

## Language of Recovery

*For more than two centuries, addicted and recovering people in America have been the object of language created by others. People experiencing severe and persistent alcohol and other drug problems have inherited a language not of their own making that has been ill suited to accurately portray their experience to others or to serve as a catalyst for personal change.*

*The Rhetoric of Recovery Advocacy: An Essay on the Power of Language, by William White*

The stigma and discrimination experienced by people who are addicted to alcohol and other drugs and/or who are recovering are profound. We are all exposed to the negative comments and beliefs expressed by people who don't understand. As recovery allies, it is important we use language that represents the hope and reality that people DO RECOVER from addiction. We must work together to establish a culture of recovery, to enable more people find their way to a recovery foothold and lifestyle. Language matters and sets the expectation for what can be accomplished.

### Language we use now

'Addiction is a chronic Relapsing disease'  
Let's break this down. Addiction is clearly a chronic illness. It does not go away once you have it. However no comprehensive research has been conducted that demonstrates a high level of relapse. For some people, relapse is part of the illness. It is not helpful to establish the expectation that relapse will occur during the recovery process. It is more helpful to teach that people can recover.

#### Substance Abuse

The term 'abuse' is moralistic and refers to actions that are intentional and harmful to others. People afflicted with addiction are not abusers. They use substances because they have an illness.

#### Relapse Prevention

We set an expectation when we teach that recovery is about preventing relapse. Recovery is about becoming alive. How do we convey this hope?

#### Recovering Addiction or Alcoholic

These labels 'addict' and 'alcoholic' have a negative stereotype in our culture. They identify the person in recovery with their illness, deepening societal stigma.

### Language that promotes recovery

Recovery from addiction is a reality.

Recovery is possible.

More than 23 million Americans are in recovery from addiction.

#### Substance addiction

Alcohol and drug related problems

Substance use disorder

#### Recovery Enhancement

Developing Recovery Capital

#### Person in Recovery

Living Proof

Survivor

### Self help

This says people with addiction problems are supposed to help themselves get better. This sets a false expectation: most people need the support of others to sustain the difficult work of recovery. Their strength is their ability to accept help.

### Recovery Support

#### Mutual Aid

### Consumer

This defines a person in a power relationship that labels him/her as someone who receives treatment services, not as a human being who has chosen to enter a pathway of recovery.

### Person in recovery

### Medication Assisted Treatment Plan/Methadone Client

Use of medication assisted treatment defines a person as 'not in recovery'  
There are people who use medications to assist them in their recovery process. The use of methadone, suboxone, vivitrol and other medications may lead to stigma and labelling from others, within recovering and other groups, creating barriers to recovery.

### Person in Medication Assisted Recovery

#### Person in recovery