



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

Top tips to using Inclusive language when delivering the parent/young people's group programmes or workshops.

Inclusive language means finding ways to name, honour, and value experiences and identities. Inclusive language is not the same as being politically correct. Political correctness is focused on not offending whereas inclusive language is focused on honouring people's identities. While both inclusive language and political correctness certainly suggest that there are certain things you should not say, political correctness can create discomfort, which prevents people from engaging in the group programme. On the other hand, inclusive language allows for more flexibility and connectedness. It is focused on education, dialogue, and naming people in accordance with their personal identities. People's identities are complex, one aspect of their identity does not define them. Do not over-focus on someone's race, ability, sexuality, etc. but consider how you can include them.

1. Use universal phrases.

Avoid idioms, clinical jargon, and acronyms as they can exclude those who may not have specialised knowledge of a particular subject and impede effective communication. Idioms are words, phrases, or expressions that do not literally mean what they express. In other words, slang and jargon are understood and used by a smaller group of people. Example of an idiom would be "break a leg" which as an idiom means; do well at a something. For someone who does not understand the idiom this could be very confusing. Performance or presentation. Keep it simple

2. Ask how someone identifies

Don't make assumptions. You could build this into 'warm up' / 'icebreaker' or introductory activities but be mindful of how you ask and that not everyone will be comfortable sharing information about themselves in a group activity. You as a group leader could model this i.e. "*my name is.... and I identify as a female and as a nurse*" or "*my name is And I identify as a male, a family worker and as a father*".

You may also at this point introduce yourself with your pronouns e.g. *I am x, the pronouns I use are she/her, him/he or they*. When you proactively share what your own pronouns are with others, you send a signal that you are an aspiring ally, and this may help reduce the stigma or awkwardness many people feel when talking about gender pronouns. You also help make it easier for trans and non-binary people in your group to more comfortably share their own pronouns and reduce the risk of being misgendered.

Common personal pronouns

- Common personal pronouns are he/him/his and she/her/hers, which are typically used to refer to people who identify their gender (identity) as masculine or feminine, respectively.
- People who identify outside of a gender binary most often use non-gendered or nonbinary pronouns that are not gender specific. These include they/them/their used in the singular, ze (pronounced “zee”) in place of she/he, and hir (pronounced “here”) in place of his/him/her.
- Using just a person’s name – Some people do not use pronouns at all and use their name as the pronoun.

When you use a gender specific pronoun, use the term preferred by the individual. If it is not possible to ask a transgender person which pronoun is preferred, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person’s appearance and gender expression. So, it would be He or his (for a trans-male, i.e. female to male) She or her (for a trans-female, i.e. male to female)

3. The social model of disability

The social model of disability says it’s not someone’s condition or impairment that disables them. It’s the barriers created by society. For this reason, we recommend you say, ‘disabled people’ and not ‘people with a disability’. Not everyone identifies with this term. So, you could use ‘people with a condition or impairment’. Sometimes, you might need to refer to young people or people who are not disabled. As a general guideline use the term non-disabled young person/person and avoid using the words “able-bodied” or “normal”.

Avoid blanket expressions that refer only to the impairment. Make it clear that you are talking about a person/young person. People should not be identified or defined in terms of any impairment that they may have. The general rule is to put people first. Use adjectives, rather than nouns, where it is important to identify someone’s impairment. So use terms such as, “disabled people/young persons”, “people/ young person with visual impairments”, “people/ young person who are partially sighted”, “Wheelchair user”, “An asthmatic person/ young person”.

When talking about the facilities that the group venue may have use the term ‘accessible’. For example, instead of saying disabled parking space, disabled toilets or disabled lifts say “accessible parking spaces” “accessible toilets” “accessible lifts” etc.

4. Recognise the impact of mental health language.

PTSD, OCD, and ADD are official mental health diagnoses. Using these terms to describe everyday behaviours trivialises the impact of someone’s real, lived experiences with a mental disorder. There are also many derogatory terms that stem from the context of mental health, like schizo, paranoid, or psycho. These should never be used to joke, mock, or offend.

5. Use genderless language.

Avoid using terms that may give offence to women or men for example, girls, guys, ladies, dear, son or love. Instead, inclusive words such as “everyone” “men” “women” “parents” or “group members” should be used.

Using words that encompass all genders rather than those that include only two genders is also preferred. For example, use young persons or children instead of boys and girls, or siblings instead of brothers and sisters. This important adjustment includes those who may not identify with the gender binary or with any gender whatsoever.

Avoid titles that imply that the normal jobholder is of a particular gender. For example, instead of saying, Chairman, Policeman or Cleaning ladies say Chair, chairperson, Police officer or Cleaners.

Don't use phrases that are reductive and overly-simplify a complex subject. A person's sex is determined by several factors. For example instead of saying biologically male/female or born as man/woman, say “assigned male/female at birth” or “designated male/female at birth”

6. Avoid assumptions about a person's sexual orientation and using heterosexual centred language.

Such language is based on the belief that heterosexuality is the only normal, valid or moral basis for partnerships. Instead of saying husband, wife, spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend say, “partner or accompanying person” (to not discriminate between married, unmarried or same sex partners)

Avoid using Miss/Mrs unless the individual concerned expressly indicates that they wish otherwise. Use Ms instead – this term is intended to parallel Mr as it does not identify marital status.

7. Avoid using terms that may offend people's religious feelings.

Surname is not always unacceptable. However, this word may originate from sire-name, or the name derived from one's father. The term ‘last name’ should not be used as it could be confusing to Asian groups who place their family name first. Instead use First name, given name, forename or personal Family name.

An important way in which we can affirm our commitment to equality and inclusion is by considering the implications of religion and belief as factors that may prevent participation in a group session, e.g. religious holidays. The best practice is to be aware of religious holidays (google list of all religious holidays) and check out with the group on things to be considered to show respect for, and sensitivity towards everyone.

8. Race (including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality)

You should only use a person's race to identify or describe them if it is directly relevant to the point you are making. It's important not to assume that a person's appearance defines their nationality or cultural background. Avoid stereotyping and making positive

or negative generalisations about members of a particular race, ethnic, cultural or national group. In the UK, BME (black and minority ethnic) or BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) is the terminology that is normally used to describe people of non-white descent. Terms such as Black British, British Muslim, South Asian British and so on are often appropriate. Difficulties can arise with expressions that use 'black' in a negative way, e.g. 'black sheep', or 'black mark'

9. Pregnancy and maternity

A large majority of people that have been pregnant or have given birth identify as women. However, there are some intersex men and trans men who may get pregnant. Avoid the term expectant mother and instead use "pregnant people".

10. Show cultural humility

Ask if you aren't sure. Embrace that you are a learner, not an expert, when it comes to understanding the experiences of other people, their cultures, and their experiences – especially if they are from a marginalised group. This requires challenging some of your own biases, continual self-reflection, and knowing that you may make mistakes but should remain open to continual learning and growth.

When you make a mistake, think impact over intention. Everyone makes mistakes – we are human. When you learn you have caused someone harm with your words, reflect and focus not on what your intentions were, but on the impact on that person or group. Listen carefully to understand how it affected them, give a genuine apology, and commit to doing better.

Summary

Inclusive language may initially seem complex and overwhelming, especially when you get into the details and realise how many common words and phrases have biased backgrounds. However, it comes down to just one thing: use the names and phrases that a person uses to self-identify. It's that simple. Inclusive language is all about making others feel heard, honoured, and respected.

Source

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Scope

