

Handout -Power of Language

Language matters, it has power to categorise people in terms that can be empowering or disempowering.

Language impacts how we think about ourselves, and shapes how we see others.

Stigmatised terms and preferred terms used

Stigmatised	Preferred
HIV - still often associated with loss, death, and suffering	HIV - alternative view. I am 'healthy, intelligent, vibrant' declares a status and so much more, it challenges understanding and supports a sense of self-worth and respect.
HIV and AIDS used interchangeably to cover all diagnosis when they are very different diagnoses.	HIV is a virus AIDS is a clinical syndrome Although associated they are not the same thing leading to confusion and misinformation. Some people still think there is an 'AIDS test', and that people are 'dying from AIDS' rather than dying from HIV-related conditions.
AIDS test - there is no such thing as an AIDS test. AIDS is a diagnosis	HIV test
Death sentence , Fatal condition, or life-threatening condition	HIV is a chronic health condition , a manageable health condition (as long as people receive care and treatment)
Disclosure - is a loaded term linked secrecy of HIV status, exposure, confession, revelation, divulgence and reinforces self-stigma and the belief that they have done something wrong	Telling or sharing -using these words becoming less about hiding something.
Infection - conjures thoughts of 'contamination, impurity and even death'	'Acquire' or 'transmit' - use of neutral words say the same thing but carry a different feeling.

Acronyms used - for people living with HIV PWLH, PWH, or PLHIV when referring to people Living with HIV can add to a sense of being labelled and the loss of our identity as human beings	Limit use abbreviations and Acronyms to charts or graphs where brevity is required recommended by UNAIDS.
Mother to child transmission (MTCT) can be accusatory tone implying to place blame on the mother.	Vertical transmission/perinatal transmission - is less accusatory and it also has the potential to increase access to services by not stigmatising women living with HIV.
Promiscuous	Has or having multiple partner
Unprotected sex	Condomless sex with PrEP, or without PrEP, sex not protected by condoms, sex not protected by antiretroviral prevention methods.
Prostitute or prostitution	Sex worker ; sale of sexual services; transactional sex