



# A Guide to Inclusive Language

How we speak matters. Our language may at times include indirect or subtle expressions of racism, even if it's not intended. Known as microaggressions, these everyday verbal slights, snubs, put-downs and insults are aimed at marginalized groups and can greatly affect their well-being. Although small in scale and sometimes unintended, microaggressions can have long-term, damaging effects on the mental and physical health of those targeted, and on society by reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

Recognizing microaggressive language is essential for fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals. Below are suggestions for non-stigmatizing terms that can be used to replace potentially hurtful language.

## Race & Ethnicity

*Instead of this...*

- Referring to people as colored people, colored Indian (to refer to American Indian)
- Native American (for federal publications)
- Eskimo
- Oriental
- Afro-American
- Negro
- Caucasian
- Non-White (used with or without specifying non-Hispanic or Latino)

*Try this...*

- American Indian or Alaska Native persons/communities/populations
- Asian persons
- Black or African American persons; Black persons
- Native Hawaiian persons
- Pacific Islander persons
- White persons
- People who identify with more than one race; people of more than one race; persons of multiple races
- Hispanic or Latino persons

## Mental/Behavioral Health

*Instead of this...*

- Mentally ill
- Crazy
- Insane
- Mental defect
- Suffers from or is afflicted with [condition]
- Asylum

*Try this...*

- People with a mental illness
- People with a pre-existing mental health disorder
- People with a pre-existing behavioral health disorder
- People with a diagnosis of a mental illness, mental health disorder, behavioral health disorder
- Psychiatric hospital/facility

## Immigration Status

*Instead of this...*

- Illegals
- Illegal immigrants
- Illegal aliens
- Illegal migrants
- Foreigners
- The foreign-born

*Try this...*

- People with undocumented status
- Mixed-status households
- Immigrant, migrant
- Asylum seeker or people who are seeking asylum
- Refugee or refugee populations
- Non-U.S.-born persons/foreign-born persons

## Socioeconomic Status (SES)

*Instead of this...*

- Poverty-stricken
- The poor/poor people

*Try this...*

- People with lower incomes
- People/households with incomes below the federal poverty level
- People with self-reported income in the lowest income bracket (if income brackets are defined)
- People experiencing poverty (do not use “underserved” when meaning low SES)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## #MinorityMentalHealthMatters #NotaCharacterFlaw

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issue, help is out there.

Contact the Mental Health America 24/7 Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741-741).

