

The Road to Recovery 2010

“Language Matters: Talking About Addiction and Recovery”

Discussion Guide: The show will be filmed in a panel format with free discussion between the show host and other panelists. This Discussion Guide is not to be considered as a script. The information and resources provided in this Discussion Guide are provided to assist panelists in show preparation. The questions identified in each panel section will be asked by the show host. Panelists will respond to not only questions asked by the host but will also comment and add to information presented by other panelists in a discussion format. Panelists will bring to the show their own keen anecdotal experiences as well as references from scientific studies from the field.

Show Description: How we communicate about addiction, treatment and recovery to people seeking and receiving help and individuals living in long-term recovery makes a difference. Words have the power to help and heal, but also to discriminate and stigmatize. Some terms have a negative connotation (“abuse” or “addict”) that stigmatize people with an illness as well as those who provide them with treatment and recovery support services. Other terms (“person in long-term recovery” or “substance use disorder”) identify individuals and their illness with dignity and respect. This episode will address the language that we use and how that language can influence public perceptions of people with addiction and long-term recovery and the people who care for them; what research has shown about the use of language and suggestions and tips on how to speak about addiction, treatment, and recovery to encourage individuals and family members to get help and support people in recovery and the individuals who provide services to them.

Panel 1: The Importance of Language

Key Questions:

- 1. What role does language play in forming public opinion?**
- 2. Why does some language impede understanding and stigmatize people with addiction and people in long-term recovery?**
- 3. How can language be an effective tool for increasing awareness of substance use and mental health disorders and addiction treatment and recovery?**
- 4. Should there be different messages or language for different audiences?**
- 5. Should there be different messages or language for different messengers?**
- 6. How does language surrounding addiction and recovery differ among sectors of society (e.g., criminal justice system, healthcare system, workplaces)?**
- 7. Is it important to build a consensus on the terminology of these issues? Why?**
- 8. How and why can language differ between speakers (i.e., messaging)?**

The Power of Language

Sources: Substance Use Disorders: A Guide to the Use of Language (4-12-04)

<http://www.naabt.org/documents/Languageofaddictionmedicine.pdf> and

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/AbuseLanguagePaperWhiteKelly2010.pdf>

- In discussing substance use disorders, words can be powerful when used to inform, clarify, encourage, support, enlighten, and unify.
- On the other hand, stigmatizing words often discourage, isolate, misinform, shame, and embarrass.
- The language used to describe alcohol and other drug problems and the people with them exerts a significant influence on people experiencing such problems and on how professional helpers, policymakers, and the public view them and their families.

Why Language Matters

Source: http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/2009Language_OnConsumer.pdf

- Language matters. It is far more than superficial concerns about political correctness.
- Language is imbedded with values and judgments of a culture; cultural change involves a transformation in language.
- The labels applied to individuals affect how they are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves.
- Language is a vehicle of social control and social isolation. Stigma and discrimination are couched in a language that reinforces stereotypes and elicits fear.
- Recovery and community integration require claiming one's own language.
- Language that focuses on the person is more respectful and less stigmatizing than language that defines a person in terms of an illness.

Language and the Recovery Community

Source: http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/rhetoric_of_advocacy.pdf

- For more than two centuries, addicted and recovering people in America have been the object of language created by others.
- People experiencing severe and persistent alcohol and other drug problems have inherited a language not of their own making that has been ill-suited to accurately portray their experience to others or to serve as a catalyst for personal change.
- Focusing on the subtle meaning of words—rejecting some while embracing others—is far more than a matter of shallow political correctness. It is about changing the way addicted and recovering people see themselves and are seen by others. It is about changing the language that affects social policies and is in turn affected by those policies.

The Importance of Consensus on Language

Source: <http://www.naabt.org/documents/Languageofaddictionmedicine.pdf>

- Those involved in preventing, treating, and supporting recovery for substance use disorders employ a variety of competing terms to describe the illness and the people it affects.
- This lack of a common language fosters fragmentation within the workforce, causes confusion in public discourse, and allows for the perpetuation of stigma.

Messaging (i.e., When Speaking About Recovery)

Source: Faces & Voices of Recovery (<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/>)

1. Make it personal to establish credibility.
2. Keep it simple and in the present tense, so that it's real and understandable.
3. Help people understand that recovery means you or the person you care about is no longer using alcohol or other drugs. We do this by moving away from saying "in recovery" to saying "in long-

term “recovery,” by using concrete examples from our lives to talk about stability and by mentioning the length of time that the person is in recovery.

