

THE ADVENTURES OF ANTI-STIGMA KID!



Hello everyone! I'm Anti-Stigma Kid and my mission is to challenge stigma and misinformation around mental health difficulties. Today I'm in Barnard Castle.



Every evening I need to fold my clothes in a certain way before I go to bed. God, I'm so OCD!



Sounds like a job for me!

Excuse me ladies, sorry to interrupt, but could I please ask you to correct your language in future?

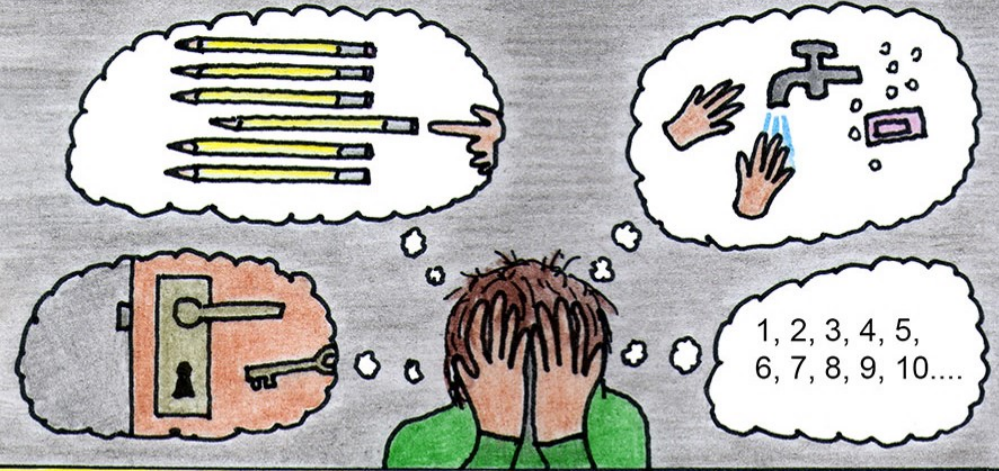


OCD is a condition characterised by intrusive thoughts, or *obsessions*, and repetitive behaviours - the *compulsions*.

