

# HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR PEERS WITH STIGMATIZED MENTAL ILLNESS

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**ams**  
**PEER SUPPORT**

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to respectfully  
acknowledge that UBC Vancouver and  
AMS Peer Support are on the  
traditional, unceded, and ancestral land  
of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam)  
peoples.

# CONTENT WARNING

This presentation will discuss topics of mental health, substance use, and suicide.

Please prioritize your wellbeing and take care of yourself however you see fit.

# OUTLINE

01

ADDRESSING THE  
STIGMA

02

BREAKING THE  
STIGMA

03

GIVING SUPPORT



01


# WHAT IS STIGMA?

What is it, where does it come from, and why is it damaging?



## WHAT IS STIGMA?

According to the Mayo Clinic, "stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage."



# LEVELS OF STIGMA

INTERNAL



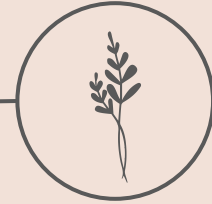
Self-stigma and  
shame

PUBLIC



Stigma from  
others and  
social  
implications

INSTITUTIONAL



Stigma in the  
workplace and  
academia

## housing insecurity

Studies in various Canadian cities indicate that between 23% and 67% of people experiencing homelessness report having a mental illness

## income

Canadians in the lowest income group are 3 to 4 times more likely than those in the highest income group to report poor to fair mental health.

## Indigenous identity

First Nations youth die by suicide about 5 to 6 times more often than non-Indigenous youth. Suicide rates for Inuit youth are among the highest in the world, at 11 times the national average

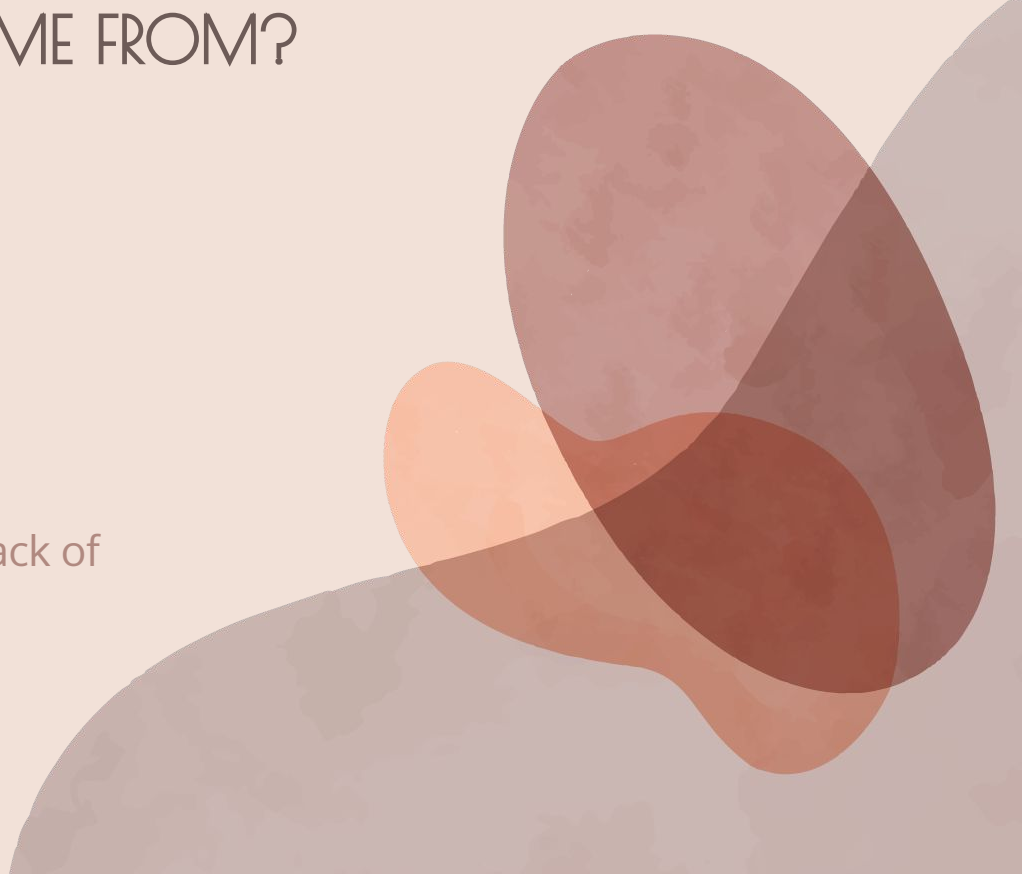


# WHERE DOES STIGMA COME FROM?

Some sources of stigma:

