



# COVID CHRONICLES

from Centennial Mental Health Center's Prevention Team

Let's #breakthestigma this May  
for Mental Health Awareness month!

## Myth

Having a mental illness is really rare and there is no spectrum of severity.

It's plain and simple, having a mental illness does not mean you are "crazy." It means you are vulnerable. It means you have an illness with challenging symptoms — the same as someone with an illness like diabetes. While mental illness might alter your thinking, destabilize your moods or skew your perception of reality, that doesn't mean you are "crazy." It means you are human and are susceptible to sickness and illness, the same as any other person. Between 20-25% of adults in the U.S. have a diagnosable mental illness on a consistent annual basis, whether or not they are seeking treatment. Mental health disorders are viewed on a scale of severity, measured by 'mild, moderate, or severe' (with the exception of substance use disorders).

FACT:

## Myth

People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.

Within the last few years, the U.S. has had an increase in mass violence. Whenever these tragedies take place, the media is quick to judge the suspects and label them as "mentally disturbed" or "mentally ill." In reality, hate is not a mental illness. Only 5% of violent crimes in the U.S. are committed by people with serious mental illness. The unfortunate truth is that individuals with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence rather than perpetrators. There is no reason to fear a person with a mental illness just because of their diagnosis.

FACT:

## Myth

People with bipolar disorder are moody.

Bipolar disorder does not cause mood swings. It causes cycles that last for weeks or months. People so often throw around the term "bipolar" to describe the weather. When they say this, it downplays the seriousness of the condition and creates misinformation about what bipolar disorder actually is. Bipolar disorder causes you to have episodes where you experience mania (high energy, rampant thoughts, inability to sleep, grandiose ideas or perspectives, etc.) and depressive states (feeling very sluggish, sad, suicidal, having low self-esteem, inability to concentrate, etc.) These extreme highs and lows take turns, but do not change or swing from moment to moment.

FACT:

## Myth

Only people in the military get Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Anyone can have PTSD. A rape or sexual assault victim, a domestic abuse victim, a survivor of a natural disaster, someone who's suffered a loss or even a person who did not face any violence or physical threats themselves directly, but happened to witness someone else who did (i.e. vicarious trauma) can all have PTSD. The symptoms include having flashbacks of that event or events, nightmares/night terrors, anxiety/panic attacks, taking precautions to avoid reminders or "triggers" of the event, reacting in a way as if the event is recurring, etc.

FACT:



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Myth

**People with psychiatric disorders or mental health diagnoses need to take medication.**

Just like any other detrimental medical condition, mental illness is still an illness. For many with mental illness, medication is necessary, just like it would be for a diabetic taking insulin. For some individuals with mental illness, medication is needed for survival. For others, like those who have mild to moderate depression, anxiety, or ADHD, medication can help ease symptoms, so they can function normally. And having regular therapy combined with medication can greatly improve one's quality of life.

Myth

**I can control my own mental illness because people will judge me for seeking help.**

It's hard to come out to anyone about having a mental illness, especially because they're so commonly misunderstood and people who are unfamiliar with mental illness tend to think that people are the way they are because of nature, personality or attitude. But when you do have the strength, courage and bravery to open up to someone else, you are working to alleviate the stigma, increase awareness, empower yourself, grow as a person, and promote understanding of mental health. So don't let others' perceptions scare you from getting the help you need.

FACT:

FACT:

## EXTENSION & REFERENCES

FOR REFERENCES ADDITIONAL RESOURCES VISIT:

<https://www.centennialmhc.org/covid-19-communications/>

CHECK OUT CENTENNIAL'S PREVENTION TEAM RESOURCES:

Seize the Awkward

Man Therapy

Gun Shop Project

Mental Health First Aid

Join our Mental Health Awareness Month Calendar Challenge! Check out Centennial's Facebook page to find May's calendar with a whole month's worth of mindful activities for your own mental health awareness!

### MYTH/FACT RESOURCE

NAMI

"<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/October-2019/>

Six-Myths-and-Facts-about-Mental-Illness" (source for myths prior to editing)

