



IMPACTS OF STIGMA

**A comic about mental
health created by women
who have experienced
sexual abuse and
homelessness**

**Visual
Inquiry**



See Me
End mental health
discrimination



The concepts and images depicted in this comic were created with the SAY Women Community. SAY Women is a Glasgow-based charity which supports young women who are survivors of sexual abuse and who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Artist-researcher and facilitator Dr. Nic Dickson and digital artist Oscar Dickson, from Visual Inquiry, assisted in the imagining, drawing and design of the comic.

Shona Cowie, from the Village Storytelling Centre, helped develop and storyboard the women's experiences.

With thanks to Maeve Grindall of See Me and the Anti-Stigma Arts Fund for supporting this project.



You don't look like a survivor...

People have ideas as how you are supposed to behave as a survivor - you are meant to behave in a certain way - use drugs, alcohol... People believe my abuse couldn't have been so bad, because to them, I have not been affected.

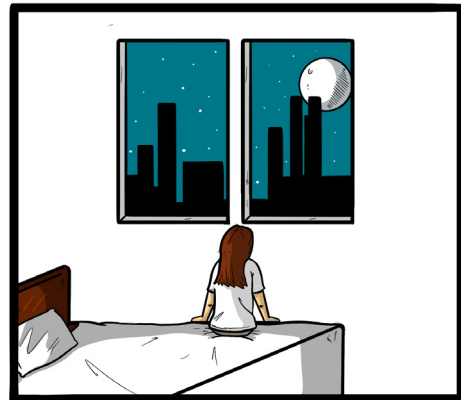
**People minimise my experience
They attach their own beliefs onto others**



THE VOICES GET LOUDER AND LOUDER

Self-Stigma

My experience of self-stigma occurred as a child when I was hospitalised for psychiatric illness



I learnt as a kid from the doctors and nurses:

'You are not well'

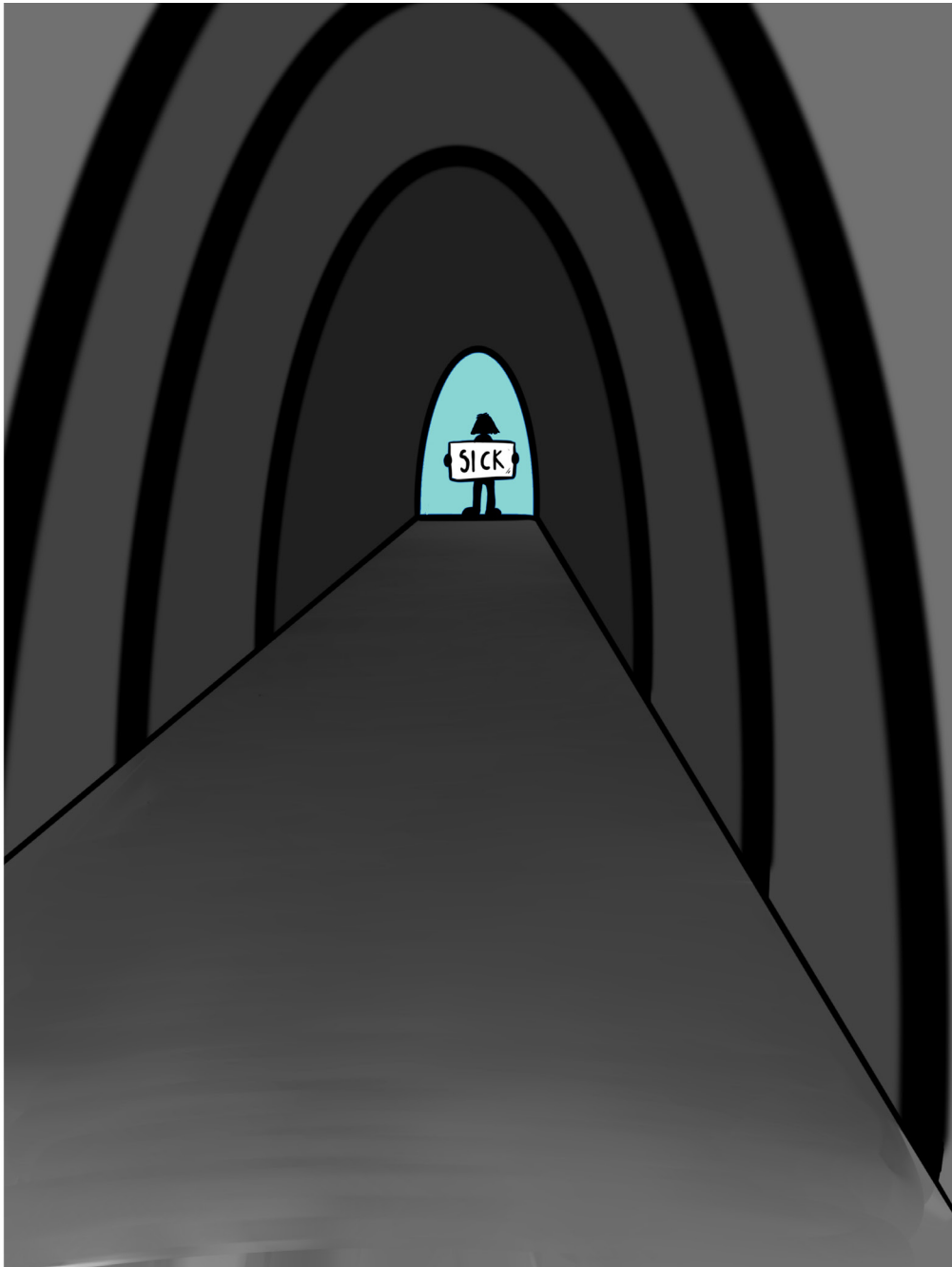
'You're mentally ill, not abused or neglected'

