

SOCIAL STIGMA due to COVID -19

Directorate:
Counselling and
Career
Development
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Define tomorrow.

UNISA



Outcomes

- To help you understand stigma
- To explore the impact of stigma due to Covid 19
- To explore how to prevent stigma
- To provide coping strategies to deal with stigma
- To highlight Higher Health Check and emergency contact numbers

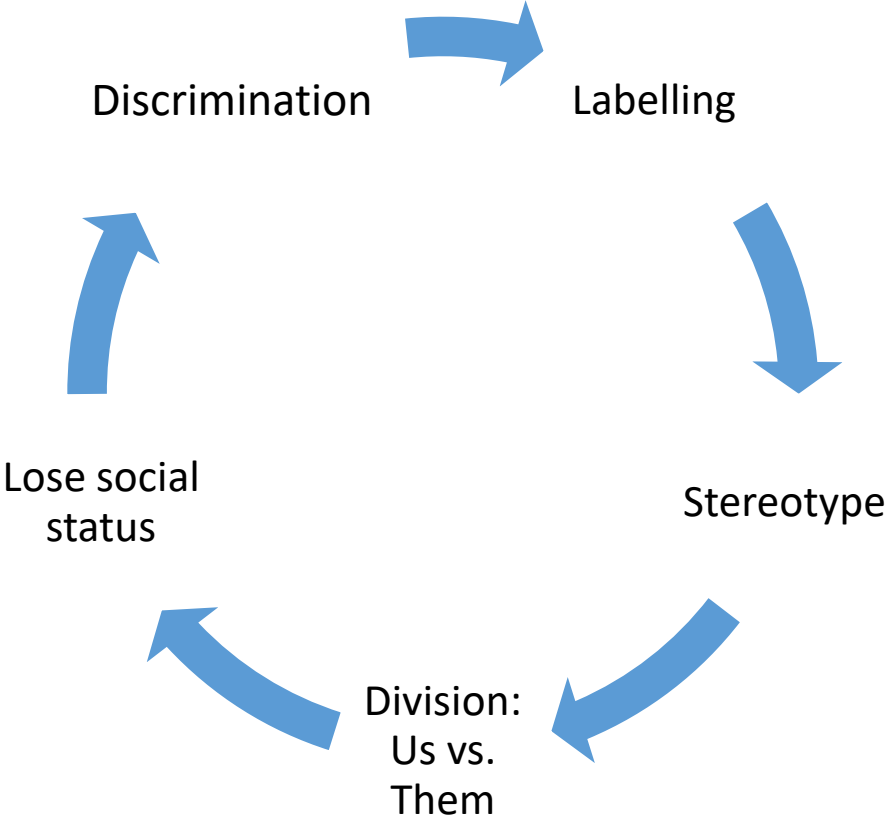
Why is COVID-19 creating social stigma?

- It is a disease that's new and for which there are still many unknowns
- People are often afraid of the unknown
- It is easy to associate that fear with 'others'

What is stigma?

- Is the negative association between a person or group of people who share:
 - Certain characteristics
 - a specific disease (e.g. COVID-19, HIV)
 - Belong to certain group (e.g. LGBTI)
- The people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against.
- They are treated separately and differently.
- They experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease/impairment or group.
- There is Division = Us vs. Them

CYCLE OF STIGMA



Some groups of people who may experience stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Healthcare workers, responders, and others working on the front lines.
- People who tested positive for COVID-19.
- People who have recovered from being sick with COVID-19.
- People who have been released from COVID-19 quarantine.
- People who have lost family/ friends due to COVID-19 deaths.
- Other frontline workers, e.g. retail workers, delivery drivers, or farm and food processing plant workers.

Social stigma related to COVID-19 is due to:

- A lack of knowledge about:
 - What COVID-19 is,
 - How COVID-19 spreads,
 - A need to blame someone,
 - Fears about disease and death,
 - Gossip that spreads rumours and myths.

What are the impacts of stigma?

Stigma can:

- Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination.
- Make people withdraw from activities enjoyed, from life, from others/work or studies
- Make people isolate themselves
- Prevent people from seeking health care immediately.
- Discourage people from adopting healthy behaviours.

Due to stigma people can experience some of these symptoms:

- Sadness, depressed mood, irritability
- Anger at self (blaming themselves) anger at others
- Anxious and worried about their present and future
- Feeling: useless/ hopeless/rejected, shameful, demoralised, humiliated
- Emptiness and being alone
- Feeling unsafe(physically and psychological)
- Feeling betrayed, survivors guilt (if they survive and other people pass on)

Impact

- Stigma can affect ones self-esteem (low self-esteem)
- Stigma can affect a person's identity
- Being stigmatised is traumatic (trauma)
- Stigma can create mental health difficulties, e.g. depression and anxiety

Do's

- Talk about the new coronavirus virus (COVID-19)
- Keep updated with developments on COVID-19 – read and listen to reliable news
- Talk about COVID-19 as a pandemic affecting people world wide
- Get to know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Understand that the virus can affect anyone – regardless of race, social status, education, geographical area, etc.
- Talk about “people who have COVID-19”, “people who are being treated for COVID-19”, “people who are recovering from COVID-19” or “people who died due to COVID- 19” – do not mention peoples names – respect privacy
- Talk about “people who may have COVID-19” or “people who are presumptive for COVID-19 – do not mention peoples names – privacy)

Do's

- Talk about prevention strategies and how to keep safe
- Implement the Prevention strategies regularly
- Talk positively about and emphasise the effectiveness of prevention and treatment measures.
- For most people this is a disease they can overcome. There are simple steps we can all take to keep ourselves, our loved ones and the most vulnerable safe.

