

REDUCING STIGMA

ONE WORD AT A TIME

Consider the power of your words when you say:

Instead Try These Phrases:

Addict / Junkie	Person with Substance Use Disorder
Ex-Addict	Person living in recovery
Substance Abuse	Substance misuse / use
Clean / Dirty	Testing negative / testing positive
Drug Offender	Person arrested for drug violation
Relapsed	Experienced a setback
Drug Habit	Substance Use Disorder

Stigmatizing language can negatively influence public perceptions of people with Substance Use Disorder (SUD).

SUD is a health condition in nature and changing the language can increase support of life-saving interventions.



REACH OUT
Strengthening Communities



USE PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

INSTEAD OF...

1. Abuse
2. Drug problem, Habit/
Drug habit,
Dependence
3. Ex-addict, former/
reformed addict
4. Abuser, Addict,
Druggie, User, Junkie
5. Detox
6. Stayed clean / sober
7. Tested Dirty
8. Drug offender
9. Relapse, lapse, slip
10. Medication as a crutch
for recovery

YOU CAN SAY...

1. Use or misuse
2. Substance use disorder
3. Person in recovery
4. Person with a substance use
disorder
5. Withdrawal management
6. Maintained recovery or is well,
healthy, or in recovery
7. Tested positive for substance use
8. Person arrested for drug violation;
related: person with criminal legal
involvement
9. Experienced a recurrence of
substance use or substance use
disorder symptoms
10. Medication as a tool for treatment

BECAUSE...

- Many of these terms are preferred because they are neutral terms that are free of judgement.
- For example, "use" is neutral whereas "misuse" can be considered stigmatizing.
- Person first language that reduces stigma and allows individuals to see themselves as people before they are identified by their disorder.
- People aren't inherently "clean" or "dirty", regardless of their patterns of use. Medications aren't crutches, they're tools.
- Shame inducing language prevents doctors, community members, and even individuals with SUD from seeing SUD as a medical condition.
- Everyone should be treated and talked about as a person, not a condition.