

SANE AUSTRALIA

SANE Australia Online Peer Group

Date: 12/05/2022

Topic: The Power of Language

Description: Language, by its nature, can have many different meanings and connotations to many different people. Language is an important component of how we refer to ourselves and how others refer to us. Let's come together and discuss how we use language and how we prefer language to be used.

**TideisTurning
g (PSW)**

Hi everyone. First, we'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands we are all joining this event from. We pay deep respect to the Elders of those Countries, past and present, and we further extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people joining this group tonight. Welcome everyone to today's Peer Group Chat talking about the Power of Language. We really value your thoughts on how these groups go, so we will send a link to a short survey at the end of this event for you to complete. While this survey is optional, it is a chance to provide feedback for us to improve our services. In case you might need to leave part way through the event, you can find the survey here now:

https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW

**TideisTurning
g (PSW)**

Tonight, Peer Support Workers @TideisTurning and @LittleSteps will be facilitating a discussion around the topic of The Power of Language. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both, language is important for everyone. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation may be heavy in nature as we talk about mental health struggles. @Oshun_Blu is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety. If you're having any technical

difficulties, please see our FAQ

(<https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat/chat-faq#what-if-i-am-having-a-tough-time-and-need-immediate-support>)

or message @ Oshun_Blu

TideisTurning (PSW)

We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn together and expand our ideas of language

TideisTurning (PSW)

Welcome everyone! Feel free to introduce yourselves. I'm @TideisTurning...

LittleSteps (PSW)

Hi! I am @LittleSteps :)

Oshun_Blu (Moderator)

Hey all! Oshun_Blu here, happy to be here with you tonight :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

This Online Peer Group is about language. What is meant by language? What do you think of language as?

LittleSteps (PSW)

Welcome bazy! :)

Oshun_Blu (Moderator)

Language to me is communication, but not always in the ways we might think of communication. It might be literally speaking someone's language, or it might be more centred on a "vibe" or a wavelength. Sometimes I've said stuff like "this person's speaking my language" to describe the way that we have been relating to one another on a deeper level. It can be the ways that we communicate, but also the way we move, the way we look at one another, etc.

Oshun_Blu (Moderator)

Welcome Bazy! Nice to see you here :)

LittleSteps (PSW)

I think language is a huge term which can encapsulate many different meanings. In the context of this Online Peer Group Chat, I understand language to be how we express ourselves, our identity, and those of others. Things that come to mind are concepts such as pronouns and identity/person first language!

LittleSteps (PSW)

Hello Shaz51!

LittleSteps (PSW)

Welcome gitty123! :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

Hi @shaz51 & @gitty123 :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

What do you think is the impact of language?

bazy

i have been a victim of gaslighting at my workplace

bazy

where I was targeted and kept silenced

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

Shaz51

bazzy

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

bazzy

Shaz51

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

Shaz51

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

bazzy

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

The Hams

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

bazzy

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

I can imagine that having your voice silenced and language censored would have been incredibly painful, Bazzy. Thank you for sharing that impact on you and I hope you've been supported in recovering from that experience

Hey @TideisTurning (PSW) , @Oshun_Blu (Moderator) , @LittleSteps (PSW) wow

Yes, I am being supported by my family at the moment. It was to the point where I nearly experience a near death event and I felt helpless around certain people.

Hey @shaz51! Good to be here with you :)

Management turned a blind eye and so did all of the staff

Power of language can be very powerful

I truly believe that language can simultaneously shape and reflect culture, and vice versa. I think a message can be understood differently by different people depending on the language used, like a vessel to shape how we express and see the world. For me, it is important to understand the impacts that our language can have on certain issues.

Language is a tool to communicate our identity. How do you communicate your identity?

The impacts of language can be really painful, and other times the impacts of language can be really uplifting. One thing that comes to mind happened just tonight where I was asked my pronouns after meeting someone new. That kind of impact is always really uplifting and boosts me

Hello Creative_writer! Welcome :)

Also feelings on the day can influence the power of language @LittleSteps (PSW)

Hi @Creativer_Writer. Great to have you with us! :)

Hey Creative_Writer!

What languages are you learning or teaching yourself?

There are multiple ways that I express my identity! :) I think different parts of my identity are expressed in different ways. For example, I have a preference for person-first language when it comes to discussions about my mental health.

hi

Hello The Hams! Welcome! :D

i've also observed that I am scared of the sea when I went to the ocean, my phobia started to creep up in my head.

I communicate my identity through spoken and unspoken expressions. So in the way that I speak, sure. But the ways that I dress, style my hair etc. My identity has at times been something I have struggled to locate, and it's only through connecting to myself that I was able to find that language to express it outwardly

bazzy and I am seeing the same numbers like 41 and the same car thinking I might be involved in a car accident (I've had a history of being involved in a motorcycle accident)

The Hams Test

Shaz51 How to say words and not to include words that might be hurtful

The Hams I take the view that language is limited. It can't convey the full array of human experiences or emotions. But it is our best attempt so far

The Hams Sorry that's very deep haha

bazzy what if you struggle to comprehend or you don't know how you are feeling because say English is not your first language so you don't know how to describe it

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) No need to apologise, @The Hams ! What a beautiful, nuanced take

TideisTurning (PSW) What could happen if the wrong language is used to describe complex mental health issues?

