



Substance Use Health

Safer Language: Compassionate and Stigma-Free



USING NON-STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE WHEN TALKING ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE HEALTH:

- helps people to seek help
- improves the quality of and access to services
- encourages unbiased policies and programs

Instead of:

✗ ***They lied. They said they were sober but they're using again.***

Say:

✓ *A person's pathway to well-being is often not linear and recurrences can and do occur with some people as they work on change.*

Instead of:

✗ ***I can smell alcohol on them. They're in our emergency room all the time. They'll probably feel fine soon.***

Say:

✓ *This person may have been using substances. They deserve a full medical assessment.*

Instead of:

✗ ***Booze***

✗ ***Ice***

✗ ***Soft, white***

✗ ***Hard, rock***

✗ ***Down, fetty, purple***

✗ ***Tina***

✗ ***Molly***

✗ ***Weed, marijuana***

Say:

✓ Alcohol
✓ Methamphetamine
✓ Cocaine
✓ Crack cocaine
✓ Fentanyl

✓ Crystal methamphetamine
✓ Ecstasy, MDMA
✓ Cannabis



Kaniatarowanénhne Kaniatariio Ata'karitéhtshera Raotinén:ra

Sources:

https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/resources/Documents/Substance-Use-Disorder-Stigma-and-Language_EN.pdf
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