

Removing the Stigma from Substance Use Disorder

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Learning Objectives

- Recognize the impact of Stigma on getting people into treatment for SUD.
- Recognize the importance of using non-stigmatizing language for substance use and people with SUD.

Summary: How the words we use can support people on the path to recovery

- Substance use disorder is a chronic brain disease from which people can and do recover.
- Persistent stigma still creates barriers to treatment and recovery.
- The White House ONDCP prepared a document which draws attention to terminology related to substance use that may cause confusion or perpetuate stigma.
- Executive Branch agencies are encouraged to consider the importance of language in their communications related to substance use.

Boticelli, Michael. *Changing the Language of Addiction*.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2017/01/13/changing-language-addiction>

Background – Substance Use

- Substance use (and misuse) impose a devastating health and emotional burden on individuals, families, communities, States, Tribes, and the Nation.
- 20.8 million Americans 12 or older have alcohol or other drug use disorders.
- 27.1 million people aged 12 or older report past-month illicit drug use.
- 64,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2016: 175 people every day, 1 person every 8 minutes.
- 9 out of 10 individuals in need of treatment for a substance use disorder do not receive treatment.

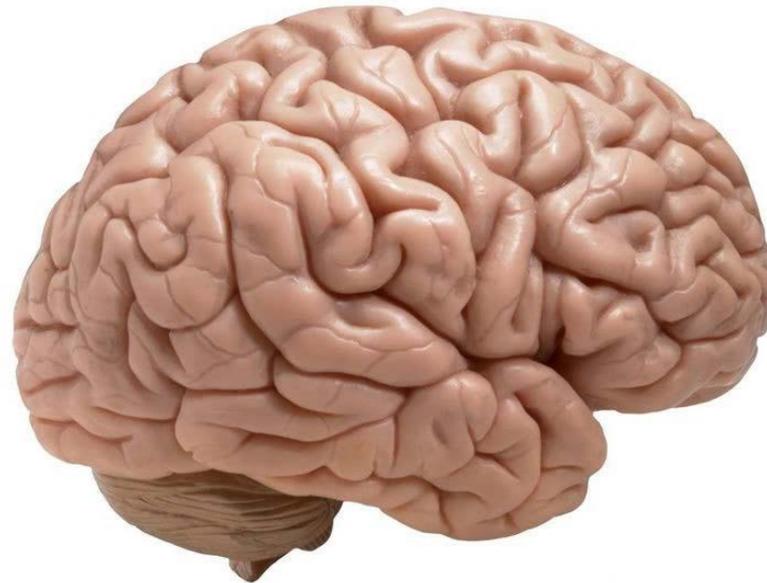
Misuse*

- “Substance misuse” - use of any substance in a manner, situation, amount or frequency that can cause harm to the person with SUD or to those around them.
- For some substances or individuals, any use would constitute misuse (e.g., under-age drinking, any use of illegal drugs).
- Prescription drug misuse refers to the use of a drug in any way a doctor did not direct an individual to use it.

* Taken from Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. (2016). Glossary p.3-4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Background – the Brain

- Substance use disorder is a chronic brain disease from which people can and do recover.
- Addictive substances can lead to dramatic changes in brain function and reduce a person's ability to control his or her substance use.



Stigma

- Dehumanization of the individual based on their social identity or participation in a negative or an undesirable social category.

Four Identified Types of Stigma

- Public
 - Endorsement by the public of negative attitudes against a specific stigmatized group, which manifests in discrimination towards individuals belonging to that group.
- Perceived
 - Stigmatized individuals think that most people believe common negative stereotypes about individuals belonging to the same stigmatized category.
- Enacted
 - Direct experience of discrimination and rejection from members of the larger society.
- Self
 - Negative thoughts, feelings, and diminished self-image resulting from identification with the stigmatized group and anticipation of rejection from the larger society.

Background – Stigma

- People with substance use disorders are viewed more negatively than people with physical or psychiatric disabilities.
- The terminology often used can suggest that substance use disorders are the result of a personal failing/choice.
- The term “abuse” is highly associated with negative judgments and punishment.
- Even trained clinicians are likely to assign blame when someone is called a “substance abuser” rather than a “person with a substance use disorder.”
- Negative attitudes among health professionals have been found to adversely affect quality of care and subsequent treatment outcomes.

