

LANGUAGE MATTERS:

Using Affirmative Language to Inspire Hope and Advance Recovery

| Stigmatizing Language | Preferred Language |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| abuser | a person with or suffering from, a substance use disorder |
| addict | person with a substance use disorder |
| addicted infant | infant with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) |
| addicted to [alcohol/drug] | has a [alcohol/drug] use disorder |
| alcoholic | person with an alcohol use disorder |
| clean | abstinent |
| clean screen | substance-free |
| co-dependency | term has not shown scientific merit |
| crack babies | substance-exposed infant |
| dirty | actively using |
| dirty screen | testing positive for substance use |
| drug abuser | person who uses drugs |
| drug habit | regular substance use |
| experimental user | person who is new to drug use |
| lapse / relapse / slip | resumed/experienced a recurrence |
| medication-assisted treatment (MAT) | medications for addiction treatment (MAT) |
| opioid replacement | medications for addiction treatment (MAT) |
| opioid replacement therapy (ORT) | medications for addiction treatment (MAT) |
| pregnant opiate addict | pregnant woman with an opioid use disorder |
| prescription drug abuse | non-medical use of a psychoactive substance |
| recreational or casual user | person who uses drugs for nonmedical reasons |
| reformed addict or alcoholic | person in recovery |
| relapse | reoccurrence of substance use or symptoms |
| slip | resumed or experienced a reoccurrence |
| substance abuse | substance use disorder |
| substance abuse/abuser | person with a substance use disorder |
| substance abusing mother | mother with a substance use disorder |
| substance misuse | substance use / non-medical use |
| victims / "tiny victims" | prenatally exposed to [drug name] |

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| Current Terminology | Alternative Terminology |
|----------------------------|---|
| clean / sober | drug free / free from illicit and non-prescribed medications |
| denial | ambivalence / ambivalent |
| drug of choice / abuse | drug of use |
| drug overdose | drug poisoning |
| graduate from treatment | commence recovery |
| relapse | recurrence / return to use |
| relapse prevention | recovery management |
| self-help group | mutual aid group |
| substance abuse | substance use disorder / addiction |
| treatment is the goal | treatment is an opportunity for initiation into recovery treatment is one of multiple pathways to recovery |
| untreated addict/alcoholic | person not yet in recovery |

Adapted from: Office of National Drug Control Policy (2015) and <https://www.recoveryanswers.org/addiction-ary/> 08.24.2017


The use of affirming language inspires hope and advances recovery.

LANGUAGE MATTERS.

Words have power.

PEOPLE FIRST.

The ATTC Network uses affirming language to promote the promises of recovery by advancing evidence-based and culturally informed practices.



ATTC Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



Mid-America (HHS Region 7)

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