

Shine a Light on Stigma Podcast

Transcript - Episode 2: Resources to Decrease Stigma

Note: The Shine a Light on Stigma Podcast is produced for the ear and designed to be heard. This transcript is intended to augment the recording.

This podcast is part of a series that explores ways to eliminate stigma and help people with substance use disorders access the medical care they need. Produced by Superior Health Quality Alliance and Telligen, Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organizations under contract with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Mia Croyle: Hello, and welcome back to the stigma podcast. I'm Mia, and in this podcast, we talk about all the ways that stigma impacts people living with substance use disorder. We are aiming to inspire and empower our listeners to shift our culture of stigma toward one that better promotes healing and recovery in a supportive and respectful way. I am so pleased that you joined us again, and I'm so pleased that I'm here with Brittany.

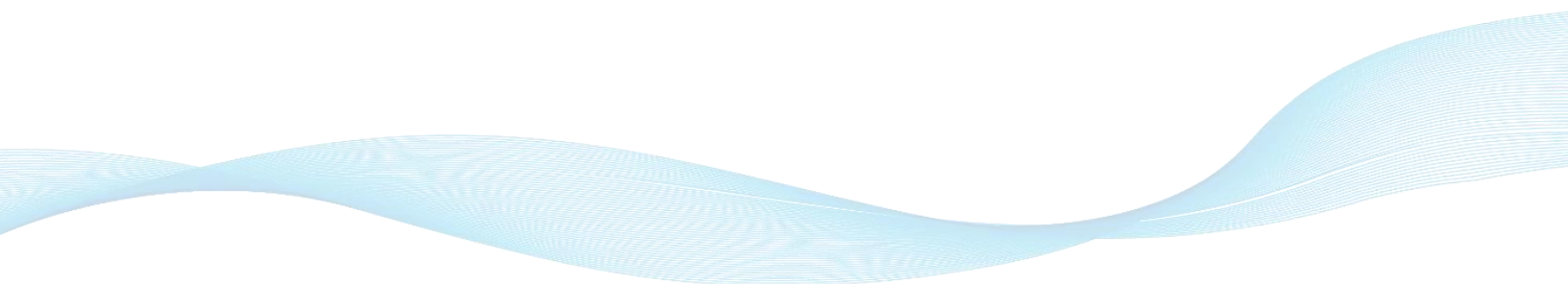
Brittany Rodriguez: Hi! I am happy to be back, and you said it perfectly in the beginning, for our aim for this podcast. I think we started off with a bang with our first episode. We are super thankful for the kind words, as you guys probably can imagine sharing your personal story. That Why, which is what we did on that first episode of why stigma, why does this matter, is kind of vulnerable. And so it's always encouraging to hear kind words and to hear that people, they'll install the value in that. So, if you happen to miss that episode, we invite you to hop back and go to that first episode. It's worth listening to, to get the groundwork really, for what we want to talk about as we're moving forward with this series.

Mia: Yeah. And I think you know the feedback that we received from that first episode. my take away is that this is something people are wanting to be thinking about wanting to hear more about wanting to talk more about. This is a place people want to be which is reassuring, because, you know, until you get that first bit of feedback it could be that just you and I wanted to talk about that, and we could certainly schedule times and just chat about it.

Brittany: And we had a great time.

Mia: But it sounds like this is a place that other people want to be as well, and that is very validating for us. So, as we were thinking about this next episode, we thought one of the things we would love to do is to just give you a bit of a walkthrough in terms of the resources that we already have developed and gathered between our two organizations. So, we've both been working on this in in bigger teams back at our home organizations for a while, and so we have some resources. And so if you listen to that first episode, or are tuning in to this one thinking: okay, now, what, right? I love you had said the 'the next right thing', so, what's the next best thing we're gonna do. So, we just want to give you some options to think about, to keep exploring this beyond just the 20 min of our pod.

Brittany: Right, just knowing that, hey, yeah, that does seem like that's a problem, right? We want to take that next step. So, we're here to share it today. We will take away the digging work for you guys, and we're gonna tell you where to find it all.



Mia: Or at least some of it, at least some of it.

Brittany: Yeah, we won't claim it all.

