

Dispelling Mental Health Stigma

Devika Bhushan, MD

Pediatrician

Former Acting California Surgeon General



DrDevikaB

My Personal Journey



Op-Ed: I am California's acting surgeon general. And I have bipolar disorder

Graduating from Harvard Medical School, Cum Laude







I believe that our struggles can be the source of our superpowers...

Experiencing bipolar disorder has made me a better doctor, colleague, parent, family member and friend.

I am not who I am today *despite* having bipolar disorder, but because of it.

Stigma Today: Straw Poll

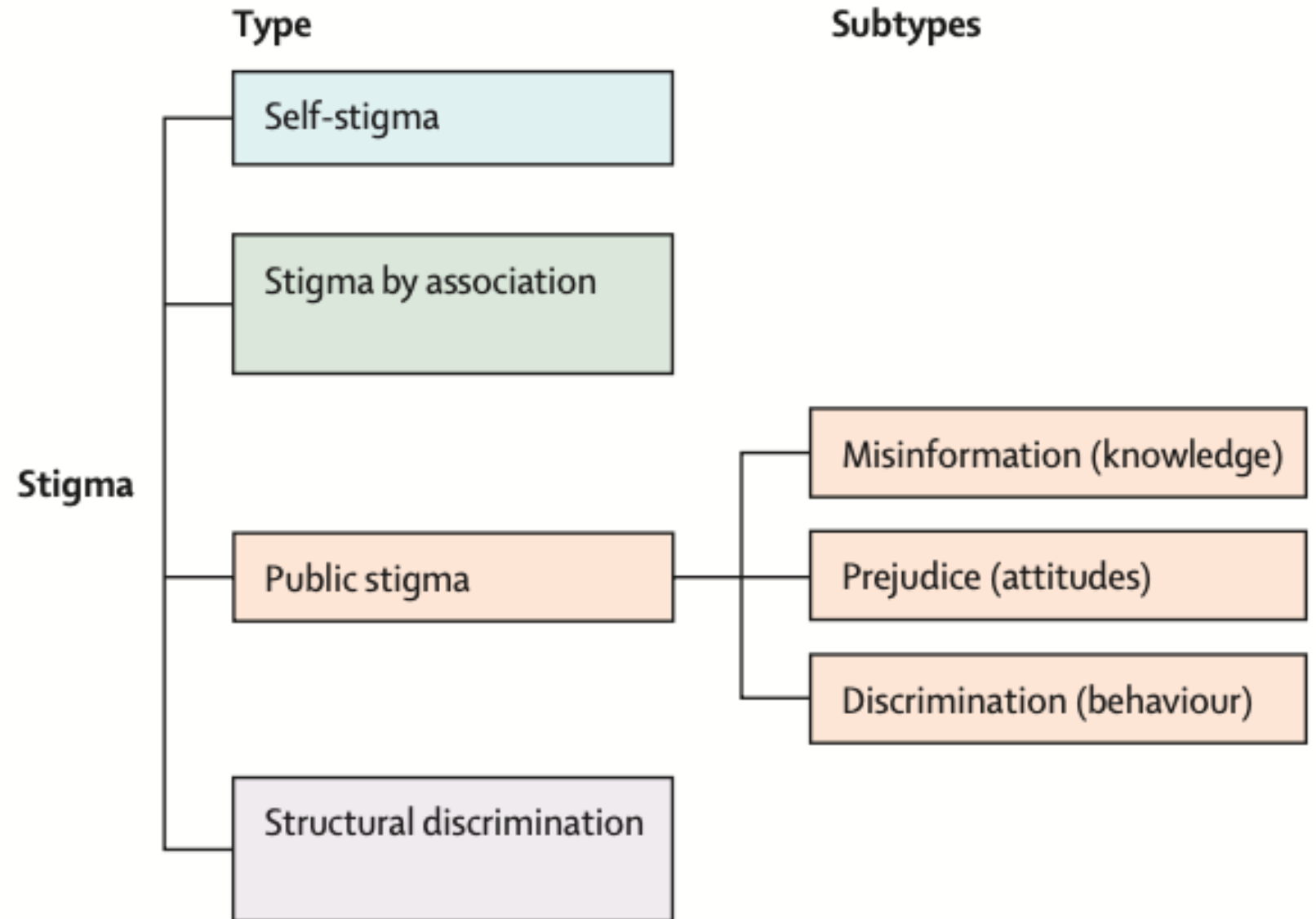
Mental Illness: A Snapshot

- 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 7 children (6-17) experience mental illness: 2020
- **53.8%** of adults were not in treatment: 2020
- 1 person dies by suicide every 11 seconds
- Global mental health spending: 2% of total health
- Life expectancy difference: 10-20 years

Stigma: What it Looks Like

- You can't trust anything she says — she's bipolar. She's probably lying.
- Why would you want to pass this on to a child?
- How can you possibly be a good mother with this illness?
- Who put her in charge of policy?
- I would never have guessed that you were bipolar.

Layers of Stigma



Impacts of Stigma

80% (N=391, 45 countries) of people with lived experience agreed:

“Stigma and discrimination can be worse than the impact of the mental health condition itself”

Stigma directly:

- Increases suicide rates
- Reduces help-seeking and recovery success

“I felt so much shame, so weighed down by the stigma, that I couldn’t function.” –Andy Dunn

Stigma Kills and Violates Human Rights



The consequences of stigma violate basic human rights eg, reduced job and education opportunities and access to health care, including mental health care



What Helps?

Key findings of the Commission



Stigma can be reduced through social contact between people who do, and who do not, have lived experience of mental health conditions

The wound is the place
where the light enters you.

-Rumi

#SpreadTheLight



Questions and Comments