

# PEOPLE MATTER,<sup>TM</sup> WORDS MATTER

## ARE YOU USING **COMPASSIONATE SUD** LANGUAGE?

Language matters in compassionate care, and that is not limited to what you say in front of a patient. What you say behind closed doors with coworkers can be the seed for stigma and blaming the patient for their illness.

For individuals with substance use disorders, this means seeing them as a person battling a severe illness and providing hope. Our words reflect our thinking and make a profound difference in the outcome of care. Let's choose to inspire and support our patients.

### TRY SAYING THIS...

- ▶ I understand what you are saying.
- ▶ Their life is worth saving.
- ▶ We have treated this patient before.
  
- ▶ A person can be a good mom/dad/parent and be in recovery.
- ▶ They have a substance use disorder.
- ▶ Their recovery should be celebrated, and we should continue supporting them.
- ▶ We should focus on both their acute conditions and their substance use disorder.

[ THESE WORDS SHOW COMPASSION AND EVERY PERSON'S LIFE IS WORTH SAVING. ]

### INSTEAD OF THIS

- It's all in your head.
- They're a lost cause.
- They're a frequent flyer in the emergency department.
- They can't be a good parent while in recovery.
- They're a junkie/addict/alcoholic.
- They're just going to relapse.
  
- They have a substance use disorder, but we should only focus on their high blood pressure.

[ THESE WORDS PROPAGATE STIGMA AND DON'T RECOGNIZE THE PERSON'S VALUE. ]

Thank you, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Carilion Clinic, for being a source of this information.