



SHATTER the STIGMA: Flipping the Facility Culture Frequently Asked Questions



Q What is the first step our facility should take when it comes to reducing stigma around talking about depression and other mental health issues?

A Create a facility culture where patients can talk openly about mental health, by posting materials, educational resources about mental health issues, and working with staff to understand the importance of mental health issues for themselves and their patients. Here are some resources that open the dialogue

- [Sample Letter For Starting a Conversation About Mental Health Struggles](#)
- [Physical Symptoms and Feelings Tracker](#)
- [Preparing to Share](#)
- [Your Mind and Your Body: Talking to Your Doctor About Mental Health](#)

Q I work at the dialysis facility with a diverse patient population. I know stigma can affect patients of various ethnicities and races differently. What can our facility do to increase staff awareness?

A Get educated on stigma within various minority groups. Share the facts and resources with staff members. Check out some great resources from Mental Health America available [here](#). Create a bulletin board or education station specifically for staff to see.

Q Our facility social worker tries to talk to patients who have screened positive for depression but they never want to talk or get “offended” when we ask.

A Be conscious of language – conversations staff have in the care area may make patients feel like they will be judged. Remind the staff that words matter. There are

simple ways to switch up the conversation and create a non-judgmental atmosphere like refraining from using phrases such as “It could be worse” or “Just brush it off” when a patient seems upset. Everyone should be mindful and practice empathy. Visit [here](#) for more tips.

Q Our patients often see their depression as secondary or not as important as coming to dialysis treatments.

A Encourage equality between physical and mental health. – Mental health treatment is just as important as dialysis treatment when it comes to quality of life.

Q Many patients feel they are going through their diagnosis alone or no other patient is going through the same struggles. How can we work with these patients to feel less alone?

A Show compassion and **Normalize** feeling depressed as an emotion many dialysis patients experience. This is especially true in a newly diagnosed kidney. This will help patients feel more at ease to talking about their feelings and to seek treatment. Statements like: “ Many people go to therapy just like many people go to dialysis.”

Q What are some other ideas to help patients discuss their mental health?

A Avoid discussions of this nature on the treatment floor. Offer a private setting for patients to converse. Suggest meeting to talk before or after treatment. You can also, offer to speak to the patient on the phone is another great way to connect.