


Ethical Dilemmas in the Treatment of Those with Substance Use Disorders



Presenter: Chazia “Chaz” Wall-Miles, LPC, NCC
Doctoral Candidate


OBJECTIVES



Identify the common knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors associated with amplifying the stigmatization of individuals with SUDs.



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Learn how to implement approaches to reduce the stigma towards those with SUDs and share the techniques with others.



What Does Substance Use Stigma Look Like?

Structural Stigma - Societal structures reflect public norms and values. And many of the factors that influence structural stigma are the same as those that influence public stigma.

Public Stigma - Public perceptions are also strongly influenced by social norms concerning the attribution of blame for mental and substance use disorders and the perceived dangerousness or unpredictability of people with these disorders.

Self Stigma - Self-stigma occurs when a person with mental or substance use disorder internalizes negative stereotypes and the public and structural stigma directed at these disorders.

*Reducing Public Stigma will in turn reduce Self Stigma.

Types of SUD Stigmas

- ▶ Public Stigma - Discrimination and Devaluation by others
 - ❖ Public stigma can refer to stereotypes of people with behavioral health conditions. Belief in those stereotypes and actions taken in response can affect job prospects, housing decisions, and even the quality of healthcare that they receive.
- ▶ Systemic Stigma - Reduced access to care and resources due to policies
 - ❖ Exists in the policies, laws, and practices that are based on negative stereotypes about people with substance use disorders.
- ▶ Self Stigma - Internalization of negative stereotypes
 - ❖ Refers to the negative attitudes, including internalized shame, that people have about their own condition.

Structural Stigma: Institutions

Structural stigma refers to the accumulated activities of organizations and systems that deliberately or inadvertently create and maintain social inequalities for people with lived and living experiences of mental health problems and illnesses and/or substance use.

Examples of structures or institutions of the society include:

- ▶ Education
- ▶ Health Care
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Legal System
- ▶ Environment

Education

Education: Young people face a variety of life challenges that can affect their use of alcohol and other drugs. Schools and campuses should be safe havens for them to grow and learn. Both settings offer promotions for mental health services and substance use prevention activities, yet American schools and campuses are facing challenging public health issues such as bullying, violence, alcohol use, and drug use.

- ▶ Underage drinking and associated problems have profound negative consequences for the underage drinker, their families, their communities, and society.
- ▶ While schools provide programs and activities to promote emotional health and prevent substance use among students, they face unprecedented behavioral health challenges.

Health Care

Health Care: Research has demonstrated that stigma damages the health and well-being of people with substance use disorders and interferes with the quality of care they receive in a clinical setting. Stigma towards people with substance use disorder can be seen at all levels of care within the health care setting.

- ▶ Some resources to assist in the destigmatizing of substance use disorder in the health care system include Individual, group, and family therapy services.
- ▶ The healthcare system can focus on the underlying causes of addiction, becoming drug-free, and preventing a recurrence of use.

Family

Family: There are issues with blame, shame, and contamination that affect family members based on some aspects of one family member's experience. Some of the effects of stigma include feelings of shame, hopelessness, and isolation. This results in the individual feeling reluctant to ask for help or to get treatment. This is also based on the lack of understanding by the individual's family, friends, and other acquaintances.

- ▶ The first step often taken, is to purge the individual's body of drugs and manage the withdrawal symptoms. Next, the family and the patient will need to engage in behavioral counseling.
- ▶ The individual, group, and family therapy will identify the root causes of the drug use, repair their relationships, and learn healthier coping skills.

Legal System

The Legal System: Institutions can demonstrate prejudice and discrimination by policies, laws, and constitutional practices, which are also known as institutionalized stigma.

- ▶ Discrimination in housing, employment opportunities, legal restrictions (in some states) for jury duty, political office, parental custody rights, marriage, and reduced privacy rights.
- ▶ There can be disparities in treatment, research & policy support, and resources.
 - ❖ Legislators, Policy Makers, Employers, Healthcare Providers, and Criminal Justice Professionals; all have the ability to implement interventions:
 - Policy Strategies
 - Legal Strategies
 - Advocacy Strategies
 - Professional Education

Environment

The Environment: Can have stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination endorsed by the general population

- ▶ There are negative stereotypes, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about substance use disorders. The individuals that have suffered from this disease are isolated and rejected by various environmental groups.
- ▶ They receive a lack of support for services, funding, and coercive practices.
 - ❖ The interventions that the general public can utilize to support the SUDs population:
 - Mass Media Messaging
 - Education
 - Community Programming
 - Contact Strategies

Can you name some factors that influence stigma?

