



HOW TO SPEAK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH WITH SENSITIVITY

Please use respectful language to talk about Mental Health Conditions. This encourages people with mental health conditions to speak about their condition and to seek help from others without shame or stigma.

Avoid using:

Prefer using or realising:

Mentally ill people	People with mental health conditions
Derogatory language such as demented, lunatic, abnormal, schizo, wacko, crazy.	The person is suffering from mental health problems and experiences challenges.
He is bipolar	He has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder or he is living with bipolar disorder. Always say what the person has and realise the person is not the condition.
Using phrases like 'He is a bit OCD'	OCD is a serious mental illness and should be treated in the same way as a physical disease. One doesn't say 'he is a bit cancer'
She hears voices, sees things and speaks to people that are not there.	She experiences symptoms of psychosis.
She is slow, thick or dumb.	She has cognitive difficulties or has a developmental delay
He is handicapped.	He is a person living with a disability.
She is mentally retarded or brain damaged.	She has an intellectual disability.
He is autistic or ADHD.	He has a special need called autism or ADHD.
Using words such as addict, abuser, junkie	A person suffering from substance abuse or alcohol disorder
Committed suicide	Died by suicide
Phrases such as 'snap out of it', cheer up, what's there to be depressed/anxious about, stop attention seeking or being lazy	Realise that mental health disorders are caused by chemical imbalances in the brain, genetic disposition to an illness and highly stressful events. People with mental health conditions need therapy and/or medication to get better and can't just wish their condition away

Reference:-

Schumaker, E. (2015, April). It's Time To Stop Using These Phrases When It Comes to Mental Illness. *Healthy Living*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/17/mental-illness-vocabulary_n_7078984.html
Tondora, et al., (2007). Yale University School of Medicine Program for Recovery and Community Health. New Haven, CT.