Mia: So, one of the things that I wanted to share was that at Superior Health Quality Alliance we have this campaign all focused on decreasing stigma and increasing respect for, and dignity of people with substance use disorders. So, to that end we've created this area on our website, and there's a lot of resources there, and there's some action steps you can take. So, I just want to share some of the stuff that's there with you guys. So we'll put a link in the description of this episode that you could click on. The other really easy way to find where you want to be is to put in the search engine of your choice the search term "Superior Health Shine a Light on Stigma", and that's the name of our campaign, because we really did want to illuminate this impact of stigma. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, they say. So you know we just wanted to bring this into the light and start talking about it so we can start changing it

Brittany: Right. It's impossible to change things that we're unwilling to mention, or, I guess, identify as existing. So it's important. I love that. It's punny. It's a good pun.

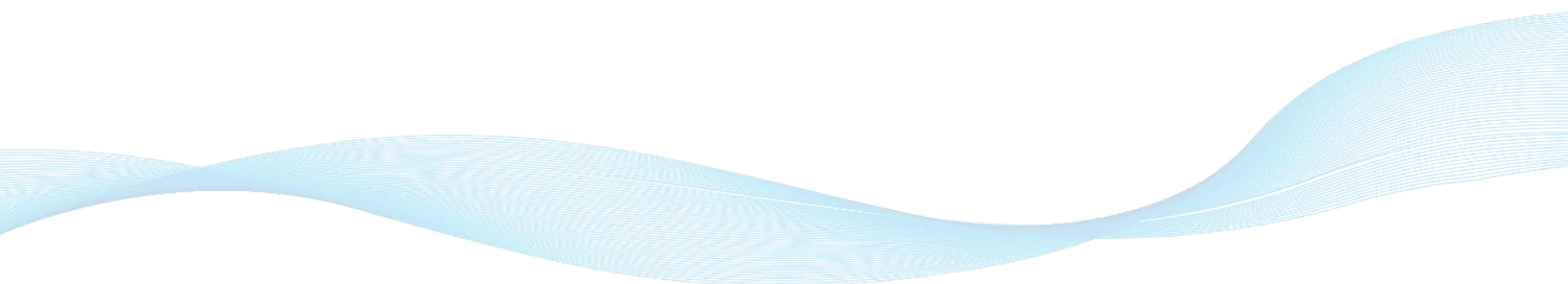
Mia: Yeah, if you can't even name it. If you can't see it, it's hiding in the dark corners. It's not something that's going to get addressed. So one of the resources that you'll see if you go to that Shine a Light on Stigma website is a series of short videos that one of our physician subject matter experts created, and it's really great, because it offers tips and sample scripting for using judgment-free language with patients and families at all points along a patient's journey of readiness for change, so they may be not ready. They may be kind of ambivalent about it. They may be in there, ready for change and asking for help. And it all points along that continuum he offers some great information and some tips and direct thing you can say. I like these because it's it is, it's clear it's direct, and it just hands you some actionable steps.

Brittany: Yeah, especially when you don't know when something's so new. When language, when we're trying to get people to pivot their language, this is a very practical next thing to do as just he gives good examples. He gets real life examples. This is an ER physician who has years of experience in that field where that was my background, too. And that's where you see people coming in for overdoses or coming in struggling. And so, yeah, and you find them all across that continuum.

Mia: Yeah, absolutely. So that series of short, accessible videos hopefully would be useful for all the clinicians in the bunch. And another resource that I just love. You know it's sort of like your children, you're not supposed to be biased. But you kind of sometimes have a favorite...

Brittany: Personal choice, personal favorite. That's all right.

Mia: Yeah. So, my personal favorite resource that we have on our website is what we call our storytelling series, and so it's a curated list of stories that we found out in the world of people with substance use disorder, or people living and loving someone with substance use disorder and, in the videos, and the written up examples. They're just telling you pieces of their story, and we know that that is one of the ways to combat stigma is to just be in relationship with people with substance use disorder. And so there are other ways that you could do that. But this is, you know, a nice electronic super accessible. I can squeeze it in



between other tasks in my workday, etc. Just listen to a story or two from someone with that direct-lived experience. Other ways that you might want to get in a relationship or connection with people, you know, you can always go to an open meeting, as long as you make sure that the meeting is open to the public. You could go to an AA or an NA meeting and listen to stories that way and connect with people that way. You could also just sort of be on the lookout for people in your community and in your life who maybe are in recovery and have shared that. We know that there are people that we interact with on a daily basis that you probably don't know that they're battling with substance use disorder or that they're in recovery.

