

It's OK To Ask-It's OK To Know

Nudging Mental Health Stigma Out Of The Way
In Mentoring Relationships

Jerry Girard, LCPC, LAC
Counseling Director
Student Health Services
Montana State University Billings

Mental Health Stigma In Mentoring Relationships Creates...

- ...uncertainty regarding how to react
- ...anxiety regarding how much we should know
- ...ethical concerns regarding how involved to be
- ...relationship concerns regarding boundaries
- ...behavioral concerns regarding impact on performance
- ...group chemistry concerns regarding distractions
- ...silence

There is no evidence base that any of this is necessary or helpful

When We Nudge Mental Health Stigma Out Of The Way, We...

- ...send a message of caring and compassion
- ...validate others in way that seems unlikely
- ...do our part to create a culture of acceptance
- ...message others that we are willing to listen
- ...message others that we are able to help
- ...create a safe space – free of judgement
- ...help

Stigma-free responses are typically met with relief and gratitude

So, What Can We Do To Nudge?

- Equate mental health and medical health
- Talk openly and directly about mental health
- Get trained and provide mental health trainings
- “What happened?” – instead of – “What’s wrong?”
- Ask often
- Take time to listen actively
- Share thoughtfully and appropriately

What About Some Launch Points?

- Host mental health trainings and programming for students-athletes, staff, faculty, community members, etc. (ACEs, QPR, MHFA, ASIST)
- Approach conversations about mental health, the same way we talk about physical wellness and injuries
- Promote a community culture of being trauma informed and trauma responsive instead of stigma informed and stigma non-responsive

Quiet, denial, shame, fear, and inaction allow stigma to thrive

Let's Talk and Share!

- What's working where you are regarding mental health and stigma?
- What's not working where you are regarding mental health and stigma?
- Where can you go from here?
- Where can your community go from here?
- What are the obstacles in your community?
- Other questions? Concerns? Feedback?

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – Call or Text 988 or Chat @
<https://988lifeline.org/current-events/the-lifeline-and-988/>

For 988 Info, Resources, and Marketing Materials visit
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit>

jerry.girard@msubillings.edu

(406) 657-2153