RECOVERY LANGUAGE

THE POWER OF WORDS

- “Words have power. They have the power to teach, the power to wound, the power to shape the way people think, feel, and act toward others.” Otto Wahl
- People living with mental illness tend to be put down, discouraged, demoralized, and marginalized.
- We can reinforce that with the language we choose to use or we can fight it.
- We are people first. None of us should be defined by our diagnosis.
WHAT’S THE BEST LABEL TO USE?
HOW ABOUT NO LABEL AT ALL!

❖ To refer to a group of people:
  ❖ Individuals living with mental health issues.
  ❖ People with mental illness.
  ❖ Folks in mental health recovery.
  ❖ Individuals with a mental health diagnosis.
  ❖ People receiving mental health services.
  ❖ People being served by the mental health system.
  ❖ The people in our program.
  ❖ The individuals we serve.
  ❖ The folks we work with.

WHAT’S THE BEST LABEL TO USE?
HOW ABOUT NO LABEL AT ALL!

❖ To refer to an individual:
  ❖ Ian is working on his mental health recovery.
  ❖ Cathy has a mental illness.
  ❖ Lucy is living with mental illness.
  ❖ Joshua receives services from our agency.
  ❖ Natalie is one of the people we serve.
  ❖ Alice lives with bipolar disorder.
  ❖ Nick has depression.
THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Don’t portray successful persons with mental illness as super humans.
- Don’t sensationalize a mental illness.
- Do put people first, not their labels.
- Do emphasize abilities, not limitations.
- Do focus on what is strong instead of what is wrong.

WORN OUT LANGUAGE

Max is mentally ill.
Max is bipolar.
Mark is normal.
Matthew is manipulative.
Alex is an addict.
Jane is disabled.
Mary is resistant to treatment.
Hailey is a cutter.
Allie is high functioning.
LANGUAGE THAT PROMOTES ACCEPTANCE, RESPECT, & UNIQUENESS

Max has a mental illness.
Max has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder.
Mark is someone without a disability.
Matthew is trying really hard to get his needs met. Matthew may need to work on more effective ways of getting his needs met.
Alex is addicted to...
Jane is a person with a disability.
Mary chooses not to...
Hailey expresses her emotional pain through self-harm.
Allie is really good at...

CLOSING....

- Personal Story
- Questions/Comments