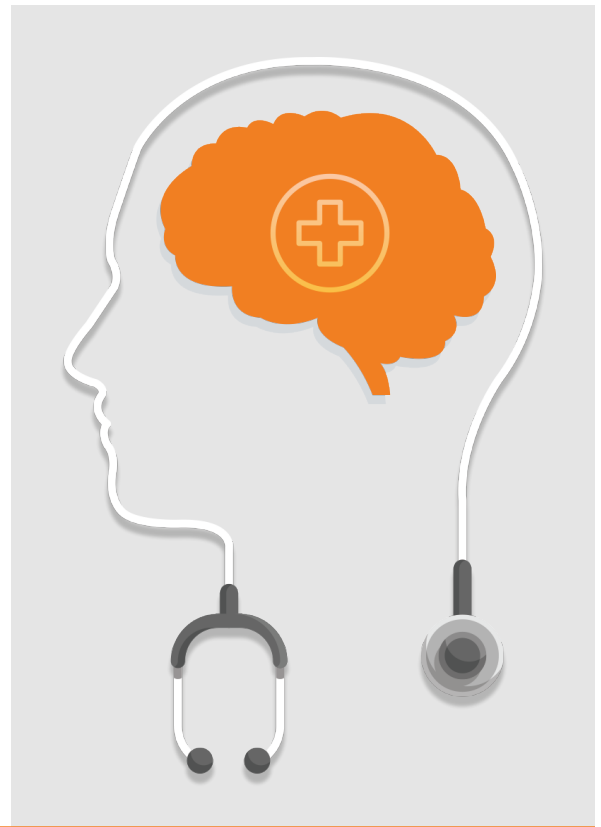


# De-stigmatize Your Discourse: How to Talk About Addiction

Addiction is among the most stigmatized conditions in today's society. We often blame people for their addictions instead of viewing addiction for what it is – a chronic disease. The negative perceptions held against people living with substance use disorders (SUDs) can impact the quality of healthcare they receive, reduce their willingness to seek treatment, and cause others to view them with fear, anger or disgust.

We all have a responsibility to correct stereotypes that negatively impact how we view those living with a substance use disorder (SUD). **But how do we reduce our negative bias? Start with your words!**



Here are three simple steps you can take

- 1** Educate others about the unintended, yet harmful, impacts of stigmatizing language and imagery.
- 2** Use person-first language that is non-judgmental and identifies that the person “has” a problem, instead of “is” the problem.
- 3** Be thoughtful about the images you share on social media. Ask yourself, does this image sensationalize drug use? Could my image be a relapse trigger for someone I know?

Below are suggested terms and images to use when talking about addiction.

INSTEAD OF

USE

Addict/Junkie/Drug abuser/User

Person with substance use disorder

Clean

In recovery or abstaining from drugs

Dirty

Actively using drugs

Former addict/Reformed addict

Person in recovery

Addicted baby

Baby born to mother who used drugs while pregnant

Abuse

For illicit drugs: Use  
For prescription medications: Misuse

Drug habit/Drug problem

Substance use disorder or drug addiction

Opioid replacement therapy

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

Images of drugs or drug paraphernalia

Images of prevention, health, hope, healing or treatment methods

Images of a person actively using drugs

Images of prevention, health, hope, healing or treatment methods

Images of an unconscious person

Images of prevention, health, hope, healing or treatment methods



[Dontliveindenial.org](http://Dontliveindenial.org)



[adamhfranklin.org](http://adamhfranklin.org)