

# How are you really feeling?



**Do you say you're fine even if you're not?**

**Do you let anyone know exactly how you are feeling?**



**Do you say what you think people want to hear?**

**Do you give different people different answers?**

## We've been there...

At 'York Ending Stigma - Let's Talk Mental Health' we are all people with experience of poor mental health / mental illness / mental ill-health (please use the language that's right for you) and we believe that no-one should be ashamed to talk about their mental health. This is why we share our experiences to end mental health stigma.

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Let's talk mental health

[www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma](http://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma)

# What is mental health?

Mental health is about how I think and feel, and is something that changes. Sometimes it's good and sometimes it's not. When it's good, I feel good, but when it isn't, I can't concentrate, I stop doing things with people, and I can struggle to cope.

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I find mental health and mental illness to be confusing - I don't want to take medication for exam or work stress, but I don't want to ignore mental illness, not have any support, and become really unwell. I wish more people would talk about mental health so that I can have a better idea as to what's 'normal' for me.

# What is mental health stigma?

Mental health stigma is unfair attitudes towards a person with poor mental health, for example assuming someone who is clinically depressed is lazy. These negative attitudes can be based on a preconception, misunderstanding, or fear of mental health.

# Why We Talk?

**Because it helps end stigma!**

Poor mental health seems to thrive in secrecy, shame, and silence. I felt so unhappy, misunderstood, and alone. When I eventually started to talk about my mental health, it was the best thing I did. It took a few goes to get it right, but it enabled me to feel so much better.

**It's not a competition!**

It really annoys me when people start competing over who has it the hardest with their mental health, when they don't even know what I'm going through. Ugh! Please, can we have open and honest conversations instead?

# How can I reduce mental health stigma?

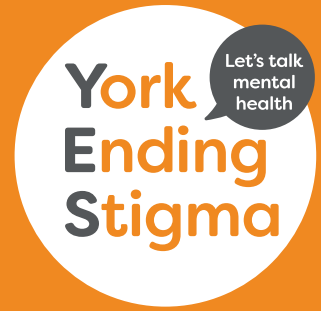
- **Be honest** with yourself about how you're feeling.
- **Be honest** with someone you trust about how you're feeling; this could be a teacher, tutor, manager, parent, friend, GP, or a mental health professional.
- **Be kind** to yourself and seek support - it is a strength to seek support, whether self-help or support from others. Persevere with it even if it takes several goes to get support.
- **Be open minded** and don't make assumptions when someone discloses their poor mental health; listen, and don't try to 'fix' or promise 'cures'.
- **Accept personal choice** and that different things help different people. Don't judge someone for taking medication or assume that medication is a quick easy fix when it isn't, for example.
- **Don't use stigmatising language** - it's not ok to describe being tidy as being "so OCD" or to describe anyone as "they're so bipolar".
- **Use reliable information** - learn about mental ill health from trusted sources and people with experience of poor mental health.
- **Start a conversation about mental health** ...but only if you want to. It's ok not to talk sometimes. Don't force it and remember that there is much more to someone than their poor mental health.

There's lots more information on our website:

[www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma](http://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma)

# Language Matters

The words we use to describe mental health are personal. Our words and the intention behind them impact people differently. Something we can do to help end mental health stigma is to think about the phrases we use when going about our everyday life.



## Avoid Using

“I’m so OCD.”

“I’m so depressed.”

“They were a psycho.”

“That was mental.”

## Consider Using

I’m very organised.  
I like things to be a certain way.

I’m feeling sad about that.  
I’m so disappointed.

We had a difficult relationship.  
They were unreasonable.

That was unusual / unexpected.  
That was busy / crowded.

**Untrue phrases spread stigma and misinformation.**

# Access support

Choose credible support. We think the Healthwatch York **Mental Health and Wellbeing Guide** is a great starting point. Visit [healthwatchyork.co.uk](http://healthwatchyork.co.uk) to get the guide.



Keep up to date with the latest blog posts, podcasts and more from York Ending Stigma by scanning this QR code or visit:

[www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma](http://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma)

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