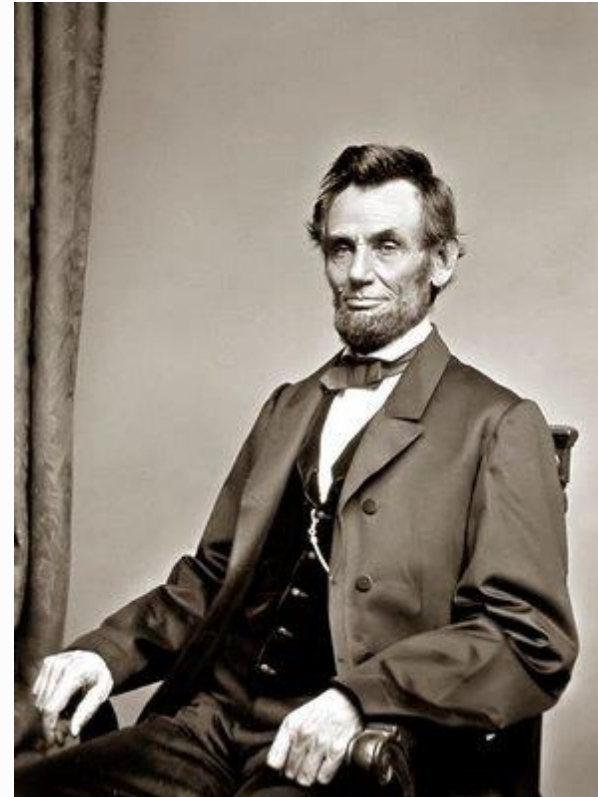
Had bipolar disorder. His “manic” episodes seemed to fuel his creativity. He wrote his most famous works during times of torment, loneliness, and suffering psychotic delusions. He medicated himself with the only drugs available in that day to bring some relief – opium and alcohol- and died from the effects of liver disease.





Famously Mentally III - Abraham Lincoln

Suffered from severe and debilitating and on occasion suicidal depressions. “A tendency to melancholy” Lincoln once wrote in a letter to a friend, “...let it be observed, is a misfortune, not a fault.”





Famously Mentally Ill - Vincent Van Gogh

From recorded information it seems clear that he suffered from bipolar disorder with profound “highs” and “lows.” He committed suicide at age 37.





Famously Mentally III - Winston Churchill

He told in his own writings of suffering from “black dog,” Churchill’s term for severe and serious depression. Less often talked about are his writings of how he often self-medicated with alcohol to deal with these times.





Famously Mentally III - Jane Pauley

NBC news
broadcaster, since the
age of 25, she talks
candidly about her
bipolar illness in her
book, "Skywriting: A
Life Out of the Blue."





Famously Mentally Ill - Linda Hamilton

Actress, well known for her part with Arnold Schwarzenegger in "The Terminator" has gone public with her diagnosis of bi-polar disorder diagnosed at a young age.





Famously Mentally III – John Nash

Nobel Prize Winner in mathematics, he has faced a lifelong battle with schizophrenia. His struggle was well documented in the book and movie, "A Beautiful Mind."





Famously Mentally Ill - Lionel Aldridge

A football player for the Green Bay Packers during the 1960's, he developed paranoid schizophrenia and was homeless for 2½ years. He is in active treatment and states that he is completely symptom free. He is a public speaker and advocate for the mentally ill.





Famously Mentally III - Ruth Graham

Daughter of Billy Graham, she writes about her many years of suffering with depression, drugs, eating disorders and thoughts of suicide in her 2004 book, "In Every Pew Sits A Broken Heart."





Famously Mentally III – Brooke Shields

She talked about her disabling Post Partum Depression in her book, “Down Came the Rain: My Journey Through Postpartum Depression.” She admits that she had difficulty bonding with her baby and later thought of hurting it and even killing herself.





