



Engaged Research Discussion Series



Language Does Matter: How We Communicate Our Findings as Scientists

The ways that research is shared, affects how communities engage with our work. Using neuro-affirming language has a big impact.

Researchers should think about:



- How communities prefer to be described
- How their choice of words can reinforce or reduce stigma
- Different ways their findings can be interpreted in the world
- Whether the research aligns with the needs of the community

Your words are a part of the research partnership. Communicate with care. Build trust. Create impact.

**How research is produced
and shared can influence:**

Relationships

Trust

Policy

Meaning

Impact

Checklists to support your community-engaged research



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| Use of language <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Am I using the community's preferred terms?✓ Have I avoided labels or assumptions that stigmatize?✓ Does my language highlight strengths and diversity? | Framing and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Could my framing increase stigma?✓ Are my findings clear and accessible outside academia?✓ Do they align with community goals? |
| Outcome Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Will this build trust and relationships?✓ Could it positively influence policy or practice?✓ Does it support improving lives? | Partnership and Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Did I ask the community how they want to be described?✓ Am I open to feedback and updating language?✓ Do I value community stories as knowledge? |

Neuro-affirming/community-friendly terms

Avoid

Symptoms

High/Low Functioning

Normal/Abnormal

Special Needs

Use instead

Traits

High/Low Support Needs

Typical/Atypical

Support Needs/Access Needs

Ask, don't assume.

Update language as understanding evolves.

Centre community stories.

Use language that builds trust and shapes impact.

Connect with experts on campus when you need advice.

