



A Green Peak Alliance Collaboration



Speaking Up about Stigma

Our words matter. Because people matter.

Using negative, judgmental language to describe behavioral health, which includes Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health, can cause disgrace or stigma and creates a barrier to getting help. Behavioral health conditions are treatable medical conditions. Persons with any medical condition are worthy of help and respect.

Green Peak Alliance encourages everyone in our communities to use language that acknowledges the medical nature of Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health. To do so offers everyone the dignity they deserve. (See reverse for examples.)

Learn more about Green Peak Alliance, our members, and our collaborations and community partnerships to promote healthy communities at www.greenpeakalliance.org.



What to Say to Reduce Stigma

Using non-judgmental language when referring to persons with a medical condition, such as Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Disorder, decreases stigma; it is person-centered. Here are some examples:

SAY THIS:	INSTEAD OF THIS:
Substance Use Disorder	Drug or alcohol addiction
Person with a Substance Use Disorder	Addict, junkie, druggie
Person living in recovery	Ex-addict
Person living with an addiction	Battling or suffering from an addiction
Person arrested for drug violation	Drug offender
Drug use	Drug abuse
Medication is a treatment tool	Medication is a crutch
Had a setback	Relapsed
Chooses not to at this point	Non-compliant, resistant
Experiencing a mental health crisis	Crazy
Maintained recovery	Stayed clean
Positive drug screen	Dirty drug screen
Having thoughts of self-harm or suicide	Suicidal



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