

# Cheltenham Communities That Care

## MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

Good health. We associate taking care of ourselves with exercise and eating properly, as well as checking in with health care providers for yearly exams and tests, aches and pains, illnesses, and concerns. However, for those occasions when non-physical issues become involved, such as feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress, people tend to panic (another symptom for the list). They get concerned about how either they or their family members will be viewed by others for having a mental illness.

Unfortunately, over time, some people have associated those with mental health issues as being less than a whole person or defective in some way. This stigma causes these individuals to worry about being stared at, talked about behind their back, and/or teased; essentially, being bullied.

Why the stigma? Because the mind is more difficult to understand than a traditional physical ailment, and people often fear what they can't understand.

For instance, an MRI can show a physical condition such as a brain injury or a tumor, but it can't display a mental illness which is not visible to the eye, but rather felt and experienced with only its resulting behaviors being seen.



Since mental health conditions can't be fixed with a bandage or a surgical procedure, people often wonder how you can determine when a mind is truly healed.

Fortunately, we seem to be moving past this stigma of shaming people with mental health issues because mental health issues are finally being accepted and associated with necessary overall health care. **If we take care of our bodies, we should also take good care of our minds.**

After all, our body and our mind are connected and, as such, are both a part of us, and should be regarded as equally important and equally deserving of proper care. By casting aside stigmas that have been too long associated with mental health, people, especially youth, can feel more comfortable and normalized getting the help they need without fear of criticism.

"I think it's really important to take the stigma away from mental health. My brain and my heart are really important to me. I don't know why I wouldn't seek help to have those things be as healthy as my teeth. I go to the dentist, so why wouldn't I go to a shrink?"  
—Kerry Washington (Glamour, June 29, 2020)

### Stig•ma (n)

The perception that a certain attribute makes a person unacceptably different from others, leading to prejudice and discrimination against them.

Image from [Mental Health Partners Colorado](#)

In the summer of 2021, the world listened as **Olympian Simone Biles** admitted that she was suffering from a mental health condition known to gymnasts as the "twisties," which causes the mind to lose track of where the body is in the air during twisting skills and leads to fears of getting hurt.

**Mental health issues can arise at any time, often unexpectedly, despite one's level of expertise, well-established reputation, and vast experience.**

Situations can occur at the most inopportune times, which for Simone Biles was during Olympic competition, when, for her safety, she pulled out of scheduled events. Despite possible frustration, she needed fans to be understanding and supportive, rather than finding fault or blame.

Even when a decision might disappoint others, as well as ourselves, if any type of health issue arises, we need to make self-care the priority. This involves seeking necessary care, including therapy, whether physical, psychological, or both.

Biles said, "I thought I could figure it out on my own, but that's sometimes not the case, and that's not something you should feel guilty or ashamed of. Once I got over that fact, I actually enjoyed it and looked forward to going to therapy. It's a safe space." (*Glamour*, June 2021)

In addition to Biles, here are a few of the many celebrities who have shared their mental health struggles:

Adele  
Hallie Berry  
Leonardo DiCaprio  
Selena Gomez  
Lane Johnson

Kendrick Lamar  
Demi Lovato  
Michael Phelps  
Ryan Reynolds  
Zendaya



*"For me, depression is not sadness. It's not having a bad day and needing a hug. It gave me a complete and utter sense of isolation and loneliness. Its debilitation was all-consuming, and it shut down my mental circuit board. I felt worthless, like I had nothing to offer, like I was a failure.*

*Now, after seeking help, I can see that those thoughts, of course, couldn't have been more wrong. It's important for me to be candid about this so people in a similar situation can realize that they are not worthless and that they do have something to offer. We all do."*

—Kristen Bell (*Time Magazine*, May 31, 2016)



*"I was always a better listener than I was a communicator in terms of sharing my feelings...asking for help when you're down...or when you're depressed is actually the most powerful thing you can do. Asking for help is not a weakness. As a matter of fact, asking for help is our superpower, and men, especially us, we fall into this trap of being really adverse to vulnerability, because we always want to be strong and feel like we can take on the world.*

*But the truth is, you have to, and hopefully over time, learn to embrace vulnerability and learn to embrace this idea that you can't always solve everything. A lot of times in life, as you head down the road, you're going to need help, and it's all a part of life."*

—Dwayne Johnson (*Men's Health*, June 27, 2021)

## LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

[Access Services](#) — 215-540-2150

[Teen Talk Line](#) — 1-866-825-5856

[Aldersgate](#) — 215-657-4545

[Child and Family Focus](#) — 267-818-6190

[Hopeworx, Inc.](#) — 610-270-3685

[NAMI Montgomery County](#) — 215-361-7784