

LANGUAGE MATTERS:

Using Affirmative Language to Inspire Hope and Advance Recovery

Stigmatizing Language	Preferred Language
abuser	a person with or suffering from, a substance use disorder
addict	person with a substance use disorder
addicted infant	infant with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS)
addicted to [alcohol/drug]	has a [alcohol/drug] use disorder
alcoholic	person with an alcohol use disorder
clean	abstinent
clean screen	substance-free
co-dependency	term has not shown scientific merit
crack babies	substance-exposed infant
dirty	actively using
dirty screen	testing positive for substance use
drug abuser	person who uses drugs
drug habit	regular substance use
experimental user	person who is new to drug use
lapse / relapse / slip	resumed/experienced a recurrence
medication-assisted treatment (MAT)	medications for addiction treatment (MAT)
opioid replacement	medications for addiction treatment (MAT)
opioid replacement therapy (ORT)	medications for addiction treatment (MAT)
pregnant opiate addict	pregnant woman with an opioid use disorder
prescription drug abuse	non-medical use of a psychoactive substance
recreational or casual user	person who uses drugs for nonmedical reasons
reformed addict or alcoholic	person in recovery
relapse	reoccurrence of substance use or symptoms
slip	resumed or experienced a reoccurrence
substance abuse	substance use disorder
substance abuse/abuser	person with a substance use disorder
substance abusing mother	mother with a substance use disorder
substance misuse	substance use / non-medical use
victims / "tiny victims"	prenatally exposed to [drug name]

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Current Terminology	Alternative Terminology
clean / sober	drug free / free from illicit and non-prescribed medications
denial	ambivalence / ambivalent
drug of choice / abuse	drug of use
drug overdose	drug poisoning
graduate from treatment	commence recovery
relapse	recurrence / return to use
relapse prevention	recovery management
self-help group	mutual aid group
substance abuse	substance use disorder / addiction
treatment is the goal	treatment is an opportunity for initiation into recovery treatment is one of multiple pathways to recovery
untreated addict/alcoholic	person not yet in recovery

Adapted from: Office of National Drug Control Policy (2015) and <https://www.recoveryanswers.org/addiction-ary/> 08.24.2017


The use of affirming language inspires hope and advances recovery.

LANGUAGE MATTERS.

Words have power.

PEOPLE FIRST.

The ATTC Network uses affirming language to promote the promises of recovery by advancing evidence-based and culturally informed practices.



ATTC Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



Mid-America (HHS Region 7)

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