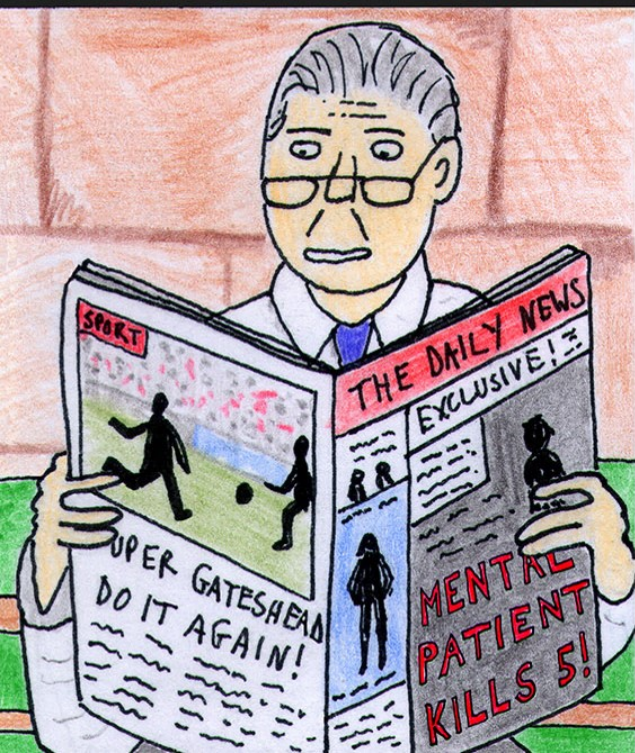
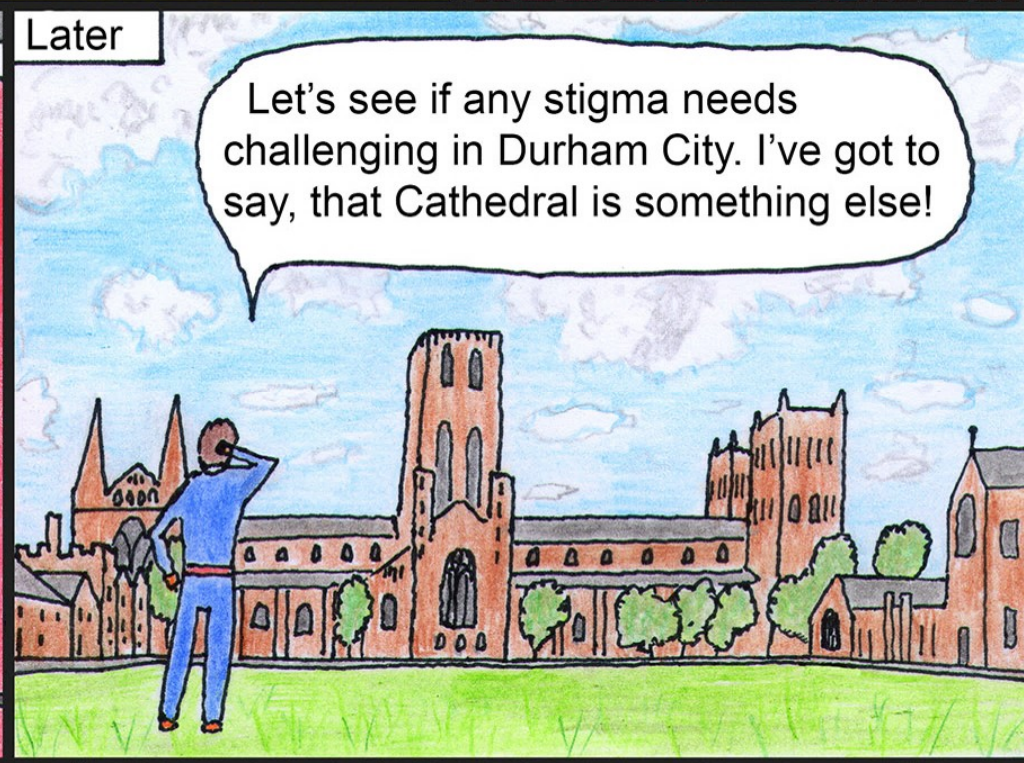


It is not simply about being neat and tidy. Yes, people with obsessive-compulsive disorder may clean or arrange things as part of their rituals, but this is just a small fraction of their symptoms.





In addition, these rituals are never positive. People feel compelled to engage with them because the anxiety caused by the intrusive thoughts is often extremely debilitating...



When in actual fact, statistics show that people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia are far more likely to be a victim of violent crime, not a perpetrator!

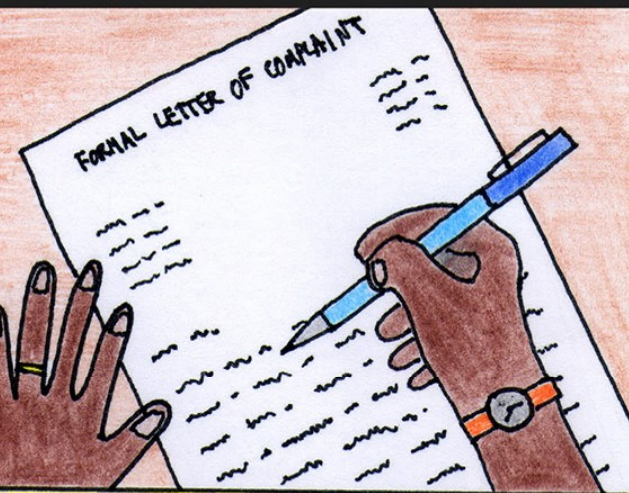


In future may I suggest you be more selective with your choice of newspaper. Here's some money to buy another.

Uhh Okay... I'm sorry!

