

The Language of Recovery: How to Share the Reality of Recovery with Others


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Southeast Addiction Technology Transfer Center (Southeast ATTC)

Southeast ATTC is one of 10 Regional resource centers for addiction-related information funded through by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Southeast ATTC, located at the National Center for Primary Care at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, serves the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

ATTC Network's Mission

- Accelerate the adoption and implementation of evidence-based and promising addiction treatment and recovery-oriented practices and services;
- Heighten the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the workforce that addresses the needs of people with substance use and/or other behavioral health disorders; and
- Foster regional and national alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, funders, and the recovery community.

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Upon Completion of this session, participants will be able to:
 - ▶ Articulate three key points required for speaking in professional settings.
 - ▶ Identify four phrases that are counter-productive when speaking in professional settings.
 - ▶ Articulate at least two phrases commonly used by behavioral health professionals that contribute to the stigma of Substance Use Disorders (SUD) and the discrimination people with SUD experience.
 - ▶ Increase their understanding of the concept of “Medication Assisted Recovery”

Language Matters



- Language is the key to changing the way people with substance use disorders see themselves and the way they are seen by others.
- Be willing to question your beliefs and assumptions about the language we use and the way we tell our story



Words



Words are important. 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



William White
Author

“Words have immense power to wound or heal...The right words catalyze personal transformation and offer invitations to citizenship and community service. The wrong words stigmatize and dis-empower.”



Take A Moment to
think.....



JOHNS HOPKINS

BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

PROSPECTIVE
STUDENTS

CURRENT
STUDENTS

FACULTY
& STAFF

Protecting Health

News

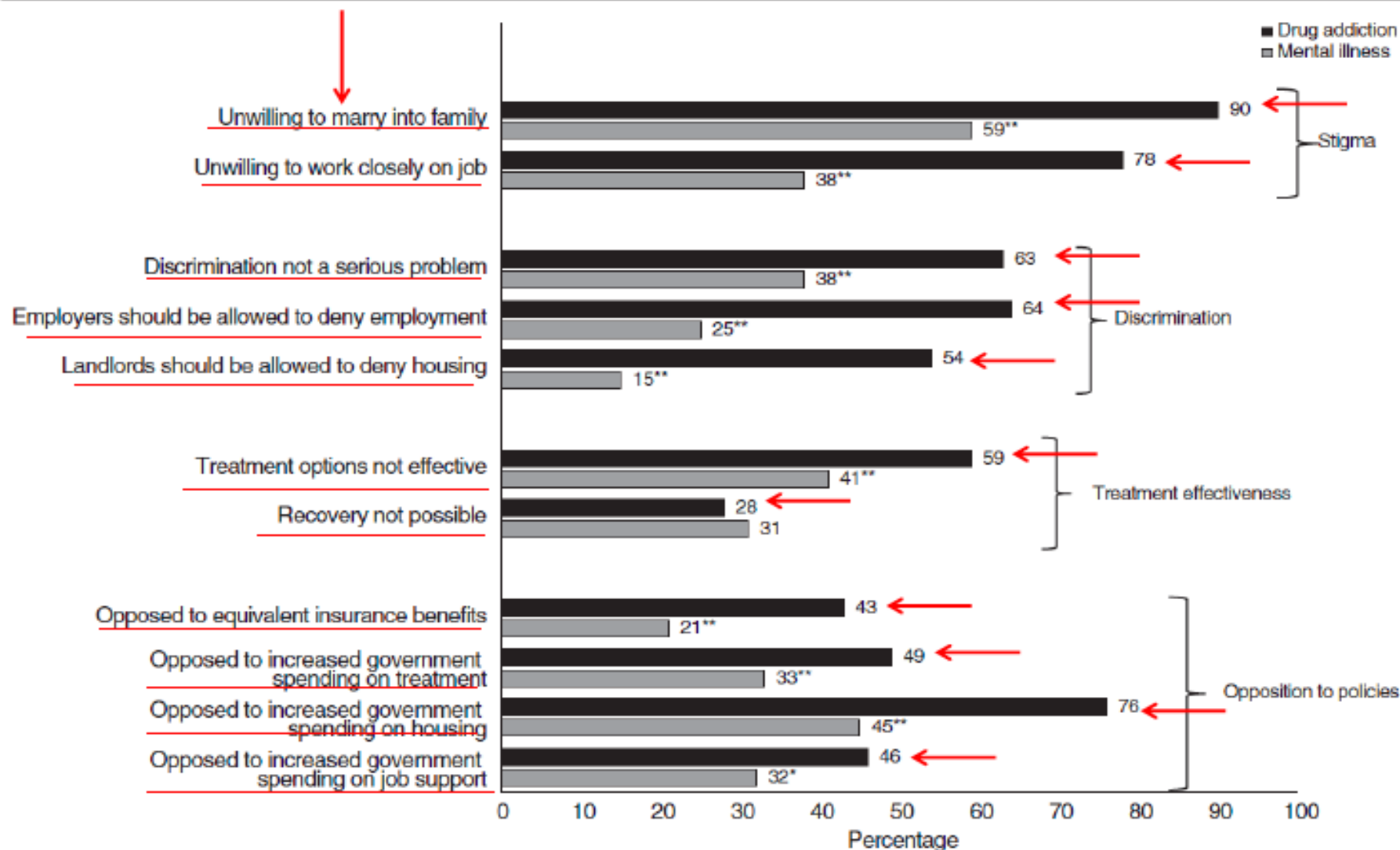
October 1, 2014

Study: Public Feels More Negative Toward People With Drug Addiction Than Those With Mental Illness