- The media
- Unsafe language
- A lack of understanding

Fundamentally, stigma is rooted in a lack of understanding or fear of the unknown



# MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE MEDIA



# BE MINDFUL OF YOUR LANGUAGE

## UNSAFE

"That class is traumatizing"

"This movie is depressing"

"You're so organized, so OCD"

"He's such a psycho"

## SAFER

"That class is so challenging. I'm having a tough time"

"This movie makes me feel sad"

"You're so organized"

"I don't really understand him"

O2

BREAKING  
THE STIGMA



# ASPECTS OF DE-STIGMATIZATION

## EDUCATION

Learn about different disorders and symptoms

## IMPACTS

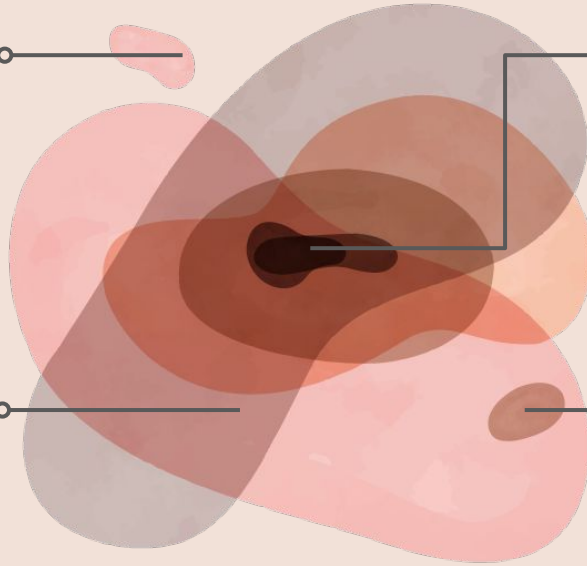
Learn how these symptoms can affect people with the disorder

## COPING

Learn different coping strategies or support methods

## EDUCATE

Share accurate information and a sense of understanding



# UNDERSTANDING THE SYMPTOMS



## SPEAK OPENLY

Talk about mental health openly and honestly. Breaking the stigma starts with open dialogue and assuming best intentions.



## KEEP LEARNING

It's important to continue your education and foster a deeper understanding of symptoms and why they occur.



O3

# PROVIDING SUPPORT

To the best of our ability.



# LET'S TALK ABOUT “DIAGNOSIS”

The good, the bad, the ugly.



# COMMON DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS



## LOW MOOD

Prolonged sadness or  
low mood



## ANHEDONIA

Loss of interest or  
pleasure



## GUILTY FEELINGS

Feelings of  
worthlessness or guilt



## SLEEP CHANGES

Sleeping too much or  
too little



## WEIGHT CHANGES

Unintentional gain or  
loss of weight



## SUICIDAL IDEATION

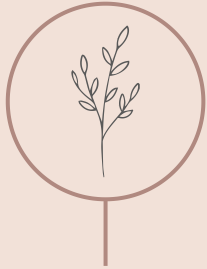
Thoughts or plans of  
suicide

# A WAY TO HELP SOMEONE WITH DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

Focus on **reconnection** to:

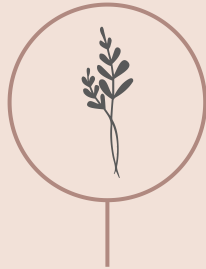
- People
  - Friends, family, professional support
- Hobbies and passions
- Beliefs and values
- Hope for the future

