

## **An Introduction to Stigmas for your Clients**

A stigma is extreme social disapproval of some type of personal characteristic or a belief that is not considered socially acceptable. Fear of judgment and ridicule about mental illness often compels individuals and their families to hide away from society rather than face criticism, shunning, labeling and stereotyping. Instead of seeking treatment, they struggle in silence. Here are some ways you can combat the stereotypes and stigmas that are associated with mental illness.

- You and your loved ones have choices. You can decide who is to know about your mental illness and what to tell them. You need not feel ashamed or embarrassed.
- You are not alone. Remember that many other people are coping with a similar situation.
- Seek help and remember that treatment from medical professionals can help you to have productive careers and live satisfying lives.
- Be proactive and surround yourself with supportive people – people you can trust. Social isolation is a negative side effect of the stigma linked to mental illness. Isolating yourself and discontinuing enjoyable activities will not help.