

# Let's Talk about - Language

Handout 5

This guide offers appropriate language choices for discussing mental health issues.

Respectful language	Disrespectful language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“person with schizophrenia”</li><li>“person with bipolar disorder”</li><li>“person with a disability”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“schizophrenic”</li><li>“manic depressive”</li><li>“handicapped person”</li></ul>
Empowering language	Disempowering language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“person with a mental illness”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“mentally ill”</li><li>“victim”</li><li>“sufferer”</li><li>“crazy”</li><li>“wacko”</li><li>“lunatic”</li></ul>
Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Put the person first</li><li>Become informed about mental illnesses</li><li>Speak up about stigma</li><li>Talk openly about mental illnesses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Refer to people by their illness</li><li>Be judgmental</li><li>Let jokes or misinformation go</li><li>Treat mental illnesses as something to be embarrassed about</li></ul>
Terms to avoid	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“challenged”</li><li>“special”</li><li>“normal” or “not normal”</li><li>“psycho” or “psychopath” or “demented”</li></ul>	

Source: MediaSmarts. (n.d.) *Teacher Training Guide*.  
Retrieved from [http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/Lets\\_Talk\\_Teacher\\_Training\\_Guide.pdf](http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/Lets_Talk_Teacher_Training_Guide.pdf).