

# A Guide to Inclusive Language

How we speak matters. Sometimes our language includes subtle forms of racism, even when we do not intend harm. These comments are called microaggressions. They can be verbal slights, snubs or insults directed at marginalized groups. Even when small or unintended, microaggressions can harm a person's mental and physical health. They also reinforce stereotypes that affect society as a whole.

Recognizing and changing these patterns can help create a more inclusive and supportive environment. Below are examples of respectful alternatives to terms that may be hurtful or stigmatizing.

## Race and Ethnicity

**X** *Instead of this...*

- Colored people or Colored
- Indian
- Eskimo
- Oriental
- Afro-American or Negro
- Caucasian
- Non-White

**✓** *Try this...*

- People/Persons of Color
- American Indian or Native American
- Alaska Native
- Asian persons
- Black or African American persons
- White persons
- People of more than one race

## Mental/Behavioral Health

**X** *Instead of this...*

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

**✓** *Try this...*

- People with a mental illness
- People with a mental health or behavioral health disorder
- People with a diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition
- Psychiatric hospital/facility

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## Immigration Status

**X** *Instead of this...*

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

**✓** *Try this...*

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

## Socioeconomic Status

**X** *Instead of this...*

- Poverty-stricken
- The poor/poor people

**✓** *Try this...*

- People with lower incomes
- People or households with incomes below the federal poverty level
- People with income in the lowest income bracket
- People experiencing poverty

## #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).

*Reviewed by medical director, MD and senior counsel, JD.*

