



Language Matters

Language, both verbal and non-verbal, has enormous power, that can have positive or negative effects

Diabetes is a complex and challenging condition that has many factors and influences that may be very individualised. Unfortunately, diabetes has often carried a stigma of blame or disability that may contribute to stress, shame and judgement.

In all interactions, a person-centred approach using language (including body language) that empowers and encourages motivation will serve to eliminate any culture of stigma or blame and achieve better care.

Use language that...

- is neutral, non-judgemental and based on facts, actions or physiology/biology
- is person-centred, collaborative and engaging rather than controlling
- is strengths-based, respectful, inclusive and imparts hope
- is stigma-free
- does not infer generalisations, stereotypes or prejudice
- does not assume the person's point of view; seek to find this out
- does not attribute blame

Positive

- + Empathic + Respectful
- + Empowering + Understanding
- + Culturally competent
- + Exploring + Congruent

Negative

- Shaming - Demanding
- Authoritative - Disapproving
- Threatening - Discriminating
- Poor body language

It is also important to support and where necessary, encourage change

Techniques to consider include:

- Brief intervention
- Motivational interviewing
- Behaviour change

NHS England (2018) *Language matters: Language and diabetes*. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/language-matters.pdf> (accessed June 2021)



"Ask me how I feel, talk to me and use language that doesn't judge me"

Person with diabetes