

## How do we talk about someone with a mental health problem?

Divide the young people into 3-4 groups and give each group a set of cards to sort. Each card has a term or word on it used to describe someone with a mental health problem. The young people need to sort the cards into two sets, one set of 'acceptable' words or terms and a second set of 'unacceptable' words or terms.

Walk around the groups as they are working and look at how they are sorting the cards. When they have all finished, bring them back into one large group and discuss which cards go where, and if there is any disagreement about any of the words or terms in particular.

## Why are the words we use when talking about mental health important?

Words can convey negative or positive values. In the context of mental illness, mental health and wellbeing, negative words can be experienced as patronising, derogatory, embarrassing, insulting, demoralising, excluding and stigmatising. Positive words, on the other hand, can convey normalisation, empathy, respect, empowerment, belonging, equality, hope and worth.

When talking about mental health, here are some suggestions:

### Avoid using:

'a psycho' or 'a schizo'  
 'a schizophrenic' or 'a depressive'  
 'lunatic' 'nutter' 'unhinged' 'maniac' 'mad'  
 'the mentally ill', 'a person suffering from'  
 'a sufferer', a 'victim' or 'the afflicted'  
 'happy pills'

### Instead use:

'a person who has experienced psychosis' or 'a person who has schizophrenia'  
 someone who 'has a diagnosis of' is 'currently experiencing' or 'is being treated for...' or 'a person with a mental health problem'  
 'mental health patients' or 'people with mental health problems'  
 'antidepressants', 'medication' or 'prescription drugs'

### Other common mistakes:

Somebody who is angry is not 'psychotic'  
 A person who is down or unhappy is not the same as someone experiencing clinical depression.



<b>Mental health problem</b>	<b>Mentally challenged</b>
<b>Going mad</b>	<b>Special</b>
<b>Unwell</b>	<b>Having a breakdown</b>
<b>A bit weird</b>	<b>Mentally ill</b>
<b>Crazy</b>	<b>Nuts</b>
<b>Attention seeking</b>	<b>Needs help</b>
<b>Struggling</b>	<b>Experiencing a mental health problem</b>
<b>Mental</b>	<b>Psycho</b>
<b>Should talk to someone</b>	<b>Needs a friend</b>
<b>Stressed out</b>	<b>Feeling down</b>
<b>Suffering with their nerves</b>	<b>Disabled</b>