

Instead of ...	Say...	Why it matters
Addict/Alcoholic	Person with a substance use disorder.	Person-first; avoids defining identity by condition.
Drug abuser	Individual who misuses substances.	Describes behavior without blame.
Clean/Dirty urine screen	Negative/Positive result	Medical accuracy; no judgement
Relapse	Return to use	Part of recovery process, not failure.
Treatment failure	Not yet in recovery	Encourages hope, avoids shame.
Former addict	Person in recovery	Centers recovery as empowering.
Habit	Substance use disorder	Recognizes SUD as a medical condition.
Sober/Clean	In recovery/Abstinent	More respectful and inclusive