

A Bite of The Casserole #13

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Stigma Talk – A Modern Dilemma

At AA and NA meetings across the world people in recovery label themselves with words considered shameful. They say, “My name is I am an alcoholic, or an addict, or a drunk,” they say as they introduce themselves.



Thus 12-step program members appropriate the shameful labels. They remove its sting and stigma by living responsible drug and alcohol-free lives and showing what an alcoholic/addict in recovery looks and acts like

But this proud tradition is apparently in direct conflict with the work of some treatment professionals to eliminate what are considered stigmatizing language and move to more benign descriptions, a person with a substance use disorder being the latest.

Clients are also encouraged to use this less stigmatizing language in their own lives and are provided a list of banned, shame filled words. However, clients trained to avoid certain words, like alcoholic, also balk at attending AA or NA, where the banned words are prominent. Yet attendance at AA and NA are proven assets in maintaining long-term abstinence.

Clyde Mighells describes this modern dilemma in his short book, “**Overcoming the Stigma of Addiction.**” Some are placing the “political agenda of stigma above an addict’s survival...People will die because they were programmed not to be involved in the two most effective supports for long term abstinence,” he writes.

Mighells encourages counselors and government bureaucrats to avoid a purist approach and blend language compassion with the real benefits of encouraging participation in 12 step programs.



Thanks to Nancy Hicks Rose for this article.

A whole casserole is too much so we offer **A Bite of The Casserole** every week or two. We welcome ideas for short articles of interest to people working in their faith congregations on issues of addiction and mental health. Working together we will defeat stigma and shame. Faith Partners is a program of Region 5 Prevention Systems 1645 N St. Lincoln, NE. This piece is edited by Otto Schultz, so when something is wrong, blame him – OttoBSchultz@outlook.com