

ALCOHOL USE DISORDER UNDERSTANDING STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

WHAT IS STIGMA

- Stigma is discrimination against an identifiable group of people, place, or nation.¹



- For people with alcohol use disorder (AUD), stigma might include inaccurate or unfounded thoughts (e.g., people with alcohol use disorder are lazy or at fault for their condition).¹

EFFECTS OF STIGMA

- Feeling stigmatized can reduce the willingness of individuals with alcohol use disorder to seek care for alcohol use problems, prenatal needs, basic primary health, or mental health.¹



- Stigmatizing language can negatively influence health care professional's perceptions of people with AUD, which can impact the care they provide.¹

- People with AUD can feel isolated or rejected because they have come to believe that the negative attitudes and false beliefs that they hear from others, may apply to them.²



TERMS TO AVOID & TERMS TO USE

Person-first language maintains the integrity of individuals as whole human beings—by removing language that equates people to their condition or has negative connotations.¹ Consider using these recommended terms to reduce stigma and negative bias when speaking about alcohol use disorder.³

STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE	NON-STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE
alcoholic, drunk, addict	person with alcohol use disorder
clean, sober, former addict	in remission or recovery
relapse	return to use
relapse prevention	recovery management
self-help group	mutual support
dirty/clean	positive/negative toxicology
alcoholic liver disease	alcohol-associated liver disease (ALD)
children of alcoholics	children of parents with alcohol use disorder

Learn more at pcss-maud.org

1. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Words Matter - Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Published November 29, 2021. <https://nida.nih.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/health-professions-education/words-matter-terms-to-use-avoid-when-talking-about-addiction>
 2. Stigma: Overcoming a pervasive barrier to Optimal Care. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Accessed February 23, 2024. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/health-professionals-communities/core-resource-on-alcohol/stigma-overcoming-pervasive-barrier-optimal-care>
 3. Grayken Center for Addiction. Reducing Stigma: Why Words About Addiction Matter. Retrieved from <https://www.bmc.org/addiction/reducing-stigma>.