

Mental Health Language Guide

Why does our language matter in mental health?

Language is a powerful tool and can impact the way others view a person and how people can view themselves. Language is ever changing so it's important to educate ourselves regularly as our culture and knowledge shifts. Don't be ashamed if someone corrects you, we are learning and growing together. We are here to help with a few do's and don'ts of mental health language!

Do's

Joe is a person who experiences bipolar disorder.

- Include trigger warnings when talking about heavier topics
- Include suicide hotline resources, warning signs, and other prevention focused information
- Use phrases like living with or experiencing instead of suffering
- Use phrases like died by suicide instead of committed suicide
- Use language that is easy to understand
- Acknowledge the person first, then the mental health condition
- Keep questions open-ended

Don'ts

The weather is so depressing!

Instead of saying "That's crazy!" say "That's wild!"

- Depict methods of suicide, self-harm and/or violence
 - Why? We don't want people to use imitative behavior
- Suicide is complex, don't attribute a suicide death to one single reason
- Use words like crazy, psycho, insane, nuts
- Make assumptions about people living with a mental health condition
- Use mental health conditions to describe situations that arise in everyday life

Additional Resources:

[Well Beings: Mental Health Language Guide](#)
[The Mental Health Coalition: Language Guide](#)