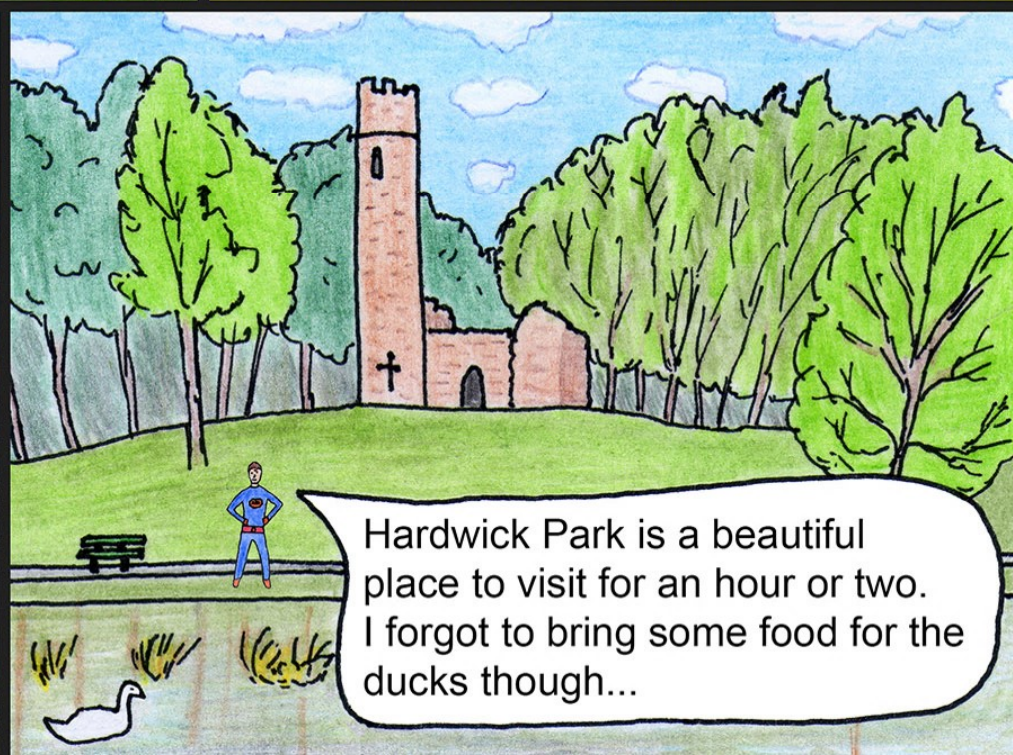


Although the media can be a powerful tool in helping to dispel myths, the opposite is also true, with sensationalist reporting leading to increased fear and mistrust.



It is important, therefore, that we hold the media to account where possible. You could write to the editor, or even complain to the regulators, if you encounter something discriminatory.

Anyway, I'd better continue on my quest to stamp out stigma. Time to head south to Sedgefield!

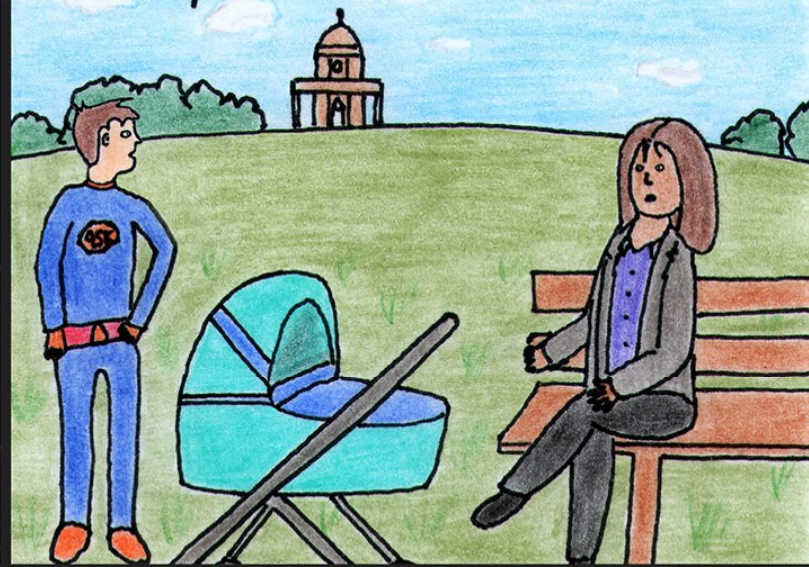


Hardwick Park is a beautiful place to visit for an hour or two. I forgot to bring some food for the ducks though...