WHILE BOTH ARE TREATABLE HEALTH CONDITIONS, STIGMA OF DRUG ADDICTION MUCH MORE PRONOUNCED, SEEN AS 'MORAL FAILING'

Figure 1

Public attitudes about persons with drug addiction (N=347) and mental illness (N=362), 2013^a



^a Responses on 7-point Likert scales were collapsed to dichotomous measures. Pearson chi square tests assessed whether attitudes differed by the drug addiction or mental illness version of each survey item.

*p<.01, **p<.001

- Large proportion of respondents were unwilling to have a person with drug addiction marry into their family (90%), or to work closely with them on a job (78%).
- 63% thought discrimination was not a serious problem, and 64% of respondents said companies should be able to deny employment to people with a drug addiction .
- 54% felt landlords should be able to deny housing; 59% felt treatment options were not effective; and 28% felt recovery was not possible.
- 43% said people with a drug addiction should be denied health insurance benefits; and 49% were opposed to increased government spending on treatment.
- 76% opposed increased government spending on housing; and 46% opposed increased government spending on job support.

LANGUAGE AND THE PUBLIC

Public knowledge and attitudes about addiction are largely inconsistent with scientific evidence. The gap between the facts and public and professional perceptions is due in part to the language used to describe the disease and those who have it...

Unless we clarify the language, those with the disease will continue to experience the stigma associated with it and attempts to deliver comprehensive and effective evidence-based prevention, treatment, and disease management will be profoundly compromised.

Celebrity Addiction



- When the actor Phillip Seymour Hoffman died the description was “found half naked on the bathroom floor with a needle hanging out of his arm.”
- If that had been a heart attack would they have said half naked on the bathroom floor with a BigMac in his hand and French fries scattered across the floor?

Language & Society: Perception vs. Reality

- Language frames what the public thinks about substance use and recovery, and it can also affect how individuals think about themselves and their own ability to change.
 - Inappropriate use of language can negatively impact the way society perceives substance use and the people who are affected by it.
- Language intentionally and unintentionally propagates stigma: the mark of dishonor, disgrace, and difference that depersonalizes people, depriving them of individual or personal qualities and personal identity.
 - Stigma is harmful, distressing, and marginalizing to the individuals, groups, and populations who bear it.

What is Stigma?

- It is a characteristic or condition that is socially discrediting and is mainly influenced by whether **you think someone is to blame** and whether they have control over the behavior.
- Two main factors influence stigma:
 - Cause
 - Controllability
- Stigma decreases when
 - “It’s not his fault”
 - “She can’t help it”

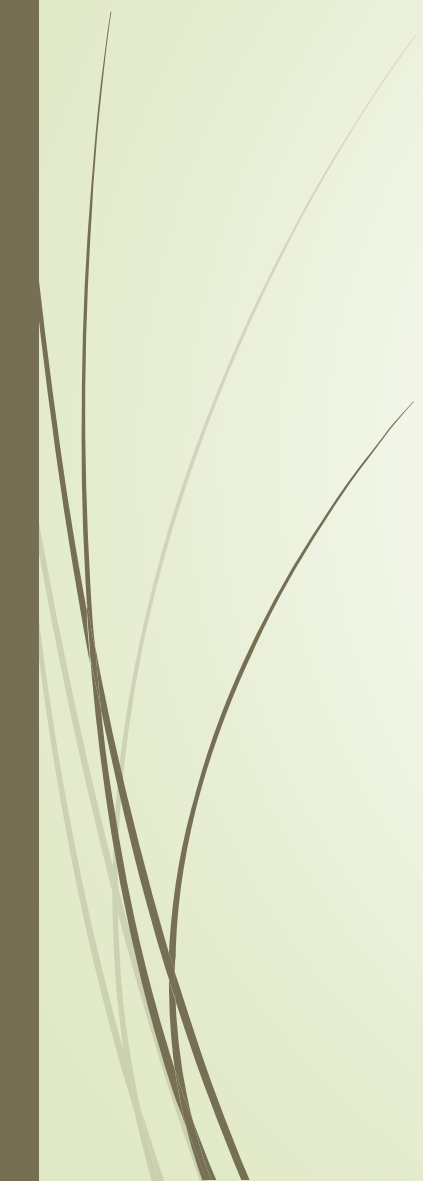
What is Internalized Stigma?


