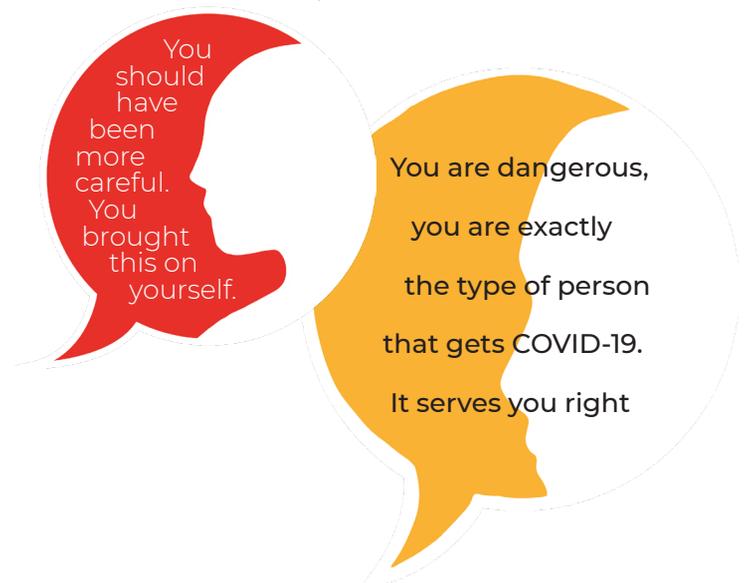


COVID-19:

Spread solidarity and love, not stigma and fear

Stigma

When you or someone else thinks negative thoughts about me or blame me because I have COVID-19



Discrimination

When someone else does negative things to me because I have or might have contracted COVID-19



Self-stigma/internal stigma

When I start to think or say negative things about myself, or do negative things to myself, because I have COVID-19



Stigma, including self-stigma is like a deadly virus and it can kill.

Stigma is caused by fear and ignorance that can lead to discrimination, shame, guilt, self-loathing and self-rejection and even suicide.

We know the stigma virus well from HIV, tuberculosis, mental health and from our work with marginalised groups in society. We recognise that stigma and self-stigma is an important factor in many instances of depression, addiction, and overweight.

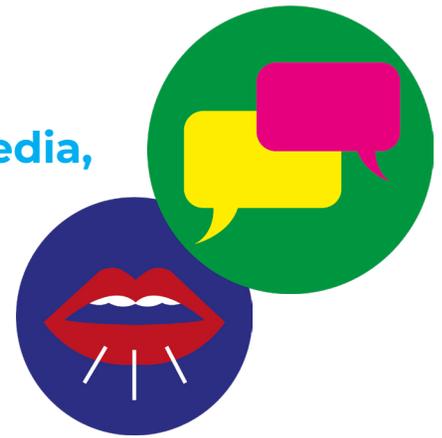
It's pervasive. It's also universal.



Stigma and self-stigma can lead to:

- People not asking about COVID testing or seeking care they need
- People hiding their illness for **fear** of discrimination and judgement
- Deepening **isolation** and depression
- Low quality of life
- Low self-esteem
- Anger and resentment

How you speak, how you share on social media, and what you share, matters.



- Talk about COVID-19 but **don't attach** ethnicity and locations to the disease
- Use terms like 'overcoming', 'understanding', 'building resilience to cope', 'learning from', not phrases like 'War', 'Combatting' – **your words matter**
- Talk about people who have it, people who have died from COVID-19 – don't call them cases or victims – **they are people**
- Talk about people contracting COVID-19, but not people infecting others, transmitting or spreading the disease – people are not intentionally 'infecting' others, there is **no blame** here
- **Share accurate information** but don't share rumours, repeat scary stories or use language that causes fear
- Talk about what is happening, what people can do to **support** themselves and others, remind people of the measures that can help – handwashing, social distancing.
- If you have or have had COVID-19, that is exactly it – you ARE NOT COVID-19, you HAVE/HAD COVID-19. **It does not define you** as a person.
- **Be compassionate and kind**, anything else hurts you. Put yourself in the shoes of the person, their family, their friends and just think about what you would want for yourself or people close to you.
- **Don't take it personally** - if you have COVID-19 and are self-isolating within your home, people staying away from you, cleaning surfaces that you touch etc are measures to protect others in the household - they are not about YOU they are about the VIRUS
- Don't distance or disparage on your social media – but **reach out, and share** the positive and inspiring

When this is all over, do you want to look back and see yourself as someone who coped well, worked to help others, to be compassionate and kind, or do you want to look back and see how you contributed to the suffering by spreading fear and stigma?

We all have a choice – what do you chose?

Spread solidarity and love, not stigma and fear



www.beyondstigma.org

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