



We know that the words we use matter. We ask you to consider this on a deeper level and make a commitment to replace harmful words, such as “crazy” and “lame” in your vocabulary. There are better, less offensive words that can be used. For example, instead of “they’re so crazy,” we could say “silly” or “unpredictable” or “spontaneous”.

These words are all used in negative ways and describe disabilities. They have been used historically to justify violence and abuse. Even when their use is no longer obvious to the user, the words’ use is still harmful to every one of us whether we have a disability or not.

By removing these stigmatizing words and choosing other words, we also can be so much more specific, describing exactly what we are trying to explain with these shortcuts. Careful word choice should be a skill that we are teaching our children, regardless.

The first step is to become aware of when you use these words and work on replacing them with better alternatives. Consider what is really meant when we call someone “crazy.” Look for a word that expresses that thought without connecting it to a mental health diagnosis.

By eliminating these offensive terms, we can show support for disabled people and also be so much more precise when describing people and things.

On the back of this page are some words that are more descriptive and not negative slurs about disabled people we encourage you to practice and make a habit out of replacing the words shown in the header of this page with other words that don’t further stigmatize those with disabilities.

Thank you,
H-CAN’s Disability and Accessibility Action Group in solidarity with H-CAN, SU4LM and Disability Equality in Education

Disability Equality in Education provides disability centered programming at K-12 schools or places of higher education at no cost. Their goal is to show all students that disability is a powerful identity and a natural part of the human experience.
The culture of silence ends with Disability Equality in Education!

info@disabilityequalityeducation.org
(215) 634-2000 Ext. 338

Lesson Plans on oppressive language:

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/thats-so-gay-from-a-teachers-perspective>

<https://www.glsen.org/article/challenging-ableist-language>

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rachel-cohenrottenberg/doing-social-justice-thou_b_5476271.html

Some history on ableist slurs

<https://www.rootedinrights.org/words-that-hurt-crazy/>

<https://www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html>

<https://www.angelamaiers.com/blog/words-matter-what-values-do-your-words-convey.html>

Better words to choose from

Asinine	Inane	Putrid
Bad	Incomprehensible	Reckless
Bleak	Inconsiderate	Ridiculous
Boring	Inconsistent	Rude
Bullish	Infuriating	Scornful
Callous	Insensible	Self-contradictory
Careless	Insidious	Shameful
Confusing	Irrational	Silly
Contemptible	Interesting	Solipsistic
Coward	Jerk	Spurious
Dense	Lacking in _____	Terrible
Devoid of _____	Livid	Thoughtless
Disgusting	Mean	Tyrannical
Dull	Mercurial	Unbelievable
Enraged	Nasty	Unconscionable
Evil	Nefarious	Unheard of
Extremist	Nonsense	Uninspired
Fascinating	Nonsensical	Unique
Furious	Oblivious	Unoriginal
Foolish	Obtuse	Unthinkable
Going to town on _____	Outrageous	Unthinking
Gross	Overwrought	Unusual
Having field day with _____	Paradoxical	Vapid
Horrible	Pathetic	Vile
Ignorant	Petulant	Without any _____
Impolite	Pissant	Wretched