

Dandelions and Stigma
by Ruth Detweiler

As I was walking through the park recently, my attention was drawn to the mass of yellow blanketing the landscape. I paused to notice the perfectly formed round yellow dandelions as I sauntered along the path.....some large and bold, others small, more delicate. Yes, even the leaves are unique with scalloped edges.

But why...why wasn't I awed with this sunny sea of gold? Surely if each dandelion was replaced by a black-eyed Susan plant, I would be overwhelmed by the beauty surrounding me. Is it the dark center of the daisy...or the taller stems with ordinary leaves that qualify it as a flower?

"Puzzling, isn't it? Whoever made the distinction that weeds are unacceptable, distasteful, shameful, to be avoided, even destroyed....while black-eyed Susans are a thing of beauty, cultivated, watered so lovingly cared for in a flower garden?

Hmmm....excluded and isolated....disgraced and discriminated against....a learned attitude, belief?

Could it be that dandelions are stigmatized in the same way society has labeled persons who have a mental illness?

BECOME A STIGMA BUSTER!

What is Mental Health?

Mental Health is how we think, feel, and act in order to face life's situations. It is how we look at ourselves, our lives, and the people we know and care about. It helps to determine how we handle stress, relate to others, evaluate our options, and make choices. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life.

What is Mental Illness?

Mental Illness is a health condition that is characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behavior, (or a combination of both), associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.

Note: Ruth Detweiler is a founder of No Longer Alone Ministries in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. She currently serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors of ADNet.

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