



## Tip #7: Don't Call Me "Honey!"

### Have you listened to yourself?

Using person-centered language impacts your life and those around you. The right words can

- build relationships,
- create positive emotions,
- improve self-esteem,
- enhance physical abilities.

### Do words hurt?

Language that is not person-centered makes life unpleasant for all.

- Labels (e.g., the feeder, the complainer, the Parkinson's) turn people into objects.
- Baby talk (e.g., speaking in a high voice) is disrespectful.
- Using terms of endearment (e.g., honey, sweetie) without a person's consent takes away his/her dignity.
- Using collective and/or plural nouns (e.g., "Should we take a shower?") demeans that person.
- Asking pseudo-questions (e.g., "You want to go to bed now, don't you?") insults that person.

### Which words make for a happy home?

#### Use these:

- home, our community
- move in, move out
- neighborhood
- caregivers, care partners

#### Not these:

- facility
- admit, discharge
- unit, wing
- frontline staff

### Does it matter how I say it?

- Speak at eye level. No one likes to be towered over. Sit across from a person who is in bed or seated.
- Stop and talk. A "drive-by" comment as you pass is not really a conversation.
- Be polite. Please wait for a response after asking permission to enter the person's room.
- Be heard. Avoid noisy distractions when having a conversation.

### Action Items

- Encourage care partners to monitor their language for a few days to make a list of words that do or do not show respect for residents or for themselves.
- Have a brainstorming session/Learning Circle to come up with a community-wide list of person-centered words to use and replace references to people according to their care needs or diagnoses.
- Recognize staff who use the correct person-centered terms and perhaps have a light-hearted "penalty" for those who forget.

### Additional Resources:

- *The Power of Language to Create Culture* by Carmen Bowman, Galina Madjaroff and Judah Ronch: <http://www.pioneernetwork.net/CultureChange/PowerOfLanguage/>
- *Words Make Worlds* on the Eden Alternative website: <http://edenalt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/04Eden-Alternative-Dictionary-Full-Continuum-Version-ABFinal.pdf>
- *Word of the Week: Building a Culture Change Dictionary*, a book of reproducible flyers by Joan Devine and sold by Action Pact: <http://actionpact.com/index.php/product/word-of-the-week>.
- A good list of old/new terms: <http://www.pioneernetwork.net/CultureChange/Language/>

