



Thoughts on Stigma from NCADD's Founder, Marty Mann:

"Few among you consider alcoholism a proper subject for open discussion, few among you would willingly label yourself, or a friend or colleague, an alcoholic, and even fewer would be able to recognize alcoholism early, when there is the best chance for recovery.

"All of this is the result of stigma, a state of mind which is essentially mindless since it overlooks all the things which have been learned; a state of mind which produces public attitudes that are anti-therapeutic to say the least. In bold language, Stigma Kills.

"Stigma manifests itself in many ways; in false beliefs, such as that alcoholism is a moral problem and alcoholics moral delinquents; or that alcoholism is simply a matter of will power and alcoholics are weaklings; or that alcoholism is a deliberate self-degradation and alcoholics are simply letting themselves slide downhill—'throwing their lives away,' or that alcoholism is only found among homeless indigent derelicts—'Skid Row bums'; or finally, that alcoholism is a hopeless condition and alcoholics are all 'hopelessdrunks' (spoken as one word).

"The results of stigma are also many, and all are destructive. The family that has an alcoholic in its midst goes to great lengths to conceal this, and the fellow workers of the alcoholic—often including his immediate superiors—cover up for him, keep giving him 'one more chance to straighten up.' The friends, neighbors and others in more casual contact with the alcoholic carefully look the other way. All are participating in a great conspiracy of silence, many of them in the mistaken belief that they are protecting the alcoholic when actually they are preventing him from getting help."