'You're delusional'

'You are sick'

'You're psychotic, therefore your thinking is flawed'

You're over emotional. You have a diagnosis of 'Emotional Unstable Personality Disorder'



Mental health stigma means a loss of opportunities, support and empathy based on nothing more than a diagnosis of people's struggles.

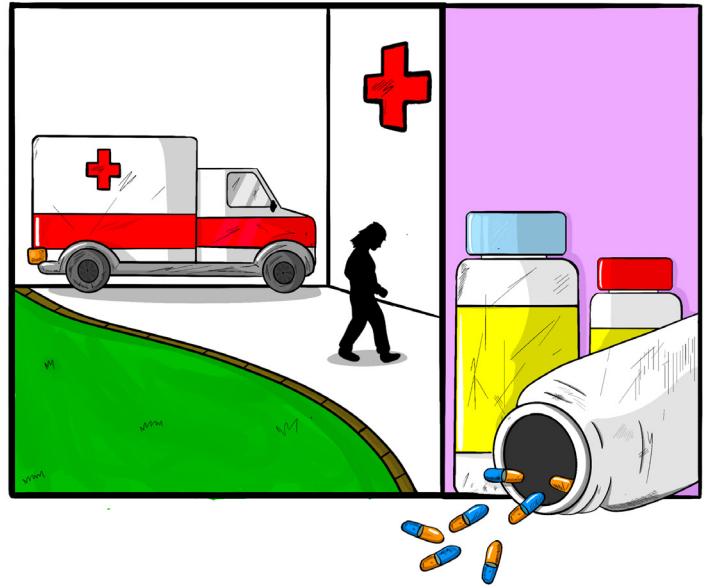
Stigma makes me sad, ashamed, afraid and unable to ask for help, because I feel I won't be believed.

I am sick.

E.U.P.D.

I was taken to hospital after an overdose.

The nurse was so kind
Till she read my files



Her behaviour changed...



When she saw my diagnosis of Emotional Unstable Personality Disorder

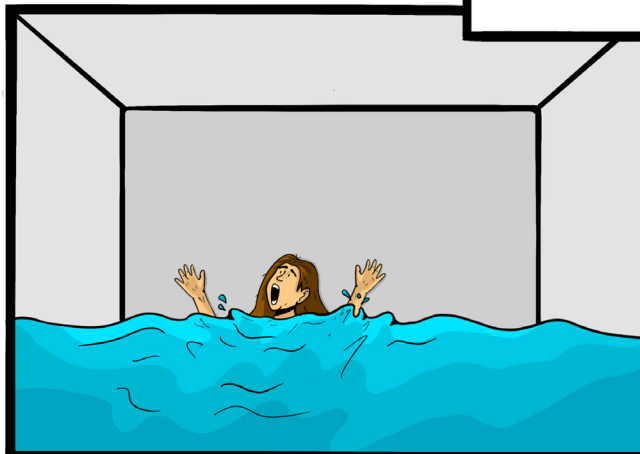
I was viewed as an attention seeker, rather than my using self-harm as a coping strategy



Now I know that

THE E.U.P.D LABEL IS MY STIGMA

It is like a basement I can't get out of...



