

Reference Guide - Safer Language

Combating stigma related to mental illness, suicide, and substance use starts with how we use language – something that continuously evolves. That’s why we must all be aware of any outdated language being used in the media and around us every day. Everyone can be a champion against stigma when advocating the use of accurate and respectful language. So, as you communicate with others, be mindful of the impact of your language.¹

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Stigmatizing	Respectful
It drives me crazy .	It bothers/annoys/frustrates me.
This is nuts .	This is interesting/strange/peculiar/funny .
This individual suffers from depression.	They live with/are experiencing depression.
Mentally ill or insane person	Person living with a mental health problem or illness
Committed suicide, successful suicide	Died by suicide
Failed or unsuccessful suicide attempt	Attempted suicide
Substance abuse	Substance use or substance use disorder
Everyone who is a junkie...	Everyone who uses substances...
They used to be an addict .	They are in recovery .



Mental Health Commission of Canada
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