



# WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF STIGMA?\*

## ▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

 **Time:** 25 minutes

 **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define stigma and give examples.

 **Training Methods:** Individual Activity, Large Group Discussion

 **In This Activity You Will...**

- Ask participants to write their own definitions of stigma (5 minutes).
- Lead a discussion on the types of stigma (20 minutes).

 **Materials:**

- Index Cards
- Handout – Definitions of Stigma (optional)

 **Preparation:**

- Print handouts (optional)

## Instructions

1. Hand out cards.
2. Ask participants to write on cards their own definition of stigma.
3. Encourage people to give examples of stigma or define it.
4. Then explain the definition below or give it out as a handout.

- Deep feeling one can have, which makes one feels disrespected or unloved.
- I feel stigmatized in my work as an AIDS educator –people tease me about distributing condoms and call me “Mama Condom”.
- PLWHA (people living with HIV/AIDS) being blamed for their infection and told they deserve it.
- People running away from you because of a disease you have.
- Feeling ashamed because one has HIV/AIDS.
- Fear of disclosing one’s disease to others.
- Self-stigma – PLWHA react to and begin to accept negative judgments of society.

### Two types of stigma:

- Internal stigma – self-hatred, shame, blame – people feel they are being judged by others, so they isolate themselves. PLWHA practice “self-stigma” – isolate themselves from their families and communities.
- External stigma or enacted stigma or discrimination - perceptions, feelings or actions towards PLWHA.

### Stigma process:

- Point out or label differences – he is different from us – he coughs a lot.
- Attribute differences to negative behavior – his sickness is caused by his sinful and promiscuous behavior.
- Separate ‘us’ and ‘them’ – for example, shunning, isolation, rejection.
- Loss of status and discrimination – loss of respect, isolation.

\* This module comes from Support Group Facilitation Training, JRI Health Peer Support Services, 2006.

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“

*Knowledge is the key that breaks stigma and unlocks doors.*

”

Graduate of the PACT training program

Other important dimensions:

- Often people do not understand the word ‘stigma’ in English.
- Difficult to find a word in other languages that is equivalent.
- Differs in intensity – sometimes blatant, sometimes subtle.
- Targeted mostly at people who are assumed to be HIV positive.
- Targeted at stereotyped and scapegoated groups (women, sex workers).
- AIDS disfigures, so stigma changes according to the stage of the disease.
- Stigma increases as the symptoms of the disease become more visible.
- HIV, sex, and death – value laden.
- Motives for stigma change according to the setting.
- Disrupts social relations.
- People fear that HIV is very contagious.
- People hide their stigmatizing attitudes.
- Discrimination and human rights.

## Summary

Wrap up session.

\*This module is part of the online toolkit Building Blocks to Peer Success. For more information, visit [http://www.hdwg.org/peer\\_center/training\\_toolkit](http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit). This module comes from Support Group Facilitation Training, JRI Health Peer Support Services, 2006.

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## SESSION HANDOUT

### DEFINITION OF STIGMA

- Deep feeling one can have, which makes one feels disrespected or unloved.
- I feel stigmatized in my work as an AIDS educator –people tease me about distributing condoms and call me “Mama Condom”.
- PLHA being blamed for their infection and told they deserve it.
- People running away from you because of a disease you have.
- Feeling ashamed because one has HIV/AIDS.
- Fear of disclosing one’s disease to others.
- Self-stigma – PLHA react to and begin to accept negative judgments of society.