... and it's flooding

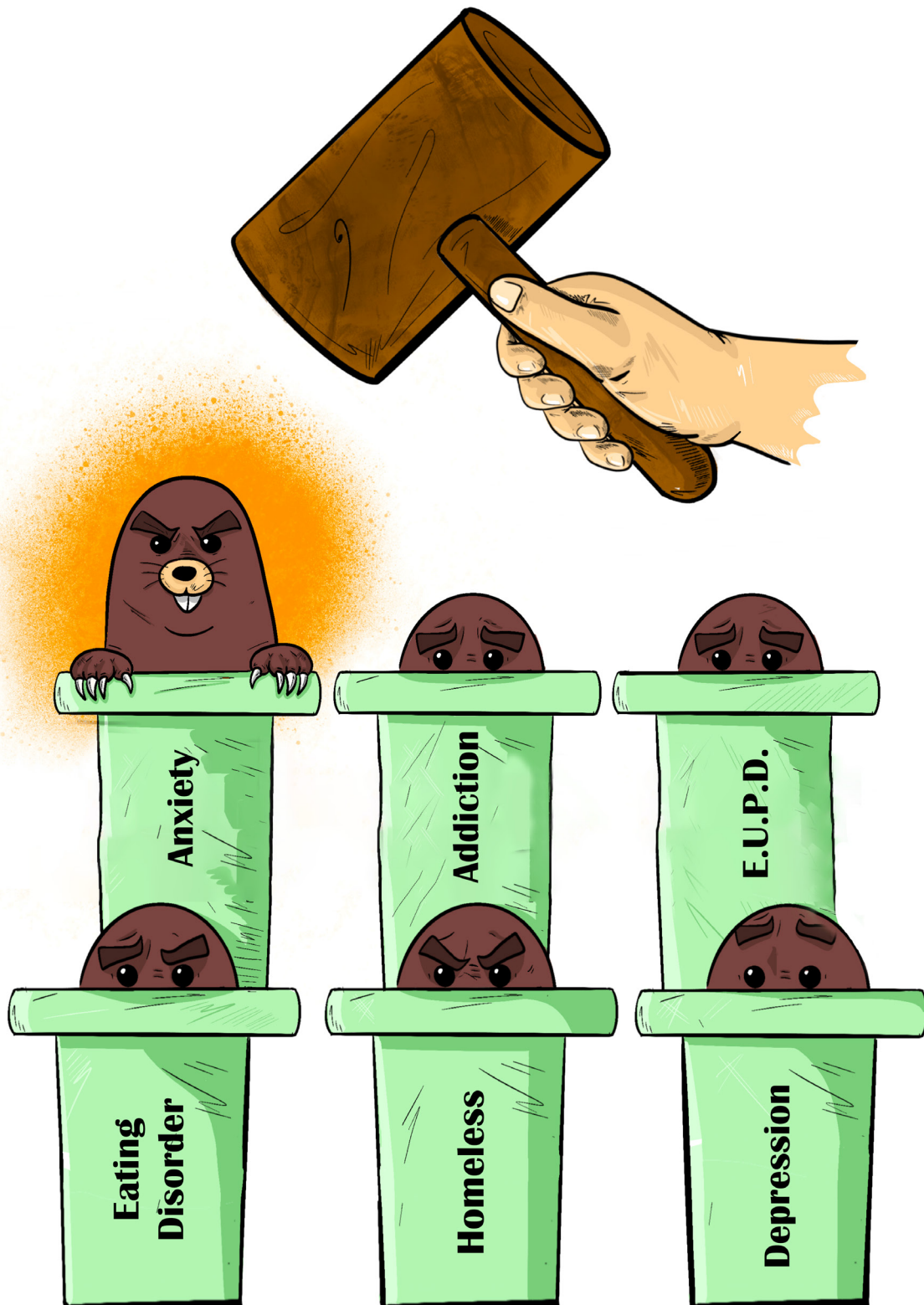
**I am alone, isolated, barred from help and scared to ask for fear of being judged.
The noise is deafening.**

