Trauma-Informed Language Tips
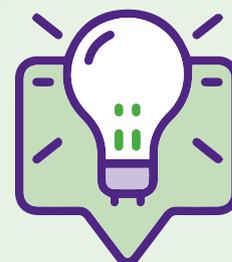
Simple suggestions for supporting people with lived experience of mental health conditions.

Understanding trauma and embracing the principles of trauma-informed care is integral to recovery-orientated practice. A crucial first step in developing and implementing a trauma-informed recovery approach to practice starts with the language we use. **Words are powerful and words matter** – they impact how people engage with services.

DON'T	DO
Don't refer to a person by their diagnosis, symptoms, as a case, or by terms such as 'frequent flyer' or 'blocked bed.'	Refer to a person as having lived or living experience of a mental health condition, trauma, psychosocial disability or co-occurring conditions.
Don't refer to a diagnosis or assessment as a pronouncement of universal truth.	Where applicable, explicitly describe a diagnostic assessment from a medical or service provider opinion or perspective.
Do not dismiss a person's viewpoint, make assumptions or describe achievements, ownership or connections as 'grandiose delusions.'	Respect and be led by the person, together with their support networks, about their hopes, aspirations and preferred connections - recognise their achievements.
Do not focus on a person's 'weaknesses' or 'limitations,' or leave them out of support planning.	Express 'shortfalls' as recovery journeys or a work in progress - support autonomy and independence.
Do not conceal, limit or use convoluted language in relaying suggested actions.	Be clear in explaining why some actions are considered necessary in terms of supporting recovery.
Do not use jargon, short-form or language derived from outdated literature in reports and data gathering.	Establish safety prompts in organisational documents and data templates and include this in continuous improvement audit processes.

By using these tips and speaking as though the person you are speaking about will hear or read what you say, we can incorporate a trauma-informed approach in all aspects of recovery.

These tips come from the Recovery Oriented Language Guide. The full Guide is available at **mhcc.org.au/resources** or scan the QR code to download.

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