



## Mythbusting: 14 common misconceptions about mental health

### Myths that minimize the problem.

#### MYTH

**1. Mental health problems affect only a small fraction of the population.**

#### FACT

- Approximately one in two people have experienced mental health challenges in the last year (source).
- Nearly 3 in 5 young people (16-24 year olds) have experience of mental health issues (source).
- There may be more people experiencing distress who do not feel able to speak out due to the stigma attached to mental health problems.

.....

**2. Depression is not real, it is just sadness.**

- Depression is a common mental health problem that can vary from mild to severe.
- Unaddressed, it can lead to disability and even suicide.
- If addressed however, it is possible to overcome the challenges related to this and live a 'normal' life.

*More information on the campaign and on mental health stigma and discrimination : [ec.europa.eu/in-this-together](https://ec.europa.eu/in-this-together)*

## Myths around Young people and mental health

### MYTH

**3. Young people are unlikely to experience mental health problems.**

**They just have mood swings caused by hormonal fluctuations and act out due to a desire for attention.**

### FACT

- Teenagers often have mood swings, but many of them also struggle with their mental health.
- 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year.
- Fourteen per cent of the world's adolescents experience mental-health problems.
- Half of all mental health issues start by the age of 14.
- Globally, among those aged 10–15, suicide is the fifth most prevalent cause of death, and for adolescents aged 15–19 it is the fourth most common cause.
- It's important for us all to not be dismissive of young people's mental health. We need to be taking them seriously, simply listening and supporting them can have a major positive impact.

**4. Bad parenting causes mental issues in adolescents.**

- Though negative home environments may indeed contribute, a large number of factors typically combine to lead to the development of mental health problems in adolescents.
- These factors may include family poverty, traumatic events, exposure to violence, migration, and other adverse circumstances and events.
- Ensuring support both at home and to protect from other potential external negative factors can significantly reduce the chances of adolescents developing mental health problems.

**5. Adolescents who get good grades and have a lot of friends will not have mental health issues!**

- Experiencing depression is very different from feeling down or sad! Everybody feels down or sad sometimes.
- A person experiencing depression will likely face intense feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, negativity and helplessness that stay with them instead of going away.
- Anyone can be depressed. You can feel depressed even if you are top of the class or the most popular person in the school.
- Depression is a complex issue and it's almost impossible to find a clear cause behind it.

## Myths around seeking help, treating or talking about mental health issues

### MYTH

**6. Nothing can be done to protect people from developing mental health issues.**

### FACT

- Mental Health issues develop as a result of various factors. These could include financial stability, unemployment, exposure to violence, migration, and other adverse circumstances and events.
- Protecting people from or avoiding these social and environmental factors can significantly reduce chances that an individual develops mental health issues.

.....

**7. If you have a mental health issue you are unlikely to recover.**

- Recovery is possible. Individuals experiencing mental health can absolutely go on to lead happy and fulfilling lives.
- There are more treatments, services and community support systems in place than ever before, and they work.

.....

**8. Therapy and self-help are a waste of time.**

- Personal recovery in mental health is entirely possible.
- Many options are available to us both online and in-person. But personal recovery will always be exactly that; personal.
- Not all forms of recovery or treatment will necessarily be the right fit for you. Discovering what is available in your community is a great first step in discovering what your path to recovery will look like.

## Myths around seeking help, treating or talking about mental health issues

### MYTH

**9. Talking about mental health problems will give people ideas or make problem worse.**

### FACT

- Many people worry that by talking about mental illness, crises or suicide they might put ideas into a person's head. Or they are worried about using the wrong words or offending someone. Or they avoid the subject because it could make themselves or others uncomfortable.
- But avoiding the topic could make people feel they have to keep their own problems secret or stop others from reaching out to someone they think might be at risk.
- It can also perpetuate stigma about mental health that prevents people from getting help. It stops our communities moving forward on matters of mental health for all.
- Talking positively and safely about issues regarding mental health helps people rather than harms them. We need to learn how to talk about these matters safely, respectfully and accurately.
- Positive connection and belonging can have a powerful impact on someone who has mental health problems, is suicidal or is experiencing troubled times.
- Learning to talk about suicide and mental health safely will reduce your fear about saying the wrong things. Using the right language to talk about mental health matters.
- Visit the campaign website <https://ec.europa.eu/inthistogether> for more details.

## Myths around people with lived experience

### MYTH

**10. People with mental health issues are violent or dangerous.**

### FACT

- Most people with mental health issues are no more likely to be violent than anyone else.
- People who are experiencing mental health are just like you and me.
- Only 3%–5% of violent acts can be attributed to individuals living with a serious mental illness.
- People who are experiencing mental health problems are statistically more likely to be a victim of violence.
- In fact, people with severe mental issues are over 10 times more likely to be victims of a violent crime than the general population.

.....

**11. Certain types of people cannot have mental health problems.**

- Some people believe that certain people are simply immune to mental health issues – be it that they are too strong, too wealthy or too young.
- In fact we are all prone to mental health problems, regardless of personal circumstances.
- However, some people are more likely to develop mental health issues. This includes young people, in fact 50% of adult mental health issues begin prior to the age of 14 (AJGP, 2018).
- If you perpetuate the myth that certain groups cannot have mental health problems, then you also decrease the chance of recognizing early warning signs among these people and reducing their access to support systems.

## Myths around people with lived experience

### MYTH

**12. People with mental health problems can't function in society (they are unproductive, anti-social, incapable or incompetent) .**

### FACT

- People with lived experience are perfectly capable, given the right support, of living and contributing to the various communities they find themselves..
- But people often view people with experience of mental health as being unable to hold fulfilling lives at home, work, school or in the community.
- This paints those with experience as an 'other', too different from the rest of society to participate. This causes stigmatisation and isolation of those with experience of mental health problems, further disconnecting them from communities.
- It's up to all of us to challenge harmful stereotypes that force people with lived experience into isolation, creating better more inclusive communities we can all enjoy together.

**13. People with mental health needs, even those who are managing their mental health issues, cannot tolerate the stress of holding a job.**

- Much like any other disability, employees, who are given the appropriate supports and a suitable environment, will be just as productive as any other employee.
- For some people with lived experience, having experienced and overcome many of the challenges associated, mental health can act as an asset.

**14. Persons with severe mental health problems are irresponsible, so life decisions should be made by others.**

- Persons with severe mental health problems are as responsible for their actions and decisions as anyone else.
- They may, sometimes, need support with decision making processes at times, but nobody has the right to make decisions for them.

**15. Persons with severe mental illness are incapable of taking care of themselves and someone else must do it for them.**

- Infantilisation of people with mental health conditions is a big problem.
- Though they may sometimes have difficulties in living independently, varying levels of support can allow them to live fulfilling lives in the community, where they can work, learn, and meaningfully contribute to society.