Class Activities for **Chapter 9: Mental Health**

**Class activity #1**

Split the class into groups of 4-5 students. Provide them with the following and ask them to answer the questions that follow. When groups have finished their individual discussions, bring the discussion back to the full class.

People who have mental disorders often experience significant stigma. Even though this has improved in recent years, there are still a significant number of people who think people can recover from their disorders if they simply want it and try hard enough. Answer each of the following questions in order. Do not read the next question without first completing the question you are answering.

1. Write down a list of things people say to people suffering from depression that show they do not truly understand what it is like to live with a mental disorder or what the process of recovering from one is like.

2. Reimagine these statements as if they were said to someone with a physical condition like diabetes, cancer, or paralysis. How would they sound? Try some of them out loud.

3. What are more appropriate ways to respond to someone who is suffering from depression?

4. If we thought of depression as a physical illness, what positive changes might happen for people with depression?

**Class activity #2**

There are very particular impressions people have of various mental disorders. Some may be perceived as serious, while the legitimacy of others is questioned right from the initial diagnosis. After discussing these conditions in class, ask your students individually to write the names of the following disorders in their notebook or on a separate piece of paper:

Major Depressive Disorder

Bipolar Disorder

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Panic Disorder

Anorexia Nervosa

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Ask the students to write down the first few words or phrases that come to mind when they think about each disorder. After giving them some time to do that, ask them to rank the disorders in terms of which they think would be the easiest to work on with a client. In other words, which disorder do they think they could do the best job of helping a client to overcome? Why?

After they have taken some time to do this, put them into groups of 4-5 for small group sharing of their answers, and then discuss as a full class. Are there common ideas or perceptions about these disorders? How might one’s approach to a client differ if one is less comfortable with a particular disorder she/he may have?

**Class activity #3**

This is a mental health-specific version of an activity first introduced in Chapter 2 of your instructor’s guide. Have the class stand up and scatter around the room. Label one side of the room “agree” (write on the chalkboard/whiteboard or put up a sign on one wall) and label the other side of the room “disagree.” Tell the students you will be reading a series of statements and you would like them to move to a place in the room that reflects how they feel about the statement. If they strongly agree, they should move far to the “agree” side of the room. If they somewhat agree, they may move halfway between the middle of the room and the “disagree” wall. After everyone has decided where to stand, ask for volunteers to explain why they are standing where they are.

Statements

1. We do a good job of recognizing mental health concerns in people around us.
2. Social workers in any area of practice need to have a strong understanding of mental health issues.
3. The fact that we prescribe so many more drugs for mental disorders than we used to is a problem.
4. We have created mental disorders that shouldn’t be labeled as mental disorders at all.
5. Mental disorders are as difficult to recover from as physical illnesses.
6. I believe people other than psychiatrists (and other doctors) should be able to prescribe psychotropic drugs if they have enough schooling and training in mental health and pharmacology.
7. Sometimes it seems like people are proud of their mental disorders.
8. There are no people with mental disorders I would be uncomfortable treating.

Feel free to add your own based on class discussions or comments you may have received from students.