“Internalized” stigma... occurs when a person cognitively or emotionally absorbs stigmatizing assumptions and stereotypes... and comes to believe and apply them to him- or herself.

Drapalski, et al., (2013)



Levels of Stigma

- Legal vs. Illicit
 - Type of illicit substance used
 - Method of Use
 - Medications to treat Opioid Use Disorder
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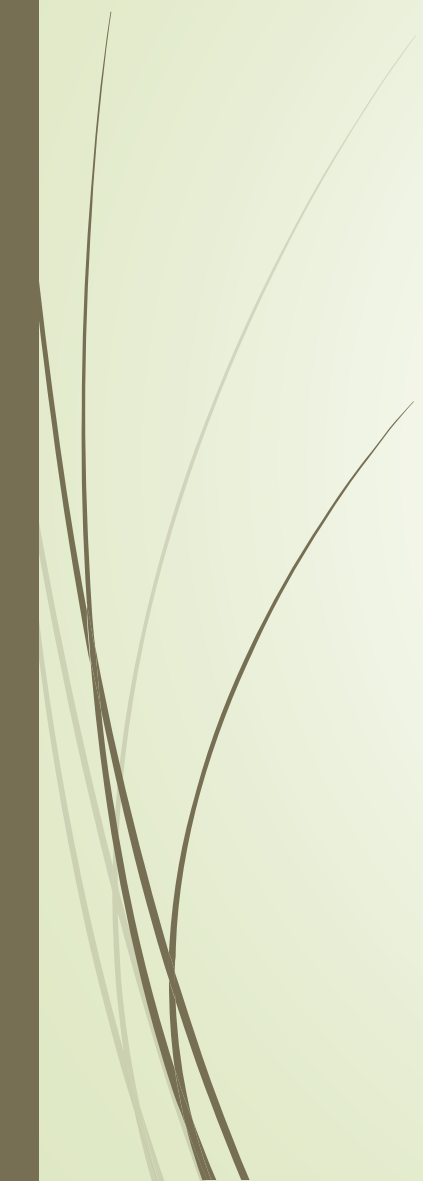


“We know from the research that has been conducted by some of the worlds leading neuroscientists that drug addiction is not a moral failing on the part of the individual, **it's a chronic disease of the brain and it can be treated.** This isn't my opinion and is not a political statement and it really isn't open for debate because the evidence is clear and it's unequivocal. It's a fact born out by decades of study and research and it's a fact that neither the government nor the public can ignore.”

Gil Kerlikowske, Director of National Drug Control Policy Betty Ford Center June 12, 2012



Types of Chronic Diseases

- Hypertension
 - Asthma
 - Diabetes
 - Addiction
- 



Why cocaine addicts keep making bad decisions

Email Facebook 2K Twitter 333 g+1 52

BY GEOFFREY MOHAN

February 4, 2015, 7:25 p.m.

Chronic cocaine use alters brain circuits that help control impulses, leading to more mistakes, a new study suggests.

The study, published online Tuesday in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, could offer a biological marker for the cycle of destructive decisions that many addicts exhibit.

Researchers measured EEG signals from a region of the midbrain that has been associated with how the brain manages

What words/messages do you think will stay with the reader?

ARNULFO FRANCO / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chronic cocaine use skews the brain's reward-related error management, according to a new study. Here, an anti-narcotics agent in Panama hacks open a package of confiscated cocaine.



RECOVERY

“Recovery is a process of change whereby individuals improve their health and wellness, to live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”

