# LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

MENTAL HEALTH LANGUAGE GUIDE

THE LANGUAGE
WE USE IS POWERFUL,
SO LET'S
TALK ABOUT IT.

If you are unsure on what words and/or terms to use when describing someone's mental health, you are not alone. I'd like to offer some helpful tips and tools you can use!

*THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

MEET BRITT

5 WAYS YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT SURROUNDING MENTAL HEALTH
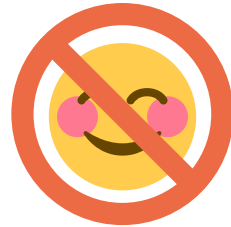
1. HELP EMPOWER PEOPLE

2. BE SENSITIVE

3. STOP THE SHAME

4. GET SPECIFIC

5. YOU DO YOU

MEET BRITT

THE WAY WE TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS SHOULD NOT DEFINE THE PERSON NOR SHOULD WE USE VICTIMIZING LANGUAGE. ACKNOWLEDGE THE PERSON FIRST, THEN THE CONDITION.

HELP EMPOWER

STEER CLEAR:

"SUFFERING/STRUGGLING WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS"

→

SAY:

"LIVING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION/THRIVING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION."

STEER CLEAR:

"HE'S SCHIZOPHRENIC /MARY IS SCHIZOPHRENIC."

→

SAY:

"A PERSON HAS SCHIZOPHRENIA / MARY IS A PERSON WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA.""

STEER CLEAR:

IS A VICTIM OF MENTAL ILLNESS / SUFFERS FROM A MENTAL ILLNESS.

→

SAY:

LIVING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION/THRIVING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION."

MEET BRITT

MANY ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES PERTAINING TO MENTAL HEALTH ARE PROFOUND, PERSONAL AND/OR INVOLVE TRAUMA. BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT TOPICS LIKE SUICIDE, WE WANT TO CONSIDER THE EMOTIONS OF THE PEOPLE ON THE OTHER END OF THE CONVERSATION. WE EXPLAIN THIS THROUGH THE EXAMPLES BELOW

BE SENSITIVE

STEER CLEAR:

""COMMITTED SUICIDE"

→

SAY:

""DIED BY SUICIDE/LOST TO SUICIDE"

STEER CLEAR:

"FAILED OR UNSUCCESSFUL SUICIDE ATTEMPT""

→

SAY:

""SUICIDWE ATTEMPT SURVIVOR/ SHE DID NOT DIE IN SUICIDE ATTEMPT"

STEER CLEAR:

""DYLAN'S BROTHER COMMITTED SUICIIDE""

→

SAY:

"DYLAN IS A SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVOR, HER BROTHER DIED BY SUICIDE.""

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THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

BE SENSITIVE

- AVOID USING DEATH BY SUICIDE AS AN "EPIDEMIC/CRISIS: OR USING DRAMATIC TERMS LIKE "SKYROCKETING"

- AVOID SHARING QUOTES FROM SUICIDE NOTES (NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE)

- AVOID SHARING EXPLICIT DETAILS OF METHODS USED IN SUICIDES OR SUICIDE ATTEMPTS, BECAUSE THEY MAY BE USED AS TIPS BY OTHERS (NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE)

- REFRAIN FROM DESCRIBING SUICIDE AS "INEXPLICABLE" OR "WITHOUT WARNING". MOST PEOPLE WHO DIE BY SUICIDE EXHIBIT WARNING SIGNS (NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE)

HOW WE TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS OFTEN PUTS BLAME ON THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCING THE DISORDER. HOWEVER, WE CAN PLAY A ROLE IN ALLEVIATING SOME OF THIS BLAME WHILE ALSO USING LANGUAGE TO REDUCE THE SEPARATION BETWEEN "US" (WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS) AND "THEM" (WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS) BECAUSE EVERYONE HAS MENTAL HEALTH.

STOP THE SHAME

STEER CLEAR:

"SHE IS ABUSING DRUGS"

SAY:

"SHE IS A PERSON WITH A SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER"

STEER CLEAR:

"THOSE PEOPLE HAVE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS."

SAY:

""INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS"

MEET BRITT

"MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION" IS A GENERAL TERM AND DOESN'T OFFER MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT AN INDIVIDUAL IS EXPERIENCING. SPECIFIC DISORDERS OR TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS SHOULD BE REFERENCED WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

BE SPECIFIC

STEER CLEAR:

"HE IS / WAS MENTALLY ILL"

SAY:

"HE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER""

YOU DO YOU !

"ALWAYS ALLOW FOR PERSONAL CHOICE; IF AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION PREFERS TO BE REFERRED TO IN A CERTAIN WAY, THEN THAT IS THEIR CHOICE, AND WE NEED TO RESPECT IT"

MEET BRITT

WE ALL NEED TO BE MINDFUL OF USING THE FOLLOWING TERMS AND PHRASES, THAT MANY USE IN THEIR DAILY LIVES. BEING MINDFUL OF THE LANGUAGE WE UTILIZE IS THE FIRST STEP TO CREATING AND FOSTERING A STIGMA-FREE ENVIRONMENT, WHERE EVERYONE IS EMPOWERED TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

ANTI-GLOSSARY

- CRAZY/ NUTS/ DISTURBED/ INSANE/ MENTAL
- 'I'M SO DEPRESSED'
- LUNATIC
- "I AM SO OCD..."
- PSYCHO
- RETARDED

MEET BRITT

"YOU'RE CRAZY"

"PSYCHO"

THANK YOU!