

WORDS MATTER

WHAT IS STIGMA?

Stigma is a discrimination against an identifiable group, place or nation.



STIGMA & SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER (SUD)

Stigma against people with SUD may stem from misinformed beliefs that addiction is a moral failing rather than a preventable and curable disease from which people can recover and lead healthy and successful lives.



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Terms you should say and use when referring to Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

ADDICT



PERSON WITH A SUD

JUNKIE



PERSON IN ACTIVE USE

ALCOHOLIC



PERSON WITH ALCOHOL
USE DISORDER

A DRUNK



PERSON WHO MISUSES
ALCOHOL

FORMER ADDICT



PERSON IN RECOVERY

REFORMED ADDICT



PERSON WHO
PREVIOUSLY USED DRUGS



INSTEAD OF HABIT



HABIT INACCURATELY
IMPLIES THAT A PERSON IS
CHOOSING TO USE
SUBSTANCES OR CAN CHOOSE
TO STOP.

THE WORD “HABIT” MAY
UNDERMINE THE
SERIOUSNESS OF THE
DISEASE.

USE

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER
OR
DRUG ADDICTION



INSTEAD OF
ABUSE
(FOR ILLICIT DRUGS)



USE
USE



THE TERM “ABUSE” WAS
FOUND TO HAVE A HIGH
ASSOCIATION WITH NEGATIVE
JUDGEMENTS AND
PUNISHMENT.



INSTEAD OF
ABUSE (FOR
PRESCRIPTION
MEDICATIONS)



LEGITIMATE USE OF
PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS
IS LIMITED TO THEIR USE AS
PRESCRIBED BY THE PERSON
TO WHOM THEY ARE
PRESCRIBED. CONSUMPTION
OUTSIDE THESE PARAMETERS
IS MISUSE.

USE MISUSE
OR
USED OTHER THAN
PRESCRIBED



INSTEAD OF
DIRTY (FOR
TOXICOLOGY
SCREENING RESULTS)



USE CLINICALLY ACCURATE,
NON-STIGMATIZING
TERMINOLOGY THE SAME
WAY IT WOULD BE USED
FOR OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS.

USING THE TERM “DIRTY” MAY DECREASE A
PERSON’S SENSE OF HOPE AND SELF-
EFFICACY FOR CHANGE.

USE

TESTING POSITIVE



INSTEAD OF
DIRTY (FOR NON-
TOXICOLOGY
PURPOSES)



USE

PERSON WHO USES DRUGS



USE CLINICALLY ACCURATE,
NON-STIGMATIZING
TERMINOLOGY THE SAME
WAY IT WOULD BE USED
FOR OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS.

USING THE TERM “DIRTY” MAY DECREASE A
PERSON’S SENSE OF HOPE AND SELF-
EFFICACY FOR CHANGE.



INSTEAD OF
CLEAN (FOR
TOXICOLOGY
SCREENING RESULTS)



USE

TESTING NEGATIVE



USE CLINICALLY ACCURATE,
NON-STIGMATIZING
TERMINOLOGY THE SAME WAY IT
WOULD BE USED FOR OTHER
MEDICAL CONDITIONS. SET AN EXAMPLE WITH YOUR OWN
LANGUAGE WHEN INTERACTING WITH OTHERS WHO MIGHT
USE STIGMATIZING SLANG. USE OF SUCH TERMS MAY
EVOKE NEGATIVE AND PUNITIVE IMPLICIT
COGNITIONS.



INSTEAD OF CLEAN (FOR NON- TOXICOLOGY PURPOSES)



USE

- BEING IN REMISSION OR RECOVERY
- ABSTINENT FROM DRUGS
- NOT DRINKING OR TAKING DRUGS
- NOT CURRENTLY OR ACTIVELY USING DRUGS



USE CLINICALLY ACCURATE, NON-STIGMATIZING TERMINOLOGY THE SAME WAY IT WOULD BE USED FOR OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS. SET AN EXAMPLE WITH YOUR OWN LANGUAGE WHEN INTERACTING WITH OTHERS WHO MIGHT USE STIGMATIZING SLANG. USE OF SUCH TERMS MAY EVOKE NEGATIVE AND PUNITIVE IMPLICIT COGNITIONS.



INSTEAD OF ADDICTED BABY



USE

- BABY BORN TO MOTHER WHO USED DRUGS WHILE PREGNANT
- BABY WITH SIGNS OF WITHDRAWAL FROM PRENATAL DRUG EXPOSURE
- BABY WITH NEONATAL OPIOID WITHDRAWAL/NEONATAL ABSTINENCE SYNDROME
- NEWBORN EXPOSED TO SUBSTANCES

BABIES CANNOT BE BORN WITH ADDICTION BECAUSE ADDICTION IS A BEHAVIORAL DISORDER - THEY ARE SIMPLY BORN MANIFESTING WITHDRAWAL SYNDROME. USE CLINICALLY ACCURATE, NON STIGMATIZING TERMINOLOGY THE SAME WAY IT WOULD BE USED FOR OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS. USING PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE CAN REDUCE STIGMA.



INSTEAD OF

OPIOID SUBSTITUTION
REPLACEMENT THERAPY
OR
MEDICATION-ASSISTED
TREATMENT (MAT)

USE

- OPIOID AGONIST THERAPY
- PHARMACOTHERAPY
- ADDICTION MEDICATION
- MEDICATION FOR A
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER
- MEDICATION FOR OPIOID
USE DISORDER (MOUD)



IT IS A MISCONCEPTION THAT MEDICATIONS MERELY “SUBSTITUTE” ONE DRUG OR “ONE ADDICTION” FOR ANOTHER. THE TERM MAT IMPLIES THAT MEDICATION SHOULD HAVE A SUPPLEMENTAL OR TEMPORARY ROLE IN TREATMENT. USING “MOUD” ALIGNS WITH THE WAY OTHER PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS ARE UNDERSTOOD, AS CRITICAL TOOLS THAT ARE CENTRAL TO A PATIENT’S TREATMENT PLAN.



WORDS MATTER

WHY CHANGE YOUR LANGUAGE?

It reduces discrimination toward people with SUD and can make them more likely to seek help.



PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

Person-first language maintains the integrity of individuals as whole human beings—by removing language that equates people to their condition or has negative connotations.

For example, “person with a substance use disorder” has a neutral tone and distinguishes the person from their diagnosis

All information was gathered from “Words Matter - Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction” published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) on Nov 29, 2021



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