

NEW for 2019

Life Advisor Well-being Webinars

Ulliance is pleased to offer, new for 2019, Life Advisor Well-being Webinars. These 45 minute webinars are offered at no cost as part of your Life Advisor Employee Assistance Program.

On Wednesday, May 22 at noon, join the discussion about

Becoming Assertive **Without Becoming a Jerk*

To register, visit
GoToMeeting.com

and enter:

Training ID: 735-367-228



The Nervous Breakdown Myth, and How It's Making us Sick

Here's the thing about nervous breakdowns: there is no such thing as a nervous breakdown. You will not find it in any diagnostic manual, no nerves are breaking down or disintegrating, and no scientists work toward a cure.

But talk to someone who says they've experienced a nervous breakdown, and they'll tell you otherwise - citing their pain and suffering as proof of its existence. Pay close attention to the descriptions; it becomes clear the experiences vary wildly from person to person. Some may describe a "breakdown" as becoming withdrawn or mute or becoming overwhelmed with some unwanted and unpleasant feelings such as profound hopelessness or confusion or despair. Some report having crying jags or excessive sleeping, not being able to get out of bed or some combination of all of these. Because there is no consensus on what constitutes a nervous breakdown, reporting it to a health care professional can be as helpful as saying one has a case of the heebie-jeebies.

It's used in casual conversation to describe something that would be exceedingly difficult to accept or tolerate. For example, "When the car broke down, I thought I'd have a nervous breakdown." But for decades, it's also been in continuous use to describe any number of emotionally related conditions and continues to be

used to this day. Others may prefer to use such terminology precisely because it is vague. And while there is nothing wrong with wanting to preserve a sense of privacy, it is also equally NOT wrong to have a mental illness. We live in a day and age in which we've outgrown phrases like falling victim to "the vapors" or "a nervous condition." How is it that "nervous breakdown" has survived all this time?

Using euphemisms, antiquated terminology and slang to describe real, treatable conditions, risks missing the opportunity to identify the real issues and accordingly, the proper treatment. This mislabeling also prevents the passing along of a reliable emotional component to your family medical history.



The most caustic outcome of using the phrase “nervous breakdown” to describe mental illness is that it perpetuates the stigma that prevents people from seeking treatment. By offering this homogenous phrase, it suggests that the underlying issue needs covering up; that whatever the real condition is, it’s so offensive or unacceptable that it best be referred to by some vague, generic verbiage. Explaining someone had a nervous breakdown was meant to be a conversation killer; it was meant to end the conversation and any more profound understanding.



Chris Evans shares his struggles with anxiety

Unrecognized and untreated mental illness costs society immeasurably. Look no further than the daily headlines for daily evidence of the silent killer that is stigma. The good news, however: Millennials have a more casual attitude talking about mental health and their own experiences than their parents have historically. Along with this softening of the stigma associated with mental illness and its treatment, there are some prominent campaigns to fight stigma. For example, CNS Healthcare, a non-profit community behavioral health clinic, has been managing an award-winning nationally recognized Anti-Stigma Program for over a decade now. Prominent celebrities from all walks of life have also helped to normalize mental health issues by sharing their experiences and inspiring millions, such as Captain America actor, Chris Evans, Lady Gaga and J.K. Rowling.

Changing the national belief system about mental health illnesses and their recovery has been a painstaking process, and despite promising indicators that best efforts are working, there is still much to be done to end the stigma that prevents people from seeking treatment.

One place to start on an individual level is to consider everyday language that can easily be substituted with more accurate descriptions. For example, instead of saying an idea is crazy, substituting a more descriptive, precise word bolsters a good argument. Instead of “crazy,” maybe the idea is poorly planned, illogical, or ignoring dangers, or cost-prohibitive. Substituting a word here and there may not seem like much, but words matter. Words count. Words influence how we think and feel about a subject. Mindful vocabulary is a small but meaningful practice that everyone can do today to help end stigma.

If you would like to become involved, visit
www.nami.org/stigma