LittleSteps (PSW) Very interesting question @bazzy

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) @bazzy that is a good point. It can be very hard to speak someone's language when there are certain cultural or social barriers. Definitely recognising that speaking the same language and connecting through language is a privilege

bazzy I mean, psychology is not my strong point but half the time I don't know what I am feeling around certain people. This is something they don't teach you in School these days especially in English.

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) Definitely hearing you there, @bazzy. Our bodies and minds and nervous systems talk to one another even when we're not "talking" to one another

The Hams Non verbal communication is also part of our experience too.

TideisTurning (PSW) It can be hard to identify and name emotions @bazzy

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) There is a concept called neuroception, which is the sense of feeling safe. One of the ways we can feel safe is to co-regulate, which means to be around people we feel safe with. So much communication happens even when we're not saying anything at all!

bazzy that's why books are somewhat limited and so are watching videos on youtube about behavioural psychology.

TideisTurning (PSW) What does the "right" language look like for you?

LittleSteps (PSW) Hello Millieme! :D

bazzy There is no 'right' language each has it's limitations and grey areas

LittleSteps (PSW) I think this is a really tricky question as the right language can look totally different to different people! Overall, I would say that the "right" language is language which doesn't cause harm or distress to anyone.

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) The "right" language can change so quickly hey. Understanding, interpretations, all of it changes depending on who is receiving the language we use. What is right for some will be wrong for others. It's a tricky one!

Millieme the 'right' language often comes from shared understanding

LittleSteps (PSW) I agree Millieme

bazzy Most languages come in similar structure most have vowels but not all of them.

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) Definitely feel you there, @bazzy. The grey area is where that nuance and shared understanding can begin. Well said, @Millieme!

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) Hey @Jacques! Happy to be here with you tonight

LittleSteps (PSW) Welcome Jacques! :)

TideisTurning (PSW) Hi @Jacques

The Hams Hey Jacques. Haven't seen you at this type of event before mate

TideisTurning (PSW) When the wrong language is used, how can we challenge that?

Millieme With great difficulty! But I think its better to lead by example than challenge (partially because im terrified of confrontation)

TideisTurning (PSW) I really like that approach @Millieme :)

Jacques hey im in thank you so much Oshun, hey shaz and Hams

LittleSteps (PSW) Fantastic, Jacques :)

Jacques thank you little steps too

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) yayyy! well done Jacques!

LittleSteps (PSW) It can be a difficult and confronting feeling to stand up for what you believe in, especially around people you are close to. One technique which I find really helpful in navigating these situations is the use of "I" statements. I think this creates more common ground between different people with different views. For example, I could say "I feel that that is a hurtful way to describe that issue. How about we try saying this instead?"

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) That's a really good question, and I think that leading by example is such a brilliant way of forging a new path and showing others the possibilities of alternative language. Sometimes a direct conversation is the best way to assert the harms perpetuated by language when boundaries continue to be crossed. But again, it can be wholly dependent on the contexts and those 'grey areas'

Jacques i guess it depends on the situation and who you are speaking too, if it is a stranger i wont say anything, online where i can be anonymous i will confront people to be respectful, i do believe it comes down to respect.

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

Welcome Appleblossom! :D

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

The power of "I" statements hey @littlesteps! Such an profound way to convey emotional experiences through language

Millieme

I think for me its context as well, and if it is personally towards me i find it very difficult to challenge, if its about others or wihtin my work its easier to find ways to model or choose language carefully in a way that shows other perspectives

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

Hey Appleblossom!

Jacques

it does upset me when people say "im so depressed" and when people tell me "to go kill myself" people use these terms so easily not understanding what they are and how it affects people

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

Wonderful point on the impacts @Jacques Words can hurt and harm at times!

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

Good point, Jacques. Using that kind of hyperbole/overly inflated expressions can be very insensitive at times

Shaz51

Sad but true @Jacques xx

Jacques

there are so many terms now just thrown around, with no thought to the consequences

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

What's the effect when the right language is used?

Shaz51

It encourages, uplifting @TideisTurning (PSW) and me sending lots of hugs

Millieme

I think there is more inclusiveness when more accurate or helpful language is used, when people can be on the 'same page' of understanding each other

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

When the right language is used, meaning when someone is acting intentionally to not cause harm through their language, it really conveys to me how deep someone's compassion is. It is not easy to communicate intentionally because it requires pause, so when others take the time to do so? Oh my days, it's beautiful!

