

Diabetes

# Language Matters

## Pocket Guides

*Health Care Professionals*



# Introduction



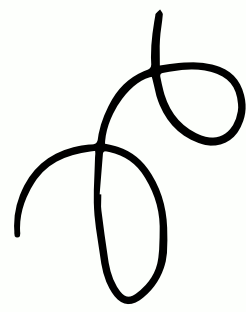
The language used by healthcare professionals (HCPs) can have a **profound impact** on how people with diabetes, and those who care for them, experience their condition and feel about living with it day-to-day. At its best, the use of language which is more **inclusive** and **values-based**, can lower anxiety, build confidence, educate, and help to improve self-care. Conversely, poor communication can be stigmatizing, hurtful, undermine self-care, and have detrimental effects on clinical outcomes.

This guide highlights how the language used in the care of those with diabetes has the **power to reinforce** negative stereotypes, and how it also has the power to promote positive stereotypes.

# It all Matters!



# Attitude matters

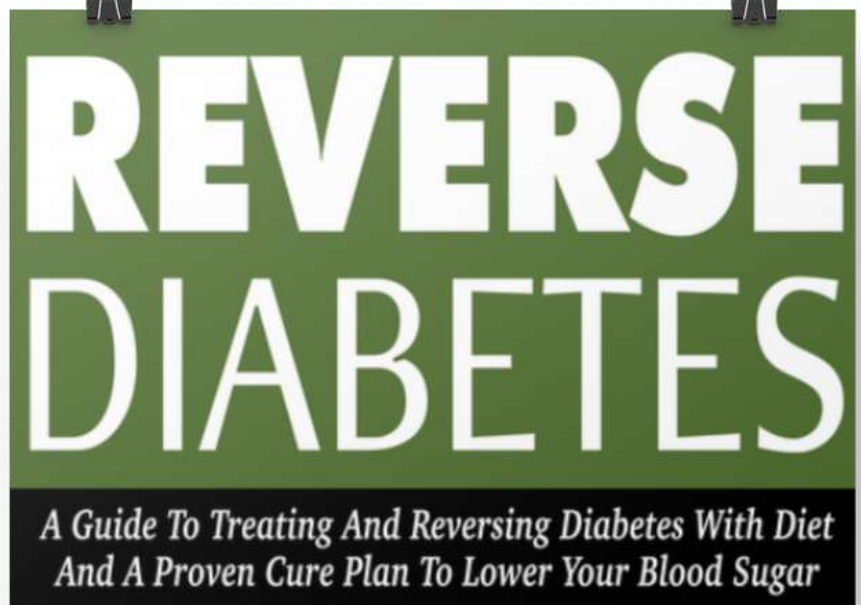


Remove bias

No judgement

Be collaborative

Assure the family



# Messaging matters

## **FOR POSTERS, EMAILS AND ANY OTHER DESIGN COLLATERALS: TYPE THE TYPE**

What often causes confusion and anxiety, is the constant overload of information from social media, news, and other factors that talk about 'curing' and 'reversing' diabetes.

However, none of these sources ever mention the 'Type' of diabetes. This incorrectly informs the ones affected by it. Stay cautious about the messages you spread, and mention the TYPE of diabetes when making statements.



## **PERSON AND HUMAN CENTRED**

For any communication within clinics, always focus on the person living with diabetes. Keep language person - and human-centered. Try to avoid talking in the third person when the person with diabetes is in the room. It is THEIR condition - make them the central figure.

## **IMAGES MATTER (IN OFFICES, PAMPHLETS ETC)**

In any messaging within the clinic, please try to use inclusive imaging that represents ALL people with diabetes. This will help people living with the condition feel like they are less alone. We also recommend using real faces (not stock images) and real stories!



**"We are not non-compliant. We are doing our best to solve an equation where we don't control all the variables"**

*- Paul*



# Why it matters



80%

of the people have been judged, blamed, shamed or treated differently due to their diabetes

66%

of the people with type 1 diabetes have been judged for eating sugary food or having a sugary drink.

50%

of the people with type 2 diabetes say that others assume they are or have been overweight

50%

of the people with type 1 diabetes say that people assume it is their fault they have diabetes

# What to call a person with diabetes?

**ASK THE PERSON!** IT'S SIMPLE TO ASK  
HOW THEY LIKE TO BE ADDRESSED AND  
BE GUIDED BY THEM.

The Language Matters movement does not have a rule book about how to address people living with the condition - because there is no one right answer. Individuals have private preferences and our recommendation is to respect their wishes and follow their lead.

Some people are okay with being addressed as “Diabetic”, others prefer “Person living with Diabetes” - let them guide the way and be respectful of their preference.



“ It’s not about being politically correct; it’s about being mindful and considerate of the reality of living with diabetes. ”





HELPFUL SUBSTITUTES – SUGGESTIONS OF  
ALTERNATIVES AND WHY IT MATTERS

**Remove  
bias, show  
you care.**

MORE ALTERNATES

# It's about more than just words

Body language is a crucial part of communication, which can sometimes be overlooked. We recommend being compassionate by remembering to make eye contact, lean in and truly listen with your senses. This will provide comfort and make the person with diabetes feel at ease.



## MORE ALTERNATES

# Smile

Smile! A smile can say things no amount of words can. It instantly breaks the ice, it comforts the person with diabetes and his/her family. Body language can either be a great barrier or a great connector, and the easiest way to make a tense situation warmer, is simply, by smiling.



MORE ALTERNATES

# Assuring tonality

Even when talking about things like complications, the tone you use can go a long way in providing comfort. Try to be reassuring, factual and solution-oriented. And always avoid scare tactics and fear mongering.



MORE ALTERNATES

# Don't fill silences

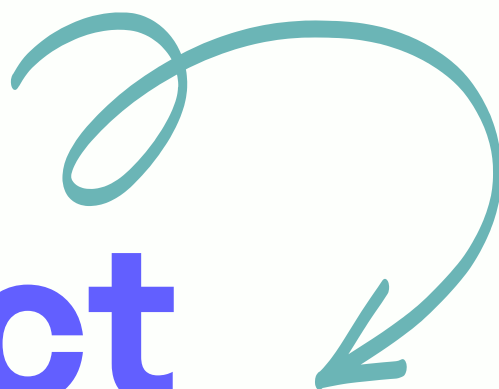
Sometimes, people with diabetes just need a bit of time to share what they need or how they are feeling. One way to help facilitate that is to not fill those silences - give the person with diabetes the time to work out what they want to say, in the way they need to say it. Remember to WAIT (ask yourself Why Am I Talking?) before jumping in.





MORE ALTERNATES

# Listen to retain, not react



Take a beat! Before reacting, think carefully about what the person with diabetes has shared, and how your response can shape what happens next. Listen fully and respond respectfully.



**“Language can make us feel demotivated, hurt, negated, excluded or it can make us feel motivated, supported, understood, included. We need more of the latter.”**

*- Isabella*

# Conclusion

Living with diabetes can be really tough. Remembering that people are doing their best and need support is a good place to start, and using language and communication that provides that support goes a long way. People with diabetes will remember - for a long time - what is said to them, and how it is said, in clinic appointments.

**Creating respectful, engaging and positive encounters is how we all work together for the best outcomes possible!**



# Acknowledgments

Renza Scibilia and Jazz Sethi

Prof Partha Kar

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

