

Language Matters

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

- SAMHSA



Stigmatizing language is discouraging and isolating. Positive, recovery-friendly language is powerful: it focuses on the person, not the behavior, and increases access to recovery.



A person using substances; a person who identifies as being in recovery from substance use*



Substance abuser, druggie, junkie, addict, crackhead, drunk, alcoholic, user



Using substances is a choice, developing a substance use disorder (SUD) is not.



Drug & alcohol addiction is a moral failure or lack of willpower.



There is no wrong way or wrong time to recover; there are multiple pathways. **



If you aren't abstinent, you aren't in recovery. If you haven't hit rock bottom, you're not ready.



Recovery is a process that looks different for everyone; it can include recurrence (return to use). ***



Relapse is always a part of recovery; relapse means recovery failed.



Recovery is possible: 22.3 million U.S. adults consider themselves to be in recovery or to have recovered from a substance use problem: 44.1 million in recovery from a mental health issue. (NSDUH)



Scan QR code to learn more!

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* Substance use includes illicit substances, legal drugs (alcohol/cannabis/nicotine), and both prescription and over-the-counter medications.

** Recovery pathways can include abstinence, using safely, treatment, medications, Medication-Assisted Treatment, Medication for Opioid Use Disorder/Alcohol Use Disorder, peer support, harm reduction, self-help and support groups.

*** Relapse is a negative term that implies failure; "return to use" or "recurrence" are preferred.