



## Stigmas and Their Hindrance to an Effective Ministry

1. What Are Stigmas and What Effect Do They Have?  
([Mental Health 101 Series](#))
  - A. Stigma = Prejudice + Discrimination
  - B. Stigmas can make a person feel unwanted and shamed.
  - C. Stigma is not just about hurting someone's feelings. Stigma is about prejudice, discrimination, and the violation of a person's human rights.
  - D. Stigma affects people while they are experiencing problems, while they are in treatment, while they are healing, and even when their mental health problem is a distant memory.
  
2. Harmful effects of stigma  
([Mental Health: Overcoming the Stigma of Mental Illness](#))
  - A. Reluctance to seek help or treatment
  - B. Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers, or others
  - C. Fewer opportunities for work, school, or social activities or trouble finding housing
  - D. Bullying, physical violence, or harassment
  - E. Health insurance that doesn't adequately cover mental illness treatment
  - F. The belief that you'll never succeed at certain challenges or that you can't improve your situation.
  
3. Steps for Addressing Social Stigma (pp.119-126; and [Addressing Stigma](#))
  - A. Seven Things You Can Do to Reduce Stigma
    - Know the facts. Educate yourself about mental illness including substance use disorders.
    - Be aware of your attitudes and behavior. Examine your judgmental thinking that may have been reinforced by your upbringing and society in general.
    - Choose your words carefully. Words affect the attitudes of others.
    - Educate others. Pass on fact and challenge myths and stereotypes.
    - Focus on the positive. Think possibilities by focusing on the bigger picture.
    - Support people. Recognize and treat others with dignity. Offer support and encouragement.
    - Include everyone. It is illegal to deny jobs or services to anyone.

## B. Prejudices overcome

- “The hearts of those who had been converted under the labors of the apostles were softened and united by Christian love. Despite former prejudices, all were in harmony with one another. Satan knew that so long as this union continued to exist, he would be powerless to check the progress of gospel truth; and he sought to take advantage of former habits of thought, in the hope that thereby he might be able to introduce into the church elements of disunion. (*Acts of the Apostles*, 87)
- “Here, in the solitude of the desert, Paul had ample opportunity for quiet study and meditation. He calmly reviewed his past experience and made sure work of repentance. He sought God with all his heart, resting not until he knew for a certainty that his repentance was accepted and his sin pardoned. He longed for the assurance that Jesus would be with him in his coming ministry. He emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life, and received instruction from the Source of truth. Jesus communed with him and established him in the faith, bestowing upon him a rich measure of wisdom and grace.” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 125)
- Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. (Psalm 51:10, NKJV)
- “God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” (Acts 10:28)

## 4. Personal Steps for Coping with Self-stigma

- A. Get treatment.
- B. Don't let stigma create self-doubt and shame.
- C. Don't isolate yourself.
- D. Don't equate yourself with your illness.
- E. Join a support group.
- F. Get help.
- G. Speak out against stigma.