



# Communicating Mental Health in the Media

## WORKBOOK



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## INTRODUCTION

There is a hidden burden of many, if not all, illnesses. Characterized by social disqualification of individuals, stigma can lead to limited access to health services and shame patients into avoiding treatment of curable and manageable disorders. According to the National Institute for Mental Health, 13,000 suicides are committed each year by adults in the US with untreated schizophrenic, manic or depressive symptoms.

There is great power in using education to reduce stigma effects. A study conducted in 2003 analyzed the efficacy of intervention with young people aimed at increasing mental health literacy & found positive attitude scores to rise significantly after a short educational workshop (Brijnath B. et. al., 2003). Educating the masses on the underpinnings of mental and neurological illnesses can have a tremendous effect in reducing preventable tragedies that the world faces today.

### Course Description

This course provides a general introduction to communicating science effectively for the purposes of disseminating mental health information to the public. Students will practice writing about specific illnesses that are commonly misunderstood by the general public in a way that is clear & vivid without diluting the topic. They will also learn how to use communication techniques to connect with patients who deal with stigmatizing disorders. The work done in the course by the students will be continually published online through The Humanology Project, a website which serves as a platform for educating the public with the hope of reducing stigma for diseases.

### Course Aims

- To provide an introduction to science communication in the broader context of (a) the role of communication in science, and (b) the cultural and societal impact of science communication to increase public understanding of illness
- To cultivate student's practical communication skills, with a particular emphasis on effective writing and speaking with patients experiencing illnesses
- To provide students with a range of resources and skills for effective communication of complex material
- To provide students with an opportunity to publish their work on a website with the practical effects of reducing stigma of illnesses

### Bibliography

Brijnath, B., Protheroe, J., Mahtani, K., & Antoniadis, J. (2016). Do Web-based Mental Health Literacy Interventions Improve the Mental Health Literacy of Adult Consumers? Results From a Systematic Review. *J Med Internet Res*, 18(6), 165. <https://www.jmir.org/2016/6/e165>



## PRE-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions:

As you prepare for the course, it might be useful for you to think through some of the following points. This is not a “test” and you will not be “graded” on your performance.

### General Questions

1. What are the most important things you hope to learn?

2. What do you expect to gain from learning them?

3. How would you rate your current understanding of the topics in this course?

4. How do you hope this course will benefit your professional work?

5. Do you have any specific questions you would like the trainer to cover? Any other special requests?



## Course Specific Questions

1. Have you encountered anyone with mental health conditions?

2. In your opinion, how do people develop symptoms of mental health conditions?

3. How does the media portray mental health conditions?

4. Can you do anything to help people with mental health conditions?

5. What does mental health mean to you?



## LECTURE 1

### A Brief History of Mental Illness Stigma

#### Learning Objectives

*At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:*

1. Describe the history of mental health stigma
2. Understand the definitions of stigma, mental health, mental disorder, which will be pertinent throughout the whole course

#### Discussion Question

In your community (or country), do you think mental illness is still stigmatized, and in what ways?

#### Lecture 1 Quiz

- 1) Which of the following is mental illness *not* due to:
  - a) Another medical condition
  - b) Brain chemistry
  - c) Severe psychological trauma suffered as a child
  - d) Side effects of a medication
- 2) Hippocrates believed mental illness was caused by:
  - a) Psychology
  - b) Physiology
  - c) Environment
  - d) None of the above
- 3) Who defined stigma as an “undesired differentness”?
  - a) Ann Jacoby
  - b) Bruce Link
  - c) Erving Goffman
  - d) Jo Phelan



- 4) Which of the following is *not* a component of stigma?
- a) Labeling
  - b) Ignorance
  - c) Stereotyping
  - d) Separation
- 5) What causes mental disorders?
- a) Biological factors
  - b) Social factors
  - c) Psychological factors
  - d) All of the above
- 6) Health is the absence of disease.
- a) True
  - b) False

Lecture 1 Quiz: A Brief History of Mental Illness Stigma

ANSWER KEY

- 1) A
- 2) B
- 3) C
- 4) B
- 5) D
- 6) B



## LECTURE 2

### Portrayal of Mental Illness in the Media

*An overview of the current way mental illness is portrayed in television, movies, newspapers, and more.*

