Getting Through COVID-19 Together

CANADIAN RED CROSS
CROIX-ROUGE CANADIENNE

"People who have been affected by COVID-19 have not done anything wrong, and they deserve our support, compassion, and kindness." (WHO, 2020)

What is Stigma?

Stigma is a negative association with a person or group of people based on something that they have in common. Stigma happens with COVID-19 when people have negative attitudes and beliefs about those who have the virus, those who have had the virus, or people whose work requires them to be potentially exposed to the virus.

Stigma creates fear and blame and causes people to be treated unfairly. With COVID-19, this may mean people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with the virus. (WHO)

The fact is ANYONE can get COVID-19 no matter how careful we are.

Anyone can get COVID-19

Historically epidemics and pandemics have caused stigma. We saw this with Ebola and MERS and now again with COVID-19. Stigma causes people to focus on unhealthy feelings about others instead of focusing on the virus itself. Stigma can cause people to avoid getting tested or avoid quarantine because they are worried about being treated differently if people think they have the virus. We need to stop stigma so that everyone can be safer and healthier.

Examples of stigma people with a perceived link to COVID-19 may face:
- Avoidance or rejection
- Denial of healthcare, education, housing, or employment
- Verbal abuse or physical violence
- Racial stereotyping and xenophobia that result in prejudiced language and actions

"Anyone can get it, and no one should be stigmatized for it!"
A message from Dr. Shannon McDonald, FNHA Acting Chief Medical Officer

Getting Through COVID-19 Together

"Anyone can get it, and no one should be stigmatized for it!"
A message from Dr. Shannon McDonald, FNHA Acting Chief Medical Officer

Promote lateral kindness!

We all have the power to promote lateral kindness by holding each other up to prevent stigma related to COVID-19. Lateral kindness celebrates positive behaviours in others, instead of focusing on negative behaviours and issues.

How can we help to stop stigma during COVID-19?

- Share the facts. If you hear incorrect information, share valid information from reliable sources. Make sure you confirm what you read on the internet or hear from people around you.
- Support each other by reaching out, either in-person or online, and sharing ways to cope during the pandemic.
- Remember people can do everything right—hand washing and physical distancing—but can still become infected with COVID-19. Getting COVID-19 is nobody's fault!
- Speak out if you notice negative behaviours like degrading comments, exclusion, or bullying towards people who have a perceived link with COVID-19.
- Support frontline workers and healthcare providers who may have contact with people infected with COVID-19 by posting positive messages of support in your windows or online.

References:

FNHA (2020). Practise Lateral Kindness to Help Reduce Stigma and Fear of COVID-19. Retrieved July 16th, 2020 from https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/practise-lateral-kindness-to-help-reduce-stigma-and-fear-of-covid-19.

CDC (2020). Coronavirus Disease 2019: Reducing stigma. Retrieved July 16th, 2020 from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/reducing-stigma.html.

Unicef (2020). Social stigma associated with coronavirus disease. Retrieved July 16th, 2020 from https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid19-stigma-guide.pdf?sfvrsn=226180f4_2.

Alberta Health Services (2020). COVID-19 and Stigma. Retrieved July 16th, 2020 from https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-covid-and-stigma.pdf.