

# Language **MATTERS**

Let's talk in a way that reflects science and demonstrates respect!

## When discussing mental health ...

 <b>Let's Say ...</b>	 <b>Instead of ...</b>
✓ She/he/they has/have _____ (e.g. bipolar disorder, dementia, anorexia nervosa)	✗ She/he/they is/are _____ (e.g. bipolar, demented, anorexic)
✓ Person living with a mental illness or mental health condition	✗ Crazy, insane, nuts, lunatic, mentally ill/handicapped/disabled, has a loose screw, lost his/her/their marbles
✓ Experiencing mental illness	✗ Suffering from/victim of mental illness
✓ Died by suicide	✗ Committed suicide
✓ Attempted suicide	✗ Unsuccessful suicide
✓ Usual/typical behavior	✗ Normal behavior
✓ Person receiving mental health services	✗ Mental health patient/case
✓ Psychiatric hospital	✗ Mental institution, looney bin
✓ Has a substance use disorder/an addiction	✗ Is an addict, junkie, druggie, drunk, alcoholic
✓ Experiences symptoms of psychosis	✗ Is psychotic
✓ Has an intellectual or developmental disability	✗ Is retarded/mentally retarded, slow
✓ Student receiving special education services	✗ Special education student
✓ Has a brain injury	✗ Is brain-damaged
✓ It annoys/irritates me	✗ It drives me crazy
✓ I like order and organization	✗ I'm so OCD
✓ I'm feeling really sad/down about this situation	✗ I'm so depressed
✓ I'm having trouble focusing	✗ I'm so ADHD
✓ I've noticed you are exhibiting a frequent change of moods lately	✗ You're so bipolar

Sources:  
 • Fogg Foundation for Mental Health  
 • "Ten Commandments for How to Talk About Mental Health." David Susman, Ph.D. Psychology Today.  
 • "It's Time To Stop Using These Phrases When It Comes To Mental Illness." Erin Schumaker. American Psychiatric Association. The Huffington Post.  
 • "What is mental health stigma?" Rachel Papke. Jordan Porco Foundation.



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