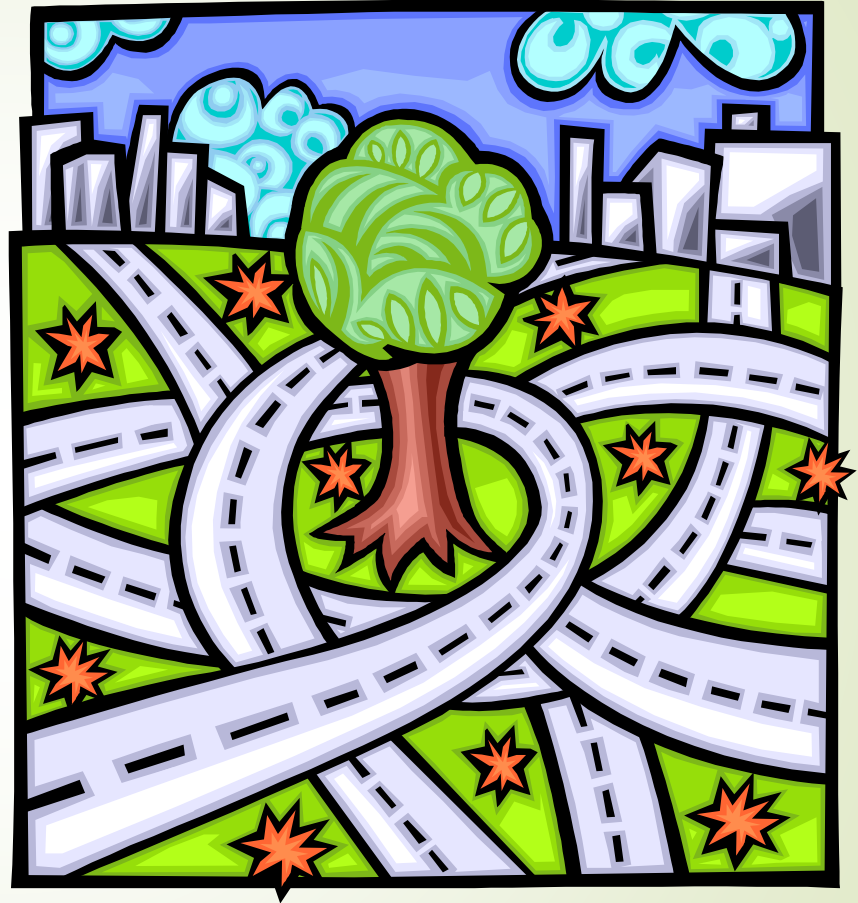
SAMHSA/CSAT 2011

Language of Recovery

Current Terminology	Alternative Terminology
Treatment is the goal; Treatment is the only way into Recovery	Treatment is an opportunity for initiation into recovery (one of multiple pathways into recovery)
Untreated Addict/Alcoholic	Individual not yet in Recovery
Substance Abuse	Substance Use Disorder/Addiction/ Substance Misuse
Drug of Choice / Abuse	Drug of Use
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	Focus on the drug CLIENT 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	Recurrence/Return to Use
Relapse is part of Recovery	Recurrence/Return to Use may occur as part of the disease
Clean / Sober	Drug Free / Free from illicit and non-prescribed medications
Self Help Group	Mutual Aid Group
Drug Overdose	Drug Poisoning
Graduate from Treatment	Commence Recovery

Many Pathways to Recovery

- Mutual Support groups
- Professional treatment
- Nontraditional methods
- Medical interventions
- Faith based
- On your own
- and many more...



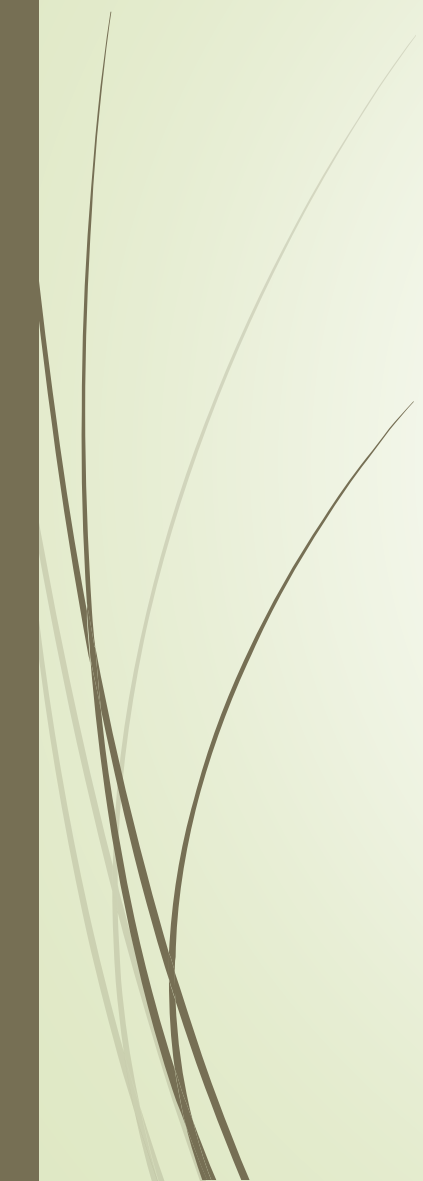


Substance / Drug Abuse

- Substance / Drug Abuse
 - The concept of “abuse”
 - Behavioral / Judgmental / Stigmatizing term (as in “Domestic or Child Abuse”)



Substance /Drug Abuse

- ➔ DSM V
 - ➔ Substance Use Disorder
 - ➔ Misuse
 - ➔ Addiction vs. Dependence
- 



Drug of Choice / Habit

- ➡ “Choice” and “Habit” are behavioral not a medical terms
- ➡ Drug of Use

In one study of clinicians, those exposed to the term “*substance abuser*” were more likely to judge the person as deserving of blame and punishment than when the phrase “*having a substance use disorder*” was used.

