



Many of our leaders passed away silently.
Leaving us in tears and loss. But their efforts
were passed on. They live in our hearts and keep
the movement going... We remember them today,

**celebrating their life,
celebrating their contribution,
and celebrating their courage.**

THE LANGUAGE OF HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS
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PEOPLE living with HIV/AIDS already suffer considerably from the stigma, prejudices, misconceptions, and fears that surround the syndrome. While reporting news about them, therefore, it is important that journalists remember to keep in check their personal biases and ensure that their language does not portray ignorance.

At the same time, the language media persons use in their reports helps shape attitudes about HIV/AIDS. Therefore, they must learn language that is appropriate to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

While HIV/AIDS has huge social and emotional ramifications, it has aspects that are intensely technical. Thus, it is important to not only try and understand the technical issues involved, but also to ensure that the information conveyed through news reports is not technically flawed.

What is appropriate language in the context of reporting on HIV/AIDS?

- It is positive and empowering, rather than victimizing;
 - It is neutral and gender sensitive; and
 - It is technically accurate, but distils technicalities into an easily understood form.
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- Appropriate language is constructive;
 - It avoids sensationalism of all kinds;
 - It does not fuel stereotypes;
 - It does not cause prejudice or fuel stigma;
 - It is suitable to the audience. This requires journalists to be familiar with their audience as well as fluent in HIV/AIDS terminology;
 - It is non-judgemental and non-discriminatory;





Writing with Sensitivity		
AVOID X	BECAUSE ?	USE ✓
Aids	Aids already means many things. AIDS is an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	AIDS
HIV and AIDS HIV or AIDS	HIV and AIDS are linked. HIV leads to AIDS	HIV/AIDS
AIDS virus	Can cause confusion between HIV and AIDS	HIV
HIV virus	HIV is an acronym for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, so virus is already included in the term	HIV
AIDS scourge/plague	Sensationalist; implies that HIV/AIDS cannot be controlled; may fuel panic, discrimination, and hopelessness	HIV epidemic
The disease of AIDS	AIDS is not a disease. It is a syndrome (group of illnesses) that results from a weakening of the immune system by HIV. This opens the body to "opportunistic" diseases (illnesses that take advantage of weak immunity)	AIDS-related illness Name the specific illness, such as TB or cancer
Full-blown AIDS	No need to use if correct distinction is always made between HIV and AIDS; there is no half-blown AIDS	AIDS
AIDS test	There is no test for AIDS, but there are tests for HIV	HIV antibody test
Catch HIV	No one can catch HIV; people can become infected Transmission of HIV is also correct, but it emphasizes "who" and how the virus is transmitted, which, often, HIV+ people do not know	Contract HIV Become HIV positive
Catch AIDS	AIDS can't be "caught"	Develop AIDS Person living with AIDS
Carrying AIDS AIDS carrier AIDS positive	This confuses the two distinct phases of being infected with HIV and having AIDS. A person can have AIDS, but can't carry it	HIV positive Person/people living with HIV/AIDS
Safe sex	No sex with a partner is ever completely risk-free, even when using a condom, which can greatly reduce, but never fully eliminate, the risk	Safer sex
Bodily fluids	Not all bodily fluids transmit HIV	Semen; breast milk; blood; vaginal fluids
HIV victim/sufferer	Victim connotes powerlessness—PLWHA are definitely not victims	PLWHA HIV positive person

Writing with Sensitivity		
AVOID X	BECAUSE ?	USE ✓
AIDS sufferer	Many people with HIV/AIDS can enjoy relatively good health for years, and lead happy lives	PLWHA HIV positive person
AIDS patient	Only appropriate when someone is ill. Care is needed to distinguish this from HIV infection, when “patient” is not appropriate. The word patient should be used when referring to the clinical setting only	People living with HIV/AIDS Person living with HIV/AIDS
Innocent	It implies someone else is guilty. No one chooses or deserves to contract HIV	AVOID USING THIS AT ALL
Prostitute	Considered value laden and derogatory	Sex worker
Promiscuous	Accusatory and derogatory	Having multiple partners
Drug abuser/addict	Many people who use drugs consider that they are in control of their use of drugs, that they are not addicted to them. Calling them abusers/addicts alienates them, which serves no good purpose. It is the act of injecting with a contaminated needle, not the drug use itself, that transmits HIV	Intravenous drug user (IDU)
Homosexual	This is a Western idea of one's identity. In different regions of the world, men who have sex with men do not necessarily have a gay or homosexual identity	Males who have sex with males (MSM)
High-risk groups	There is high-risk behaviour, but no high-risk group. Regardless of the group he belongs to, it is what a person does that exposes him to HIV	High-risk behaviour

