



How we talk about mental health

The language we use when we talk about mental health should be safe, inclusive and respectful. When we use the right language, we help tackle stigma. Using inclusive language also shows a deeper understanding of mental health conditions. You can create a healthier workplace culture when you consistently use inclusive language.

This table outlines stigmatizing language and the safe, more inclusive language you should use instead.

Instead of:	Use inclusive language:
Mentally ill person	Person living with/experiencing or has experienced a mental health condition.
Addict, junkie, substance abuser	Person with a substance use disorder.
Patient, Client, case	Person living with a mental health condition.
Committed* suicide, failed suicide attempt	Died by suicide; attempted suicide. <small>* Suicide is not a crime, so we shouldn't be referring to it in that way.</small>
Mental claim/mental illness claim	Mental health claim.
This drives me crazy	This bothers/annoys/frustrates me.

Instead of: **Use inclusive language:**

Crazy/psycho/insane/schizo/nuts**

Interesting/strange/peculiar/funny.

** You should never use this language to describe a person or situation.

A person suffering from mental illness

A person living with/experiencing a mental health condition.

He is insane

He has lived experience with a mental health condition.

She is schizophrenic

She lives with schizophrenia.

They are depressed

They have depression.

I'm so depressed (when used casually or flippantly)

I'm feeling unhappy or down.



Important tips:

- **Put the person first.**
 - A person isn't their illness, disability or condition – they have an illness.
- **Avoid labeling, generalizing and making assumptions** about people with mental health conditions.
- **Don't trivialize or minimize** mental health conditions or the symptoms someone may be experiencing.
- **Don't treat people as though they are inferior or incompetent.**

Source:

[Language Matters](#). Mental Health Commission of Canada

[Language Matters, Safe Communication for Suicide Prevention](#), Government of Canada

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