Our words create our world

Safe Language 101: what to remember

Safe Language is thoughtful, respectful and empowering communication that acknowledges the impact our words have on ourselves and others. The goal isn't perfection. It's awareness.

Why does feeling safe matter?

When we're full of fear, we can't hear. When we feel safe, we think more clearly, communicate more honestly, learn and ask for help. Feeling safe doesn't mean avoiding hard conversations. It means we can actually hear each other in them.

Stigmatic or intentional?

Stigmatic language labels, limits or shames. It divides, demeans and dehumanizes. **Intentional language** recognizes what someone is experiencing, without defining who they are. It connects, empowers and loves.

INSTEAD OF	TRY
He committed suicide.	**I lost him to suicide.**
He's suicidal.	**He's been having thoughts of suicide.**
She's just seeking attention.	**She may be communicating a need for support.**

Graphic detail

Once we put an image in someone's mind, we can't take it back. We can know who is in the room without knowing what they're carrying: their history, their state of mind, their support. Before sharing, ask:

- Do I need to go there to make my point?
- Is this the right setting? Who might be listening?
- Have I given them a choice?

Speakers: disclose graphic detail when you're booked, when it's promoted, and before you share it.

What can I say when I don't know what to say?

Acknowledge: "I can hear the pain in your voice. I'm sorry this hurts so much." **Ask:** "How would you like me to support you?" **Connect:** "I've had an experience where... Is that similar?" And sometimes simply: **"We've got you. You're safe."**

> **A safe space doesn't guarantee an absence of fear,** but it does guarantee the love and support you may need in order to face your fear.

Need help now? If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988 (US) or text HOME to 741741. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

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