

Recovery Road

It's a journey, not a destination

Summer 2017

Breaking the mental illness stigma

By Mark Brennaman

Those of us dealing with a mood disorder are keenly aware of the stigma attached to a diagnosis. Our first instinct may be to hide it, even from our loved ones.

Things are changing. And I mean things are rapidly changing. Today there is more acceptance of self-disclosing a diagnosis with an employer or potential partner.

Stigma exists only with a lack of knowledge and possession of bias. Taking an issue from the dark of a cave into the brightness of the sun results in prejudice and self-doubt dissolving in a puff of smoke.

I have realized I must face stigma situations with mindful strength. I will no longer allow those who know me to think I am less because of my

diagnosis. I am whole, dealing with some issues.

I wear my green mental health awareness ribbon on my collar everywhere I go to spark a conversation about mental health awareness. People can't belittle their mental health friends or co-workers once they understand the true



Mental Health Awareness Ribbon

nature of someone who struggles with a mental health diagnosis.

We are on a journey of accomplishment and acceptance. Sojourn on!

How to fight the stigma

Stigma is one of the most challenging aspects of living with a mental health condition. It causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control and prevents many from seeking the help they need and speaking out.

What is the best way to end stigma?

Talk openly about mental health. "Mental illness touches so many lives and yet it's STILL a giant secret. Be brave and share your story." –**Lindsey Watkin Lason**

Educate yourself and others about mental health. "Challenge people respectfully when they

are perpetrating stereotypes and misconceptions. Speak up and educate them." –**Yvonne Lucas**

Be conscious of your language. "Saying someone is "retarded" or using (or even mentioning) the "N" word is politically incorrect, but it's still fine to throw around words like crazy, psycho, lunatic, etc." –

Michele Croston

Encourage equality in how people perceive physical illness and mental illness. "We should explain mental illness as similar to any other illness. When someone acts differently or "strange" during diabetic shock we don't blame them for moral failings." –**William Newbill**

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How to fight the stigma

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Show empathy and compassion for those living with a mental health condition. “We can all use more education, but that will not make people change their opinions. When you love and respect people, love and respect all of them. You have a desire to learn more about who they are and what their life is like.” –**Megan Wright Bowman**

Stop the criminalization of those who live with mental illness. “Professionals and families together need to talk to neighborhood groups, law enforcement, hospitals and legal experts to share experiences and knowledge on interacting with mentally ill.” –**Valerie E. Johnson**

Push back against the way people who live with mental illness are portrayed in the media: “Push back hard against the media and politicians and pundits that simply deflect real social issues such as gun control to the realm of “psychos” causing mass shootings.” –**Michele Croston**

See the person, not the illness: “Talk about your family and friends with mental illnesses any time a conversation invites the opportunity; with an open heart, love, and real information about the real human being that they are; they are not their condition.” –**Sheryl Schaffner**

Advocate for mental health reform. “It's empowering people whenever and wherever you can. It's also writing legislators. It's also talking in front of a board of commissioners to advocate for continued mental health funding... It's doing the right thing and treating others justly.” –**Danielle Hoover**

Stigma is not something that will go away on its own, but if we work together as a community, we can change the way we perceive mental illness in our society.

This article, written by Laura Greenstein, and published at NAMI.org, is reprinted by permission.

If you need help . . .

National Suicide Prevention
800-273-TALK (8255)

Emergency
911 Ask for CIT Officer

OCARTA for Crisis
405-812-4580

OCARTA for Friendship
405-436-4082

Oklahoma County Crisis Intervention Center
405-522-1800

Heartline
211 Ask for help with emotional distress

Remember: Suicidal thoughts are temporary. Suicide is permanent. Don't give in to suicidal thoughts – you can overcome them.



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance
Oklahoma

3000 United Founders Blvd, Ste 104
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-254.3994
405-254.5019 Fax
office@dbsaok.org
www.dbsaok.org

Like us on Facebook @dbsaok

Our Mission

To create support groups to provide peer-to-peer hope, help, education and support. To foster recovery in the lives of people living with depression, bipolar and other mood disorders.

We've been there. We can help.

George Crooks – Executive Director
Jeannie Huey - Office Manager
Mark Brennaman – Support Staff

BOARD as of FY 2016

Voting Members

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Ricky Brown Past President
Pat Manning Vice President
Debbie Bryner Secretary
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Stepping toward wellness

Walking is an ideal way to enhance mental health. It is the easiest, cheapest, best way to achieve heart health as well as improve one's mood. There is no special equipment to buy or a gym to join. All you need is a sturdy pair of shoes and a safe place to walk.