THE AMERICAN
JOURNAL *of*
MEDICINE®

Stop Talking ‘Dirty’: Clinicians, Language, and Quality of Care for the Leading Cause of Preventable Death in the United States



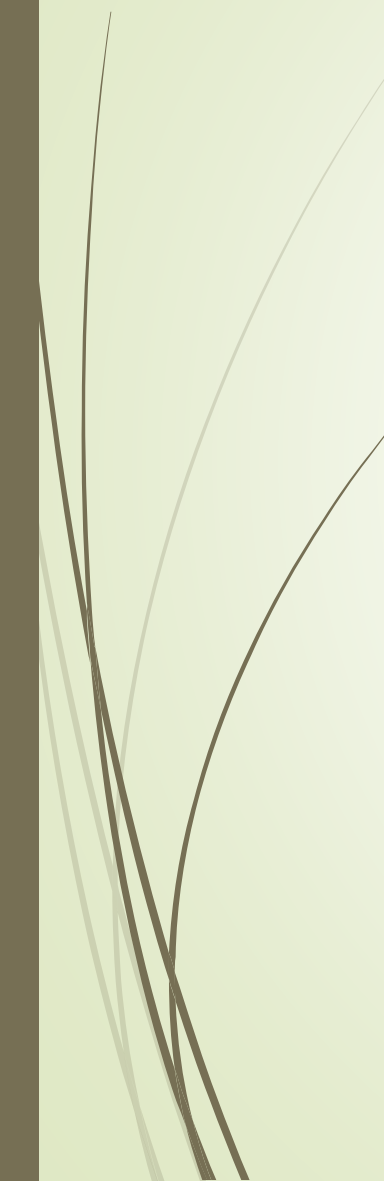
Volume 128, Issue 1, Pages 8–9. January 2015.

A patient with diabetes has “an elevated glucose” level. A patient with cardiovascular disease has “a positive exercise tolerance test” result. A clinician *within* the health care setting addresses the results. An “addict” is not “clean”—he has been “abusing” drugs and has a “dirty” urine sample.

despite harmful consequences. Yet, despite evidence of a strong causal role for genetics and impairment in inhibitory control, stigma is alive and well. Research is now revealing that one contributory factor to the perpetuation of stigma may be the type of language we use.



Denial vs. Ambivalence



“Intrinsic motivation for change arises in an accepting, empowering atmosphere that make it safe for the person to explore the possibly painful present in relation to what is wanted and valued. People often get stuck, not because they fail to appreciate the down side of their situation, but because they feel at least two ways about it.” (Miller and Rollnick, 2002)

