



**SUBSTANCE USE
ACTION COALITION**
OF WAUKESHA COUNTY



*A pocket guide for
reducing substance use stigma.*

SEE THE PERSON. STOP THE STIGMA.

CHECK YOUR BIAS SELF-QUIZ

- ?** What assumptions am I making about this patient?

- ?** Is my language respectful and person-first?

- ?** Am I supporting their choices or steering them?

- ?** Would I respond this way to any patient?

BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS

AVOID

★ **USE**

Crossed arms → Open posture

Stepping back → Nodding

Eye rolling → Calm tone

Surprised face → Neutral expression



PAUSE
CHECK YOUR IMPACT

IS IT EMPOWERING?

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

STIGMA: The labeling and devaluing of a person or group.

SUD: Substance use disorder.

PERSON-FIRST: Language that puts the person before their medical condition.

MINDFULNESS: Thinking and acting with intent instead of emotion.

IF YOU CAN... PLEASE BE



YOU MAY IMPACT SOMEONE'S RECOVERY JOURNEY.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE MATTERS

AVOID

★ **USE**

Addict/Junkie → Person w/ SUD

Relapse → Return to use

Clean/Dirty → +/- Test result

Drug seeking → Expressing discomfort

Non-compliant → Barriers to care



**SUBSTANCE USE
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OF WAUKESHA COUNTY

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR:

- Local recovery meetings
- Harm reduction resources
- Personal stories
- SUAC YouTube
- SUAC LinkedIn

When we treat substance use disorder like any chronic condition, we replace stigma with care, and care changes outcomes.



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-  What assumptions am I making about someone?

-  Is my language respectful and person-first?

-  Am I reacting to facts or stereotypes?

-  Would I respond this way to another chronic illness?

BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS

AVOID

 **USE**

Crossed arms → Open posture
Stepping back → Hug (ask first)
Fidgety → Deep, relaxed breathing
Surprised face → Neutral expression



**WHAT CAN YOU SAY IF
SOMEONE OPENS UP
TO YOU?**

**Thanks for telling me.
I'm here to listen.
You're not alone.
I'm glad you reached out.
How can I support you right now?**

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IF YOU CAN... PLEASE BE

MINDFUL



YOU MAY IMPACT SOMEONE'S RECOVERY JOURNEY.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE MATTERS

AVOID

★ USE

Addict/Junkie → Person w/ SUD

Relapse → Return to use

Bad Choices → Facing Challenges

Weak → Human

Fix-yourself → Let's connect you with support



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When we treat people with dignity, respect and empathy, we help build a community where recovery is possible.



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SEE THE PERSON. STOP THE STIGMA.

CHECK YOUR BIAS SELF-QUIZ

? Am I making assumptions about a co-worker?

? Am I using respectful, person-first language?

? Am I responding to performance concerns rather than stigma?

? Would I respond this way to another health condition?

BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS

AVOID

★ USE

Crossed arms → Open posture

Looking distracted → Active listening

Eye rolling → Calm tone

Suprised face → Neutral expression

PAUSE **IF AN EMPLOYEE OR
CO-WORKER
OPENS UP...**

**Thanks for trusting me with this.
I appreciate you sharing.
How can I best support you?
Let's talk about available resources.
You don't have to navigate this alone.**

Many people in recovery are employed, productive, and valuable members of the workforce. Supportive workplaces can make a meaningful difference in recovery.

WORKPLACE REMINDERS

Small changes in language can make a difference in the workplace.

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HOW EMPLOYERS CAN

REDUCE STIGMA

- Use person-first language
- Train supervisors on supportive communication
- Offer flexibility for treatment appointments
- Treat SUD like any other chronic condition
- Encourage early help-seeking
- Create a culture where recovery is respected
- Have alcohol free workplace events and locations



SPOKEN LANGUAGE MATTERS

AVOID

★ USE

Addict/Junkie → **Person w/ SUD**

Relapse → **Return to use**

Unreliable → **Experiencing Personal Distress**

Don't Care About Their Job → **They are working through a chronic health condition and may be overwhelmed**



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- Employee assistance
- Recovery meetings
- Harm reduction information
- Personal stories

**A supportive workplace reduces stigma,
encourages people to seek help earlier,
and helps employees thrive.**