4. Talk about your recovery—not your addiction.
5. Help people understand that there’s more to recovery than not using alcohol or other drugs, and that part of recovery is creating a better life.

View From SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde: What's in a Term? Considering Language in Our Field

Source: http://samhsa.gov/samhsaNewsletter/Volume_18_Number_2/DrHyde.aspx

- We need to find a way to talk about prevention, health, disorders, disease, addiction, illness, and recovery so that we can address the issues and not argue about what we mean.
- We definitely need to use “people first” language regardless of how we describe people with symptoms, illnesses, addictions, or diseases and how we label their status.
- What really matters is that we not get distracted, not fight among ourselves, and not make assumptions about motives or beliefs based on the current language we use. We need to engage in the discussion but not write one another off when we do not agree.
- We need to ensure we are respectful of all people, whether they are pro-12 step, anti-psychiatry, service providers, or service recipients. It is what we have in common, not what we may disagree on, that makes us strong as a field.

Panel 2: Words and Phrases To Avoid

Key Questions:

1. **What is the difference between positive and negative slogans and phrases as they pertain to the topics of addiction and treatment?**
2. **What are some terms relating to people with a substance use disorder (e.g., “addict,” “junkie,” “crack head,” “drunk”)?**
3. **What are some terms relating to people with mental illness (e.g., “nuts,” “crazy,” “psycho,” “retarded”) that are common in popular society today but are inappropriate? Why are these terms undesirable?**
4. **What are some examples of words and phrases that are detrimental to people in recovery and the broader recovery community? Why are these words dangerous? What are some preferable alternatives?**
5. **What are some examples of words and phrases that need to be discussed and debated? Why?**
6. **Why are these words and phrases important to people providing services?**

Slogans

Source: http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/white_treatment_works.pdf

- Slogans are phrases or mottoes that convey ideas and sentiments in a highly condensed and memorable form.
- Catchy slogans and jingles have a rich history within the alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems arena. They have been used to:
 - Promote psychoactive drug use (“It’s Miller time”; “I’d walk a mile for a...; “Tune in, turn on, drop out.”);
 - Discourage psychoactive drug use (“Just Say No”; “This is your brain...”);
 - Convey the source and nature of AOD problems (“Alcoholism is a disease”; “Capitalism plus dope equals genocide”);

- Portray the character of AOD consumers and those experiencing AOD problems (“The alcoholic is a sick person”; “Users are losers”);
 - Promote particular AOD-related social policies (“Zero tolerance”; “Treatment works,” “Treatment is effective”); and
 - Shape recovery-based thinking and daily living (“One day at a time”; “Sobriety priority”).
- Such slogans can work at some levels while failing at others, and generate unintended and potentially harmful consequences.
- Effective slogans should:
 - Extol the power of personal choice and responsibility;
 - Be recovery-focused, family-centered, culturally nuanced, and scientifically defensible; and
 - Incorporate a menu of catalytic metaphors drawn from diverse medical, religious, spiritual, political, and cultural traditions.

Words/Concepts To Abandon

Source: http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/rhetoric_of_advocacy.pdf

- For isolated individuals to come together as a group, they must come to see and define that which characterizes them as a distinct people. When those distinguishing qualities have been defined by others in terms of disrespect and disrepute, these terms must be cast away and new labels elicited from their collective aspirations.
 - “Abuse”
 - “Self-help”
 - “Untreated alcoholics/addicts”
 - “Consumer”

Words/Concepts To Discuss and Debate

Source: http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/rhetoric_of_advocacy.pdf

- While some words may need to be changed, others need to be carefully analyzed and discussed.
 - “Alcoholic/addict”
 - “Disease” / “Disease concept”
 - “Treatment works”
 - “Stigma”
 - “Enable”
 - “Relapse”
 - “Recovering/recovered”
 - “Anonymity” and “Passing”

Panel 3: Words and Phrases To Promote

Key Questions:

- 1. What are some examples of words and phrases that are positive and increase awareness and understanding of addiction and recovery (including what’s involved beyond no longer using alcohol and other drugs (i.e., the many pathways to recovery, what’s involved in getting your life back on track, why these terms should be promoted)?**
- 2. How has the terminology surrounding addiction changed over the years? What role have 12-step programs (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous) played in creating this change?**

