

# PEOPLE MATTER,<sup>TM</sup> WORDS MATTER

## ARE YOU USING **SUPPORTIVE LANGUAGE** THAT **MAKES A PERSON FEEL SAFE AND HEARD?**

Language matters in compassionate care, and that is not just limited to what you say in front of a patient. What you say behind closed doors to coworkers, friends and family can be the seed for stigma, and not recognizing cultural differences may lead people to distrust and avoid treatment.

After experiencing a traumatic event, many people struggle to share their experiences and reactions with others. When they do open up, it may result in several reactions for you, making it difficult to know how exactly to respond. What you say matters in helping the survivor feel safe and understood.

### INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

- ▶ You need to move on. The past is the past.
- ▶ This is heavy. Let's talk about something else.
- ▶ There are other people who have been through worse than you.
- ▶ Your PTSD symptoms will never go away, so you should learn to live with them.
- ▶ Maybe it's not as bad as you are remembering it.
- ▶ Try to focus on the positive instead of the negative.

[ THESE WORDS PERPETUATE STIGMA  
AND CAN BE DAMAGING TO THE  
PERSON DISCLOSING THEIR TRAUMA. ]

### CONSIDER SAYING ...

- It doesn't matter how long it's been since it happened. You deserve support now.
- Thank you for trusting me enough to share your story.
- I'm sorry you are struggling with what happened to you. I am here to help.
- Many people who seek treatment see an improvement in their symptoms.
- I am here to listen and support you.
- Your feelings and experiences are valid.

[ THESE WORDS SHOW SUPPORT  
AND HELP THE PERSON WHO HAS  
EXPERIENCED TRAUMA TO FEEL SAFE  
WITH SHARING THEIR EXPERIENCES. ]

When people share their experiences and feelings with someone — or even disclose their trauma — it can be an important part of the healing process. It is important to continue to practice self-care, so if listening causes you distress, please reach out to a trusted peer for additional support.