



ANCORA'S CORNER

ANCORA PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL TRAUMA INFORMED CARE COMMITTEE

What We Say Matters

Language offers clues about what we think about ourselves and others. It therefore impacts how we behave toward others. Imagine you hire a personal trainer to lose some weight. Your trainer makes a diet and exercise plan, and the next week, asks: "Have you been compliant with the plan?" I might wonder, "Where does this guy get off?" I'd find a new trainer. The problem is not that your trainer asked about the plan, but it is that word: *compliant*. The dictionary defines compliant as "obeying, obliging, or yielding, especially in a submissive way." The moment we talk about compliance in relation to an individual's treatment, it becomes more about the staff's treatment plan rather than the service recipient's. It also oversimplifies the situation, places blame on the individual, and ultimately hinders recovery. Instead, simply report on the actual behavior that occurred (that the person stopped taking his medications, did not follow-up with his outpatient plan, etc.), work to understand the person's position, and determine alternative approaches.

Language is both reflective of culture, and it influences culture. At Ancora, we are continually striving for a culture of collaboration and person-centered, recovery-oriented care. Therefore, consider the use of these other words in your documentation and conversations: *a Borderline, a Schizophrenic, a frequent-flyer, manipulative, attention-seeking, needy, resistant, tying someone up, these people, case management, or placement*. It's time to start thinking and talking about the language of our therapeutic community. Keep in mind: "The humanity we all share is more important than the mental illness we may not."

Ivy Grace Durant, Psy.D. and Dana Susino, Psy.D.

On behalf of the Ancora Trauma-Informed Care Committee