

Chances Are...We Can Stop the Cycle of Stigma

The cycle of substance abuse stigma creates an ongoing pattern of fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social exclusion. Stigma manifests in society when negative perceptions are not corrected – and this leads to discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping.

When this cycle repeats itself, people are less likely to seek help because they feel devalued. **Delaying treatment delays recovery** – which is why it is essential to change attitudes about substance use disorders and ensure that no one is left behind.

The Cycle of Stigma



6 Ways to Reduce Stigma

1. **Educate yourself** about substance use disorder.
2. **Educate others** by sharing facts, dispelling myths, and challenging stereotypes.
3. **Be aware of your behavior** and attitude toward people who engage in risky substance use. Identify any prejudices or judgments you have made in the past.
4. **Change the language** around substance use. Avoid words and phrases such as “junkie,” “addict,” or “drug habit.” Use person-first language instead (e.g., person with a substance use disorder).
5. **Treat people with respect** when you learn of substance use disorders-and always.
6. **Increase support and encouragement** while providing resources to people with substance use disorders.



How to Use Person-First Language

One of the most effective ways to reduce stigma and improve the chances of someone seeking treatment is to use person-first language (also known as people-first language). If your first reaction to this phrase is that you don't want to be "politically correct" and that people are "too sensitive," know this isn't about politics – it's about helping people receive the treatment they need for substance use disorders, plain and simple.

Person-first language is:

- Non-judgmental
- Neutral
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- Distinctive

Below are some common terms that you might hear in reference to substance use disorder that may cause stigma. As we seek to end stigma around substance use disorders, we need to change the language first.

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In discussing substance use disorders, words can be powerful when used to inform, clarify, encourage, support, enlighten, and unify. On the other hand, stigmatizing words often discourage, isolate, misinform, shame, and embarrass...

- From *Substance Use Disorders: A Guide to the Use of Language*

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Words to avoid	Words to use
Addict, junkie, drug addict, or drug abuser	Person with a substance use disorder or an addictive disease; patient
Addicted baby	Baby born to mother who used drugs/alcohol while pregnant
Alcoholic	Person with an alcohol use disorder
Clean	Not actively using substances, addiction free
Clean drug screen	Testing negative for substance use
Co-dependency	Emotional reliance on a partner
Dirty	Actively using substances
Dirty drug screen	Testing positive for substance use
Drug problem or drug habit	Substance use disorder or addictive disease
Enabling	Supporting behaviors that lead to substance use
Habit	Substance use disorder
Lapse (or slip)	Resumed substance use
Recovering addict	Person in recovery or addiction survivor
Replacement therapy	Medication-assisted treatment, treatment, or medication
Substance abuse	Substance use disorder
User	Person who misuses alcohol or drugs; person engaged in the risky use of substances

More resources for people-first language:

- www.recoveryanswers.org/addiction-ary/
- www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction/glossary



Chances Are...Changing Your Language Can Change Lives

I will help end stigma around addiction by:

#ChancesAreMI



Chances ARE

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