

Understanding Dignity Violations





**“Have you ever felt unheard,
labelled, or spoken over?”**

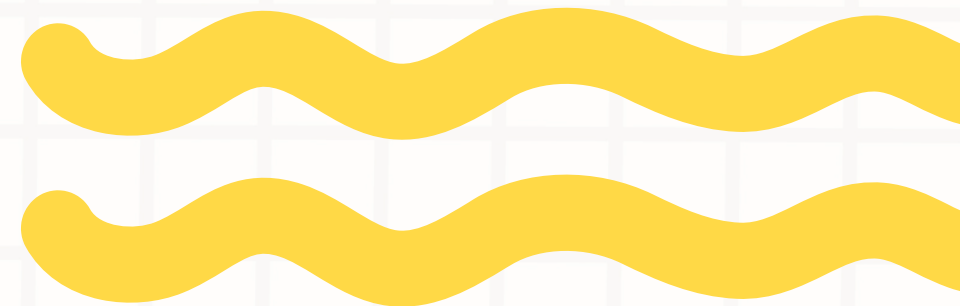
Dignity is hard to define, but we immediately recognise
when it is violated.



What Are Dignity Violations?

Dignity violations happen when people are:

- Talked down to or infantilised
- Ignored or not listened to
- Reduced to labels (“a patient”, “a case”)
- Excluded from decisions about their own care
- Treated with coercion, neglect, or disrespect



Key insight

Treatment without dignity
becomes meaningless, even if
clinically correct.

Source: World Federation for Mental Health
(2015), World Mental Health Day – Dignity in
Mental Health Report.
(From Janet Paleo's lived experience narrative)



Real-Life Examples

From lived experience in the report:

- Professionals speaking about the person, not to them
- Assuming fragility, incompetence, or inability to decide
- Forced care without explanation or consent




Why Dignity Violations Are Harmful

Impact on individuals:

- Loss of identity & self-worth
- Reduced trust in services
- Poor engagement with treatment
- Delayed or blocked recovery

Impact on systems:

- Reinforces stigma
 - Normalises discrimination
 - Leads to burnout on both sides (providers & users)
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Dignity in Everyday Practice

Dignity begins when we:

- See the person before the diagnosis
- Start where the person is
- Use respectful language
- Replace control with collaboration
- Challenge stigma, in systems and ourselves

Thank You

