



Bringing People in Through Inclusive Language

ICC Breakfast Club Session Summary | November 18, 2025

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Describe the importance of shifting towards inclusive language
2. Discuss approaches and resources to support inclusive language

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE?

Inclusive Language affirms and includes people's various identities, and avoids wording that stereotypes, stigmatizes, or excludes individuals or populations based on personal or social attributes e.g., race, disability, gender, sexual orientation.

Myth

Inclusive language is **not** about:

- political correctness
- censorship or sterilized language
- only using neutral/depersonalized terms

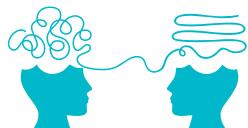
Reality

Inclusive language **is** about:

- creating meaningful, real life effects
- adding to our repertoire of inclusive terms
- using the language others use for themselves

PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

1. Challenge assumptions and judgments by expanding our language.
2. Be flexible and willing to adapt your language.
3. Be intentional about representing diversity.
4. Use language to connect with and advocate for your communities.



Tips for managing fears:

Acknowledge upfront that we are all learning and are open to feedback and correction.

Avoid assuming any aspect of a person's identity that you do not know e.g., gender, ethnicity.

Apologize when a mistake is made, correct yourself, and then move on.

Commit to future action; this is the best apology.



INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IS:

Specific & Precise

It is a common misconception that inclusive language is vague or not clinically relevant. However, referring to a patient as a “person with a low sperm count” instead of an “infertile person,” is more respectful and provides much more information about the patient.

Personalized & Flexible

Inclusive language should be contextually adaptive rather than prescriptive so it's best to mirror the language patients use for themselves i.e., using their preferred pronouns.

 *Keep in mind that some patients may speak languages that don't have gender specific pronouns; therefore asking for or sharing pronouns may not be culturally relevant.*

Humanizing

We can help preserve a patient's integrity by putting their humanity ahead of their condition i.e., “The patient is here seeking treatment for alcohol use” instead of “The patient is an alcoholic.”

Compassionate

Adopt an open and curious approach. When we approach with openness, we shift our perspective from a place of judgement i.e., “the patient refused treatment” to empathy i.e., “the patient had barriers to treatment.”

INCLUSIVITY IN PRACTICE

There are many verbal and non-verbal ways we can signpost our commitment to inclusivity and equity. Some actions can be as simple as:

Adding a Pride or pronoun pin to your lanyard.

This can signal safety and acceptance to patients.

Providing a space for preferred pronouns and/or preferred names on patient intake forms.

This can help build rapport with patients by making them feel welcomed and respected.

Incorporating inclusive language in your teaching and counselling.

This can help demonstrate inclusivity in a real-world setting.

 *Inclusive language looks different for different communities and patient populations. It's important to remember that you know what works for your community; share your expertise about your community and become a mentor of real-world inclusivity for your learners.*



For more information, view or download UBC's [Inclusive Language Guide](#).