



Welcome to “NA 101”!



Reducing Stigma for Members with Mental Illness

Presented by: Northern California Region of Narcotics Anonymous



NA 101: Reducing Stigma for Members with Mental Illness



Large Group Discussion:

- What are some additional barriers that members with mental illnesses face when recovering in Narcotics Anonymous?
- How is this related to the stigma in our society regarding mental illness?
 - Note: Stigma can be defined as “a strong feeling of disapproval that most people in a society have about something.”



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Some Common Issues:

- Medication
- Behavioral issues
- Fear and shame
- “Too crazy to recover”



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What does our literature say?

- Remember our Third Tradition! From *Guiding Principles*:
 - “Each of us has a part to play in making NA groups welcoming to everyone. Doing so requires checking our reservations about the recovery of others.” (page 47)
- From *In Times of Illness*:
 - “We have found collectively that medicine, religion, and psychiatry alone are not sufficient to treat the disease of addiction. This may mean that medicine and psychiatry are sometimes necessary to treat mental illness in combination with our program of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous...There is no shame in getting the help we need.” (page 22)
 - “It is possible to find freedom from active addiction in NA and to be taking medication prescribed by an informed healthcare professional for a mental illness.” (page 23)



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Small Group Discussion:

- What actions can my homegroup take to help members with mental illness feel more included?
- What actions can I take to make sure I'm not "writing off" people who may appear "too crazy" to recover?
- What can we as members do when we see unwelcoming attitudes or behaviors in our meetings?



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Sharing Solutions!

“Just as we wouldn’t suggest that an insulin-dependent diabetic addict stop taking their insulin, we don’t tell mentally ill addicts to stop taking their prescribed medication. We leave medical issues up to doctors. As NA members, our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, not to give medical advice.” (*In Times of Illness*, page 20)

“Learning to reach out to members with additional needs can be a process, as well. Asking how we can help, rather than assuming what someone needs, is an act of empathy.” (*Living Clean*, page 108)

“Tolerance reminds us that judgment is not our task. The disease of addiction does not exclude anyone. NA, likewise, cannot exclude any addict who desires to stop using.” (*It Works: How and Why*, page 109)



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Thank you for participating!

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