#### Learning Objectives

*At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:*

1. Understand media's portrayal of mental illness, considering all angles of depiction

#### Discussion Question

Rewrite this newspaper headline to remove the negative reference to mental illness: "History of Schizophrenia Detailed for Man Held in Subway Attack"





## Lecture 2 Quiz

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the public's most significant source of mental illness information.
  - a) Electronic media
  - b) Newspapers
  - c) Academic papers
  - d) Print media
2. All forms of media portray mental illness with a heavy emphasis on:
  - a) Dangerousness
  - b) Unpredictability
  - c) Aloofness
  - d) Both a & b
3. Which value best represents the percentage of characters depicted as mentally ill in prime-time television shows?
  - a) 10%
  - b) 20%
  - c) 3%
  - d) 30%
4. The process whereby an individual with a mental illness will perceive him or herself as an outcast:
  - a) Self-stigma
  - b) Self-blame
  - c) Othering
  - d) Public stigma
5. The media perpetuates which negative reactions to individuals with mental illness?
  - a) Ridicule
  - b) Derision
  - c) Fear
  - d) All of the above
6. Mental health professionals are impacted by the circulation of negative media images.
  - a) True
  - b) False

Lecture 2 Quiz: Portrayal of Mental Illness in the Media

ANSWER KEY

- 1) A
- 2) D
- 3) C
- 4) A
- 5) D
- 6) A



## LECTURE 3

### Reducing the Stigma of Mental Illness

*A theoretical framework on research which highlights effective ways of reducing stigma of mental illness*

#### Learning Objectives

*At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:*

1. Facilitate an open discussion about effective ways to reduce stigma surrounding mental illness
2. Understand current research that aims to establish methods of reducing stigma in our daily lives

#### Discussion Question

Rewrite this newspaper headline to remove the negative reference to mental illness: “History of Schizophrenia Detailed for Man Held in Subway Attack”

#### Lecture 3 Quiz

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the public’s most significant source of mental illness information.
  - a) Electronic media
  - b) Newspapers
  - c) Academic papers
  - d) Print media
2. All forms of media portray mental illness with a heavy emphasis on:
  - a) Dangerousness
  - b) Unpredictability
  - c) Aloofness
  - d) Both a & b
3. Which value best represents the percentage of characters depicted as mentally ill in prime-time television shows?
  - a) 10%
  - b) 20%
  - c) 3%
  - d) 30%



4. The process whereby an individual with a mental illness will perceive him or herself as an outcast:
- a) Self-stigma
  - b) Self-blame
  - c) Othering
  - d) Public stigma
5. The media perpetuates which negative reactions to individuals with mental illness?
- a) Ridicule
  - b) Derision
  - c) Fear
  - d) All of the above
6. Mental health professionals are impacted by the circulation of negative media images.
- a) True
  - b) False

Lecture 2 Quiz: Portrayal of Mental Illness in the Media

ANSWER KEY

- 1) A
- 2) C
- 3) C
- 4) A
- 5) D
- 6) A



## LECTURE 4

### Communication of Science I

*A theoretical framework on research which highlights effective ways of reducing stigma of mental illness*

#### Learning Objectives

*At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:*

1. Facilitate an open discussion about effective ways to reduce stigma surrounding mental illness
2. Understand current research that aims to establish methods of reducing stigma in our daily lives

#### Question

Rewrite the following “story” using the ABT formula discussed in class.

Schizophrenia is a mental disorder characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and behavior, AND individuals with schizophrenia often have additional health problems such as anxiety, depressive, or substance-use disorders, AND the causes of schizophrenia include genetic factors.

Lecture 4 Quiz: ANSWER KEY (answers will vary)

Schizophrenia is a mental illness AND can be caused by genetic factors, BUT it is an extremely complicated disease that scientists are just beginning to understand. THEREFORE, we need to have empathy and education about schizophrenia to learn how we can best interact with those suffering from this mental disorder.