- ▶ Blame
- ▶ Stereotypes of Dangerousness and Unpredictability
- ▶ Lack of Knowledge about Mental and Substance Use Disorders
- ▶ Contact and Experience
- ▶ Media Portrayals
- ▶ Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Blame

- ▶ The public often accuses those with a substance use disorder of being the blame for their condition and lived circumstances.
- ▶ There are perceptions that individuals with SUDs have a lack of accountability for their chosen path and behaviors.
- ▶ These are harmful misconceptions that being dependent upon a substance is a Personal Choice, rather than a medical condition

*Are you beginning to see why social support is important?

Stereotypes of Dangerousness & Unpredictability

Many people fear violence, particularly violence that seems random or unpredictable.

- ▶ We often deal with this fear by avoiding people or situations that we believe might lead to violence.
- ▶ We see substance use and violence connected often—in the news, on TV shows, and in movies.

This connection can fuel this stereotypical fear and in turn, this fear of danger and unpredictability can be a driving force for negative attitudes toward those with SUDs.

- ❖ Base your judgment on your individual experience and reflect on your community's risk of violence.

Lack of Knowledge about Substance Use Disorders

What we say and do matters in an effort to reduce the stigma against individuals with SUDs.

Ways that you can educate yourself and others:

- ▶ Attend training and presentations to learn the what stigma toward addiction is defined as.
- ▶ Learn the causes of addiction.
- ▶ Get on the mailing list for SAMHSA, NAMI, and your local DHHS to learn about local resources.
- ▶ Recognize that Treatment Works!
- ▶ Learn what words to use and not to use
 - ❖ Drug Abuse vs Substance Use Disorder
 - ❖ Drug Habit vs Addiction
 - ❖ Abuser, Addict, & Junkie vs A Person with a Substance Use Disorder
 - ❖ Clean vs In Recovery

Contact

The public's immediate social networks and the extent of their contact with people with a substance use disorder affect their understanding of and opinions about SUDs in general.

Increased contact with people with a substance use disorder does not necessarily reduce stigmatizing beliefs, and some studies have found that increased interactions with non-professionals may raise the level of stigma

The depth of stigma against those with SUDS depends on factors like:

- ▶ The individuals' symptom severity and stage of recovery.
- ▶ The context of contact-based interventions.
- ▶ The quality of the intervention itself and the fidelity of which they are implemented.
- ▶ The quality of the peer training that had been provided to the individuals offering the contact services.

Experience

Positive attitudes can be experienced with individuals with SUDs after they experienced contact with them in small-group settings

A decreased sense of stigma with increasing contact and familiarity

Familiarity can be established with:

- ▶ Community resources such as needle exchanges with your local pharmacy.
- ▶ If the individual has a friend or family member with SUDs.
- ▶ The quality of the intervention itself and the fidelity of which they are implemented.
- ▶ The use of a strong and consistent inverse relationship between contact as an intervention and the level of stigma.
 - ❖ If engagement with the individual with SUDs is adverse, then advocate for interventions
 - ❖ If engagement is stable with no adversities, then continue interactions at your comfort level
 - ❖ Consistency and Experience lead to lower levels of stigma

Media Portrayals

Media can provide ideas about and images of individuals with SUDs, that influence public attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward people with substance use disorders.

Media helps shape the public's opinions about SUDs and when the attention given to SUDs is negative, public opinion tends to mirror negative perceptions

Have you been an influence on any of these media portrayals:

- ▶ Stoking fear and intensifying the perceived dangers of persons with substance use disorders.
- ▶ The quality of the intervention itself and the fidelity of which they are implemented.
- ▶ Promoting associations of SUDs with dangerousness and crime.

What can you do to help?

- ❖ Assist in sharing local resources and treatment interventions
- ❖ Set the tone for others around you that may not have experience or knowledge
- ❖ Depict a positive presence on social media to advocate for anti-stigma efforts

Race, Ethnicity, & Culture

Sociodemographic characteristics have been found to affect many public beliefs.