I don't want to feel this way... What if they take him away from me? Why can't I just be a normal mam?



Is everything OK, miss?



Well... actually, no. You see, I've been feeling so low ever since my son was born. I just can't help having these thoughts. You won't tell anyone, will you?

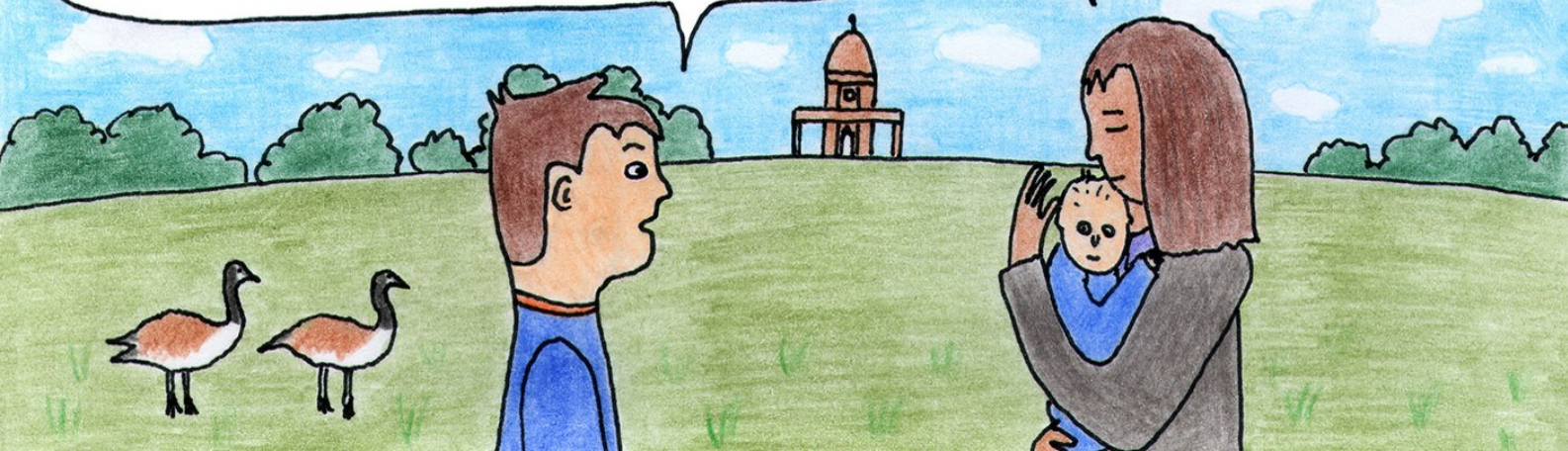


Feeling very low both during and after pregnancy is very common, miss. If you speak to your GP or health visitor, they will give you the support that you need.



Many women have had a similar experience to your own. Sometimes they may feel like they are 'bad mothers' even when this is clearly not the case.

Thank you for your kind words. I'll phone my doctor later.



Most people understand stigma to be the direct discrimination that they face from others, but it is broader than this.



I need to be locked away from society...

I am unpredictable and dangerous...

I'll never get better...

I'm a worthless individual...

