



Using Person-Centered Language to Avoid Stigmatizing Individuals with Substance Use Disorders

Language matters when it comes to advocating with and for individuals with substance use disorders. Many of the common terms used in describing people with problematic use of drugs and alcohol [further add to the stigmatization](#) and discrimination of this community. Here are some [alternative words and phrases to consider](#):

Instead of using the term(s)...	Consider using the following term(s)...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addict • Abuser • Junkie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person/Someone with addiction • Person with a substance use disorder
Clean: “She has been clean for 10 years” “She is finally clean and off drugs”	“She has been in recovery for 10 years” “She is currently in recovery”
Dirty: “The drug test came back dirty”	“The drug test came back positive for drugs”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relapse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurrence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug problem • Drug habit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic use of drugs and alcohol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed addict • Reformed alcoholic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person in recovery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimental user • Recreational user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person starting to use drugs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitution therapy • Replacement therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medication-Assisted Treatment • Medication-Assisted Recovery

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