

# Understanding Dignity Violations



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

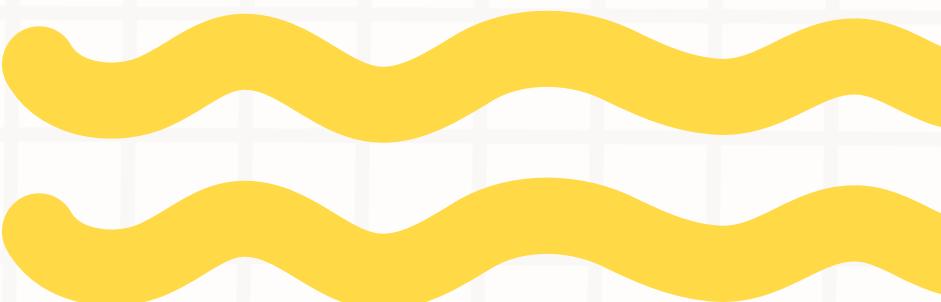
Dignity is hard to define, but we immediately recognise  
when it is violated.

# What Are Dignity Violations?

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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

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## 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)

# 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

