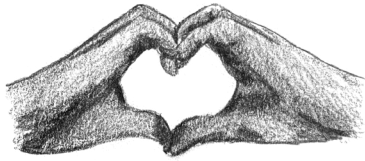


NEXT Distro
STAY ALIVE , STAY SAFE.



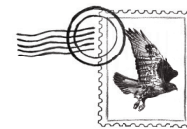
Person-First Language/ Talking to PWUD Without Stigma

I noticed that in all my interactions with NEXT Distro staff, everyone uses terms like “people who use drugs” or “people who inject drugs” instead of “addict” or “drug user/abuser.” Why?

NEXT Distro works from a harm reduction framework, and we know that stigma surrounding substances and the people who use them isn't just personally painful—it can also have real-life consequences, like preventing people who use drugs from seeking healthcare, causing families and friends to cut off or exclude people who use drugs, and even from using harm reduction services. Referring to our participants as “people who use drugs” centers their personhood, and acknowledges that they live full, complicated, and unique lives beyond their substance use.

Studies have found that healthcare providers, politicians, and other people who make choices that impact the health and safety of people who use drugs have negative associations words like “drug abuser” and “addict,” and might be negatively biased when making laws that impact people who use drugs or providing treatments to them.

Even if you think of addiction an illness, it's helpful to compare how you talk about this illness to how you might talk about others. If someone has depression, we might say that they “are depressed” or “have depression,” but we don't make that condition the center of their identity. Similarly, we might say someone “has a substance use disorder” or “is actively using substances” rather than calling them “an addict.”



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