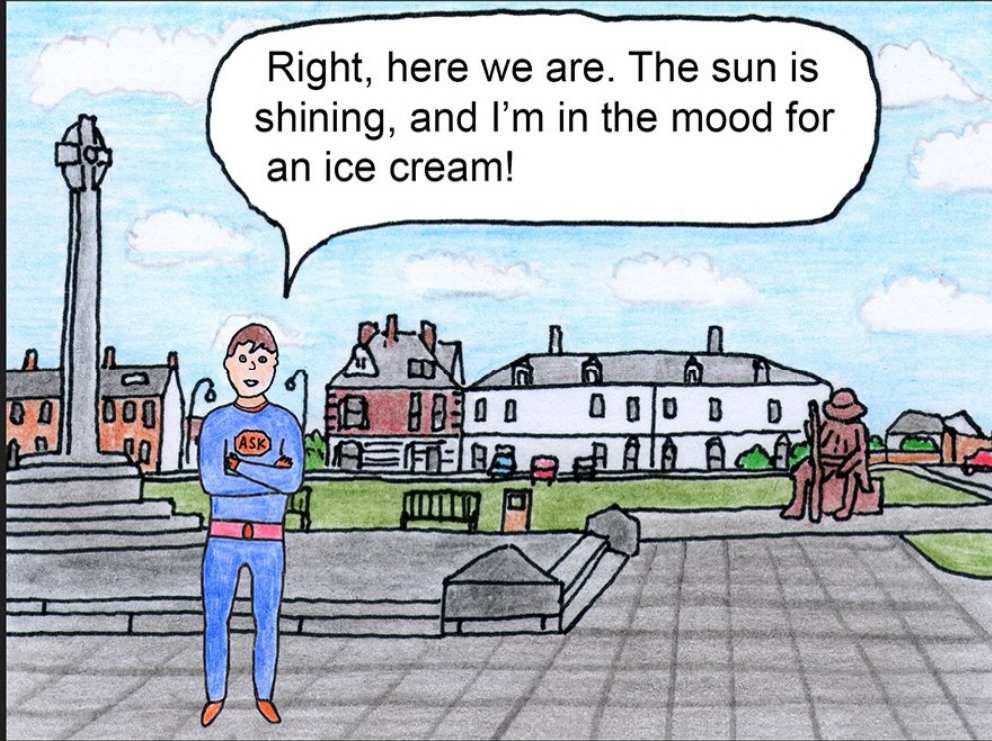


For example, self-stigma around mental health can occur when someone agrees with any negative societal attitudes held about their diagnosis...

This is why it is important that we challenge any misinformation that we come across. Let's head across to Seaham for one final stop!



Right, here we are. The sun is shining, and I'm in the mood for an ice cream!



So Gary's been off for a fortnight now. I heard that it's his depression.

Depression? Yeah, whatever. It's just an excuse really. He just needs to pull himself together...



Excuse me, may I remind you that depression is a serious condition that can have a significant impact on someone's life? It is not a sign of weakness or something that they can simply shrug off.



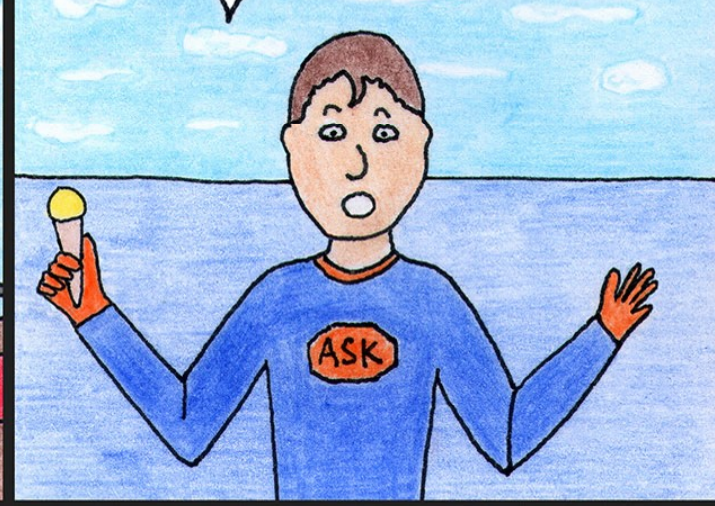
Mind your own business kid. There's nothing wrong with him.



