

## Title: Stigma, taboo and discrimination

Level: SENIOR PHASE

### Links to Curriculum for Excellence

In terms of Curriculum for Excellence this level is concerned with extending or deepening what is described at Fourth Level.



Experiences and outcomes	Benchmarks
<p>I recognise that power can exist within relationships and can be used positively as well as negatively. HWB 4-45a</p> <p>I am aware of the need to respect personal space and boundaries and can recognise and respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication. HWB 4-45b</p> <p>I reflect on how my attitudes, beliefs, values and morality can influence my decisions about friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour. HWB 4-46a</p> <p>As I explore the rights to which I and others are entitled, I am able to exercise these rights appropriately and accept the responsibilities that go with them. I show respect for the rights of others. HWB 4-09a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguishes between a balance of power and abuse of power in relationships, for example, respect, trust, coercion, consent.</li> <li>• Demonstrates the skills needed to manage challenging situations within relationships, including sexual relationships, for example, compromise, empathy, decisiveness.</li> </ul>

### Learning Intentions

- Young people discuss and understand the impact of stigma and discrimination on people living with ill-health/chronic conditions.
- Young people know that their language and behaviour has an impact on others.

### Success criteria

- I understand that their actions impact on others.
- I show respect for others.
- I can describe and challenge stigma and discrimination.

### Resources to support this activity

- PowerPoint slides
- **See Me: Talking about mental health** <https://youtu.be/F9iLJa9ZdE4> (duration 3 minutes 48)
- **Living with the stigma of HIV** <https://youtu.be/mdhEun0l-nM> (duration 6 minutes 48)
- **Stigma Is More Harmful Than HIV** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zX91VwsEMAQ> (1 minute)
- **The Stand Up Kid** <https://youtu.be/tBDuoOli4t8> (3 minutes 7)
- **Sometimes we say we're fine when we're not** <https://youtu.be/nOkH2jGK4p0> (duration 37 seconds)

*Whenever you use content on a platform like YouTube/Vimeo please cue the film you intend to play in advance, check it is the film you want to view, and skip adverts.*

## Activity

1. Introduce the learning activity along these lines: Young people will be discussing stigma, taboos and discrimination, and how these issues can affect people's relationships and health. Some people's relationships and health issues are subject to more stigma and discrimination in society than others. The intention is to talk openly and honestly about this. If there is anything that a young person does not want to ask in front of others, or would like more information about, they can talk to you at another time.
2. Discuss with the class the meanings of (checking understanding, exploring any initial questions or thoughts):

**STIGMA:** Stigma is a set of negative or unfair beliefs that people or a whole society might have about something. This can apply to health issues, so people might say there is a stigma about mental illness, or a stigma about people living with HIV. When you experience stigma it can be someone judging you, being hostile towards you, physical or verbal abuse or being excluded or avoided.

**TABOO:** A taboo is something that is thought to be not acceptable to do or to talk about. It can be about a subject like sex or sexuality or sexually transmitted infections.

**DISCRIMINATION:** Discrimination is when someone treats you unfairly because of who you are. This could be because of your gender, sexuality or because you have a disability or health condition.

3. **Which groups in society might experience stigma, taboo or discrimination?** Pose the question for discussion, ask how this might be experienced?

Two example health issues follow which allow the group to think more about stigma and taboo and discrimination – mental health and HIV. However, do reflect back on the groups or communities that young people have identified as experiencing aspects of stigma etc too.

### 4. Examples of stigma and taboo: mental health.

Acknowledge that mental health is part of everyone's day to day life, it affects all of us, but there is still a stigma around it when someone is unwell. To tackle this properly we need young people to understand that it is okay not to be okay and you can talk about it.

#### Stigma and taboo and Mental Health

One study of young people found that only 37% said they would tell someone if they were finding it difficult to cope with their mental health.