## LECTURE 5

### Communication of Science II

*A theoretical framework on research which highlights effective ways of reducing stigma of mental illness*

#### Learning Objectives

*At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:*

1. Hone their scientific writing skills
2. Showcase their understanding of the principles of effective writing.

#### In Class Examples: Cut the Clutter

Rewrite the following examples:

“This paper provides a review of the basic tenets of cancer biology study design, using as examples studies that illustrate the methodologic challenges or that demonstrated successful solutions to the difficulties inherent in biological research.”

“As it is well known, increased athletic activity has been related to a profile of lower cardiovascular risk, lower blood pressure levels, and improved muscular and cardio-respiratory performance.”

#### More Practice

Anti-inflammatory drugs may be protective for the occurrence of Alzheimer’s Disease.

Clinical seizures have been estimated to occur in 0.5% to 2.3% of the neonatal population.



An IQ test measures an individual's abilities to perform functions that usually fall in the domains of verbal communication, reasoning, and performance of tasks that represent motor and spatial capabilities.

Possible Rewrites:

1. Anti-inflammatory drugs may protect against Alzheimer's Disease.
2. Clinical seizures occur in 0.5% to 2.3% of newborns.
3. An IQ test measures an individual's verbal, reasoning, or motor and spatial abilities.



## LECTURE 6

### Incorporating Narratives in Writing

*A theoretical framework on research which highlights effective ways of reducing stigma of mental illness*

#### Learning Objectives

*At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:*

1. Respectfully incorporate narratives of patients with mental illnesses into their writing.
2. Balance elements of narrative nonfiction and narrative medicine.

#### Interview Guidelines

Humanology Project Contributors are required to conduct interviews with people who have suffered from issues in mental health or with professors who are conducting relevant research. These are designed to gather further information on a topic, and profiles. In doing so, please follow the guidelines below:

- ✓ Contact the potential interviewee by phone, email or whatever method is most appropriate. Don't be alarmed if they don't respond immediately. If you don't hear from them after a few business days, follow up. Remember to be polite.
- ✓ Ask the interviewee if they agree to speak on the record.
- ✓ At the beginning of an interview in which any degree of anonymity is expected, there should be a discussion in which the ground rules are set explicitly.
- ✓ With the interviewee's permission, record the conversation on a phone, computer, or other recording device.
- ✓ If a quotation is flawed because of grammar or lack of clarity, paraphrase in a way that is true to the original quote. If a quote's meaning is too murky to be paraphrased accurately, it should not be used.
- ✓ If the interview is in person, avoid loud and busy locations. Ideally, find a place in which the interviewee is most comfortable, such as their office, home, or favorite coffee shop.
- ✓ Arrive early and well dressed.
- ✓ At the outset of the interview, you should: identify yourself; state the purpose of the interview; and tell the interviewee how much time the interview will take.
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions that the interviewee.
- ✓ Give the interviewee ample time to reply; this is a conversation, not an interrogation.
- ✓ Ask the interviewee to clarify complex or vague answers.
- ✓ Avoid lecturing the interviewee, arguing or debating.
- ✓ Email/snail mail a thank you note within 24 hours of the interview.
- ✓ Above all else, never interrupt. Silence often precedes the best quotes. Don't fear silence.

Guidelines borrowed from *The Associated Press*'s "News Values and Principles" and The Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism's "Interviewing Principles."



Find a friend, colleague, family member, or anyone you may know who might be willing to be interviewed by you who might have experienced some form of mental illness at some point in their lives. Use the interview guidelines above and information from the lecture as guidance.

You can also use prompts from *The Humanology Project's* Share Your Story webpage. If you and the person you are interviewing would like for the story to be published on the website, you can submit it here: <http://www.humanologyproject.org/share-your-story>





## POST-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions:

You have devoted time to the course, writing course notes, and thinking of how the content could be beneficial for you. We'd love for you to share your thoughts with us.

1. How likely would you recommend this training course to a friend or colleague?

2. How well did the content that was delivered match what you expected when you registered?

3. How much new information did you receive in the training course?

4. How actionable was the information you received in the training course?

5. If you were to pick three words to describe the course, what would they be?