

Understanding stigma around suicide and mental health concerns

Stigma is the negative beliefs or attitudes about a person, or a group of people, based on a single factor, like an experience with suicide or a mental health challenge.

Some cultures may view suicide and mental health concerns more negatively than others. The reasons for this can be complicated and influenced by many things.

This can, but not always, include beliefs about what causes suicide or mental health concerns, putting family and community before the self, and belonging to a faith community.

“It is important that as part of the guide, that we encourage people to think about unconscious bias or stigma that they may not have recognised within themselves and then how this might be expressed as part of their broadcast.”

Estela Fuentes, Community broadcaster and
Coordinator Mariposa Trails Cross Cultural
Education Project and Suicide Prevention Network



The impact of stigma

Stigma can cause people to feel shame, leave them or their families feeling isolated, and make some people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds less likely to talk about their problems or seek support.

They may also feel unsure about telling others if:

- They have a mental health issue
- Someone close to them has died by suicide
- Someone close to them has previously attempted suicide.

When someone dies by suicide, stigma can also make grieving even harder. Families may feel ashamed, be judged by others, or stay silent because of cultural or religious beliefs.

This can lead to people feeling alone, hiding their pain, and not getting the support they need.

As a community broadcaster, you can help by:



Being aware of your own thoughts and attitudes. Ask yourself if you have any thoughts or beliefs about mental health concerns or suicide that could affect how you talk to or listen to others.



Sharing stories that show many different experiences, including hope and recovery, within your community.



Offering information and support in ways that respect culture and also builds awareness about what someone else might be going through.



Using language and formats everyone can understand.

What next?

Read through the other topics and considerations for your broadcast and then use the template to write down your ideas.

