

Break the Silence



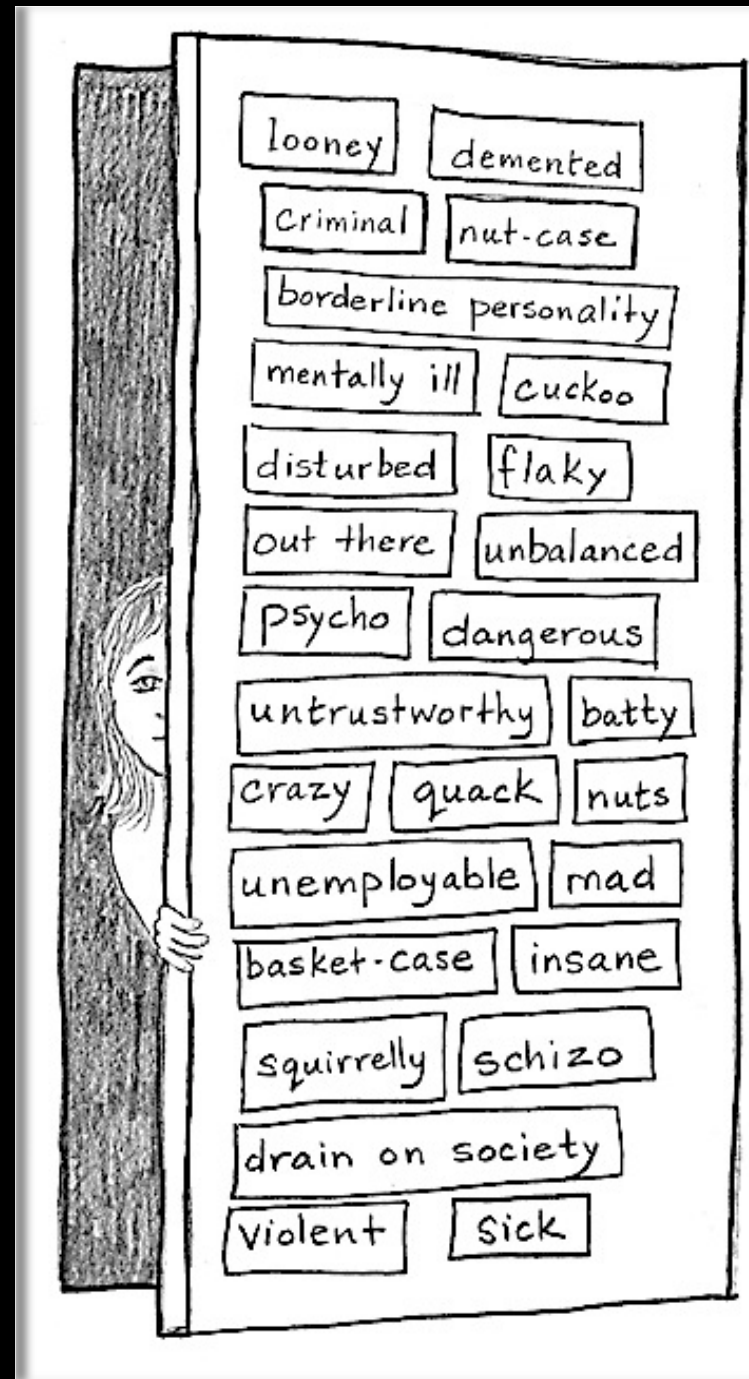
- How many Canadians would.....

- Have a financial advisor,
- Hire a Lawyer, or
- See a doctor

...if they knew that person had had a mental illness?

