

Dealing with Stigma

What is stigma?

- Stigma is when people use negative labels and associate those labels with stereotypes, resulting in an overall negative feeling about others or oneself.

Negative labels can be used to label people and lead to assumptions about their behaviors.

Examples include

“drunk” and “addict” or “alcoholic”

Stereotypes are negative beliefs about certain groups of people.

Examples include

“Drunks have no self-control.”

Why is stigma important during treatment and recovery for substance use disorders and mental illness?

- Stigma may prevent you from seeking help for recovery because you may feel guilty or shameful about your condition(s).
- Stigma may cause you to feel low self-esteem and depression.
- Stigma may make you feel the need to hide your alcohol use from others.
- Stigma may interfere with your understanding of recovery and make you feel fearful about a treatment plan.

What you can do to deal with stigma

- Understand that substance use disorders are a health issue and not a moral issue.
- Educate yourself and others about misconceptions of alcohol use disorder.
- Try not to use stigmatizing words when talking to others.
- Attend peer-support groups.
- Do not let feelings about being stigmatized get in the way of seeking help.