

# Mental Health Literacy

*What can we do to open up the conversation around  
mental illness, youth and young adults*



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# What does Mental Health Literacy Mean?

- “Literacy” is the ability to read and write, and means that someone has competence or knowledge in a specific area
- “Mental Health Literacy” than means the ability to access, understand, and use information to better mental health conditions and outcomes.
- Take it one step further: turn literacy into action



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# What are we up against?

- Social stigma
- Cultural stereotypes
- Parental and guardian uncertainty
- Teacher overload
- Lack of resources
- Political cycles
- Fear of getting it wrong



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# Stigma Facts

- 50% would tell friends, co-workers that they have a family member with a mental illness
- 42% were unsure whether they would socialize with a friend who has a mental illness
- 55% said they wouldn't enter into a relationship with someone that has a mental illness
- 46% thought people used “mental illness” as an excuse for bad behavior
- 27% said they'd be fearful of being around someone who suffers from a serious mental illness



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# What Can SD 61 Do?

- Five recommendations from BC Mental Health and Addiction Services (June 18,2010 Report)
  - Disseminate a highly visible mental health internet presence for youth and young adults (Foundry)
  - Public Awareness Strategy (Targeted messaging to specific populations: youth, educators, parents)
  - Youth Engagement Initiative (Dare to Dream/The New Mentality)
  - Promote Contact with Individuals with lived experiences
  - Youth Coordinator Position
- Include youth in every aspect of the development process



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# What can we do?

- Use STOP to recognize mental health stigma.
- Does an attitude or action:
  - S – Stereotype people with mental health conditions?
  - T – Trivialize people with mental health conditions and/or the condition itself
  - O – Offend people with mental health conditions
  - P – Patronize people with mental health conditions by treating them as if they were not as good as other people



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