I am labelled



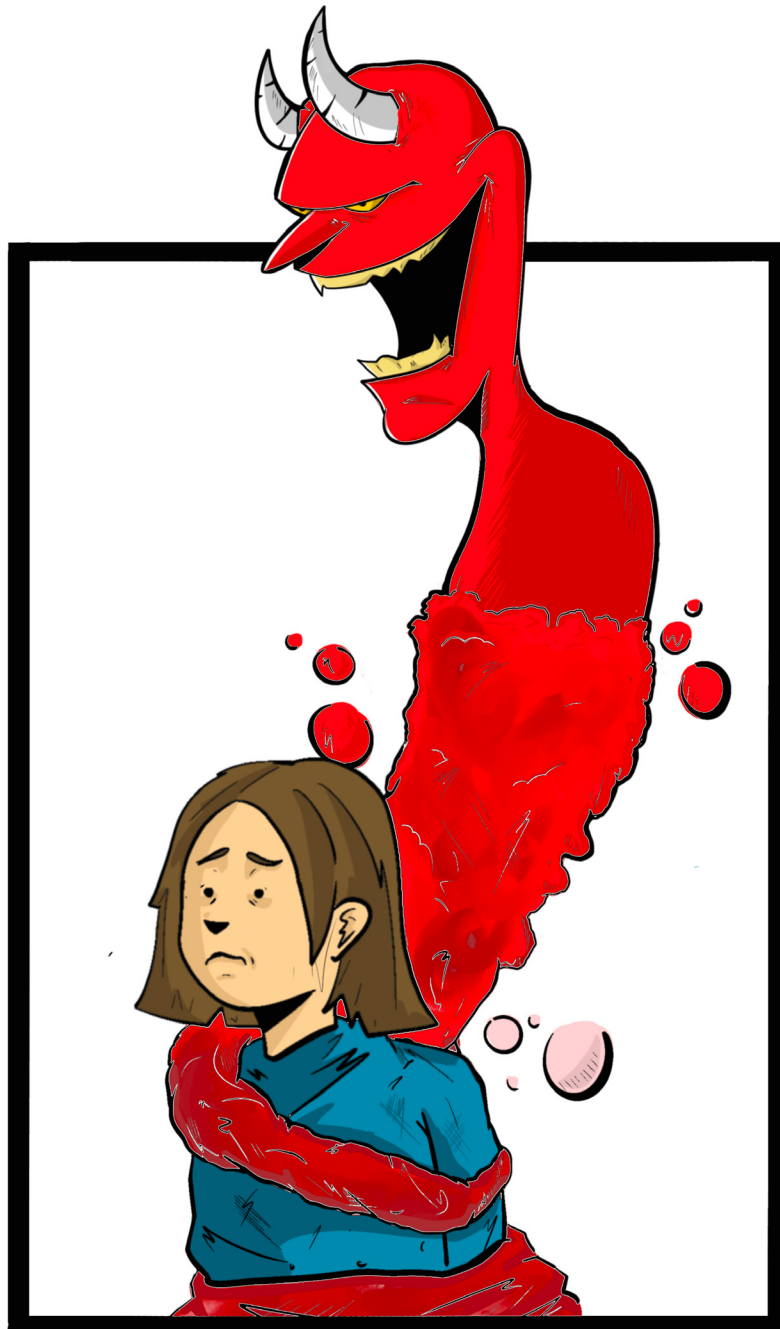
Stigma whack-a-mole

It's everywhere, there is no escape



Mental health stigma is a demon which lives inside of me

**I can't control it.
It destroys my life.
It makes me question and doubt everything.
Being told over and over again I was psychotic.
I cannot voice an opinion.**