# COMMON ANXIOUS SYMPTOMS



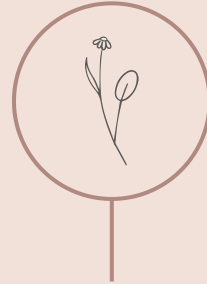
## FATIGUE

Restlessness, changes  
in sleep, general  
fatigue



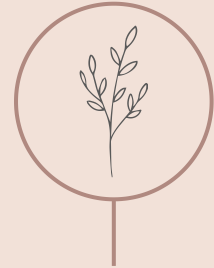
## TENSION

Unexplained muscle  
tension or  
“high-strung” feeling



## IRRITABILITY

Short-temper, changes  
in mood, irritability



## DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING

Tuning-out or feeling  
unable to concentrate

# PANIC DISORDERS SYMPTOMATOLOGY



## BREATHING CHANGES

Hyperventilation, trembling, or shallow breathing



## CONFUSION

Unsure of surroundings, feeling out of control or a sense of danger



## PHYSICAL PAIN

Headaches, unexplained pain, or tightness in chest/throat



## CATASTROPHIZING

Sudden fear of death or what is felt is the worst possible event coming

# HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WITH ANXIOUS SYMPTOMS



## FOCUS ON THE PRESENT

Keep them in the moment



## BE A VOICE OF REASON

Try to encourage a focus on things within their control



## MAKE A SCHEDULE

To-do lists and achievable schedules can help manage everyday stressors



## AFFIRM THEM

Affirm their feelings as well as their ability to cope

# HOW TO HELP SOMEONE EXPERIENCING PANIC



## TRY NOT TO PANIC

They received the energy  
that you provide



## BE PATIENT

Do your best to stay  
patient, gentle, and calm



## DEEP BREATHING

Encourage deep breaths  
into the stomach



## DON'T TOUCH

Ask for consent before  
touching them



## TALK THEM THROUGH IT



## Describe the situation

"Hey, you're in your room and I think you're having a panic attack right now, but you're safe and it's going to be okay."

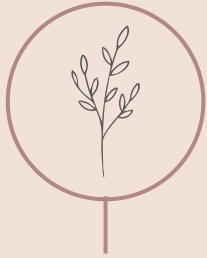
## Try grounding

"What day is it? Do you remember what you did today? Try naming all of the colours you can see."

## Aftercare

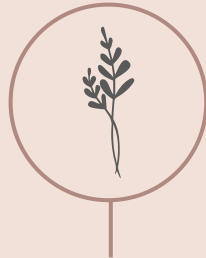
"Do you need anything? Do you want some water? We can stay here as long as you need. I'll be right here."

# COMMON SUBSTANCE USE AND RELATED SYMPTOMS



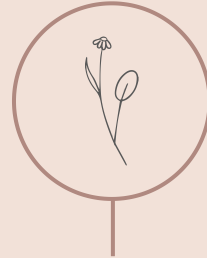
## IMPROPER USE

Using higher quantities or longer than intended



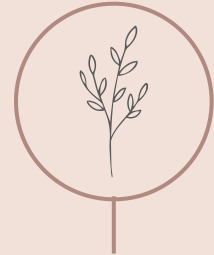
## UNABLE TO MANAGE USE

Unable to cut down or stop using despite efforts to do so



## CONTINUING USE

Even when it has negative effects on other aspects of life



## WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Symptoms relieved by more substance



# HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WITH SUBSTANCE USE



## SKIP THE LECTURE

Meet them where they're at. The choice to enter recovery is theirs to make, not yours.



## BE THERE

Express your support for them regardless of their relationship with substances



## EXPLAIN OPTIONS

Ask if they want to look at different resources for substance use related disorders



QUESTIONS  
OR OFFERS?

# KEEP IN TOUCH

Contact Us!

Location: NEST 3125

Website: [ams.ubc.ca/peersupport](https://ams.ubc.ca/peersupport)

Social: [@ams\\_student\\_services](https://twitter.com/ams_student_services)

Email: [ps.outreach@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:ps.outreach@ams.ubc.ca)

