

Start Your Story

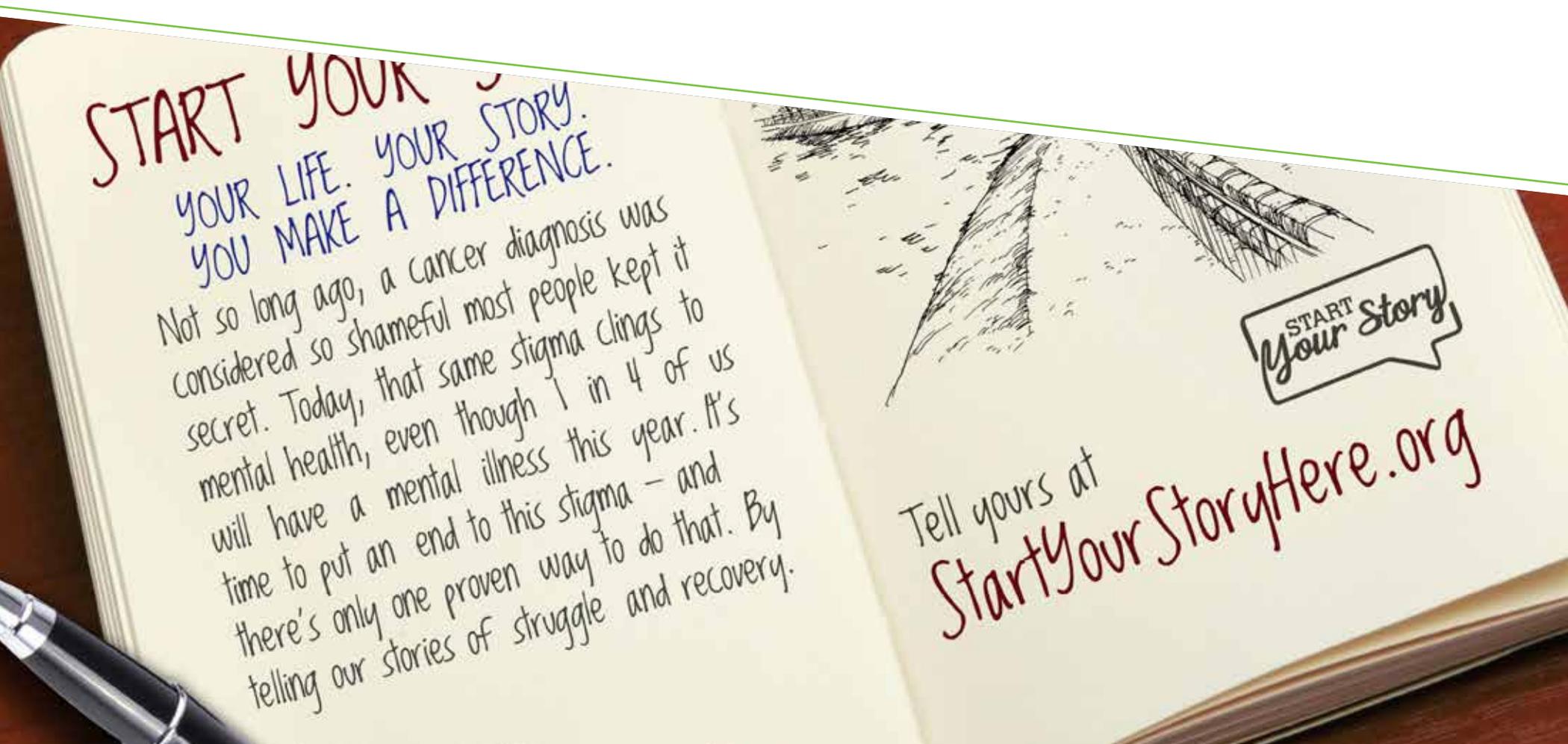
It's hard enough to have a mental illness. Stigma makes it worse. Not only does it make it harder to cope emotionally, it is also a leading reason why people don't seek help.

When Orange County, Fla., asked us to promote their Wraparound Orange children's mental health services initiative, we quickly learned that stigma was a major barrier to program involvement. And our research found only one evidence-based way to address stigma: Telling stories.

Based on the groundbreaking work of leading stigma researcher Patrick Corrigan (and with his permission), we created StartYourStoryHere.org, an online tool that helps people craft a personal narrative that highlights their strengths and resilience. We then partnered with Page15.org, a youth literacy initiative, and the University of Central Florida's (UCF) creative writing program to sponsor writing workshops.

The results:

One Wraparound case manager called the weeklong workshop she did with her teen clients "better than a year of therapy." And the adult writing workshops are now embedded at UCF and were recently featured in the university's Pegasus magazine.



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