

Working with mental health clients and being a mental health consumer is rewarding but at times, overwhelming. I must practice the same principles that I instill in my clients by taking care of myself on a daily basis. If I don't then it is apparent when I walk into then building where I work and do not know "which way is up." I become irritated and confused. The stigma that I feel within is then triggered by my assuming others may stigmatize me and not understand what I am going through if I were to share my feelings. I allow myself to become a prisoner in my own mind...stuck!...still trying to figure out "which way is up!"



*This project was sponsored by San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Office of Diversity and Equity.*





Children are usually perceived as innocent, but can be especially cruel to one another. Differences in race, religion, sexual orientation, or physical appearance become excuses for children to ridicule others. My daughter was told by her friend that our family's spiritual practices are evil. She was excluded when other two children expressed that she could not be in their family/ group because of her different belief. Children internalize values, judgments and morals from adults around them. We need to embrace the diversity to create a climate of empathy and compassion in our community, so all children from different backgrounds, races and religious can feel safe and accepted.

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This sexually explicit advertisement on the back of a MUNI bus depicts a woman as a sexual object with the word ADDICTION. Sexual addiction is a major problem in our society. A person with a sexual addiction experiences the same type of uncontrollable compulsions similar to other forms of addiction (substance, alcohol, gambling, shopping, etc.) but may be even more stigmatized.

Ads like this on TV, billboards, and in magazines cause ordinary people to feel dissatisfied with their bodies, particularly our youth. This contributes to the rise of dieting, depression, and eating disorders. As a parent, I do not want my children exposed to ads like this. Public institutions and organizations like MUNI need to consider the appropriateness of an ad and seek ads that promote the health and well-being of our communities.



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I live by myself on a sailboat in the bay area. When I first started working in the mental health field, I could not afford to live in an apartment by myself, which is an unfortunate statement of the lack of social and economic recognition given to our field. The positives of living on a sailboat are: living on the water, independence, my family of ducks and a coot. The trade-offs consist of: small living space, no shower, no freezer, no washer/ dryer or other amenities enjoyed by renters or home-owners.

I could be evicted at any time; my marina exceeds the regulatory allowable 10% of boaters who 'live-aboard'. Most marinas don't even allow boaters to live on their boats- it's only a 'recreational activity'.

I don't have a permanent address, as the mail cannot be delivered to my boat at the dock. To register to vote, open a bank account, get a car loan, a permanent address is Required. A PO Box cannot be used. I am not counted in the census. I only marginally exist.

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Imagine living in a small community where everyone knows each other and knows each others business or at least they think they do. Now imagine walking into your school cafeteria and feeling stigmatized because you know that as soon as you walk into that door, someone is bound to point you out and say something about you whether it be good or bad it still makes you feel a little uncomfortable while waiting in line to get your food or walking over to take a seat at a table. Many people have reported that they feel stigmatized while in the cafeteria. The cafeteria is a social environment where people gather together to gossip about other people and unconsciously stigmatize others based on what they did the night before or simply how they look that day. It is a very negative thing to do but the cafeteria is where it happens the most and its where people can either build relationships or destroy them. Instead of people destroying each other, why can't people destroy the notion of stigma? Well, it all starts with you!

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