

Language to Use and Avoid When Discussing Mental Health

The words we use when talking about mental health can shape how safe, supported, and understood someone feels. Thoughtful language helps reduce stigma encourages open, honest conversations.

Why Language Matters

Using respectful and supportive language can help people feel seen and validated. Certain phrases, even when well-intended, can unintentionally minimize someone's experience or discourage them from seeking help.

Language to Use

Supportive language focuses on empathy, understanding, and respect.

- Acknowledge feelings without judgment.
- Use calm language without making assumptions. Listen more than you talk.
- Ask open-ended questions that invite sharing. The goal is to speak with compassion and curiosity.

Examples of supportive language include:

- How are you feeling today?
- Thank you for trusting me with this.
- That sounds really difficult.
- I am here to listen.
- It is okay to ask for help.

Language to Avoid

Some phrases can unintentionally dismiss or oversimplify mental health challenges.

- Avoid minimizing feelings by saying things like it could be worse or just stay positive.
- Avoid labeling or defining someone by a diagnosis.
- Avoid telling someone what they should do.
- Avoid jokes or casual language that makes light of mental health concerns.

Using thoughtful language helps create a culture where mental health conversations feel safer and more supportive for everyone.