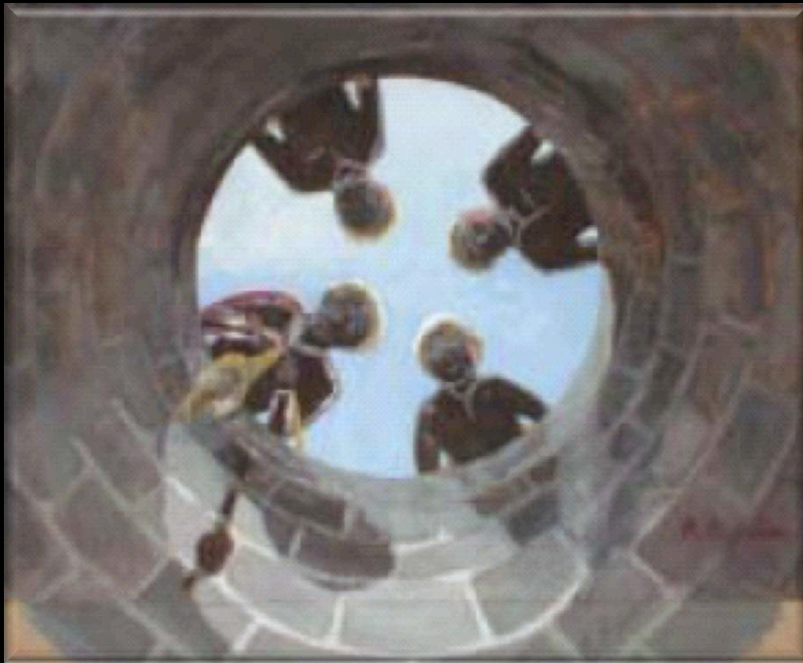


The Nature of Stigma



Donna, 2003

The Nurture of Stigma



Well

Ronald A. Brooks, Nova Scotia

- Negative stereotypes (cognitive)
- Prejudice (emotional)
- Social distance (behavioural)
- Social Disadvantages (structural)

*“I’d Rather Have Cancer...
Then I wouldn’t have to face the stigma”*



Source: Out of the Shadows at Last

Stigma casts a long shadow...



- Stigma-by-association affects:
 - family members
 - friends
 - health providers
 - public policy
 - research

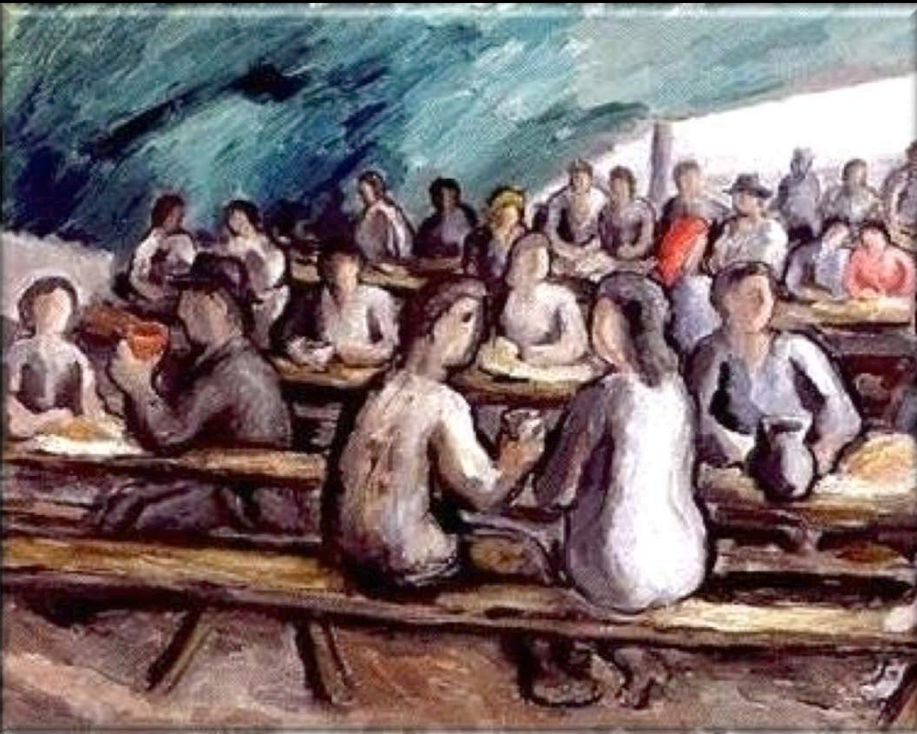
Individual Consequences



Abyss Within, Bruce
Ray, 2003

- **Self-stigma**
 - Internalized public stereotypes
 - Shame and self-blame
 - Wish for secrecy
- **Expectations of Stigma**
 - Social withdrawal
 - Reduced help-seeking
 - Increased disability & delayed recovery