Ask: *Why do you think this is?* Use the short film here to hear what other young people have said about the stigma of talking about mental health:

**See Me: Talking about mental health** <https://youtu.be/F9iLJa9ZdE4> (duration 3 minutes 48)

Take any reactions to the film. Any opinions about why mental health worries or problems carry such stigma or why it's such a taboo thing to talk about?

### 5. Examples of stigma and taboo: Living with HIV

Share the slide as an introduction to how stigma and taboo impact when it comes to living with HIV.

*"I knew there was a stigma before I was diagnosed – I know HIV was a taboo, but it's difficult experiencing it"* Joseph Cotgrave on living with HIV

Before watching the next film ask young people: **What kinds of stigma or discrimination do you think someone might face if they are living with HIV?** Then watch the film, and discuss reactions/main thoughts afterwards.

**Living with the stigma of HIV** <https://youtu.be/mdhEun0I-nM> (duration 6 minutes 48)

**6. How can we fight against stigma and discrimination? 5 ways....**

The young people have had some opportunity to hear about the experience of stigma, to consider why something might be taboo, to hear about how people experience discrimination. Ask them now to work in small groups to consider *what can we do about this?* They could consider mental health, HIV or see the challenge more broadly. After some time, get some feedback and conversation about possible strategies.

**7. Try these 5 ways.** Introduce the 5 points using the slides – discuss as you go, what would each mean, say in terms of mental health stigma, or HIV stigma? Is there a match with what the young people identified?

**1. Know the facts.** Educate yourself and others instead of believing ‘fake news’

**2. Be aware of your attitudes and behaviour:** We all grow up hearing or even learning prejudices and judgmental thinking. But we can change the way we think. We can choose to see people as unique human beings, not as labels or stereotypes.

**3. Choose your words carefully:** The way we speak can affect the way other people think and speak. We can decide not to use language that hurts or puts someone down.

*(NOTE: if not already discussed this would be a space to discuss use of the word ‘gay’ as a negative, derogatory term – that’s so gay etc.)*

**4. Support and include people:** Treat people with dignity and respect. Think about how you’d like others to act toward you.

**5. Use the law to protect people:** It is against the law to discriminate against people because of their gender, how they identify, their sexuality or sexual health status. It’s also not cool.

**8. Campaigning and educating against stigma and breaking down taboos**

Explain that lots of individuals and agencies want to help change the way things are when it comes to stigma and taboos. Then share some of the campaigns that have been used to inform, educate and change opinions. Share and discuss each, asking the young people whether they think such approaches are worthwhile and impactful.

- Share the images on the PowerPoint slides of campaign posters: What do they say? Do young people think they have a clear message? Would they help?
- **Stigma Is More Harmful Than HIV** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zX91VwsEMAQ> (1 minute) is a campaign launched in 2023 and is the first new TV advert on HIV to air in Scotland since the UK Government’s ‘Don’t Die of Ignorance’ campaign featuring falling tombstones 40 years ago.
- **The Stand Up Kid** (Time to Change UK) <https://youtu.be/tBDuoOli4t8> (3 minutes 7) This is a powerful short drama challenging stigma and taboo and encouraging young people to share and be respectful of others when they do.
- **Sometimes we say we’re fine when we’re not** (Time to Change UK) <https://youtu.be/nOkH2jGK4p0> (duration 37 seconds)

9. **To end**, share the final slide, reiterate the early point about being available for a confidential chat later. Also that seeking help is the right thing to do if you are affected by anything discussed in this session. Remind everyone – just be kind!

### Additional material

***If it's not gay, it's not gay*** (duration 30 seconds) <https://youtu.be/nYsUKPoW-Qo> Published by Rainbow Youth in New Zealand and drawing attention to using the word gay as a slur/negative.

Common misconceptions about HIV have a devastating impact on people living with the virus. But HIV is now treatable, and just one pill a day means it can't be passed on. And if HIV can't be passed on, we can end new cases in Scotland. Find out more about HIV at [www.HIVstigma.scot](http://www.HIVstigma.scot)

### Practitioner notes