

More than 50 per cent of young Australians are too embarrassed to talk about mental health issues

June 14, 2016

Startling new research has revealed the shocking role that “stigma” plays in preventing young Australians seeking help for mental health issues.

Each year, a quarter of all young people in this country will experience mental health issues, however many of them will not seek the help that they need.

New research, funded by an NHMRC Partnership Grant to the Centre for Youth Mental Health at the University of Melbourne and Orygen, the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, and in partnership with **headspace** revealed that 26 per cent of young people aged 12 – 25 would not tell anyone about a personal mental health issue.

Professor Debra Rickwood, a chief investigator on the research from **headspace**, said it showed that 52 per cent of young people were embarrassed to discuss a mental health problem with anyone and nearly half were afraid of what others would think.

“The results also found that 22 per cent would be unlikely or very unlikely to discuss it with their family doctor,” she said

headspace CEO Chris Tanti said stigma plays a profound and significant role in stopping Australian youth from seeking help for mental health issues.

“Stigma can make it harder to ask for help and get support for mental health issues out of fear of being judged,” Mr Tanti said.

Dr Carolyn Little, Clinical Director of headspace Darwin said that spending time and getting to know people impacted by mental health issues, hearing their stories and understanding their experiences helps to change negative attitudes, reduce fear and social distance.

“The other is education – providing information and knowledge about mental health issues and the benefits of seeking help and seeking help early,” she said.

To combat stigma, **headspace** has launched a vital National Awareness Campaign aimed at informing Australians that the more we talk openly about mental health issues, the easier it becomes for young people to seek help for them.

The campaign was kick started last week in Melbourne when **headspace** constructed a Big Stigma in Melbourne's Southern Cross Station.

From Monday 6 June – Friday 10 June, thousands of members of the public visited this eye-catching structure and took a piece of the stigma away – a panel from its outer shell containing information about mental health issues and how to seek help for them.

By doing so, they were helping to tear down the stigma, piece by piece, and keep the conversation about youth mental health alive.

This week the campaign will be bolstered by a digital hub, launching on Tuesday 14 June, complete with a virtual stigma to tear down and links to resources and tools for friends and family seeking to support youth with mental health issues: www.thebigstigma.com.au

headspace encourages all Australians to use #thebigstigma in all forms of social media to get the conversation going, and to help tear down #thebigstigma.

The statistics:

- 26 per cent of young people aged 12 – 25 would not tell anyone if they had a mental health problem, and 22 per cent would be unlikely/very unlikely to discuss it with their family doctor.
- 52 per cent of young people aged 12 – 25 that have identified having a mental health problem in the last 12 months would be embarrassed to discuss the problem with anyone, and 49 per cent would be afraid of what others think.

If you are having a tough time contact headspace on 1800 650 890 or www.eheadspace.com.au

headspace operates 94 centres across Australia, for details visit www.headspace.org.au.

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