

Person-First Language

When talking about people with mental illness, it is important to be mindful and use "person-first language". Terminology when speaking or writing should be positive and reflective of the person first.

Generic phrases such as "mentally ill" or "the mentally ill" are not appropriate since they convey a lack of appreciation for and depersonalize the individual. These terms communicate and reinforce the discriminatory notion of a special and separate group that is fundamentally unlike the rest of "us."

The use of person-first language such as "a person with schizophrenia," "an individual with bipolar disorder," or "people with mental illnesses," communicates first that they are people and second that they have a disability. Use of person-first language, although sometimes wordy, is important and requires that we be mindful of what we present to the public.

Language to Avoid

- Crazy • Mentally ill • The Mentally Ill • Mentally or emotionally handicapped
- Emotionally challenged • Differently-abled • Victim or sufferer

Person-First Language:

- Individual with lived experience of mental illness • Person with schizophrenia • Person with a mental illness • Person with bipolar disorder • Individual living with mental illness
- Individual(s) experiencing homelessness