

STIGMA

WHY WORDS MATTER

People who use substances often face discrimination and barriers to getting help. Stigma can shape opinions, create negative stereotypes, influence how people are treated, and can stop people from getting help.

STIGMA CAN BE REDUCED by changing how we talk about substance use

Instead of saying...

- Addicts
- Junkies
- Users
- Drug/substance abusers
- Recreational drug users

- Former drug addict
- Referring to a person as being 'clean'

- Drug/substance abuse
- Drug/substance misuse
- Problematic drug/substance use



Say...

- People who use drugs/substances
- People with an addiction or substance use disorder

- People with lived/living experience
- People who occasionally use drugs

- People who have used drugs/substances
- People in recovery
- People with lived/living experience

- Drug/substance use
- Addiction/substance use disorder
- Higher-risk drug/substance use
- Substance use harms

HELP END STIGMA

Do not define people by their substance use.

Be respectful and compassionate.

Share facts and challenge stereotypes.

Remember that **addiction is not a choice**, it's a medical condition.

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