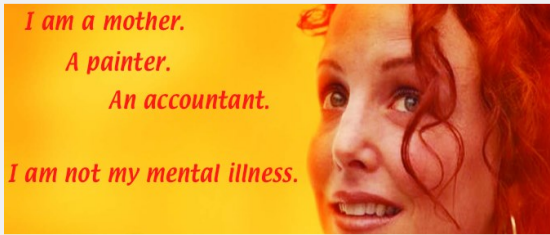## What is Mental Illness?

Mental illness is a health condition characterized by changes in thinking, mood, behavior or some combination of the three. This condition is associated with distress and/or a lessened ability to function.

I am a mother.
A painter.
An accountant.

I am not my mental illness.

What Causes Mental Illness?

- Long-term and acute stress
- Biological factors such as genetics, chemistry and hormones
- Use of alcohol, drugs and other substances
- Cognitive patterns such as constant negative thoughts and low self esteem
- Social factors such as isolation, financial problems, family breakdown, grief, loss or violence

Who has mental illness?

Mental illness can affect individuals of any age, gender, race, religion, or income.

Is recovery possible?

Through treatment and support, people with mental illness often recover. Recovery means a person is able to work, learn and participate fully in the community.

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
AND RECOVERY SERVICES**
**P.O. Box 2087
Merced, CA 95344
www.co.merced.ca.us**

**For more information call
(209) 381-6800
or 1-866-626-6472**

MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF, BUT STIGMA AND BIAS SHAME US ALL.

QUOTEHD.COM

Bill Clinton
American President

Mental Health is Part of All Our Lives

I am a neighbor.
A chess player.
A future President.

I am not my mental illness.

*Merced County
Mental Health Services Act
Ending the Stigma Campaign*

EachMind MATTERS

What is Stigma?

● An attempt to label a particular group of people as less worthy of respect than others

● A mark of shame, disgrace or disapproval that results in discrimination

● To diminish or devalue someone based on a perceived negative attribute, such as having a mental illness

I am a skater.
A shortstop.
A grandson.

I am not my mental illness.
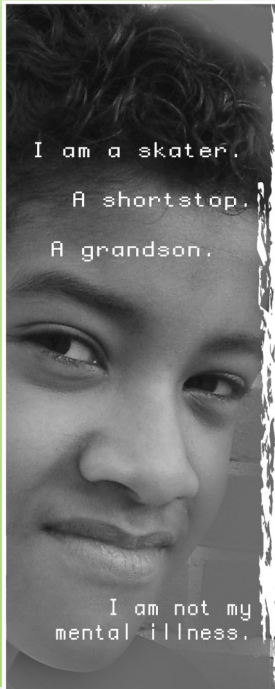
What does Stigma have to do with Mental Illness?

~

Stigma leads to …

◊ Prejudice and discrimination against people with mental illness
◊ People living with mental illness feel afraid or ashamed to seek treatment
◊ Fear, mistrust, and violence against people living with mental illness
◊ Family and friends turning their backs on people with mental illness

How to Fight Stigma

♦ **Use respectful language**
One of the first ways to get rid of stigma is to treat people with respect and dignity. Be mindful of your words. Never use harmful terms like crazy, lunatic, psycho or retarded. Educate that people are living with mental illness.

♦ **Educate about mental health**
Talk openly and spread the word that mental health problems can affect all of us: friends, neighbors, co-workers and family members. Share that mental illness is a treatable condition and that people do recover.

♦ **Become an advocate**
Speak out and challenge stereotypes portrayed in the media. Take it upon yourself to inform your community about the truth of mental illness and the resources available.

♦ **Foster an inclusive environment**
Include mental health issues in discussions about acceptance of diversity, just as you would discuss cultural diversity, religious beliefs, physical disability, and sexual orientation.