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ASpida: Unhooking people with chronic pain from stigmatized behaviors

Stigma appears in many forms and when it occurs, we often tend to believe what others impose on us.

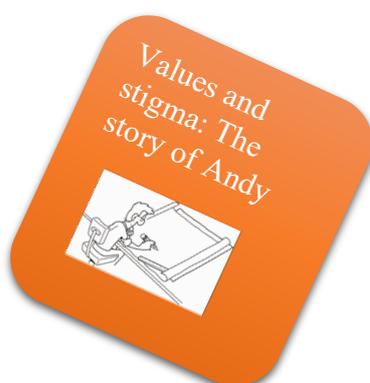
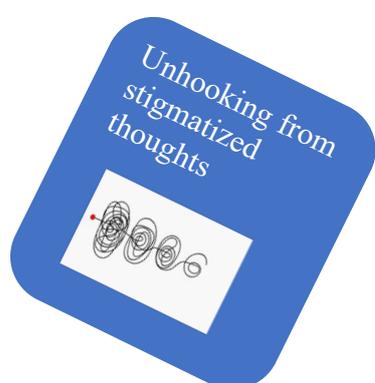
This is what we call in ASpida “Internalized or felt stigma”. Once we come to believe it, this ends up going down the road to self-judgment, guilt, or other uncomfortable thoughts and feelings.

When we get hooked by those thoughts and feelings, we may tend to feel bad or even allow ourselves not to be treated well. For example, we may feel less motivated and less assertive towards others.

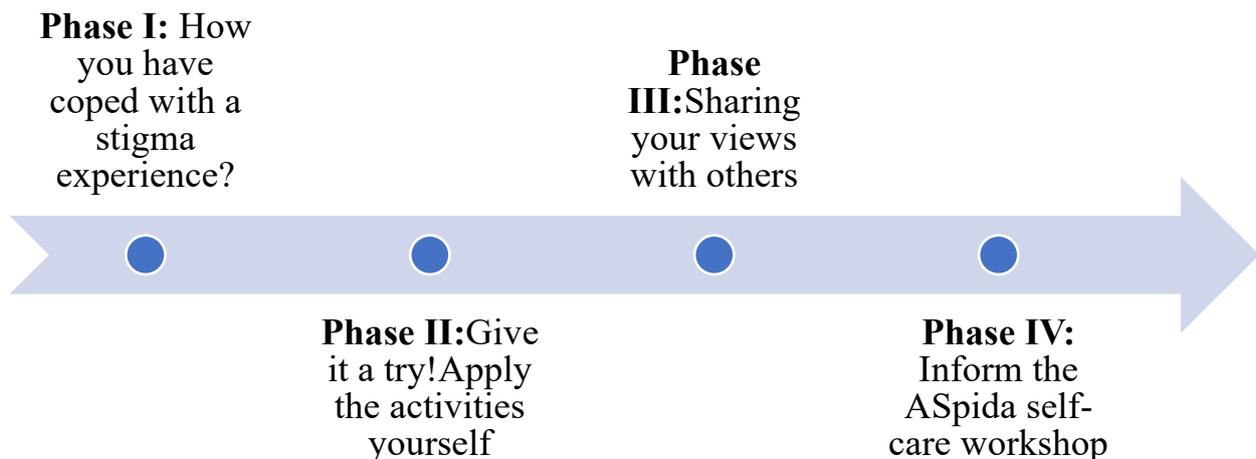


To find out how to “unhook people with chronic pain from stigmatized behaviors”, a group of members from **Chronic Pain Ireland (CPI)**, recently formed a Public and Patient Involvement Group (PPI). They work with a group of researchers from the **School of Applied Psychology, University College Cork (UCC)** in Ireland, to create a new self-care ½ day group-based workshop to tackle the effects of stigma.

The team has been met in several virtual meetings to understand what can help people with chronic pain against stigmatized behaviors. They have now created activities, illustrating experiential exercises, metaphors, and techniques that are informed from the latest of Contextual Behavioral Science.



Now the team is going to test the activities in an online platform and a research study that includes four phases:



- Phase I: participants, guided by a PPI member, will work on one of their previous experiences with stigma and record how they have coped with them.
- Phase II: participants will be randomly assigned to either gain access to a digital platform and watch a series of virtual experiential activities, delivered by PPI members, or be invited to participate in an open online webinar where PPI members will illustrate the activities live. Participants in both groups will then apply the new skills (exercises) to their daily life for ten days.
- Phase III: participants will share their views about the usefulness of the skills in a virtual focus group
- Phase IV: findings will inform the final development of the ASpida ½ day self-care group-based workshop

In ASpida, our motto is that “*we cannot control others-or our minds- for imposing stigma, but, we can learn how to respond to stigmatized behaviors*”.

See what the PPI members have said about their participation in the program and stay tuned for our updates!

If you want to contribute or join the ASpida group, email Dr. Vasilis S. Vasiliou, Clinical Psychologist and Post-Doctoral Researcher at the University College Cork, School of Applied Psychology: v.vasiliou@ucc.ie

Regina, Galway: *“As a member of the PPI group, I have become more aware of stigma that I place on myself in relation to chronic pain and become more mindful of how I interact when I am on the receiving end of stigma.”*



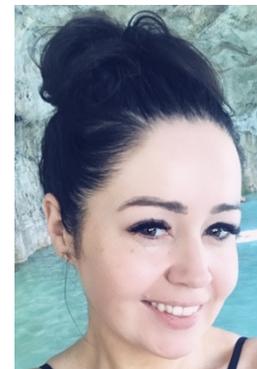
Andy, Donegal: *“I found the PPI experience interesting, instructive, and challenging”*



Vasilis, Cork *“As Researcher, I have found PPI group being instrumental in guiding our ASpida research program”*



Laura, Kilkenny: *“I have found the ASpida program to be though provoking, informative, and encouraging So, I’m very happy to have been part of this to help other to manage chronic pain stigma”*



Martina, Limerick: *“I have the PPI experience to be interesting and very challenging. I have learned a great deal and met some wonderful people as well”*

