Language Matters

Pocket Guides

Media & Social Media

Introduction

The Language Matters Diabetes movement has evolved into more than just a conversation for healthcare professionals. It's about the language the media uses, too. It's about the language we use with ourselves and, the messaging we give out to the broader community.

Language is the primary carrier when it comes to misinformation and false promises and this entire movement is a collective effort to address these issues and provide a loose guide and strategies to avoid these situations. This guide will highlight why language matters, and provide suggestions to make sure that what you say and write doesn't contribute to misinformation and reinforce stigma.

" For a journalist it may just be a story, but for people with diabetes, it's our story and our reality. We want to see that reflected back at us.
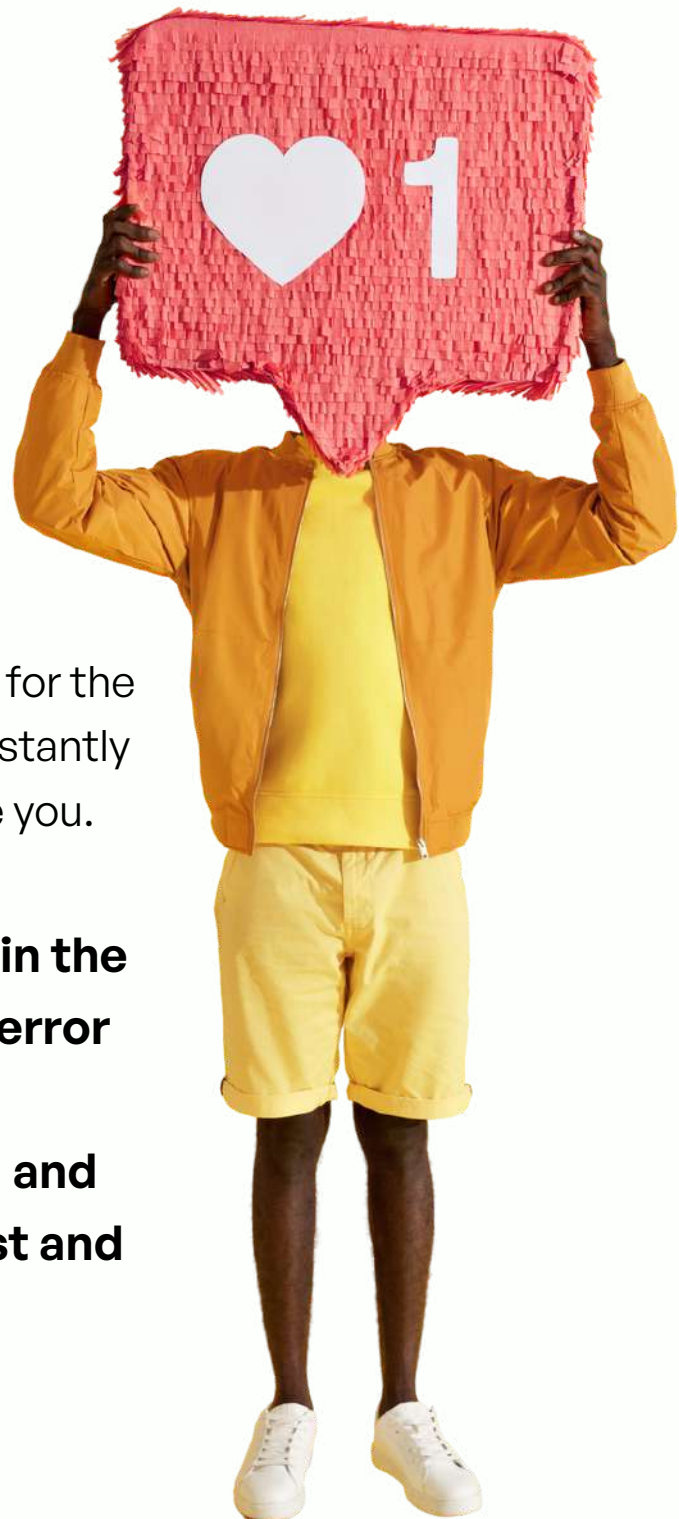
Words create attitudes and attitudes create reality. **"**

