



Glossary of Terms

At Connecting Through Courage, we believe education is one of the most powerful tools for reducing stigma. Understanding the language surrounding substance use disorders, recovery, prevention, and mental health helps create compassionate communities where people feel safe seeking help. This glossary provides clear, person-centered definitions to support understanding, hope, and positive change.

Abstinence

The choice to refrain from using alcohol, drugs, or other substances. For some people, abstinence is an important goal in recovery, while others may follow different evidence-based pathways.

Addiction

A chronic, treatable health condition characterized by compulsive substance use or behaviors despite harmful consequences. Addiction changes the structure and function of the brain, making it difficult—not impossible—to stop without support and treatment.

Advocacy

Speaking or acting to improve policies, services, education, and opportunities for individuals, families, and communities affected by substance use disorders.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, household substance use, domestic violence, or parental incarceration. High ACE scores are associated with increased risk for substance use disorders and many other health conditions later in life.

Boundaries

Healthy physical, emotional, and behavioral limits that protect a person's well-being while allowing them to maintain caring relationships.

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS)

A trained professional with lived experience in recovery who provides hope, encouragement, advocacy, and support to others seeking recovery.

Chronic Disease

A long-term health condition that often requires ongoing management. Like diabetes, hypertension, and asthma, substance use disorders are recognized as chronic, treatable diseases.



Co-Occurring Disorders

The presence of both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, or bipolar disorder.

Compassion

Responding to another person's suffering with understanding, empathy, and a desire to help rather than judge.

CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training)

An evidence-based approach that teaches family members and loved ones practical communication and behavioral skills that can encourage treatment while improving their own well-being.

Detox / Withdrawal Management

Withdrawal Management is the medically appropriate term for the supervised process of helping a person safely manage withdrawal symptoms as substances leave the body.

Dopamine

A naturally occurring neurotransmitter involved in motivation, learning, reward, and movement. Addictive substances can cause dopamine levels to rise dramatically, leading the brain to prioritize substance use over healthy rewards.

Enabling

Actions intended to help someone that unintentionally allow unhealthy or harmful behaviors to continue by removing natural consequences.

Harm Reduction

Strategies designed to reduce the negative consequences associated with substance use without requiring abstinence.

Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)

A structured treatment program that provides several hours of therapy and support each week while allowing individuals to continue living at home.

Intervention

A planned process in which family, friends, or professionals encourage someone to recognize the impact of their substance use and seek treatment.



Invitation to Change (ITC)

A compassionate, evidence-based approach that combines CRAFT, Motivational Interviewing, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help families support change while reducing conflict.

Lived Experience

Knowledge gained through personal experience with substance use, recovery, mental health challenges, or supporting a loved one.

Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

Evidence-based medications such as buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone used to treat opioid use disorder.

Motivational Interviewing (MI)

A collaborative, person-centered counseling approach that helps individuals explore their own reasons for making positive changes.

Naloxone

A life-saving medication that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose by blocking opioids from attaching to receptors in the brain.

Opioid Antagonist

A medication that blocks opioid receptors and reverses or prevents the effects of opioids. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist used to reverse overdoses.

Overdose

A medical emergency that occurs when a substance overwhelms the body's ability to function normally.

Person-First Language

Language that recognizes the individual before their condition. For example, saying 'person with a substance use disorder' rather than 'addict' helps reduce stigma and promote dignity.

Prevention

Efforts to reduce the likelihood that health problems occur before they begin. Primary prevention focuses on building protective factors and teaching life skills that reduce risky behaviors.

Protective Factors

Personal, family, school, and community strengths that reduce the likelihood someone will develop substance use or mental health problems.



Recovery

A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and work toward reaching their full potential.

Recovery Capital

The internal and external resources that support sustained recovery, including family support, housing, employment, education, healthcare, and community connections.

Recovery-Friendly Workplace

An employer that actively supports employees in recovery through policies, education, second-chance hiring, and access to treatment resources.

Residential Treatment

A structured treatment program where individuals live at a treatment facility while receiving intensive counseling, education, medical care, and recovery support.

Return to Use

The return of substance use after a period of recovery. This term is often preferred over 'relapse' because it is less stigmatizing and recognizes that recovery is a process.

Resilience

The ability to adapt, recover, and grow following adversity, trauma, or significant life challenges.

Risk Factors

Characteristics or experiences that increase the likelihood of developing a substance use disorder or other behavioral health concerns.

Social Determinants of Health

The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that influence health outcomes.

Stigma

Negative attitudes, stereotypes, or discrimination directed toward people because of a health condition, behavior, or identity.

Public Stigma: Negative beliefs held by society.

Self-Stigma: Internalized shame experienced by the individual.

Structural Stigma: Policies or systems that create barriers to treatment, employment, housing, or healthcare.



Substance Use

The consumption of alcohol or other drugs. Substance use exists on a spectrum from low risk to substance use disorder.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

A chronic, treatable medical condition characterized by the continued use of substances despite significant negative consequences.

Trauma

An emotional response to an event or series of events experienced as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening.

Trauma-Informed Care

An approach that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and seeks to create environments that promote healing while avoiding re-traumatization.

Trigger

A person, place, emotion, memory, or situation that increases the urge to use substances or engage in unhealthy behaviors.

Withdrawal

A collection of physical and psychological symptoms that occur when a person reduces or stops using a substance after prolonged use.