Anyone can use depression as an excuse if they don't feel like doing something. Anyway, I've got better things to be doing with my time than standing here listening to you!



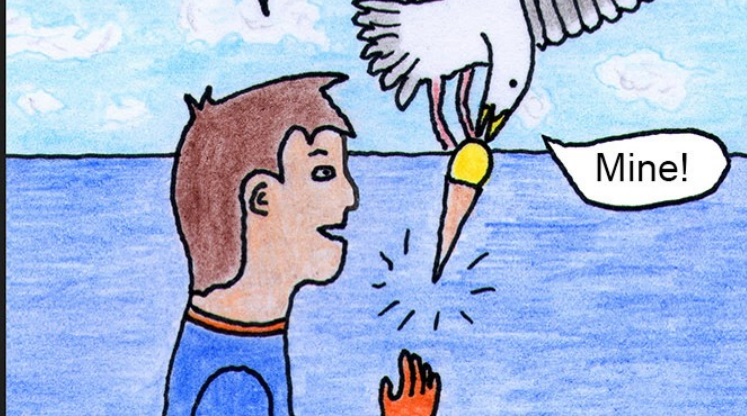
But depression is not like that. If you'd just let me explain...



Many people with depression are reluctant to discuss how they feel because they are afraid of being accused of 'making it up'. For many, the stigma they face can be more distressing than the illness itself...



Let me ask you this: would you tell someone with cancer or heart disease that they were using their diagnosis as an excuse?



Um, well... no of course not!

So why would you say this to somebody with depression? Just because you can't often see it, doesn't mean that it isn't there!

I, um...when you put it like that... yeah maybe I was being a bit harsh there. Sorry about this, kid.

I think that was a successful end to the day - even though I lost my ice cream! Remember, you don't need to be a superhero to challenge stigma - why not try some of the following suggestions?

Challenge what people say...

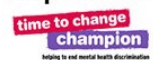
'Crackers' are what you eat cheese with - not a description for someone!

Post about mental health on social media...



Bring info about mental health into work, school or college...

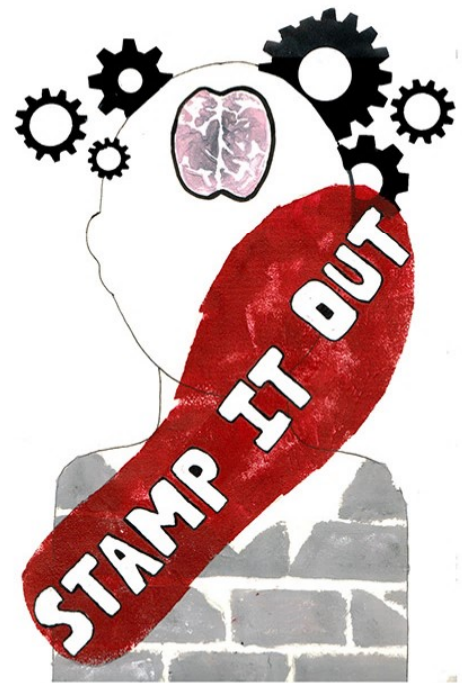
Become a time to change champion...



Studies have shown that talking about mental health can help to break down barriers and challenge any misconceptions. You'll find that most people you speak to will be open-minded and will listen to what you have to say.

Finally, if you have a friend or relative who experiences poor mental health, remember to **ASK**, rather than assume, how they are doing. See you all later!

This comic was produced by Peter Swan for 'Stamp it Out', a charity based in County Durham that aims to reduce stigma and discrimination towards people with mental health problems by raising awareness amongst the general public, within the workplace, and other settings.



**Mental Health Anti-Stigma
and Discrimination Campaign**

If you would like to get involved in helping to challenge stigma, search for 'Stamp it Out in County Durham' on Facebook, or contact Chris Affleck at:

chris.affleck@investinginchildren.net

**time to change
county durham**

let's end mental health discrimination