

Corrigan

The Stigma Effect

Unintended Consequences of Mental Health Campaigns

Despite efforts to redress the prejudice and discrimination faced by people with mental illness, a pervasive stigma remains. Many well-meant programs have attempted to counter stigma with affirming attitudes of recovery and self-determination. Yet the results of these efforts have been mixed. In *The Stigma Effect*, psychologist Patrick W. Corrigan examines the unintended consequences of mental health campaigns and proposes new policies in their place. Corrigan analyzes the agendas of government agencies, mental health care providers, and social service agencies that work with people with mental illness, dissecting how their best intentions can misfire. For example, a campaign to change the language around mental illness by replacing supposedly stigmatizing words with empowering ones has made little difference in how people with mental health conditions are viewed. Educational programs that frame mental illness as a brain disorder have made the general public less likely to blame people for their illnesses, but also skeptical that such conditions can be cured. Ultimately, Corrigan argues that effective strategies require leadership by those with lived experience, as their recovery stories replace ideas of incompetence and dangerousness with ones of hope and empowerment. As an experienced clinical researcher, as an advocate, and as a person who has struggled with such prejudices, Corrigan challenges readers to carefully examine anti-stigma programs and reckon with their true effects.

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