

# Reducing Stigma with Language | Handout

When it comes to illnesses and health issues, **putting the person before the diagnosis describes what the person has rather than what they are (helps prevent Internalized Stigma)**. Using a sentence structure where the person comes first allows for this. For example, saying “people with disabilities” is more humanizing than saying “disabled people” or “the disabled.”

## HIV & AIDS: Say This, Not That

Stigmatizing	Preferred
HIV infected person, HIV/AIDS patient or carrier, Positives, HIVers	Person living with HIV (PLHIV). Do not use “infected” when referencing a person.
To die of AIDS	Died of AIDS-related illness, died of AIDS-related complications or end stage HIV
HIV infection, became infected	HIV transmissions, diagnosed with HIV, acquired HIV
Victim, innocent victim, sufferer, contaminated	Person living with HIV, survivor, warrior (Don’t use “contaminated” in reference to a person)
To catch, contract, or transmit AIDS; to catch HIV	An AIDS diagnosis, developed AIDS, contract HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis and HIV is the virus)
Compliant	Adherent
Prostitute/Prostitution	Sex worker, transactional sex, selling sexual services
Promiscuous	Use “having multiple partners” instead of this value judgement
“Tainted” blood, “dirty” needles	Shared needles, blood containing HIV
Clean, as in “I’m clean, are you?”	Avoid! Never suggest those living with HIV are dirty.

# LGBTQI: Say This, Not That

*\*Please note: it is always best practice to ASK your patient what terms they use for themselves; the following serves as a general guide.*

Stigmatizing	Preferred
"homosexual" (n. or adj.)	"gay" (adj.); "gay man" or "lesbian" (n.); "gay person/people"
"homosexual relations/relationship," "homosexual couple," "homosexual sex," etc.	"relationship," "couple" (or, if necessary, "gay/lesbian/same-sex couple"), "sex," etc.
"gay lifestyle," "homosexual lifestyle," or "transgender lifestyle"	"LGBTQ people and their lives"
"gay agenda" or "homosexual agenda"	"Accurate descriptions of the issues (e.g., "inclusion in existing nondiscrimination laws," "securing equal employment protections")"
"special rights"	"equal rights" or "equal protection"

Visit [seaetc.com](http://seaetc.com) to access the complete Cultural Humility & Reducing Stigma and Discrimination Handbook for additional insights and information.