



Mental Health & HIV Care

This video shares the stories of people living with HIV and their journeys with mental health and illness. Experts in mental health care, HIV care and Long Term Care speak to the relationship between HIV and mental health and the importance of recognizing the stigma facing both concerns, in particular when they are paired together.

Mental health and HIV

- People living with HIV are more likely to experience mental health concerns than the general population – up to half of all people living with HIV will experience a mental health concern at some point in their lives (www.phac.ca, 2015). Mental health conditions can affect diagnosis, treatment and medication adherence, as well as quality of life.
- People newly diagnosed with HIV may feel very vulnerable and experience anxiety or depression. Clients may also have lived through trauma, which could be associated with an HIV diagnosis and/or experiences unrelated to the illness.
- People living with HIV may have also experienced significant grief and loss. This can be particularly true for the older population, who may have lived through the early days of the epidemic and lost friends and loved ones
- People experiencing serious depression may have thoughts about harming themselves. If you suspect someone is thinking about suicide, consult with your inter-professional team to support a client through a potential crisis. If you think someone is in danger, you can contact 911 and/or your local crisis centre and distress lines available through **The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention** (see below).

Stigma

- Stigma is a form of prejudice that spreads fear, labels individuals or groups and perpetuates negative stereotypes. Stigma is a reality faced by many people living with HIV, which can be felt from both society at large and at times from within health care settings. Stigma can also contribute to depression and anxiety.
- Up to 20% of Canadians will experience a mental health concern in their lifetime (www.cmha.ca, 2015), but there is still stigma attached to talking about mental health.
- Stigma is one of the reasons many people experiencing mental health concerns do not seek treatment. For clients living with both HIV and mental health concerns, the experience of stigma can be compounded.

Sources and links

CATIE offers facts and resources on HIV and mental health in Canada: www.catie.ca/en/hiv-canada/7/7-4

www.HIV411.ca is a resource to help locate counseling and support services for people living with HIV across Canada

The AIDS Bereavement and Resiliency Program of Ontario offers resources, including staff training, to assist both care providers and clients experiencing HIV-related loss: www.abrpo.org

The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention provides a tool to locate help in your area: www.suicideprevention.ca/thinking-about-suicide/find-a-crisis-centre

The Canadian Mental Health Association offers further information and brochures: www.cmha.ca/mental-health

The Mental Health Commission of Canada provides strategies for recognizing and reducing stigma: www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/initiatives-and-projects/opening-minds