Scott County Focus Group

- “I love them (Syringe Exchange Staff) to death. They’re nice people. They don’t look down on you, because we’re just drug users. A lot of people think you’re trash because you’re an IV drug user [but] they don’t. It’s the best thing. I am happy about it.”(Tracy, F2)



Background- Language

- American Society of Addiction Medicine and others have recommended the adoption of clinical, non-stigmatizing language for substance use.
- “Person-first language” has been widely adopted by professional associations to replace negative terms that have been used to label people with other health conditions and disabilities.
- “Person with a mental health condition” or “person with a disability” carry neutral rather than negative connotations, and distinguish the person from his/her diagnosis.



Substance Use Disorder

- The current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders replaced older categories of substance “abuse” and “dependence” with a single classification of “substance use disorder.”
- Terms such as “drug habit” inaccurately imply that a person is choosing to use substances or can choose to stop.



Person with a Substance Use Disorder

- Person-first language is the accepted standard for discussing people with disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions.
- Use of the terms “abuse” and “abuser” negatively affects perceptions and judgments about people with substance use disorders.
- Terms such as “addict” and “alcoholic” can have similar effects.
- Using the terms “addicted babies” or “NAS babies” stigmatizes both the baby and the mom.

Person in Recovery

- Various terms are used colloquially to label the people with SUD, including the terms “clean” and “dirty.”
- Instead of “clean,”
 - “negative” (for a toxicology screen)
 - “not currently using substances” (for a person)
- Instead of “dirty,” the term
 - “positive” (for a toxicology screen)
 - “currently using substances” (for a person)
- The term “person in recovery” refers to an individual who is stopping or at least reducing substance use to a safer level, and reflects a process of change.

Medication-Assisted Treatment

- Terms “replacement” and “substitution” have been used to imply that medications merely “substitute” one drug or “one addiction” for another. This is a misconception.
- The dosage of medication used in treatment for opioid use disorder does not result in a “high,” rather it helps to reduce opioid cravings and withdrawal.
- “Medication-assisted treatment” (MAT) is used to refer to the use of any medication approved to treat substance use disorders combined with psychosocial support services.



the facts.

**UNDERSTANDING
OPIOID USE DISORDER**

Outreach Presentation



How Do Opioids Work?

Opioids work by:

- 1) Binding to brain receptors
- 2) Minimizing the perception of pain
- 3) Stimulating “reward” centers in the brain
- 4) Triggering feelings of pleasure, relaxation and euphoria



FACT 1

**It's a
disease.**

#KnowTheOFacts





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FACT 2

**There is
treatment.**

#KnowTheOFacts





What is the Most Effective Treatment Option?

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)

Combines prescribed medication and behavioral therapies to treat opioid use disorder



FACT 3

Recovery is possible.

#KnowTheOFacts





What can you do to reduce the stigma?

#KnowTheOFacts



Language matters

SAY THIS  **NOT THIS**

Person with Opioid Use Disorder	Addict, user, druggie, junkie, abuser
Disease	Drug habit
Person living in recovery	Ex-addict
Person arrested for a drug violation	Drug offender
Substance dependent	Hooked

Language matters

SAY THIS  **NOT THIS**

Medication is a treatment tool	Medication is a crutch
Had a setback	Relapsed
Maintained recovery; substance-free	Stayed clean

Sources: Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Changing the Language of Addiction.*, 01/09/17.
National Council for Behavioral Health, *Language Matters*, September 2015.

#KnowTheOFacts



In Review

- **Know the “O” facts**
 - **Opioid Use Disorder is a Disease**
 - **There is Treatment**
 - **Recovery is Possible**
- **Be aware of your attitudes and behavior**
- **Choose your words carefully**
 - **Avoid Hurtful labels**
- **Be kind to everyone**

In Review

- **Educate others**
- **Be supportive, include everyone**
- **Replace negative attitudes with evidence-based facts**
- **Offer compassionate support**
- **Treat people with Opioid Use Disorder with dignity and respect**



Know the facts.

**UNDERSTANDING
OPIOID USE DISORDER**

www.IN.gov/recovery