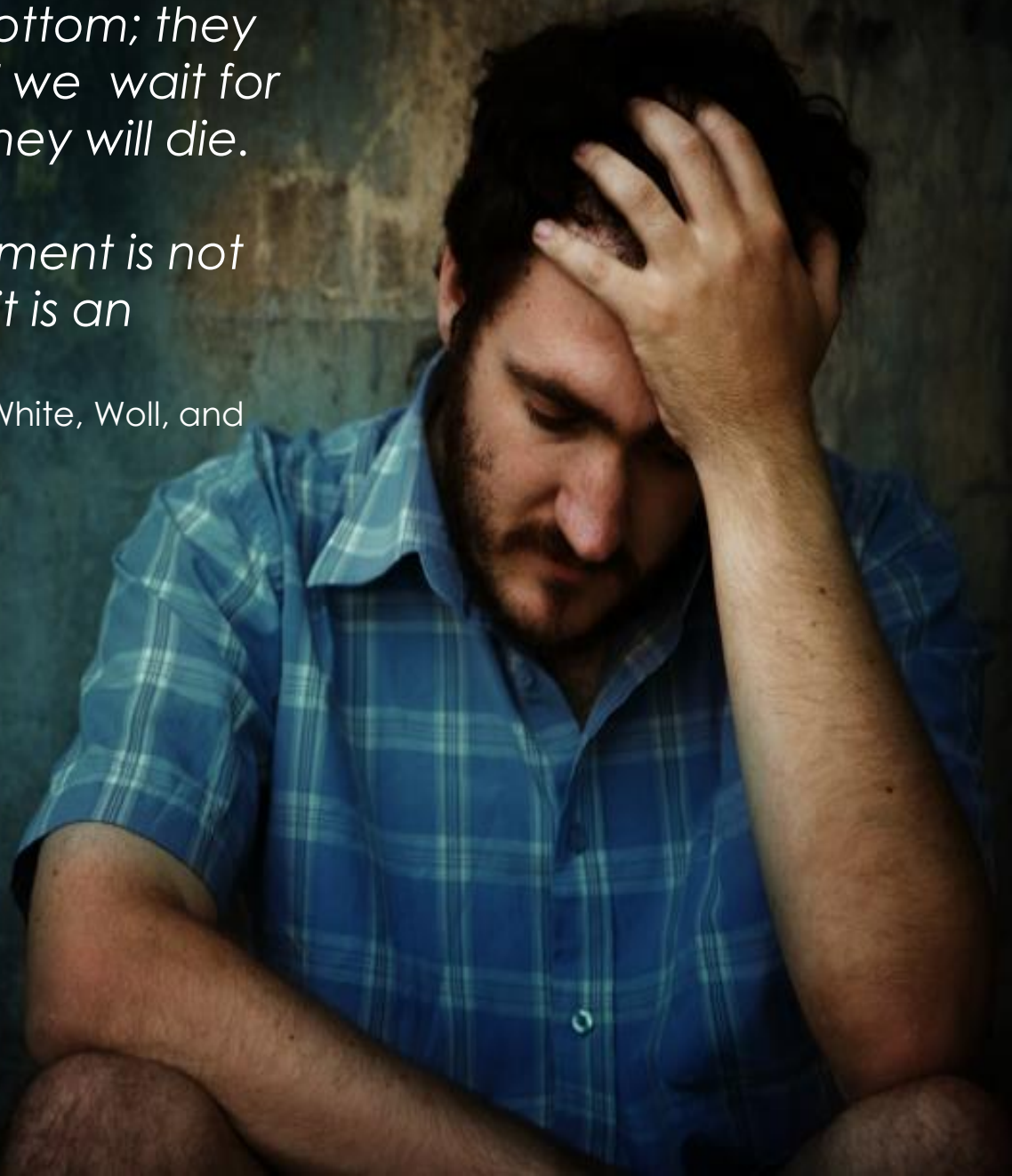


The Language That We Use

- They' re not ready
- They don' t want it bad enough
- They haven' t hurt/lost enough
- They' re too resistant
- Narcan just enables them to keep using
- They are in denial

My clients don't hit bottom; they live on the bottom. If we wait for them to hit bottom, they will die. The obstacle to their engagement in treatment is not an absence of pain; it is an absence of hope. —

Outreach Worker (Quoted in White, Woll, and Webber 2003)



“Those people”

- Alcoholic
- Addict
- Drunk
- Old Wino
- Crack Head
- Junkie
- Needle Freak
- Benzo Queen
- Garbage Head
- Burn Out
- Pot Head
- Borderline
- Nut Job
- Crazy
- And then there is “Chronic Relapser”

Health Care Providers: Myths and Misperceptions

Some clinicians have acted as though patients taking methadone or buprenorphine are still using illicit drugs, missing the critical distinction between addiction and the treatment of addiction.

- *The understanding of opioid use disorder as a medical illness is still overshadowed by its misconception as a moral weakness or a willful choice.*

– Drs. Olson & Sharfstein, JAMA 2014

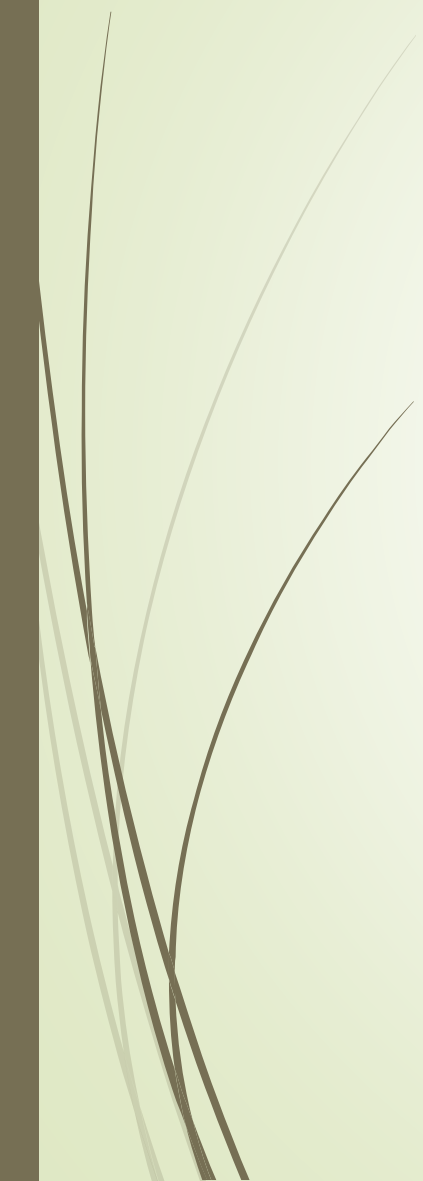
Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

→ MAT *is not* a stand-alone treatment option:

- Part of a comprehensive, multiplex EB treatment plan that can include behavioral, cognitive, & other recovery-oriented interventions
- MAT becomes part of the comprehensive Tx plan *when it is determined to be medically necessary and appropriate*
- Medication *assisted* treatment is used to control the symptoms of a number of chronic diseases (e.g., cardiovascular diseases and diabetes)




A Drug is a Drug is a Drug...

