

Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation

Language and terminology factsheet

March 2016

Language and terminology

It is important that your language is as inclusive as possible. People have different ways of describing their own mental health and it is important that where possible you follow their lead, especially when communicating 1:1.

Mind asked members about their communication preferences and as a result Mind uses the term 'mental health problems' although we do recognise that some people and organisations prefer to use the terms 'mental health conditions' or 'mental illness'.

Certain language¹ can cause offence and may be inaccurate when used in news stories, in publications, posters and fliers, documents or in everyday discussions. Here are the most common, as well as some alternative suggestions.

Avoid using	Instead try
'a psycho' or 'a schizo'	'a person who has experienced psychosis' or 'a person who has schizophrenia'
'a schizophrenic' or 'a depressive'	someone who 'has a diagnosis of' is 'currently experiencing' or 'is being treated for...'
'lunatic' 'nutter' 'unhinged' 'maniac' 'mad'	'a person with a mental health problem'
'the mentally ill', 'a person suffering from' 'a sufferer', a 'victim' or 'the afflicted'	'mental health patients' or 'people with mental health problems'
'prisoners' or 'inmates' (in a psychiatric hospital)	'patients', 'service users' or 'clients'
'released' (from a hospital)	'discharged'
'happy pills'	'antidepressants', 'medication' or 'prescription drugs'

Other common mistakes

- 'schizophrenic' or 'bipolar' should not be used to mean 'two minds' or a 'split personality'
- somebody who is angry is not 'psychotic'
- a person who is down or unhappy is not the same as someone experiencing clinical depression

¹ Source: Time to Change, Mind Your Language!



Mental health and wellbeing²

It is important to remember like physical health we all have mental health too.

What is mental wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing describes your mental state – how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life. Our mental wellbeing can change, from day to day, month to month or year to year.

If you have good mental wellbeing (or good mental health), you are able to:

- feel relatively confident in yourself – you value and accept yourself and judge yourself on realistic and reasonable standards
- feel and express a range of emotions
- feel engaged with the world around you – you can build and maintain positive relationships with other people and feel you can contribute to the community you live in
- live and work productively
- cope with the stresses of daily life and manage times of change and uncertainty

Mental health problems and wellbeing

If you experience low mental wellbeing over a long period of time, you are more likely to develop a mental health problem.

If you already have a mental health problem, e.g. depression or anxiety, you are more likely to experience periods of low mental wellbeing than someone who hasn't. However, you can still have periods of good wellbeing, where you are able to manage your condition and your life without becoming unwell.

Further information

If need further information or some advice about language and terminology please get in touch with Mind [visit their website](#) or contact sport@mind.org.uk

² Source: Mind, How to improve and maintain your mental wellbeing