The American Heart Association recommends walking 30-minutes every day. Others suggest we need to walk 10,000 steps a day recorded on a pedometer (that's 5 miles!). Thirty minutes is a great target. Just open your front door and walk away for 15-minutes then turn around and walk back home.

The act of getting up to move; the act of getting outside the door; the act of seeing new surroundings all contribute to feeling better. As you walk take in all that is there to be seen. Be aware of nature all around you.

If you make walking 30-minutes a daily habit you'll soon discover that you're losing unwanted weight.



Many malls allow people to walk the mall. Malls are a perfect place to walk if it's too cold or hot outside. City parks are also great places to walk. Check your local government for walking and biking trails.

Having a walking partner can make this exercise even more enjoyable.

The best thing about stepping toward wellness is it's free, and the benefits are immediate.

Get outside. Put one foot in front of the other and have some fun!

Walk your way to better!

DBSA Wellness Tracker

The DBSA Wellness Tracker is a free, innovative, and user-friendly online tool that allows you to keep track of your emotional, mental, and physical health.

- Track Key Health Trends
- Overall mood
- Well-being
- Mood disorder symptoms
- Lifestyle (including sleep, exercise, etc.)
- Medication (and side effects)
- Physical health

Wellness involves your whole health—emotional and mental, as well as physical.

This valuable information can help you better recognize potential health problems and mood triggers in your daily life. It can also help you better partner with your clinician on treatment plans that address your overall health and wellbeing.

Stay on track with DBSA Wellness Tracker.

It's easy, takes only a few minutes a day, and, like the other tools at dbsalliance.org, it's free.



Ending the stigma

By Katie Bayne

I was fairly young when my grandfather was diagnosed with depression. I didn't understand how he could be so sad when he had such a large, loving family and a seemingly happy life. To some extent, I blamed my grandfather; I didn't understand what was really happening was a chemical imbalance out of his control. As a society, we still don't really understand, and many of those who are struggling hide their true selves away to avoid questions and judgment. The recent story of the contrast between a young athlete's happy life as depicted by social media and the mental illness that led to her suicide is a perfect example. It's time to really start addressing societal norms and acting on warning signs to behavioral health disorders.

If you search "stigma" on Google, you're helpfully provided with a definition at the top of the search results: "a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person." You also get an example, and the one that's supplied is sadly relevant: "the stigma of mental disorder." One of the biggest barriers to people seeking help for their behavioral health care needs is the role that stigma plays in their lives. It is what leads people to believe that they are responsible for their own illness or keeps them in denial about it. After my grandfather's initial diagnosis, it was rarely ever spoken about again, and certainly never by him. We are not yet comfortable speaking freely about mental health disorders.

It is especially unfortunate that the stigma of mental illness is so great, given how prevalent it is. One in four Americans will be affected by a mental health disorder in any given year, and many more will have a family member affected. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), serious mental illness costs the US \$193 billion in lost earnings per year.

In any given year, it is estimated that 60% of people in need of mental health care will not seek treatment. Unlike our response to a broken leg, mental illness is often considered a health issue that can wait or is merely a sign of weakness—something that may fix itself. The Affordable Care Act requires health plans to provide mental health and substance treatment, so potential access to care is improving.

The path to recovery for those suffering from mental illness or substance use is often long and requires the support of peers and professionals. Similarly, our path to a better mental health system will likely be long and require the effort of many dedicated individuals and organizations. My hope is that somewhere along this journey we find acceptance and openness to end the stigma and reach out for help.

This article is reprinted by permission from The Center for Health Progress, originally published May 20, 2015 at <http://centerforhealthprogress.org/blog/ending-the-stigma/>

Recovery Road is the quarterly newsletter of DBSA of Oklahoma. We are seeking stories from those who have faced the stigma of mental illness and were able to rise above it. Please send your story to office@dbsaok.org

From the executive director

This past quarter has been very busy and rewarding for DBSA.

The most exciting news is we were able to hire a part-time additional staff member. His name is Mark Brennaman. He brings many skills to DBSA including support group facilitator, fundraiser, creative writing and speaking. Mark is also a recovering consumer.

In the next several months you will all get to know him. I know you will like him. I am very grateful to have him join our staff.

Other developments are:

We have subcontracted with a freelance writer to increase awareness of the DBSA community. Her name is Stephanie Huey. She is bringing us up to speed with social media technology.

As a state organization, DBSA will have a new president of the Board. His name is Jimmy Roberts. Jimmy has been with DBSA for many years. We are very grateful for our last president, Diane Bergeron. She has done an excellent job and we are happy that she will continue to serve as a Board member.

DBSA has worked hard with other mental health advocacy groups. Our combined efforts will hopefully result in maintaining and improving mental health services in Oklahoma.

