



# I'm feeling ~~depressed~~

**Think about the last conversation you had with a friend.** Were you open to talking about depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, trauma or other mental health conditions? Or could a few simple words in your vocabulary — like calling someone nuts, crazy or an addict — have encouraged your friend to hide how they were really feeling?

## Words matter.

**Use these three tips to talk about mental health in a stigma-free way.  
That means a way that doesn't attach judgment or shame to it.**

1

### Remove

**Take certain words out of your vocabulary.** *Crazy, nutty, head case, lunatic, psycho, schizoid* and similar words reinforce stereotypes and minimize the importance of truly understanding mental health conditions.

2

### Reword

**Rephrase from *someone who suffers from mental illness* to *someone who lives with a mental illness* or *someone who is affected by mental illness*.** Also, rephrase from *someone who committed suicide* to *someone who died by suicide*.

3

### Rethink

**Don't refer to someone only by their disease,** such as a *schizophrenic person*. Instead, use a person-first approach. Say *a person living with schizophrenia* or *someone diagnosed with schizophrenia*.

DON'T SAY	DO SAY
Abuse, abuses	Use, uses Example: Person who <i>uses</i> drugs
Addict	Person with substance use disorder
Afflicted with	Living with, diagnosed with, with, who has, etc. Example: Person <i>who has</i> schizophrenia
Alcoholic	Person with alcohol use disorder
Alcohol problem	Alcohol use disorder More broadly: Substance use disorder
Anorexic, anorexics	Person who has anorexia, someone diagnosed with anorexia, etc.
Capitalize conditions or disorders, e.g., General Anxiety Disorder Exception: Conditions preceded by a name should be capitalized, e.g., Asperger syndrome, Tourette syndrome	Anxiety, depression and other conditions should not be capitalized unless the words appear in a headline.
Clean	Abstinent, not actively using
Clean drug screen	Tested negative for substance use
Committed suicide	Died by suicide
Dirty	Actively using
Dirty drug screen	Tested positive for substance use
Drug abuse	Drug misuse, harmful use
Drug abuser, drug addict, druggie, etc.	Person with substance use disorder
Drug problem, drug habit	Substance use disorder
Former/reformed addict/alcoholic	Person in recovery, person in long-term recovery
Mentally ill, mental illness	Diagnosed with a mental health condition, mental health condition Example: Person <i>with</i> a mental health condition
Problem Example: His wife was concerned he had a drinking problem.	Concern, condition, issue (depending on context) Example: His wife was concerned he was living with alcohol use disorder.
Suffers from	Living with, diagnosed with, with, who has, etc. Example: Person <i>who has</i> schizophrenia
Victim of	Living with, diagnosed with, with, who has, etc. Example: Person <i>who has</i> schizophrenia

**Imagine if we didn't feel the need to hide how we're really feeling.**  
Your word choices can help create a culture where it's possible.



**It's OK to Not Be OK**

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