

Choose your language

This is not offered as a piece about “right language” and “wrong language”. It is clearly about language but it is really about choice- and the many choices we make whenever we use language to describe another person.

Especially, for instance, a person some might choose to call

“Schizo”, “the schizo”, “a schizo”.

It is so very easy to download and repeat the terms we see and hear being used around us without thinking much, following-along, using the same language we find ourselves immersed in, subtly imposed upon us. How can we unknowingly participate in systems of oppression?-

because that is how it works, by relying on us being unaware, doing our part, not noticing and not thinking.

Like many others, this term dehumanizes any person we attach it to: any person upon whom we put this mark.

Doing so removes consideration that they are a human being: they become non-human, nonbeing even.

We might not realize that it also dehumanizes us

too. When we use terms like this, we make the mark that we put on others our mark. Our mark we put upon them. If we talk of wanting an end to “stigma” it’s worth asking where the mark – the “stigma” -comes from.



Schizo...



Person
who is
Schizo...ic



Person
With
Schizo...

“Stigma” begins when we choose to put our mark upon others.

Some people might be aware of the pain this can cause not just to an individual but to whole groups of people we might similarly mark, and instead try to offer a little more respect, use a few more words.

And you will hear

some remark
something along
the lines of...

“but that’s so many
words!”

but really, is it..?

And is it enough?



Person with
a diagnosis of
Schizo...



Person given
a diagnosis of
Schizo...

Each of these here is a real examples of language I heard people using both in a one-day workshop, and again a few days later in a gathering at a HV café.

It’s not my role to tell you which language is “right” or “wrong”, and I won’t do that. Because I don’t know.

I will offer this observation: it seems to me that each subsequent example here

offers the person being described a little more dignity, a little more space in which to be human, a little more

generosity on the part of the person choosing their language, a little more willingness to hold open connection with another human being. Maybe because each subsequent example creates a little more space between the person and the term we use to describe them and the difficulty they are experiencing in the world.

Each also invites us to approach the person being described in a different way, reminds us we can understand a little more, can be more curious about what it is the other person is experiencing, reminds us that we can be more supportive, reminds us we can be more human.

I believe we each have the same right to name our world, to name ourselves in whatever terms we choose.

I’m learning
how, when it
comes to
naming others, it
pays to be as
respectful, to
offer as much
respect as we
can.



Person
struggling
in the world...
and in pain...

The language we choose to describe another says way more about us than it can ever say about them.