Let's Look at the Lingo:
Why use Person First Language?

Jacinta Emery

Language matters. Words matter.
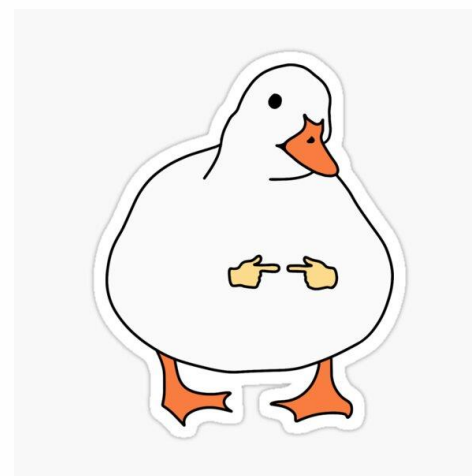
- Empowerment vs disempowerment

- Stigma and discrimination

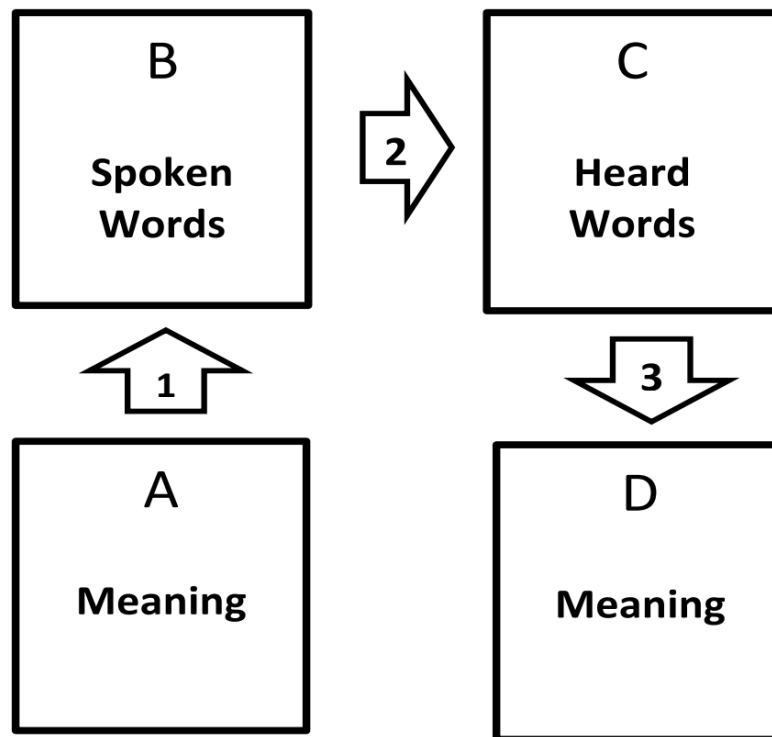- Social perception and attitudes

- Meaning and association

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I mean, just personally…..

Accurate Empathy

LISTENING WELL

Now back to it: Person First Language

"First and foremost people with mental health illnesses are people and therefore it is important to use 'people first' language when referring to a person with a mental illness."

- Australian Human Rights Commission

What is Person First Language?

A type of linguistic prescription which puts the person before a diagnosis in a statement or sentence.

Using person first language:

- A person living with BPD

- Has a diagnosis of BPD

- Lives with BPD

- Person with BPD

- Has a lived experience of BPD

- Lives with a diagnosis of …….

- Has lived experience of a diagnosis of …….

Note: some people will have experience of being *diagnosed or labelled* with something and not identify with that diagnosis. How would you approach this openly and respectfully?

Examples: diagnosis first language

- BPD patient
- Borderline patient
- Borderline person
- Borderliner
- BPD/borderline client
- BPD sufferer
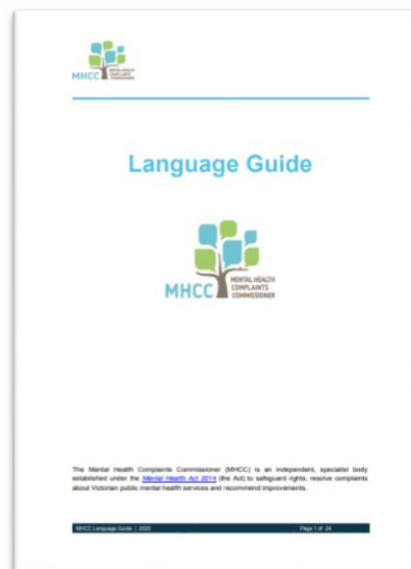

This could be extended to:

- "The borderline in room ……."
- "That unit has become BPD central."
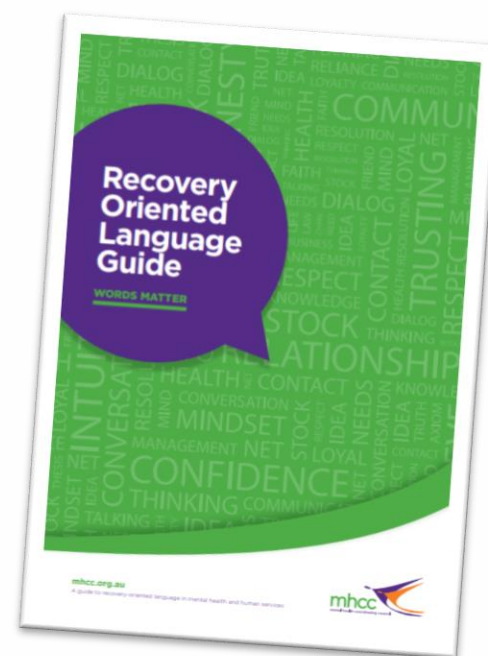- "BPD management."

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Resources:

Our words matter: Guidelines for language use – Mindframe

Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide-3rd-edition.pdf (mhcc.org.au)

Mental-health-language-guide.pdf (mhcc.vic.gov.au)

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Final Note:

"None of us should be defined by our difficulties or diagnoses, or by any single aspect of who we are - we are people first and foremost."

- Mental Health Coordinating Council recovery-oriented language guide