



### What We Say Matters: Language that Respects the Individual and Imparts Hope

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### What We Say Matters – Language that Imparts Hope

- Learn the old-fashioned diabetes phrases, words and approaches that can be left behind.
- Describe diabetes language that is respectful, inclusive, person-centered and imparts hope.
- Practice communicating about diabetes using phrases free from judgement with a focus on a strength-based approach.



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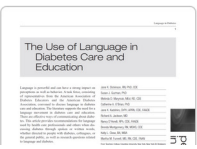
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### The Language Movement



- Special recognition to Jane K. Dickinson, RN, PhD, CDE for her vision, research and advocacy

Full Article from *The Diabetes Educator* :



Quick Guide for Healthcare Providers



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**SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF DIABETES:**  
Language Guidance for Diabetes-Related Research, Education, and Publications

*How we talk to and about people with diabetes plays an important role in engagement, conceptualization of diabetes and its management, treatment outcomes, and psychosocial well-being. For people with diabetes, language has an impact on motivation, behaviors, and outcomes.*

**Four principles guided this work and served as a core set of beliefs for the paper:**

- ▶ Diabetes is a complex and challenging disease involving many factors and variables
- ▶ Every member of the health care team can serve people with diabetes more effectively through a respectful, inclusive, and person-centered approach
- ▶ Stigma that has historically been attached to a diagnosis of diabetes can contribute to stress and feelings of shame and judgment
- ▶ Person-first, strengths-based, empowering language can improve communication and enhance motivation, health and well-being of people with diabetes

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**Stigma associated with diabetes**  
Have you heard others using these words or phrases?

- ▶ Cheat (er)
- ▶ No will power
- ▶ Diabetic
- ▶ Lazy, weak
- ▶ Non-compliant
- ▶ Train wreck
- ▶ Frequent Flyer
- ▶ Non-adherent
- ▶ Not intelligent
- ▶ Refuses to check blood sugar
- ▶ Forgot log book again
- ▶ Refuses to take their meds as directed
- ▶ Eats junk food
- ▶ Loves sugar
- ▶ They brought it on themselves

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**Quick Question**

Which phrase best represents the principles for communicating with and about people living with diabetes.

- A. John is only taking his insulin every other day and he should be taking it daily.
- B. John is in denial about his diabetes and frequently skips his insulin
- C. John is taking his insulin about half of the time
- D. John doesn't seem to care about his diabetes control at this time

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## Self Reflective Question

- ▶ A person shows up to appointment, forgets their log book and meter and tells you they are only taking their daily insulin injection about 4 times a week.
- ▶ What feelings would that evoke?
  - ▶ Doesn't care
  - ▶ Non-compliant
  - ▶ Lazy
  - ▶ Better scare them
  - ▶ Exasperation

curiosity



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## Improved approach to language

- ▶ Mindset – come from a place of acceptance
- ▶ Approach – partner with participants.
  - ▶ “I am on your side”
  - ▶ Focus on person rather than the diagnosis
- ▶ Words are tools that can be used to encourage and focus on strengths.
- ▶ Not about being the word police
- ▶ Requires awareness and ongoing practice



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## Coaching Styles Matter

### Coaching Style

- ▶ Encouraging
  - ▶ Collaborative
- Leads to behavior change

- ▶ Discouraging
  - ▶ Other resources
- Not associated with behavior change



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## And what about us?

- ▶ We bring our life experiences to each interaction.



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## Expectancy Theory and Language

- ▶ When we label people, we form biases.
- ▶ We act out behaviors based on this label.
  - ▶ Providers also modify behavior in response to label
- ▶ The person labeled may take on attributes of that label.
- ▶ Do our language choices lead to clinical inertia?



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## Empowerment Defined

- ▶ “Helping people discover and develop their inherent capacity to be responsible for their own lives and gain mastery over their diabetes”.
- ▶ Posits:
  - ▶ Choices made by the person (not HCPs) have greatest impact.
  - ▶ PWD are in control of their self-management
  - ▶ The consequences of self-management decisions affect PWD most. It is their right and responsibility to be the primary decision makers.



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## Let's use language that (is)

- ▶ Imparts hope
- ▶ Neutral, nonjudgmental
- ▶ Based on fact, actions or biology
- ▶ Free from stigma
- ▶ Respectful, inclusive
- ▶ Fosters collaboration between person and provider
- ▶ Avoids shame and blame



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## Guiding Language Principles

### Strength Based

- ▶ Emphasize what people know, what they *can* do.
- ▶ Focus on strengths that empower people

### Person-first

- ▶ Words that indicate awareness
- ▶ Sense of dignity
- ▶ Positive attitude toward person with diabetes



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## Quick Question

- ▶ A 82 year old enters your office and says, "the doctor and my wife made me come here. I don't have diabetes."
- ▶ A1c is 7.5%. What is the most appropriate response?
  - A. Based on your A1c level, it looks like you have diabetes.
  - B. Your wife and doctor know what is best for you.
  - C. Thank you for coming today even though you didn't want to.
  - D. Let's just start with carb counting.



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## Language of Diabetes Education

### Old Way

- ▶ Can't, shouldn't, don't, have to, should
- ▶ Regimen
- ▶ Refused
- ▶ Victim, suffer, stricken

### New Way

- ▶ Have you tried..."
- ▶ What about..."
- ▶ May I make a suggestion..."
- ▶ Plan, choices
- ▶ Declined, Chose not to
- ▶ ..lives with diabetes
- ▶ ...has diabetes

American Diabetes Association, Diabetes Care  
The Use of Language in Diabetes Care and Education, 2017



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## Language of Diabetes Education

### Old Way

- ▶ Control diabetes
- ▶ Test BG
- ▶ Patient
- ▶ Normal BG
- ▶ Non-adherent, compliant
- ▶ Disease

### New Way

- ▶ Manage
- ▶ Check
- ▶ Participant
- ▶ BG in target range
- ▶ Focus on what they are accomplishing
- ▶ Condition

American Diabetes Association, Diabetes Care  
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## Quick Question

Which phrase represents the principles for communicating with and about people living with diabetes.

- A. You are checking your blood sugar daily.
- B. Your BMI indicates you're obese
- C. Your fasting blood sugar is above normal
- D. You should try and exercise 150 minutes a week.



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## Mrs. Jones asks you What Do You Say?

- ▶ They say I am diabetic because I am obese?
- ▶ How am I going to control this?
- ▶ What is a normal blood sugar?
- ▶ Do I have to test my blood sugars?



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## Terminology matters in medical communication about obesity

- ▶ For people with BMI >30, preferred terms
  - ▶ “person with elevated BMI”.
  - ▶ “person with obesity”
  - ▶ “person with excess weight”
- ▶ For descriptions of BMI >40
  - ▶ “class III obesity”
  - ▶ “severe BMI” and
  - ▶ “extreme BMI”



Pearl RL, et al. *JAMA Surg.* Sept2018; doi:10.1001/jamasurg.2018.2702



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## Optimism and Resilience

- ▶ Our words have the power to create and transform
- ▶ Human connection is healing



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## Thank You



- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ Email [bev@diabetesed.net](mailto:bev@diabetesed.net)
- ▶ Web [www.diabetesed.net](http://www.diabetesed.net)



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