3. **What role has the mass media played in creating this change (e.g., A&E's Intervention, Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew, media coverage of celebrities in and out of rehab? Rush Limbaugh? Congressman Kennedy?)?**
4. **Is there a "generation gap" aspect to language and terminology used to describe addiction, treatment, and recovery? If so, what can be done to bridge this gap and eradicate archaic, undesirable terminology?**
5. **How can the public and private sectors work together to educate Americans on using terminology that expands understanding of addiction and recovery and doesn't reinforce stereotypes and misunderstanding?**

Positive Supporting Statements

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

(<http://www.samhsa.gov/>)

- SAMHSA, in collaboration with other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, local organizations, and individuals including consumers and the recovery community, has demonstrated in research and practice:
 1. Behavioral health is essential to health.
 - Improves health status.
 - Lowers costs for families, businesses, and governments.
 2. Prevention works.
 3. Treatment is effective.
 4. People recover.

One of SAMHSA's Strategic Initiatives—Public Awareness and Support

Source: Mark Weber, Director, Office of Communications—Agency Lead

- Goal: Increase understanding of mental and substance use disorder prevention and treatment services to achieve the full potential of prevention and help people recognize and seek assistance for these health conditions with the same urgency as any other health condition.
- Fast Facts:
 - 66 percent of Americans believe addiction can be prevented.
 - 75 percent of Americans believe recovery from addiction is possible.
 - 66 percent of Americans believe that treatment and support can help people with mental illnesses lead normal lives.
 - 20 percent of Americans say they would think less of a friend or relative if they discovered that person is in recovery from an addiction.
 - 30 percent of Americans say they would think less of a person with a current addiction.
 - 20 percent of Americans feel that persons with mental illness are dangerous to others.

Words/Concepts to Elevate and Celebrate

Source: http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/rhetoric_of_advocacy.pdf

- The recovery community should develop a core lexicon that distinguishes itself both from mutual aid societies, from professionally directed addiction treatment and from earlier addiction-related advocacy movements.
 - "Recovery"
 - "Recovery community"/"communities of recovery"
 - "Advocacy"

- “Sustainability”
- “Recovery support services”/“recovery coach”
- “Recovery pathways/style”
- “Putting a face on recovery”/“living proof”
- “Story”
- “Responsibility,” “gratitude” and “service”
- “Friends of recovery”

Reducing Stigma Through Language

Source: <http://www.naabt.org/documents/Languageofaddictionmedicine.pdf>

- Attention to language is a critical step toward the reduction of stigma, but it is only one step.
- Reducing stigma involves not only changes in language but also a significant transformation in people’s underlying perceptions and attitudes and in society’s discriminatory policies.
- These developments are essential to creating a society that fully supports prevention, treatment, and recovery for substance use disorders.

Panel 4: Resources

Key Questions:

- 1. Why is it important for people in recovery, family members, friends, and allies including prevention and treatment professionals to educate themselves on the importance of language and messaging?**
- 2. Where can they find information about this?**
- 3. What is the ATTC Network? What does it do?**
- 4. What is Partners in Recovery? What does it address and how?**
- 5. What is Faces & Voices of Recovery? What is the organization’s aim?**
- 6. What is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction *Recovery Month*? Why is the observance important in educating others and reducing stigma and discrimination as well as encouraging those in need to seek assistance?**
- 7. What other resources are available for individuals to increase their awareness of how to speak about the topics of substance use and mental health disorders and addiction treatment and recovery?**

The ATTC Network

Source: <http://www.attcnetwork.org/aboutus/index.asp>

- Established in 1993 by SAMHSA, the ATTC Network is comprised of 14 Regional Centers and a National Office, which serve the 50 U.S. States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Islands of Guam, American Samoa, Palau, the Marshal Islands, Micronesia, and the Mariana Islands.
- As a nationwide, multidisciplinary resource for professionals in the addictions treatment and recovery services field, the ATTC Network serves to:
 - Raise awareness of evidence-based and promising treatment and recovery practices;
 - Build skills to prepare the workforce to deliver state-of-the-art addictions treatment and recovery services; and
 - Change practice by incorporating these new skills into everyday use for the purpose of improving addictions treatment and recovery outcomes.

Partners for Recovery

Source: <http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/about/goals.php>

- Partners for Recovery (PFR) is an initiative sponsored by SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) (<http://www.csat.samhsa.gov/>).
- It addresses issues of national significance and it is driven by the individual, families and communities it serves.
- The PFR Initiative supports and provides technical resources to those who deliver services for the prevention and treatment of substance use conditions and co-occurring mental health and substance use conditions disorders and seeks to build capacity and improve services and systems of care.