Brittany: Yeah, sometimes it's so hidden, right? It's hard to tell when we think that there's a certain way that someone's supposed to look or act, and then they don't fit that bill. And a great example of that actually is in this article that I saw this week, and it was shared by a physician out of Boston that he was sharing his personal story. It was in the Harvard Gazette, I believe, and he was saying, no one knew for so long no one knew until it got so out of control right, until he ended up losing his license, losing his practice, losing family. And at that point. That's obviously when things hit the fan. But at that point one of the things he said was it was because people chose to love me. People chose to stick with me, and he made a point to mention that tough love was not what he needed. But it's through these personal stories that we learn that someone, even a physician, even your doctor could be the one struggling with substance use disorder, and we don't like to think about that. But it's people that look like us. It's people who act like us. And I'm happy to say now that this man is in recovery, and he's a professor at Harvard, and he is supporting his peers that are also struggling with this. But that's just another example of how we can start talking about stigma and normalizing stigma, is through sharing our stories. It makes people human, right? It opens our minds up and our hearts to be willing to consider that maybe they're not so different than me,

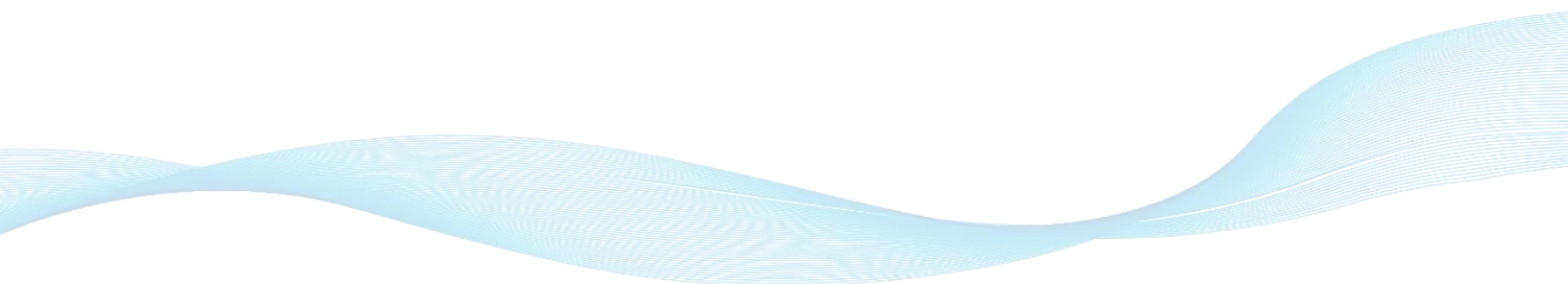
Mia: Yeah. And I love that about, tough love wasn't what I need. I think we have this sort of myth in our culture, and I know it's tied to stigma. But this idea that somehow, we have to be hard on people who are already having a hard time and you know, I think oftentimes. And this is this is my opinion. But I think oftentimes we think that people need tough love, and what they really need is love. They just need love, love, and that doesn't mean that we can't have appropriate boundaries, and we can't, you know, keep ourselves safe. We don't have to be victimized by them in any way. But there's a big difference between having good boundaries, keeping yourself in a stable and safe position and sort of actively aggressing towards someone else. Because we think that's what they need.

Brittany: They need to hear that something shameful like they need to feel their shame as if they don't already, you know. And I think oftentimes that it's the whole if we think we're showing them love, that it could be received as enabling. When I think that that's a difference. There's a difference there between caring for someone and choosing the way that we're speaking with them, and our words, and enabling them. It's a little bit different.

Mia: Yeah, absolutely. And I think this idea that somehow keeping more shame and pain on someone who's already suffering. With that, you can trace it back to that sort of initial belief that substance use disorder as a moral failure.


Brittany: Exactly what I was thinking about.

Mia: We have to somehow set them straight, I don't know.