I am looking forward to this coming quarter with all of these changes.

Don't forget our annual picnic at Stars and Stripes Park on August 12.

What can I do?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| D Donate | Encourage others to do the same. |
| B Break the stigma | Educate; increase awareness. Tell your story. |
| S Spread the word | DBSA is here, we can help. |
| A Advocate | Ask legislators to support mental health issues. |

Laughter is the best medicine

You Can't Teach an Old Dog to Fly

A woman called our airline customer service desk asking if she could take her dog on board.

"Sure," I said, "as long as you provide your own kennel." I further explained that the kennel needed to be large enough for the dog to stand up, sit down, turn around, and roll over.

The customer was flummoxed: "I'll never be able to teach him all of that by tomorrow!"

Calendar of Events

Please mark these dates on your calendar

July

6,13,20, 27 Creative Expressions

4th Independence Day – Office Closed

8th Facilitator Training 1-4 PM Suite 104

18th Board Meeting 5 PM Suite 104

28th Movie Night

August

3,10, 17, 24, 31 Creative Expressions

12th Annual Picnic Stars and Stripes Park

16th Summit 5 PM Suite 104

25th Movie Night 6 PM Suite 117

September

7, 14, 21. 28 Creative Expressions

4th Labor Day – Office Closed

12th Board Meeting 5 PM Suite 104

16th Facilitator Training 1-4 PM Suite 104

29th Movie Night



Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Oklahoma
 3000 United Founders Blvd. Suite 104
 Oklahoma City, OK 73112
 405-254-3994 www.dbsaok.org

We've been there. We can help.

CONFIDENTIAL AND FREE SUPPORT GROUPS

If you cannot reach the contact person please call the state office 405-254-3994

Updated July 6, 2017

Group	Day	Time	Location	Contact 1	Phone	Contact 2	Phone
Altus	Inactive				405-254-3994		
Bethany	Thursday	7:00 PM	Bethany Church of Christ 3301 N Rockwell	Iva	405-373-0059	Cynthia	405-639-9623
Claremore	Inactive				405-254-3994		
Edmond	Saturday	3:00 PM	Edmond Public Library	Charlie Michelle	405-745-3270 405-330-0642	Sheila	405-844-2444
Lawton	Monday	6:30 PM	Lawton Public Library	Laura	580-536-1251	John	580-483-4942
Midwest City	Tuesday	6:30 PM	Eastside Church Of Christ 916 S. Douglas	Diane	405-679-5214	Lisa Dawn	405-510-8500 405-464-5252
Moore	Inactive				405-254-3994		
Norman #1	Thursday	7:00 PM	McFarlin Methodist Church Room 229	Diane	405-503-1948	Ricky	405-625-4066
Norman #2	Monday	7:00 PM	McFarlin Methodist Church Room 402	Ricky	405-625-4066	Diane	405-503-1948
OKC - MHAO Drop-In Center 1	Saturday	2:00 PM	1311 N Lottie	Jimmy	405-418-4119		405-600-3074
OKC-MHAO Drop-In Center 2	Tuesday	12:00 Noon	1311 N Lottie	Bianca	405-999-2951		405-600-3074
OKC - All Souls	Inactive				405-254-3994		
OKC - Crossings Church	Monday	6:30 PM	Crossings Church 14600 N. Portland	Jack	405-205-4139	Thomas Neil	405-330-3873 408-368-5459
OKC – OCARTA/OCCIC Drop-in Center	Tuesday	3:00 PM	2808 NW 31st	Tyler	405-436-4083	Brandi	405-848-7555
OKC - State Office	Wednesday	12:00 PM	3000 United Founders Blvd Suite 104	George	405-413-7778		405-254-3994
Shawnee	Thursday	5:30 PM	309 N Pesotum	James	405-464-3289		
Spencer	Inactive				405-254-3994		
Stillwater	Tuesday	6:30 PM	First Presbyterian Church	Karen	405-624-1518	Bob	918-285-1233
Talehquah	Thursdays	7:00 PM	1 st Lutheran Church 2111 Mahaney Ave	Johnny	918-207-8366		
Tulsa	Inactive		All Souls Church 2952 S Peoria Ave	Larry	918-809-1152		
Yukon	Tuesday	7:00 PM	1 st Christian Church 601 Maple	Renee	405-209-7477	Cheryl	405-354-5650

Temporarily Closed: Claremore, Spencer

Coming Soon: Tulsa

The phone numbers listed are personal numbers of DBSA Volunteers. Please be considerate of the time and day you call. These phone numbers are NOT crisis numbers. **If you have an emergency dial 911.**