Faces & Voices of Recovery

Source: <http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/about/goals.php>

- Faces & Voices of Recovery is a national organization of individuals and organizations joining together to support local, State, regional, and national recovery advocacy by increasing access to research, policy, organizing and technical support; facilitating relationships among local and regional groups; improving access to policymakers and the media; and providing a national rallying point for recovery advocates.
- Faces & Voices of Recovery is committed to organizing and mobilizing the millions of Americans in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction, our families, friends, and allies to speak with one voice.
- The organization is dedicated to changing public perceptions of recovery, promoting effective public policy in Washington and in all 50 states, and demonstrating that recovery is working for millions of Americans. It is our collective strength that will ensure our success, and it is the organization's mission to bring the power and proof of recovery to everyone in America.
- Faces & Voices of Recovery's recovery community messaging training was developed in 2006 after extensive research. Over 3,000 people in recovery, family members, friends, and allies have been trained to use this messaging, which can be adapted for people using medication in their recovery, family members who have lost loved ones to addiction and others.

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction *Recovery Month*

Source: <http://recoverymonth.gov>

- *Recovery Month* is an annual observance that takes place during the month of September.
- The *Recovery Month* observance highlights the societal benefits of substance abuse treatment, lauds the contributions of treatment providers and promotes the message that recovery from substance abuse in all its forms is possible. The observance also encourages citizens to take action to help expand and improve the availability of effective substance abuse treatment for those in need. Each year, a new theme or emphasis is selected for the observance.
- *Recovery Month* provides a platform to celebrate people in recovery and those who serve them. Each September, thousands of treatment programs around the country celebrate their successes and share them with their neighbors, friends, and colleagues in an effort to educate the public about treatment, how it works, for whom, and why. Substance abuse treatment providers have made significant accomplishments, having transformed the lives of untold thousands of Americans. These successes often go unnoticed by the broader population; therefore, *Recovery Month* provides a vehicle to celebrate these successes.
- *Recovery Month* also serves to educate the public on substance abuse as a national health crisis, that addiction is a treatable disease, and that recovery is possible. *Recovery Month* highlights the benefits of treatment for not only the affected individual but for their family, friends, workplace, and society as a whole. Educating the public reduces the stigma associated with addiction and treatment. Accurate knowledge of the disease helps people to understand the importance of

supporting treatment programs, those who work within the treatment field, and those in need of treatment.

SAMHSA/CSAT Language Guide

Source: <http://www.suboxone.com/hcp/opioiddependence/language.aspx>

- The guide is designed to raise awareness of the impact of language—particularly that used by professionals involved in substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- In addition, the guide offers alternatives to negative and stigmatizing terminology in an effort to promote “the use of words that will advance the understanding of substance use disorders as a health issue.”
- The guide can be found at <http://www.naabt.org/documents/Languageofaddictionmedicine.pdf>.

Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues: Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Use and Addiction

Source:

http://www.eiconline.org/resources/publications/z_sddatua/Spotlight%20On_Drug,%20Alcohol%20and%20Tobacco%20Use%20and%20Addiction.pdf

- Enhancing public understanding of the nature of addiction and addiction treatment is an important step in reducing stigma and aiding the recovery process. One way this can effectively be achieved is through the accurate portrayal of drug use, abuse, addiction, and treatment and recovery in popular media.
- The Entertainment Industries Council has created Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues to quickly, easily, and clearly satisfy the immediate needs of the creative community—writers, directors, producers, performers and executives—looking for detailed information about specific topics related to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and issues of prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- This publication contains information identified for over 50 topics related to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. This information is organized into seven sections: alcohol, drugs, tobacco, the impact of substance abuse, terminology, glossary and additional resources. Each section is divided into chapters containing detailed factual information and depiction suggestions.

The Anti-Stigma Project

Source: <http://www.onourownmd.org/asp.html>

- The mission of The Anti-Stigma project is to fight stigma by raising consciousness, facilitating ongoing dialogues, searching for creative solutions, and educating all participants within or connected to the mental health community, including consumers, family members, providers, educators, and administrators.
- Through workshops, The Anti-Stigma Project facilitates ongoing dialogues that enable participants to talk openly on a level playing field about attitudes, behaviors, and practices that are stigmatizing.