

Stigma Scenario One

Shirley, 42 - Manchester

I recently went into my local Salon and Spa to get a massage. I'd been feeling a little isolated recently so I thought this would cheer me up and make me feel good.

When I booked in for my treatment, they asked me to fill out a standard questionnaire about my health and medical conditions. I completed the form and handed it back.

Soon, the owner of the spa came out and asked if I'd mind stepping outside to have a chat. She informed me that I would not be getting my treatment today as I had declared I have HIV on my form. She told me it was a risk to her staff for anyone to touch me.

I was so shocked and tried to tell her that I was no risk to anyone as I was fully medicated and could not pass on the condition...she would not allow me to reenter the salon and I noticed that she would was standing at a distance from me at all times as though she could catch it through the air.

Stigma Scenario Two

Sadiq, 24 – London

I had to take some time off work recently as my mental health was very low. I've always struggle with depression but it recently got a lot worse. My doctors have diagnosed me with Bipolar Disorder.

When I returned to work after a two week absence, my workstation had been moved closer to my boss's office. I found that no-one really knew how to talk to me. Everyone said hi but no-one seemed to want to have a conversation with me. Many went down to lunch together but I wasn't asked to join. My closest workmate, Jake told me that people didn't really think I'd be up for the crowds and all the stress of eating in the pub.

I mentioned this to my manager. He said that I was being over sensitive and that people were just giving me some space.

People seem to be talking to me less and less as though they're scared of me or scared of having to talk about my condition. So they think it's better to just leave it alone.

Stigma Scenario Three

Jennie, 31 – Bristol

I used to be James, but now I'm Jennie and I've never been happier to be my true self.

Today I joined up with the new gym in my area. I was coming straight from a busy day at work so took gym clothes with me. When I arrived I entered the female dressing room and found that it was open plan with no private cubicles, only lockers and benches. This wasn't a problem for me really so I undressed and put on my work-out clothes.

A woman was hovering at the sinks, looking at me in the reflection of the mirror. She was texting on her phone. I tried not to be paranoid and simply went out onto the gym floor to do my work out.

After my session I showered, and when leaving the shower I was approached by a female member of staff. She politely mentioned to me that in future I could make use of the disabled toilet for dressing.

I told her I am happy to dress at the bench with others, however she told me that I would "surely be more comfortable with some privacy".