

## LANGUAGE MATTERS: LANGUAGE OF RECOVERY

If you want to care for something, you call it a “flower”; if you want to kill something, you call it a “weed”. –Don Coyhis.

### CURRENT TERMINOLOGY

### ALTERNATIVE TERMINOLOGY

Treatment is the goal.	Treatment is an opportunity for initiation into recovery
Treatment is the only way into recovery.	Treatment is one of the multiple pathways into recovery
Denial	Ambivalence
Relapse Prevention	Recovery Management
Pathology Based Assessment	Strength/Asset Based Assessment
Focus is on total abstinence from all illicit and non-prescribed substances the CLINICIAN identifies	Emphasis is on the substance or behavior the individual feels is creating the problems
A Drug is a Drug is a Drug	Each illicit substance has unique interactions with the brain; medication if available is appropriate
Relapse is part of recovery	Recurrence may occur as part of the disease

CURRENT	ALTERNATIVE	REASONING
Drug of Choice/Abuse	Misuse, harmful use, inappropriate use, problem use, risky use.	These words negate the fact that addictive disorders are a medical condition. It also blames the illness solely on the individual, ignoring environmental and genetic factors.
Clean/Dirty	Drug-Free / Free from illicit and non-prescribed medications Negative, positive, substance-free.	These terms used to describe drug test results are stigmatizing because they associate the person as well as the illness symptoms (i.e., positive drug tests) with filth.

<b>CURRENT</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE</b>	<b>REASONING</b>
Habit or Drug Habit	Substance use disorder, active addiction.	Calling addictive disorders a habit denies the medical nature of the condition and implies that the problem is simply a matter of willpower,
Replacement or Substitution Therapy	Treatment, medication-assisted treatment, medication.	Treatment, medication for a medical condition that is assisting treatment.
User	A person who misuses alcohol/ drugs; a person engaged in risky use of substances.	This term labels a person by his/her behavior. It is also misleading because the term user has come to refer to someone who is engaged in risky misuse of substances, but 'use' alone is not necessarily problematic.
Crack head, pothead	Cocaine addicted, a person who uses THC	This term is derogatory and implies that the person with a substance use disorder is less than others.
Strung out	Debilitated, intoxicated	This term is derogatory and stigmatizing.
Relapsed	Re-occurrence	The term has negative connotations for it often has projected a tone of moral judgment
Self-help group	Recovery support groups, mutual aid groups	The term is a misnomer because such groups are formed for the express purpose of providing an environment for individuals to support one another.
Substance Abuse	Substance Use Disorder	This term is stigmatizing because of the association of the word "abuse" with illicit activities such as child, domestic, and sexual abuse.

## Referring to People as People

CURRENT	ALTERNATIVE	REASONING
Clients / Patients / Consumers	The people in our program The folks we work with The people we serve	More inclusive, less stigmatizing
John is a problem drinker.	A person experiencing an alcohol problem/person with a substance use disorder	This word describes and identifies the person as a problem. The use of this phrase reduces the person's essence and identity to one (problematic) behavior. Like "abuser," "alcoholic," and "addict," this term denies the dignity and humanity of the individual.
Alex is an addict/abuser/junkie	Alex is addicted to alcohol Alex is a person with a substance use disorder Alex is in recovery from drug addiction Alex is in active addiction.	Put the person first. Avoid defining the person by their disease. These terms are demeaning because they label a person by his/her illness. Also, these labels imply permanency to the condition, leaving no room for a change in status.

The terms listed below, along with others, are often people's ineffective attempts to reclaim some shred of power while being treated in a system that often tries to control them. The person is trying to get their needs met, or has a perception different from the staff, or has an opinion of self not shared by others. And these efforts are not effectively bringing them to the result they want.

<b>CURRENT</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE</b>	<b>REASONING</b>
Mathew is manipulative	Mathew is trying hard to get his needs met Mathew may need to work on more... effective ways of getting his needs met	Take the blame out of the statement Recognize that the person is trying to get a need met the best way they know-how
Kyle is non-compliant	Kyle is choosing not to... Kyle would rather... Kyle is looking for other options	Describe what it looks like uniquely to that individual —that information is more useful than a generalization
Mary is resistant to treatment	Mary chooses not to... Mary prefers not to... Mary is unsure about...	Avoid defining the person by the behavior. Remove the blame from the statement
Jennifer is in denial	Jennifer is ambivalent about... Jennifer hasn't internalized the seriousness of... Jennifer doesn't understand...	Remove the blame and the stigma from the statement