



Addiction isn't a choice. But we can all choose how we talk about the disease — changing minds, opening innovative pathways to care and saving lives.

# START A CONVERSATION

## How we talk about addiction matters

Leading the community conversation about the public health crisis of addiction starts with the words we use. The stigma of the disease keeps many of our neighbors from seeking the treatment they need. Addict, user, junkie and other negative terms for those living with addiction are not only inaccurate, they're harmful and a barrier to treatment.

**CHANGING  
MINDS**

✓ **USE** Person-first, non-stigmatizing language

✗ **AVOID** Negative, bias-building language

PERSON	Having a substance use disorder, engaged in risky use of substances	Abuser, substance abuser	PERSON
	Person living with/experiencing addiction	Addict, user	
	Patient, client, consumer	Problem	
	Having an alcohol use disorder, experiencing alcohol addiction	Alcoholic, drunk, wino	
	Having an opioid/drug use disorder, experiencing opioid/drug addiction, under the influence of a substance	Junkie, druggie, burnout, stoner, meth head, drug offender	
	Person without an addiction	Normal, healthy	
DISEASE	Chronic disease of addiction	Personal/lifestyle choice, moral failing	DISEASE
	Substance use or misuse, risky/harmful use	Abuse, substance/alcohol/drug abuse	
	Active addiction, substance use disorder	Habit, drug habit	
	Alcohol/drug disorder	Alcohol/drug dependence	
TESTING	Negative drug screen, substance-free	Clean drug screen	TESTING
	Positive drug screen	Dirty drug screen, hot UA, failed UA	
TREATMENT	Medication-assisted treatment, pharmacotherapy, group and individual counseling, medications for opioid use disorder	Replacement/substitution therapy, medication is a crutch	TREATMENT
	Evidence-based treatment, outcomes-based treatment	Rehab, drunk tank	
	Individualized treatment, Integrated treatment plan, person-centered treatment and recovery, continuing care	Abstinence (or any single path to recovery) worked for me (my cousin, etc.), you have to go cold turkey, need to hit rock bottom	
RECOVERY	Had a setback in recovery, recurrence of use	Repeat offender, non-compliant, failed treatment, relapse	RECOVERY
	Addiction survivor, person living in recovery, addiction-free	Clean, sober, ex-addict	
	In remission, maintained recovery	Cured, stayed clean	

# CHANGING MINDS

Learn more about addiction at:

[ChangingMindsLarimer.org](https://ChangingMindsLarimer.org)

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Read true stories of addiction at:

[ChangingMindsLarimer.org/stories](https://ChangingMindsLarimer.org/stories)

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Learn more about the language of addiction at:

[RecoveryAnswers.org/Addiction-ary](https://RecoveryAnswers.org/Addiction-ary)