Recommendations for Representative Language

By the Representation, Equity & Accessibility Committee. April, 2021.
Updated 2021-08-20
Updated by the Language Subcommittee 2023-04-22

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Introduction

To carry the ACA message with love to the adult child who still suffers, this document identifies language used throughout ACA literature that we recommend changing to better represent our human identities and experiences. Representative language in program literature supports our common welfare and encourages unity within ACA. We expect this document to evolve over time.

Gender Language

Words and Phrases to Avoid Using   Suggested Words to Use Instead

Words and Phrases to Avoid Using	Suggested Words to Use Instead
she, he	they
her, him	their, them
herself, himself	themselves, oneself
woman, man	person
women, men	people
brother, sister	sibling
son(s), daughter(s)	child, children
"Mister or Miss right"	"the right person"
LGBT	LGBTQ2SIA+/ LGBTQ+

LGBTQ2SIA+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-spirit, Intersex, Asexual

One word/ letter version: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-spirit, Intersex, Asexual
Full version:
L: lesbian, G: gay, B: bisexual, T :trans/transgender/transexual/transmasculine/transfeminine/transandrogynous,
Q: queer/questioning, 2: twospirit/2spirit, I: intersex, A: agender/asexual spectrum,
+ = femme, butch, pansexual, polyamorous, non-binary etc

Example:
"Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA)/Dysfunctional Families is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition program of men and women who grew up in dysfunctional homes." (https://adultchildren.org, first page) becomes "Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA)/Dysfunctional Families is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition program of <u>people</u> who grew up in dysfunctional homes."

"At some point the adult child realizes that her or she must seek a Higher Power..." (BRB, p. 223) becomes "At some point the adult child realizes that <u>they</u> must seek a Higher Power..."

Exceptions:
Any words or phrases can be used in personal shares. Mindfully attempt to collect and publish shares from people of different gender identities and sexual orientations (e.g. cisgender, transgender, non-binary, LGBTQ2S).

Why using the recommended language is important:
Some people see themselves as human beings first and a specific gender (e.g. female, male), second or not at all. This is especially relevant for people who identify as gender-queer, non-binary or transgender. "They" is the most common pronoun used by non-binary people in various countries around the world, and includes people who use "she","he", and "ze". The Big Red Book already uses gender-representative language in many places, such as using the term "adult child" rather than "adult girl or boy." The suggestions listed here expand on that foundation.

Romantic and/or Sexual Relationships Language

Words and Phrases to Avoid Using	Suggested Words to Use Instead
spouse	partner/s, companion/s,
marry/marriage/get married	be in relation with them Enter into a relationship with become romantically and/or sexually involved with, life partners, celebrate /become/ing life partners romantic partners/partnership/got involved with/partnered with them Intimate companion

Example:
"We either become alcoholics, marry them, or both…" (BRB, p. 648) becomes "We either become alcoholics, (live with them (partner may not mean living with them)), are in a relationship with them, or both…"

Exceptions:
Any words or phrases can be used in personal shares. Mindfully attempt to collect and publish shares from people with several different romantic and/or sexual relationship types and structures.

Why using the recommended language is important:
There are myriad types and structures of romantic and/or sexual relationships throughout the world. Many people are in relationships (long-term, short-term or otherwise) and are not married, and/or never plan to get married. Many people engage in relationship structures other than monogamy, such as polyamory, polyandry, or polygyny. Some countries do not allow marriage between queer people, and some people have trauma from being forced into marriage without their consent.

Additional Notes
We also recommend adding the terms "sexually aggressive" (overtly not safe) and "sexually suggestive" (covertly not safe) and "sexist" in "A hope for ACA beginners meeting handbook" and adding "sex and love addict" and/or "sex and love abuser" to the phrase "ladies' man, player, gigolo, skirt chaser" in the Family Diagram Labels in Step One literature. We recommend adding the terms "man-eater," "flirt," "home-wrecker" and "sex and love addict" and/or "sex and love abuser," as some people are familiar with those terms. While the existing language is gendered, we recognize its intention is to help adult children come out of denial about their family dysfunction, and that commonly used words and phrases are useful in that regard. It also provides an opportunity for adult children working the step to recognize the behaviour for what it is rather than using common phrases to minimize or trivialize it.

Family Relationship Language

Words Currently Used   Words to Use With Greater Frequency
parent(s)   caregiver(s), parent and/or caregiver

Example:
"... there are some unique considerations for adults raised by parents who abused drugs" (BRB, p. 59) becomes "... there are some unique considerations for adults raised by parents and/or caregivers who abused drugs."

Exceptions:
Any words or phrases can be used in personal shares. Mindfully attempt to collect and publish shares from people who come from a variety of different living situations in childhood.

Why using the recommended language is important:
Many people grow up in foster homes or orphanages, and/or are raised by family members other than their biological or adoptive parents, and/or live both with their parents and with other caregivers throughout their childhood for various reasons. This recommendation is not to eliminate the use of the word "parent", but rather to use the word "caregiver," or the phrase "parent and/or caregiver" more equitably throughout published content. This recommendation is in the same vein as the expansion of "Adult Children of Alcoholics" to "Adult Children of Alcoholics *and Dysfunctional Families*."

Race-Based Language

Concepts and Words to Avoid/Reduce Using	Concepts and Words to Use Instead
Using "dark", "darken", or "dark night of the soul" as a metaphor and/or when talking about feelings	Use accurate descriptive words: hurt, hopeless, despair, depression, sad, lonely, difficult, challenging
Using the word "light" as a metaphor and/or when talking about feelings	Use accurate descriptive words: insightful, joyful, elated, buoyant, clarity
POC (People of Color)	BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)

Example:
"...to those seeking God's love and light" (BRB, p. 143) becomes "... to those seeking God's love and insight."

Exceptions:
Any words or phrases can be used in personal shares. Mindfully attempt to collect and publish shares that do not use racist words or phrases, or words or phrases with racist etymologies.

Why using the recommended language is important:
Using "dark" as equivalent to bad and "light" as equivalent to good ("the dark metaphor") is a form of structural racism built into our fellowship language, with roots in the Oxford movement of the Christian religion. The word "dark" is appropriate for use in the context of illumination (e.g. "it's dark outside tonight"), but it is not appropriate to use "dark" to imply that something is bad, wrong, difficult or challenging.

Place of origin or residence

<u>When Using these words</u>   <u>Suggested Concepts and Words to use or add</u>
Town, city, and nation   Place, land, home

We do this to include indigenous cultures and people not living in nations or cities.

Dominant Culture Language

<u>Concepts and Words to Avoid Using</u>	<u>Suggested Concepts and Words to Use Instead</u>
"our culture"	Avoid using the phrase "our culture." And/or avoid attributing characteristics to any specific culture. And/or use a very specific phrase such as "Western modernity."

<u>Example:</u>
"Self sufficiency is valued in our culture" (BRB, p.xxiii)

<u>Exceptions:</u>
Any words or phrases can be used in personal shares. Mindfully attempt to collect and publish shares that are either very culturally specific (i.e. it names the culture; e.g "In my Latinx culture…"), or don't mention culture at all. Avoid the use of shares that ascribe characteristics or traits to all people of a single race or national origin.
An alternative for "our culture" could be Western modernity.

<u>Why using the recommended language is important:</u>
There is not a single world culture; the world has myriad cultures with all sorts of different values. It is not appropriate to assume what culture someone belongs to nor the values of their culture.