

Using Inclusive Mental Health Language

This past year has shown us how important it is to prioritize our mental health and well-being, especially as we navigate change and uncertainty. Our mental health impacts how we think, feel, and act — at work, at home, and in our relationships.

Creating an environment at work that normalizes mental health creates a more inclusive culture, reduces stigma to seek support, and fosters a greater sense of belonging among team members. Something as simple as the language we use in our day-to-day to talk about mental health can go a long way.

Mental Health communication best practices

When it comes to talking about mental health, here are some phrases to avoid, phrases to use instead, and why these terms matter.

Category	Terms to Avoid	What to Use	Why It Matters
Destigmatizing Language	Mental Health problem Suffers from depression Substance abuse	Mental Health concern Experiences depression Substance use	Avoid terms that place judgment on the individual or victimizes them.
Person-Centered Language*	Depressive Autistic Schizophrenic	Person with Depression Person with Autism Person with Schizophrenia	Use person-centric language to acknowledge that someone is not defined by their condition.
Decriminalizing Language	Skyrocketing rates Committed suicide Failed suicide	Increasing rates Died by suicide Attempted suicide	Avoid language that sensationalizes mental health concerns or frames suicide as a criminal act or accomplishment.

Source: [Psych Hub Communication Guide](#)

*These best practices are Modern Health guidelines. The best solution when unsure is to ask someone the language they prefer to use. Language should be selected with the understanding that the individual's preference supersedes matters of style (APA, 2021).