The Hams

The effect of the right language is that we are all better for it and we understand each other better

Jacques

i guess using the right language helps people understand the seriousness of mental health and show respect for people who are struggling, SANE is the only place i seem to get any support for what i go through, people in real life seem to be so cruel

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

When the preferred language is used, it can feel validating, respectful and dignifying. I think when we use people's preferred language, it is a way of showing them that we view them as a human being.

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

The Hams, so so well said and concise

Jacques

i guess education is key

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

Jacques, language can help us find 'our people'. And it sounds like you have found some of your people <3

Shaz51

Ohh yes @Oshun_Blu (Moderator)

Jacques language is also good for initial contact you can tell instantly if someone has been through the same or similar thing, my partner has severe mental health issues and we clicked straight away because our life experiences are so similar

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) Oh totally, Jacques! Language can act as a guidepost that shows others we're safe for them, and them for us

TideisTurning (PSW) Have you learned anything helpful from others' experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what did you learn?

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) I learned that The Hams needs to write a book on philosophy because I would 100% read that book lol

Jacques 100% Oshun, hams is amazing!!!!

TideisTurning (PSW) Not sure if it's a learning or a reinforcement of how powerful and impactful language can be. It carries the potential to hurt and harm, but also to bring healing and hope

Millieme speaking (literally out loud speech) is a challenge for me, i struggle with communication, so its a barrier for everything in a way. if im anxious its virtually impossible to manage. language is hugely important and can be taken for granted at times

LittleSteps (PSW) I learnt so much from tonight's Online Peer Group Chat! I think one aspect of tonight's discussion which stood out to me was this idea of language used as a vehicle for connection, leading to feelings of safety, security and belonging. I had never considered language from this perspective before!

Jacques i totally agree TedeisTurning, i was close to taking my own life a few years ago and my partner gave me a reason to keep going, her words really meant something to me and it helped me see there is hope, even when you can't see it

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) But more than that, I learned that everyone here has experienced the impacts of language in such profound ways. And that language is more than what we say to one another. Such a cool group tonight, ya'!!! Awesome topic choice @LittleSteps (PSW) & @TideisTurning

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) Wow, thank you for sharing that Jacques. What a journey it sounds like

TideisTurning (PSW) Tonight's topic may have brought up some heavy feelings as we talked about the impacts use of language can have. Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do? 😊

The Hams Ha. I wrote 6000 words yesterday in 2 hours. It was a dialogue between me and a therapist. It was very useful. Language wise it told me that I need to articulate things better

Shaz51 Coffee time @TideisTurning (PSW)

The Hams Watching 007 here. This was a good chat I learned a lot. Thanks all

Jacques i will be using my worry beads to help calm me down after this. and maybe a coffee same as shaz :)

LittleSteps (PSW) I think I will eat a healthy dinner! And then a good nights sleep :)

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) Thanks everyone! Thinking a bath is on the cards tonight for me

Jacques thank you so much support crew for this amazing chat, all 3 of you did so well moderating and steering the conversation, thank you

Oshun_Blu (Moderator) Thank YOU for your wonderful insights and contributions, Jacques!

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

Hello amelia! Unfortunately we are just wrapping up the Online Peer Group Chat, but there will be transcripts available soon :)

bazzy

watching cobra kai

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

We'd like to invite you to complete a survey reflecting on your experience in this Peer Group Chat. As we're trialling this service, we'd love to hear any feedback you may have. It will only take a few minutes to complete. Please click this link:

https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

ohhhh brilliant bazzy! enjoy!

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

Here are some further resources we recommend having a look at:

1 on the meanings given to language and the impacts that can have- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_wEi20i03k

2 an example of the connection between language and identity, including –

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/commentisfree/2016/aug/31/if-language-tells-us-who-we-are-then-who-am-i>

3 an exploration of multiple identities and the influence of language on identity- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SP0bAQ8J6C0>

bazzy

thanks @Oshun_Blu (Moderator) liking it so far

bazzy

i've recommended doing a talk about different breathing exercises

bazzy

in the survey

The Hams

Good night all

Jacques

im off too, thank you so much everyone loved the chat and love to all

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

Thank you all! :D

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

Thank you for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion 😊 If you'd like to be informed when our next Peer Group Chat will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/online-mental-health-meet-up>. You can also ask questions for us to discuss in future peer chats! :)

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

Thanks again, peeps!

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

Thanks everyone for being here, sharing this space & all your contributions! :)

bazzy

Sorry we can't find that page for you!

Shaz51

Thanks everyone

**TideisTurnin
g (PSW)**

We'll be closing the room shortly everyone. Hope you all have a wonderful evening :)

**Oshun_Blu
(Moderator)**

We'll give folks a moment to wind down and transition into the rest of your evenings and will be closing this room very soon. Thanks again for hanging out with us tonight, everyone!

Shaz51

Good night @Oshun_Blu (Moderator) , @TideisTurning (PSW)

**LittleSteps
(PSW)**

Thank you all! :)

Shaz51

Good night @LittleSteps (PSW)