- Different cultures surrounding different drugs
 - Stigmatizes individuals in Medication Assisted Recovery and individuals with Co-Occurring Disorders taking prescription medications.
- 

Relapse

- In no other chronic medical condition is a return to being symptomatic described a “relapsing”.
- Stigmatizing term
- Carries much emotional baggage
- A more medically accurate term would be “a recurrence” or “a return to use”. A less stigmatizing term would be a “setback”.

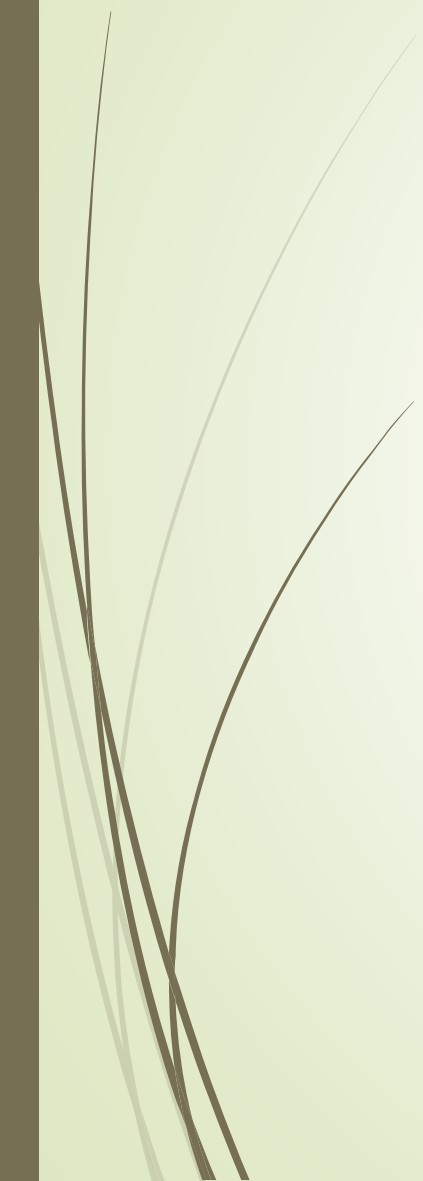


“Relapse is part of recovery”

- ◆ The resumption of drug use by someone with a history of addiction is part of the disease, but not part of the process of getting well
- ◆ Fails to acknowledge the potential for permanent recovery with no continued episodes of drug use
- ◆ Minimizes the pain and potential loss of life involved in the resumption of usage



Clean and Sober

- Have you heard these terms used with someone who is diagnosed with cancer, diabetes, hypertension?
 - Laden with moral implications
 - Stigma – dirty is usually followed by an epithet that is racial, sexist, or religious in nature
 - Alternative – Drug Free or Free from illicit or non-prescribed medications
 - Mutual Aid Group usage
- 




Clean and Dirty

- Urine Drug Screens are medical tests, medical tests are not “clean” or “dirty”
- Alternative – Positive or negative

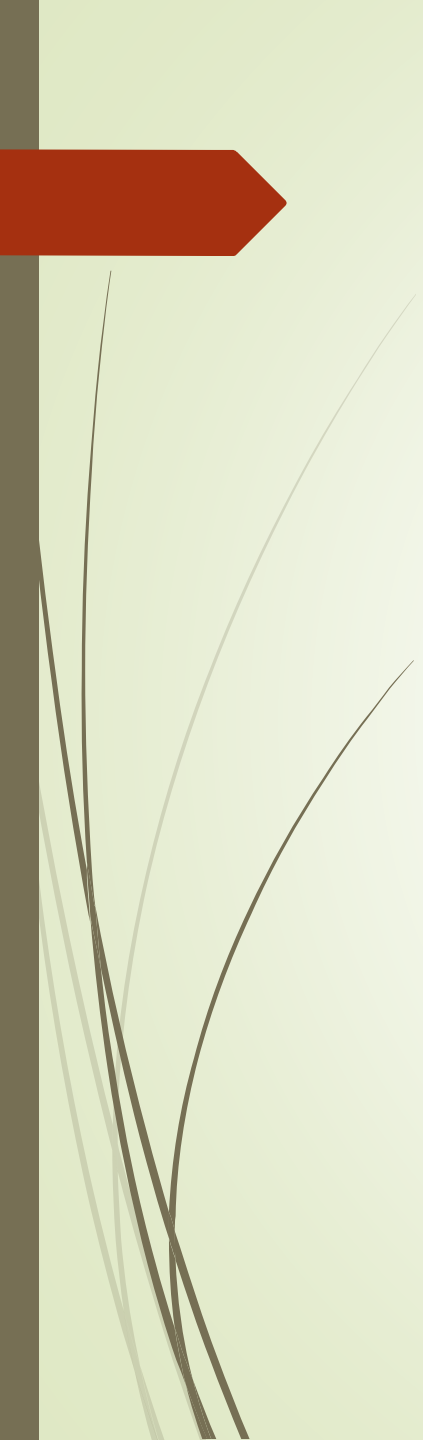


Person First Language



What is “Person First Language”

- Highlights the fact that a person’s illness, condition or behavior is NOT the defining characteristic of who they are.
- Uses the word referring to the individual BEFORE words describing their illness / condition
- Reinforces the person’s identity first and foremost
- Examples:
 - Person with a substance use disorder
 - Person is addicted to opioids
 - Person in recovery from addiction



Watch your thoughts,
they become words
Watch your words,
they become actions,
Watch your actions,
they become habits
Watch your habits,
they become character
Watch your character,
it becomes your destiny
Anon.