Impact of Social Media and Messages

The world of health is often fraught with language that brings out fear and hesitation rather than **support and comfort.**
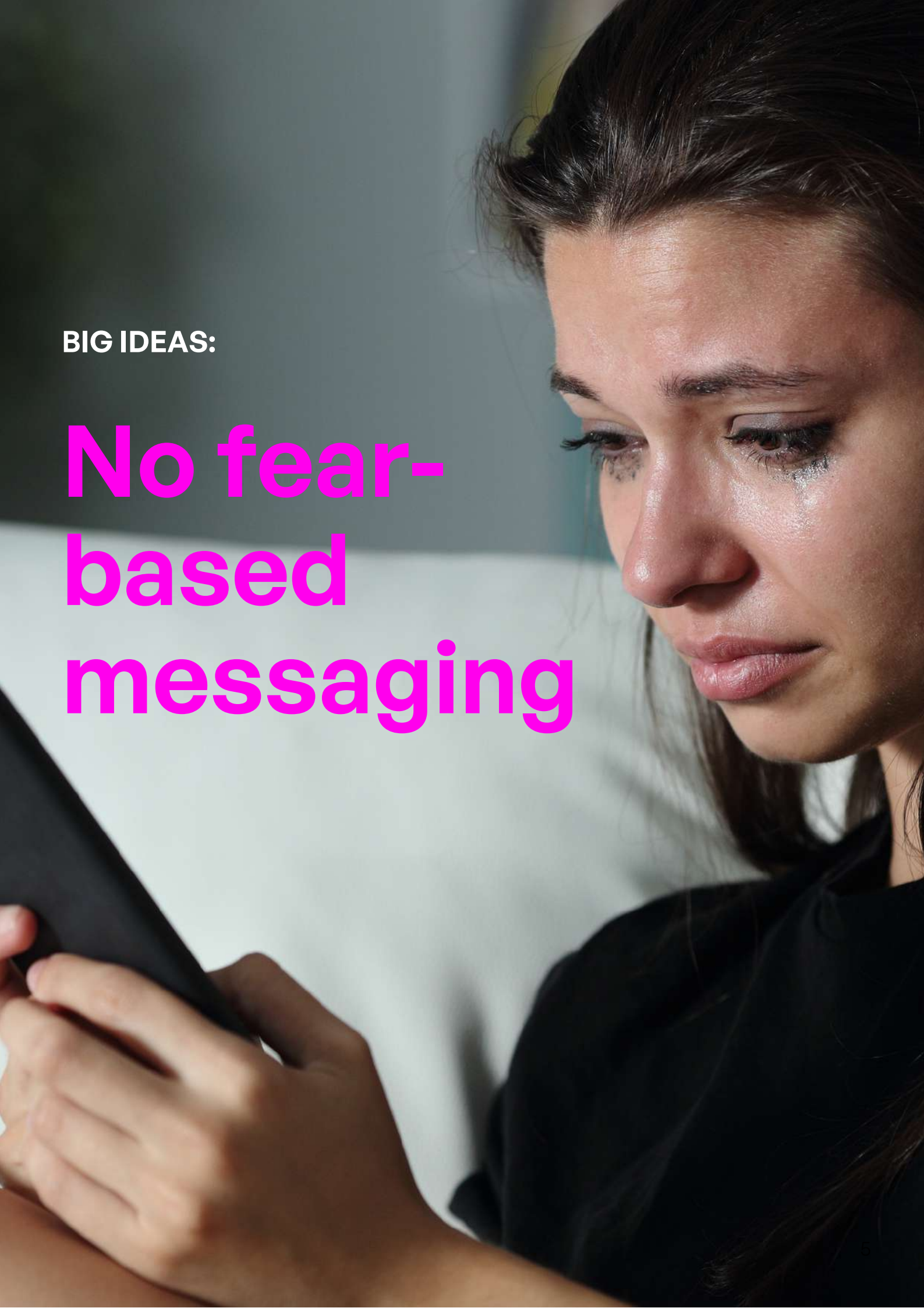
When you have to live with something for the rest of your life, you don't want to constantly see and hear messages that will scare you.

Too often what we see and hear in the public domain is soundbites of terror and tales of caution. Diabetes messaging needs to be nuanced and factual rather than sensationalist and scary.

BIG IDEAS:

No fear-based messaging

Remove the stigma, judgment and/blame

For people with diabetes

- No one can tell you how to tell your story or feel about your own diabetes
- Own your social media and communication style
- There's no poster child (or adult!) for diabetes
- There's no pressure to tell your story. You don't have to share. Or you can share everything!
- Lousy diabetes days happen. It's okay to not be positive all the time.
- Be creative to get your story across! There's no one size fits all when it comes to storytelling - just like in diabetes!

For people not living with diabetes

- Images matter too! Don't use dehumanising or stigmatising images. We recommend using real faces (not stock images) to accompany real stories!
- Speak to real people with diabetes - we don't need people to speak for us!
- Be inclusive in your reporting - representation matters!
- Base your stories on facts! When you combine facts with real life, the story becomes more compelling.
- Adults have type 1 diabetes too - include them in diabetes stories!
- There are more resources to help. Start here: www.languagemattersdiabetes.com

Remove
Bias

INSTEAD OF THIS..

Good news for Australia's 1.3 million diabetes sufferers. A new device means no need to test-bleed sugar levels frequently during the day to keep the disease under control.
Demand for this new technology is expected to put a strain on the health system, as Australia's diabetic population booms, fuelled by the ongoing obesity epidemic

Show we
Care

SAY THIS

Good news for the 1.3 million Australians with diabetes.
A new device makes it easier for people with diabetes to check their glucose levels regularly, day and night, to help manage their diabetes.
Demand for this new technology is strong from the 121,000 Australians with type 1 diabetes who need to check their glucose levels at least 4-6 times daily.

Conclusion

Diabetes has an image problem and a big part of that is due to how the story has been told in the public domain. Let's change the narrative by presenting diabetes as it is - the stories of real people living real lives. Facts matter but don't always connect with others. That's where storytelling comes in.

Acknowledgments

Renza Scibilia and Jazz Sethi
Prof Partha Kar

A big thank you to the global #LangaugeMatters community for working to change the way we communicate about diabetes!