How to deal with stigma

- Educate people about the disease and early detection
- Use videos from World Health organisation (WHO)
- Encourage people to seek treatment
- Address the fear to avoid stigma
- Have the facts (use reliable sources , e.g. WHO, Department of Health)
- Help spread the good advice

Don'ts

- Attach locations or ethnicity to the disease – this is not a “Wuhan Virus”, “Chinese Virus”.
- Refer to people with the disease as “COVID-19 cases” or “victims”.
- Talk about “COVID-19 suspects” or “suspected cases”.
- Talk about people “transmitting COVID-19” “infecting others” or “spreading the virus” as it implies intentional transmission and assigns blame.

DON'TS

- Use criminalising terminology that creates the impression that those with the disease have somehow done something wrong
- Don't create the impression that those with COVID-19 are less human than the rest of us
- Don't feed stigma
- Don't fuel wider reluctance to seek early treatment or attend screening, testing and quarantine.

SOME COPING STRATEGIES

- Asking for help is a sign of bravery and courage
- Get counselling and or social support for people who have experienced stigma or discrimination.
- Use virtual resources – stay informed
- Use Exercise/ dance/ healing music
- Start a new hobby or reconnect with an old hobby that you enjoyed.
- Cleaning/ gardening/ Enjoying nature
- Reading motivational stories/ movies
- Relaxation techniques, e.g. colouring in, breathing exercises, mindfulness

COVID-19 on campus

- **Avoid stigma and discrimination**
- Encourage your peers to follow hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Take part in creating an environment where all students are aware and see it as a responsibility to monitor symptoms.
- Encourage your peers to use Higher HealthCheck before coming to campus
- Actively encourage all peers who are sick to stay home and or study from home
- Don't share people names, personal information without their permission
- Don't post pictures of fellow students who you know have had COVID-19 on social media
- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of those seeking healthcare

Students and community members can help prevent stigma by:

- Correcting negative language that can cause stigma
- Sharing accurate information about how the virus spreads.
- Speaking out against negative behaviours and statements, including those on social media.
- Quickly communicating about the risk and prevention strategies
- Encouraging seeking treatment from medical professionals
- Actively encourage peers who are sick to seek treatment and study/work from home

Student / Community members/ and can help prevent stigma by

- Making sure that images used in communications show diverse communities and do not reinforce stereotypes.
- Using media channels, including news media and social media, to speak out against stereotyping groups of people who experience stigma because of COVID-19.
- Protecting those who are stigmatised and refer to support departments for counselling support.

We all can and have to:

- Make a conscious decision and effort to change and protect yourself and loved ones/ neighbors / fellow students/ communities, etc.
- Keep safe – Wear a face mask (mandatory)
- Cover your face with your elbow when sneezing
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap or sanitize
- Maintain social distance – keep a distance from others of 1.5 to 2 metres
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Stay at home when not feeling well

As students use Health Check App:

- Use Health Check App for Daily Health Screening for COVID-19 before coming to campus once able to do so

To access the tool:

- Download: healthcheck.higherhealth.ac.za
- Add Higher Health Check to your WhatsApp contacts:
Text Hi to 0600 11 0 000
- Dial using USSD line *134*832*2#

COVID-19 HIGHER HEALTH Solution

When **Higher Education institutions** begin to accept students and staff back onto campus, **daily health screening by staff and students** will be a critical step in ensuring their health and safety.

The **COVID19 Digital Risk Assessment and mapping tool known as HealthCheck** allows for early detection, mapping and management of COVID-19 cases using **USSD, WhatsApp and a simple web based form** and will be deployed by **HIGHER HEALTH** as a mandatory daily screening tool.



EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Save on your phone to save a life

- 24-hour HIGHER HEALTH Post school education and training helpline: Toll-free call 0800 36 36 36 or SMS 43336
- Gender based Violence toll free number: 0800428428;
- South African Depression & Anxiety Group (SADAG) : 0800 567 567;
- 24 hour helpline: 0800 456 789 OR SMS 31393/32312(available 7 days per week);
- Lifeline: 0861 322 322;
- Corona virus (COVID-19) 24-hour hotline: 080 002 9999
- COVID-19 connect (WhatsApp): 060 012 3456
- Suicide crisis line: 080 056 7567
- Lifeline: 086 132 2322
- Domestic violence helpline: 080 015 0150
- Childline: 080 005 5555

EVALUATION FORM

- Use this link to evaluate this resource: <https://bit.ly/32EbjvH>

Got some questions? Wanting to share your insights?

- We are available by email:
<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Learner-support-&-regions/Counselling-and-career-development/Contact-us>

REFERENCES

- <https://www.firstpost.com/health/expert-tips-how-to-deal-with-the-stigma-around-covid-19-infection-8244511.html>
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- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/za/blog/the-stigma-effect/202004/the-stigma-covid-19>
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Thank you

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