Famously Mentally III - Others

- Leo Tolstoy, author
- Charles Dickens, author
- John Keats, poet
- Michelangelo, artist
- Bette Midler, entertainer
- Charles Schultz, cartoonist
- Dick Clark, entertainer
- Irving Berlin, composer
- Rosemary Clooney, singer
- Jimmy Piersall, baseball player.
Boston Red Sox
- Burgess Meredith, actor
- Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky,
composer
- Charlie Pride, singer
- Sylvia Plath, poet and novelist
- Janet Jackson, singer
- Patty Duke, actress
- Roseanne Barr, comedian
- Marlon Brando, actor
- Maurice Bernard, actor
- Buzz Aldrin, astronaut
- Margot Kidder, actress
- Jonathon Winters, comedian
- Pat Conroy, author
- Ernest Hemingway, author
- Tennessee Williams, playwright



Why do we Stigmatize?

- Categorizing, labeling, comparing, and evaluating events is a natural linguistic process
- We all do it!!!, But it is BAD!
- So after this discussion I would like everyone here to stop having those stigmatizing thoughts
- Don't think about chocolate cake!
- What are the numbers?





Happiness is not normal

“The single most remarkable fact about human existence is how hard it is for humans to be happy.”

(Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999)



The Assumption of Healthy Normality

- By their nature humans are psychologically healthy
- Suffering is abnormal
- Abnormality is a disease or syndrome driven by unusual pathological processes
- We need to understand these processes and change them



The Major Reason to Suspect this is False

- The ubiquity of human suffering

“Sorrow comes to all...Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better and yet you are sure to be happy again.”

- Abraham Lincoln



Major Traditions accept Suffering as Normal

- Buddhist tradition states that pursuit of pleasure/happiness can only continue what is ultimately an unquenchable thirst. In the end, only aging, sickness, and death are certain and unavoidable.



Major Traditions accept Suffering as Normal

- Old testament says:
 - Genesis 3:17 - And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.



Major Traditions accept Suffering as Normal

- New testament says:
 - 1 Peter 4:12 - Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.



Major Traditions accept Suffering as Normal

- The Quran endorses suffering as natural as well:
 - 90:4 - Verily, we have created man into a life of pain, toil and trial.
 - 2:155-156 - And most certainly we should try you by means of fear, hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of life or of labor's fruit. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity, who when the calamity befalls them, say, "Verily unto God we belong and verily unto him we shall return"



Normality of Suffering

- High lifetime incidence of major psychiatric disorders
- High treatment demand
- High rates of divorce, sexual concerns, abuse, violence, prejudice
- Destructive behaviors are common (e.g., addictive behaviors, self-harm)



The Example of Suicide

6-Year-Old Commits Suicide

A 6-year-old girl was killed today when she stepped in front of a train, telling two siblings and a cousin that she wanted "to become an angel and be with her mother." The girl was identified as Jackie Johnson; the authorities said her mother, Carla Johnson, had a terminal illness. Jackie's death was ruled a suicide.

-New York Times, June 17, 1993



We is They

- We are all wearing an “I’m fine” Mask!
 - Annual prevalence of Axis I Disorders – 25%*
 - Lifetime prevalence of Axis I Disorders – 46%*
- Everyone suffers, some more than others
 - What is something that bothers you that you usually do not share with anyone? (Think of this)
 - How does this make you feel?
 - Now, get rid of it, throw it away, don’t think about it!
 - What are the numbers?
- Mental illness is in every family, occupation, ethnic group, social class, etc...
- Who would choose to suffer, given the option?
- Joe the Bum

*Ronald C. Kessler; Wai Tat Chiu; Olga Demler; Ellen E. Walters. (2005). Prevalence, Severity, and Comorbidity of 12-Month DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Archives of General Psychiatry, 62:617-627.



The Solution to Stigmatization

- It **is not** to rid the world of bad thoughts and feelings
 - It **is** to be aware of our attitudes and stereotypes
- and*
- It **is** to suspend action based on our attitudes and stereotypes, then acting on our values (e.g., equality)

Questions

& Answers