The effect of sociodemographic characteristics differs depending on whether one is looking at the person stigmatizing or the stigmatized person

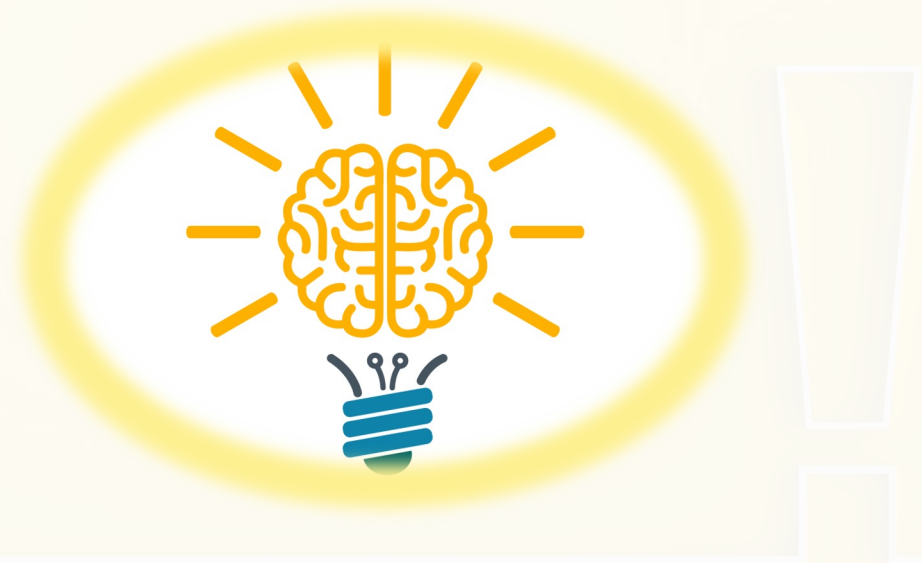
Ethnic and racial minorities access mental health care at a lower rate than whites, and when they do, the care they receive is often suboptimal.

Influential factors:

- ▶ Access, quality of care, and rates of treatment for mental disorders among ethnic and racial minorities and immigrant groups.
- ▶ Quality of care is compromised by language barriers and provider misunderstanding of cultural ideas about illness, health, and treatment.
- ▶ Provision of physical and behavioral health services in integrated care settings has been shown to increase participation in mental health treatment for racial and ethnic minorities

What can we do as individuals to help reduce the stigma against those with Substance Use Disorders?

Type in the “Chat Box”



What do you think you can do to change the stigma and change the culture?

Talk About It!



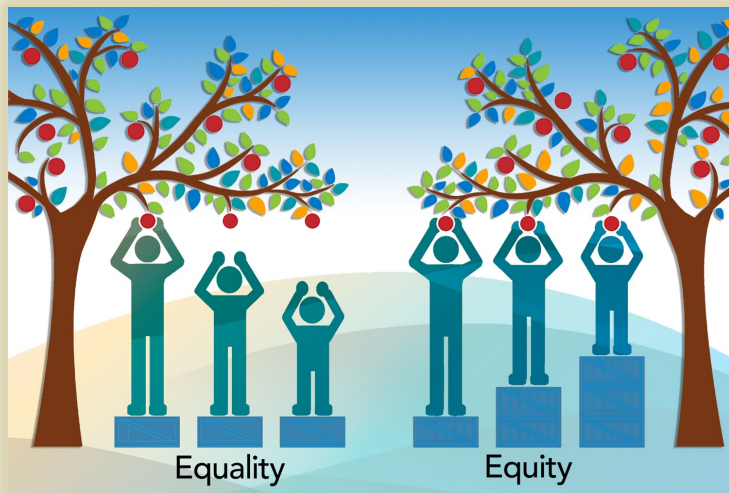
► **Talk openly** about substance use disorders. Share on social media and speak to friends

Education



- Educate yourself and others - respond to misperceptions or negative comments by sharing facts and experiences.

Equality & Equity



- ▶ Encourage equality between physical, mental illness, & substance use - draw comparisons to how they would treat someone with cancer or diabetes.

Empathy



- ▶ **Be conscious of language -** remind people that words matter.

Compassion



- ▶ Show compassion for those with a substance use disorder.

Be Honest



- ▶ Be honest about treatment - normalize mental health treatment, just like other health care treatments.

Speak Up!



- ▶ Let the media know when they are using stigmatizing language presenting stories of mental illness in a stigmatizing way.



Advocate

- ▶ Choose empowerment over shame - “I fight stigma by choosing to ...”

Resources

- ▶ <https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp>
- ▶ <https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Advocate-for-Change>
- ▶ [https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/#:~:text=Substance%20Use%20and%20Mental%20Health%20Treatment%20Locator,662%2D4357%20\(HELP\)](https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/#:~:text=Substance%20Use%20and%20Mental%20Health%20Treatment%20Locator,662%2D4357%20(HELP))
- ▶ <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/prevention-and-wellness/mental-health-substance-Use/index.html>