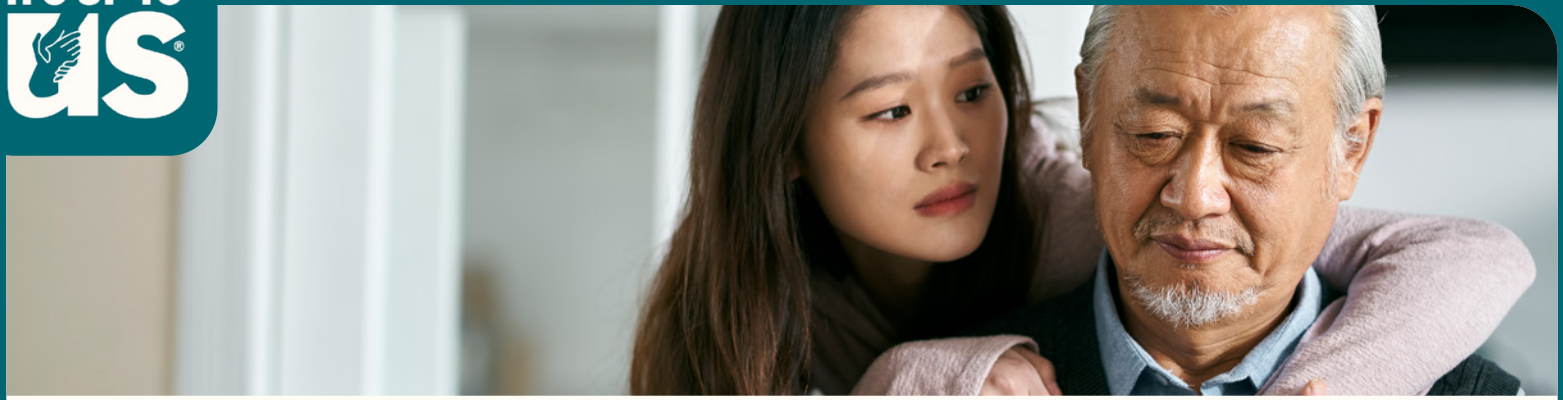




It's Up to Us to Create a Healthy and Supportive San Diego

Shine a Light On: Normalizing Conversations About Mental Health & Substance Use

A mental health challenge is anything that affects thinking, emotions, behaviors, or mood. Signs of mental health challenges are different across age groups, but for adults, symptoms may include worry, withdrawal, or burnout. If a person is experiencing mental health challenges for an extended period of time (two or more weeks), they may also experience a mental health disorder. These mental health disorders, like major depression and anxiety disorders, can be associated with significant stress or disability in social, work, or day-to-day activities.

Sometimes when people struggle with a mental health challenge, they may misuse alcohol or drugs instead of getting professional help. A National Institutes of Health study in 2020 found that 1 in 4 people who develop a substance use disorder also have a mental health disorder. This means that if someone you know is using more alcohol or drugs, it could be a sign to talk about their mental health.

For some people, talking about mental health can be difficult because of stigma. Here are some helpful tips to make conversations around mental health easier and reduce stigma around mental health.

Tips on Reducing Stigma and Normalizing Conversations About Mental Health

- Educate yourself about different mental health challenges and disorders.
- Treat others with respect. Avoid hurtful or judgmental language—words have power.
- Understand that people are more than just their mental health disorders. Use people-first language, meaning that you should refer to someone as a “person with bipolar disorder” rather than a “bipolar person.”
- Speak up when you hear incorrect information being shared.
- Learn about a few mental health resources so you're better prepared to help someone in need.

Being honest about what's really going on can help everyone feel empowered, not alone, and more comfortable having mental health-related conversations.

Did You Know?

The **It's Up to Us** website has a resource guide to help you find mental health support that's right for you.

Go to [Up2SD.org](https://www.up2sd.org) to learn more.

Conversation Starters

Starting the conversation to check in with the people around you is another great step toward reducing stigma around mental health. The more you practice talking about mental health, the better you get. Here are some conversation starters that can be helpful:

I've noticed something is different about you lately. How are you feeling?

I'm here to listen if you need to talk about anything. What's been going on in your life?

We haven't talked in a while, but I've been thinking about you. How are things?

If you need support with anything, I'm here for you. How can I help?

I know things are hard for you right now. I'm always here if you want to talk.

It's okay if you're not doing okay. How can I be there for you?

Being there for a friend or a family member and reminding them that it's okay to ask for help can make a big difference. If they need professional support, encourage them to find resources by visiting [Up2SD.org](https://www.up2sd.org) or contacting the **San Diego Access and Crisis Line at 888-724-7240**. Remember, your support and kindness can make a difference in their life.



Sources

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