

Understanding mental illness

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



Understanding Mental Illness: Means for Lifting the Stigma As a victim of the debilitating mental illness clinical depression, I have a first hand knowledge of the terrible stigma attached to seeking medical help for this and similar problems. When the diagnosis was made, I told no one that I was seeing a psychologist. I feared what people would think of me and how they would react to one of their friends seeing a "shrink". Because mental illnesses are not well known and even less well understood, people tend to fear them. People who may be afflicted with mental illnesses often shy away from treatment because they fear that they will be labeled "crazy" or sent to an institution. I think that the stigma attached to mental health care could be easily lifted if regular psychiatric examinations were instituted, much the same as regular physicals. As people are exposed to the illnesses and begin to understand their origins and ways to help, this fear of people afflicted with the diseases should shrink (ha ha) and eventually disappear. As our country moves from a society made up of mainly manual laborers, to a society of white-collar workers, Americans find themselves with more and more leisure time. Often, if everything is going well in the world, society will look for problems to take the place of those that have been eliminated. For example, during the past ten years, Americans have had few really big problems, there have been no close to home wars, the economy is doing well, and unemployment has been dramatically down. Because of this, people have had large amounts of free time and energy, which was previously spent trying to work out larger problems and issues. For many people, this time is spent looking within themselves and often noticing things within their personality and psyche that would have been overlooked by earlier

generations (onhealth. com/ conditions/cause). Statistics of today would lead one to believe that the occurrence of these illnesses has increased, however; awareness and the willingness of the victim to receive help has increased instead. There is less of a stigma attached to seeking mental health care than there has ever been before in this country. People are more willing to recognize and obtain help for their problems instead of ignoring them and going on with their lives as if nothing is wrong. With the continual exposure of the general public to these diseases, society is sure to place even a lesser degree of shame on the sufferer and his or her family. Mental illnesses can be devastating to not only the sufferer, but also the sufferer's family and friends. Early detection and prompt administration of treatment help in the overall treatment of the mentally ill. If you or someone you know suffers from a known mental illness, don't ignore it, get help. Early detection is the key to fixing the problem quickly and easily. Works Cited Robb, Martin and Jerome Kroll. The Reality of Mental Illness (Cambridge University, 1986 New Standard Encyclopedia (1990) Mental Illnesses vol. 11. Chicago, Illinois Standard Education Corporation. 2000 Depression. com [Internet] [http://www. depression. com](http://www.depression.com) [accessed July 25, 2000] 2000 On Health [Internet] Mental Illnesses. [http://www. onhealth. com/conditions/ resource/conditions/item483](http://www.onhealth.com/conditions/resource/conditions/item483) [accessed July 25, 2000] 2000 Health-Center [Internet] Mental Health. [http://www. health-center. com/mental health/bipolar](http://www.health-center.com/mental health/bipolar) [accessed July 25, 2000] 2000 Health-Center [Internet] Mental Health. [http://www. health-center. com/mental health/schizophrenia](http://www.health-center.com/mental health/schizophrenia) [accessed July 25, 2000]