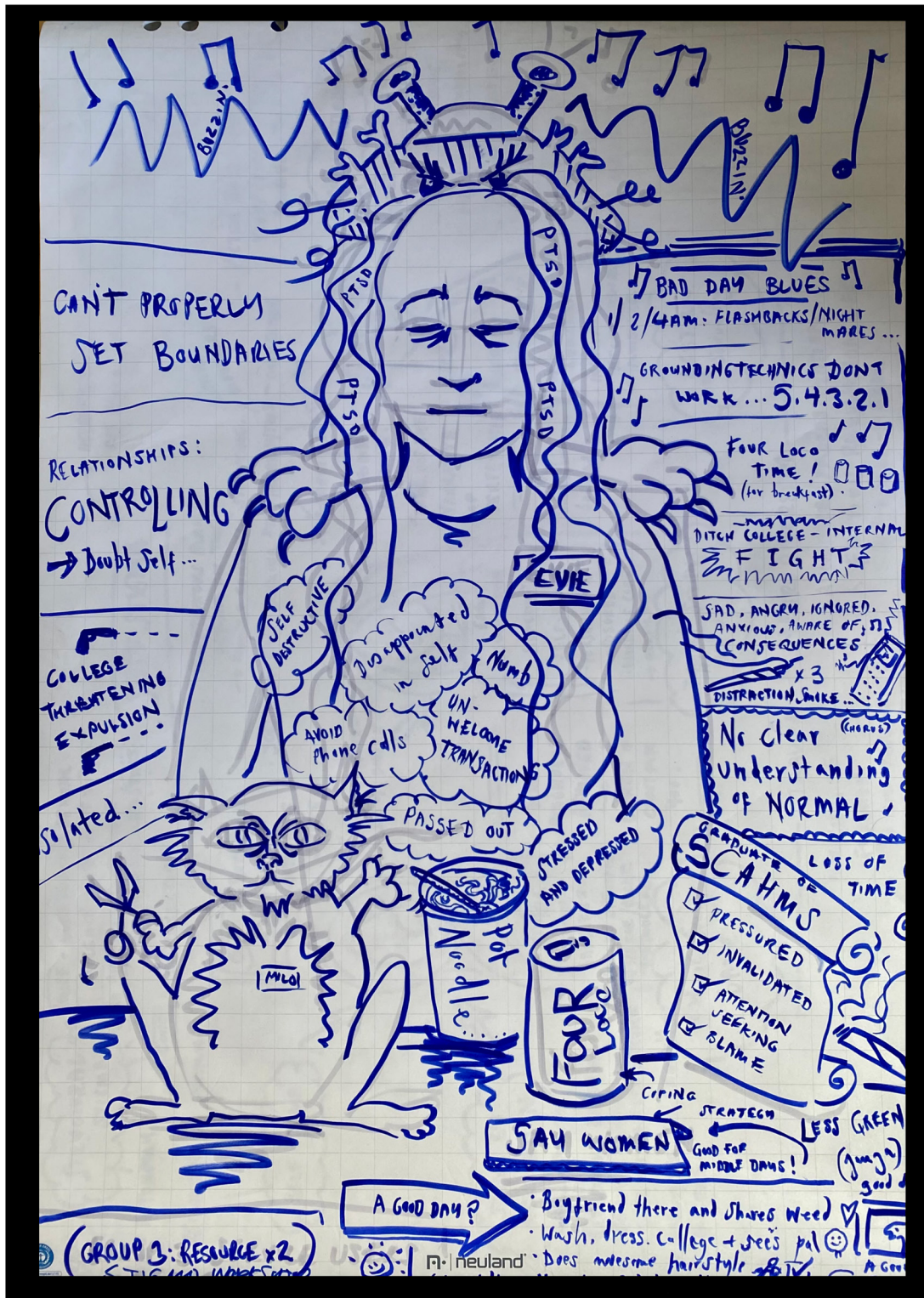
**My mental health stigma is like a
constant warning barrier - telling
others to be cautious**

My mind can't be trusted

**I challenge mental health stigma by
learning more about myself. By
understanding my thoughts, feelings
and behaviours, without attaching
stigma to them**



Surviving stigma



Women's homelessness is not just sleeping on the streets, it is having no safe place to call your own, and having to sofa surf between friends and family. Though this experience is hidden, women face judgement and stigma due to societal prejudice.

AND YET THEY SURVIVE AND FLOURISH

This publication is made by survivors of sexual violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. They have faced being stigmatised as survivors, as individuals with mental health problems and as homeless women.

For further information on the impacts of mental health stigma, sexual abuse and homelessness, please contact:

See Me

Visit: www.seemescotland.org

Breathing Space

Call: 0800 83 85 87

Visit: www.breathingspace.scot

SAY Women

Call: 0141 552 5803

Visit: www.say-women.co.uk

Turning Point Scotland

Call: 0141 420 6969

Visit: www.turningpointscotland.com

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<https://www.visualinquiry.co.uk/>