Family Consequences



The Feast, Escher

- Families are the de facto caregivers
- Families seen as blameworthy
- Reduced social networks
- Diminished family esteem
- Family burnout and health consequences

Employment Consequences



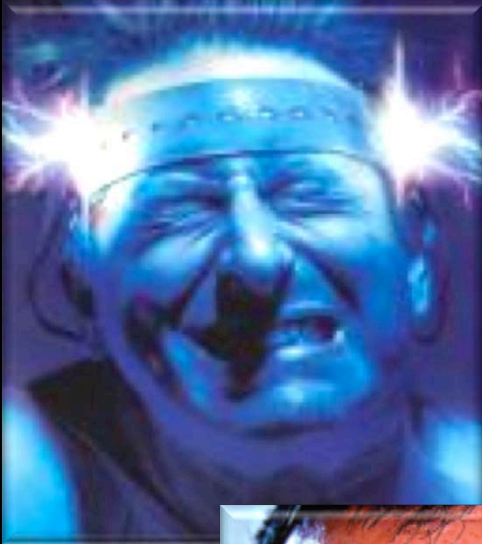
- Unemployment
- Under-employment
- Negative reactions of colleagues

Work places can be like an army that shoots its wounded.

They made it so hard for me at work; I think they were trying to force me to quit.

They treated me like a 'broken product' that you just discard if some small part isn't working the same as before.

Consequences for the Field



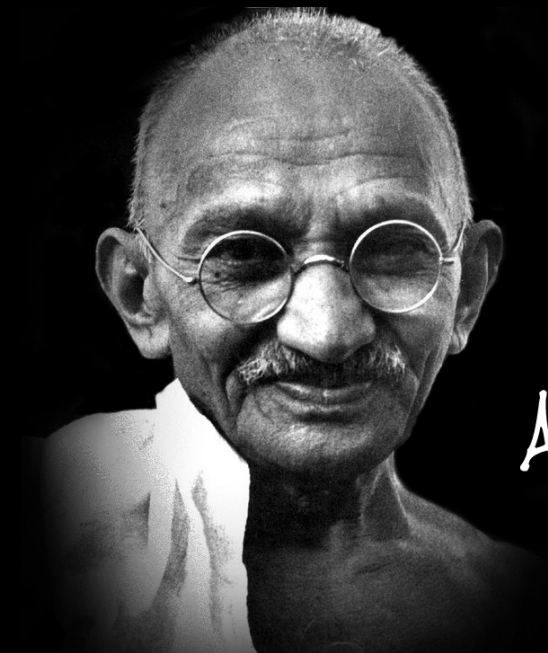
- Distorted view of mental health treatments
- Lack of esteem for professionals & programs
- Research funding incommensurate with burden
- Policy vacuum related to mental health initiatives

But, Stigma Can be Beaten!



....If we

- Recognize that we are all part of the problem and we can become part of the solution
- Correct any misperceptions we may have about people with a mental illness
- Target programs to high needs areas (youth; healthcare; workplaces; media)
- Break the silence. Be unashamed to talk about how mental illnesses have touched our lives



*Action expresses
priorities*

— Mohandas Gandhi

Food for thought



“...we have the means and the scientific knowledge to help people with mental and brain disorders. Governments have been remiss, as has been the public health community. By accident or by design, we are all responsible for this situation.[We] have only one option—to ensure that ours will be the last generation that allows shame and stigma to rule over science and reason.”

Gro Harlem Brundland, Director General, WHO, World Health Report, 2001.

5+1 Simple Things to do

1. Watch your language (PEOPLE with a mental illness; no jokes please)
2. Educate yourself about mental illness
3. Remember, small acts of kindness go a long way (send a get well card; go for coffee)
4. Listen and ask – don't assume or give advice
5. Support mental health and anti-stigma programs (write a letter to your MP; donate)
6. Start a dialogue, not a debate