

How to Talk About Mental Health on Your Platforms

- Make it clear to your audience which conversations about mental health are focused on evidence-based practices compared to coping mechanisms based on your personal experience.
- Develop relationships with subject matter experts that can check your messaging to ensure it is accurate, safe and responsible, while also providing support and resources to those in your audience who may be struggling.
- Share mental health stories that describe different aspects of one's mental health journey: From learning to cope to thriving. This will help your audience understand how varied each person's mental health journey can be.

Evidence-Based vs. Personal Experience

- Even if you aren't presenting yourself as an expert, followers that feel connected to you or look up to you may follow your guidance instead of seeking out information and strategies tailored to their unique situation. With that said, it's important to recommend people to seek professional help if they are struggling.
- When talking about personal experiences to help prevent confusion between evidence-based information and personal experiences:
 - ✓ "I" statements: Tell your stories in the first person to convey that these are your personal experiences.
 - ✓ Say "In my experience" or "This works for me personally" when conveying tips/strategies that have worked for you to help your audience understand that it may not help everyone.
 - ✓ Specifically emphasize that, just like our physical health, we all deal with mental health challenges and should find coping methods and support that work for us as individuals.

Working with Subject Matter Experts

- Value of working with experts:
 - ✓ Ensures your messaging is safe, accurate and effective.
 - ✓ Provides resources you can direct your audience to for those who may need further support.
 - ✓ Helps you appropriately respond to followers who express distress, a need for help or suicidal thoughts.
- Ways to work with experts:
 - ✓ Work with them to create a list of resources that best suits your community.
 - ✓ Include experts in your content.
 - ✓ Host live events where audiences can ask questions to mental health professionals.

Keep in Mind: Have Resources Ready

As tempting as it might seem to offer personalized advice or support, this can actually be harmful as your followers may put more energy into connecting with you than creating their own support network. Instead, consider including this text: “If you or someone you know is struggling, you are not alone. Call the NAMI HelpLine at 800-950-6264 Monday–Friday or email info@nami.org or visit nami.org/help and access CHAT. In a crisis? Text ‘NAMI’ to 741-741.”

Inclusive Language Guide

Principle	Definition	Productive Phrases	Counter Productive Phrases
PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE	Person First means using language to recognize a person’s experience with mental health as only part of them as a person, and not the whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person living with schizophrenia • My brother living with OCD • She is a person recovering from addiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A schizophrenic • My OCD brother • She is an addict
NORMALIZING LANGUAGE	Normalizing what one is going through and not minimizing or judging their experience with mental health can help people open up more regularly and feel less alone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s understandable to be feeling down with everything going on. • What you’re going through is challenging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Depression is not a bad illness to have” • “Some people have it way worse” • “Why can’t you just chill out?”
COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE	Words and phrases that are second-nature to us (slang or colloquial expressions) may be rooted in problematic assumptions, which can hurt those around us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m having trouble focusing • The weather is fluctuating a lot today • I like things done in a particular way • That’s unreal/wild 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I have such ADD right now” • “This weather is bipolar” • “I’m so OCD about this kind of stuff” • “That’s crazy/insane”
LANGUAGE AROUND SUICIDE	As one of the most taboo topics, it’s helpful to have the right language when talking about suicide. Research shows that talking about and explicitly asking about suicide can greatly reduce the risk of someone dying by suicide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Died by suicide • Ended their own life • Attempted suicide • Sometimes when people feel this way, they think about ending their life. Are you having these thoughts? • “That was so hard” (avoid mentioning suicide casually) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed suicide • Successful suicide • Unsuccessful suicide • “You’re not thinking of killing yourself, are you?” • “OMG I wanted to kill myself, that was so hard”