

FIGHTING STIGMA IN RECOVERY



IOWA COLLEGIATE
RECOVERY NETWORK

Stigma refers to negative beliefs about a group or topic, often based on false information. In addiction, stigma includes misconceptions like addiction being a choice, people with addictions lacking willpower, or being beyond help. **These harmful stereotypes prevent understanding and support, making recovery harder.**

Why Language Matters

- Words shape how society views people in recovery.
- Saying “addict” or “alcoholic” dehumanizes; person-first language shows respect.

How stigma harms

- Fear of Help: Avoidance due to judgment.
- Low Self-Esteem: Reduced confidence.
- Feelings of Failure: Struggling without willpower.
- Depression: Stigma worsens symptoms.
- Social Withdrawal: Fear of judgment leads to isolation.

*Hinders, D. Breaking down barriers

How Can Stigma Be Overcome?

- Provide Facts: Correct misconceptions about addiction.
- Show Compassion: Offer support without judgment.
- Support Loved Ones: Encourage families to seek help.
- Share Stories: Personal recovery stories inspire change.

*All Points North. Social Media and Recovery.

Person-First Language

Use



- Person with substance use disorder
- Person in recovery
- Person misusing substances

Avoid



- Addict / Junkie / Alcoholic
- Former addict / Ex-alcoholic
- Drug/ Substance abuser

*NIDA, Words Matter (2021)