Talking About YOUR RECOVERY

Portrayal of persons with successfully treated mental illness and drug addiction is a promising strategy for reducing stigma and discrimination toward persons with these conditions and improving public perceptions of treatment effectiveness.

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ELSEVIER



Portraying mental illness and drug addiction as treatable health conditions: Effects of a randomized experiment on stigma and discrimination



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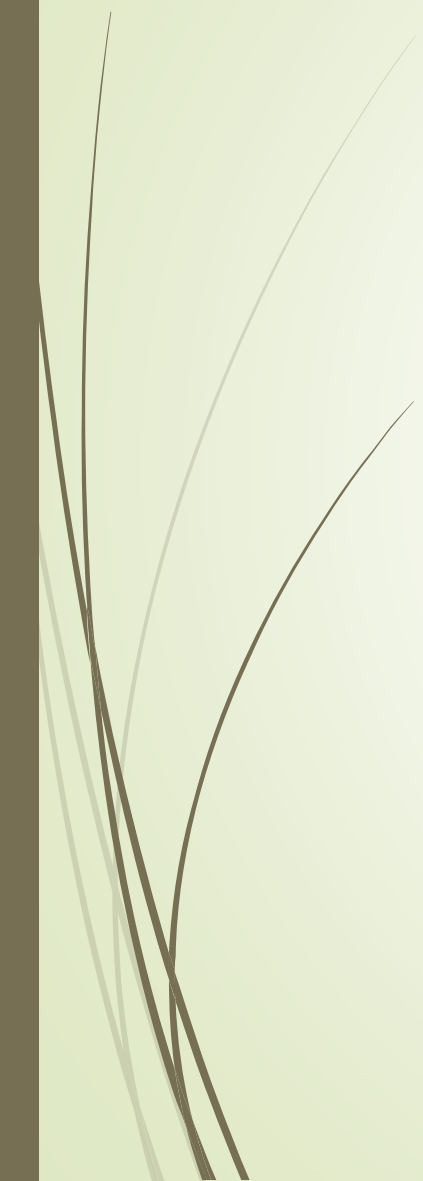
Who are you talking to?

- Family
- Friends
- Neighbor
- Co-worker
- Public off





Talking with others



How do you describe your recovery to others who know little or nothing about recovery?


Addiction vs. Recovery

What is the percentage of time you spend telling your story of **Addiction** vs. your story of **Recovery?**



Our Stories Have Power

The more our policymakers, our allies, friends, and neighbors and employers hear our stories and understand that we can and do get well the more people will seek help that they and their loved ones need in order to recover.



Why Recovery Messaging is Important

1. Make it personal, so that we have credibility
2. Keep it simple and in the present tense, so that it's real and understandable
3. Help people understand that recovery means you or the person you care about is no longer using alcohol or other drugs. We do this by moving away from saying "in recovery" to saying "in long-term recovery", by using concrete examples from our lives to talk about stability and by mentioning the length of time that the person is in recovery



Why Recovery Messaging is Important

4. Talk about your recovery, not your addiction
5. Help people understand that there is more to recovery than just not using alcohol or other drugs, and that part of recovery is about creating a better life




Recovery Message



- We have a way to describe and talk about recovery so that people who are NOT part of the recovery community understand what we mean when we use the term “recovery”.
- One of the important findings from our research is that the general public believes the word recovery means that someone is trying to stop using drugs and alcohol.
- We have found a way to talk about recovery in a clear and credible way that will help move our advocacy agenda forward making it possible for more people to get the help they need to recover

Language Matters

- ▶ The language we use with relative mutual acceptance “in-house” becomes a whole new animal when we take it “out-house”- out to John Q. Public to the schools, the legislators, the judges, funders, higher education, the media, and elsewhere.
- ▶ It’s one thing to call ourselves an “addict” in the rooms, but when we do this in public settings, it simply reinforces the very stigmatizing concept that we’re now working so hard to reverse. Language DOES matter.



What's not in the Message and Why

- *I'm an addict (or alcoholic)*
- *I'm a recovering addict (or alcoholic)*
- *Addiction is a disease*
- *Information about 12-step programs, for examples membership in AA or NA or Al-Anon*
- *A "definition" of recovery*



Mutual Support Group / Treatment “Speak”

**Just for Today
One Day at a Time
Stay in the Moment**