Brittany: Yeah, yeah. And that kind of brings me to the next thing that I was gonna share about was it's that words matter, and that's the resource that we I wanted to highlight today as just like a practical step that you can take for personal use, or as an organization as a leader within your organization. And it's, if you can find it on our website, same as with Mia. If you just go to your favorite search engine and search, Telligen QI Connect. And then after that, just put Words Matter, and it pops right up, and these are wallet cards or badge reel cards. They can be used for either depending on how they're printed, and they're really great, because they identify in really simple terms the words to use versus the words to avoid. And this really ties in with exactly what we're talking about, because we're trying to say while we're not trying to be super picky right? Or maybe too sensitive about words, but when someone's in a shame cycle, these words do tend to stick a little harder, and so some words to avoid are things like addict, or alcoholic, or dirty drug test, because those are words that are defining someone. That is saying, that is an addict, that is who that person is versus using person first language, which is, which is on the flip side of that card that is, saying things like a person with substance use disorder. So, we're allowing that person to be a human who can be defined by something other than their addiction. And that's a subtle change, and it's a subtle shift in our language, but it's powerful. It's powerful to those people and to those family members that don't want to think that addiction is who their son is, or who their daughter is, or who their husband, wife, whatever. We want to know, because they know that person as a person they know the good things the bad things of fun things, not just that they struggle in this area. So I encourage you to reach out and use those that's a great resource to use as a marketing material or as a pilot program. If you're trying to kick off something within your organization related to a stigma. It's a great start and as well as using the videos and the other resources Mia is already sharing. These things combined really give you a great starting point.

Mia: Absolutely. And I love that little pocket card, because again it's just something so direct and so actionable like it tells me exactly what I can do, and I love how you know, you highlighted that shifting our language can be so meaningful for patients, for families. for other people. I think also, it can be really powerful for us, like for me as the speaker, the words I use shape the way I think about that person, and so it may be a little bit of a matter of fake it till you make it kind of thing like I'm gonna say the words even before my mindset fully shifts. But I'm going to do the effort of using these words, and through the act of using less stigmatizing language. my mindset is going to shift. So yeah, yeah, I love it. It's because it's head work, and it's heart work, and sometimes we can do some stuff with our head, and our heart will follow, and sometimes we lead with our heart and our head will follow. The last thing on our website that I really wanted to call everybody's attention to as we're speaking about actionable things is our pledge. So as part of the Shine a Light on Stigma campaign we have a pledge that we invite people to sign. And basically, what you are doing by taking the pledge is, you're joining us in shining a light on stigma. And you know, making a conscious decision to think about stigma and how you can shift it. There's sort of three things that are components of what you're pledging to do. The first is to listen, right? So listen to the stories and the feedback and the input of people with lived experience. The second is to act, right, and so that talks about things like shifting your language, advocating for people, etc. And then the third thing is to lead. And so we're inviting everyone who takes this pledge to think about how they can be a leader among the people that they interact with. It might be in your personal life, certainly in your professional life, and just to offer some coaching. So when you hear a colleague using very judgmental or stigmatizing language you might share with them: "You know another perspective is this..." Or you might say, "I recently learned that that term, you know, can be hurtful for some people. Would it be okay if I share an alternative term that we could think about using instead. And just thinking about how do you take what you know and continue to



spread it as well. So that pledge is available on our Superior Health Shine a Light on Stigma website. And you can take it as an individual. There's also an organization level pledge. If this is something that if you're a leader of an organization and you want to make that commitment on behalf of your organization as well.

Brittany: It's an important thing, I think, just taking these pledges, even though they're simple right like you just say it's an attestation, but at the end of the day, it's that whole idea of, if we're saying it, if we're thinking it, and then if we're doing it, it becomes ingrained. It's sustainable change that happens within our within our organization. But yeah, that does bring me to what is coming up. I wanted to mention with you guys, that we have some exciting guests coming on, and one of our upcoming on our upcoming episode is gonna be, Dr. Denton Chancey. And he is our subject matter expert on opioids and behavioral health for Telligen and we're excited for him to be here and to kind of give a glimpse of the history related to policy and the culture that has occurred related to the policies and insurance all of the things right, that influence our care that we actually end up getting as or receiving as the patient. He's going to touch on that as well as the exciting things that's happened. So we have some new changes that have come out of the CDC's new guidelines, and we're going to be sharing on that. So please come back and join us, and as well as reaching out, we want to hear what you guys have to say. Your comments, questions, concern stories. We have loved, getting to hear feedback from you all we would like to continue to. And you can do that at stigmaodcast@telligen.com. Shoot us an email, it's Mia and I on the other end. So you'll get to hear directly back from us. Which is exciting.

Mia: Yeah. So we're just so glad that you joined us for this episode, and we look forward to connecting with you in the future.

Brittany: Take care.

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