

BE TRAUMA INFORMED WHEN TALKING ABOUT TRAFFICKING

WORDS HAVE POWER

BELOW ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO ADJUST YOUR LANGUAGE TO BE MORE SURVIVOR INFORMED IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

DO NOT SAY	TRY INSTEAD	WHY?
<i>“Slavery”</i>	<i>Human trafficking, sex trafficking, labor trafficking, trafficking</i>	Terms like “slavery” tend to sensationalize survivors’ stories. This is a shock value word.
<i>“Victim”</i>	<i>Survivor</i>	Once a victim exits their trafficking situation, they are no longer a victim, they have survived. Calling a survivor a survivor empowers them to be in control of their own healing, journey, and life.
<i>“Rescue”</i>	<i>Escape, exit</i>	When a survivor leaves their trafficking situation, they have power and hope. It’s just the beginning, yes, but using language like “escape” and “exit” empowers survivors to take part in their own story. It allows them the space to be involved in one of the biggest changes they may ever experience in their life.
<i>“Saved”</i>	<i>Helped, assisted</i>	This is particularly important when speaking directly to survivors. Whomever had a part in their escape certainly helped, but saying they “saved” the survivor discredits the exhausting, terrifying, hard work that survivors did to keep themselves alive during their situation and all the healing the survivor must work through following escape
<i>Ask for details of a survivor’s story</i>	<i>Let the survivor lead who, when, and how much they tell their story</i>	It is important to give survivors ownership of their own experiences. It is also important to not exploit a survivor’s story for whatever purpose you are speaking with them.
<i>Focus only on the survivor’s story</i>	<i>Pull in other relevant information to whatever topic you are discussing</i>	Survivors are so much more than their story. Talking about other things in their life can help them remember that, and it’s always important to see a survivor as a whole person, not just what they have been through.
<i>Use trafficking terminology that the survivor has not brought up</i>	<i>Use only the language survivors use, and make sure you understand the definition and context before using the language</i>	This language can be triggering to survivors, and it can also be frustrating for survivors to hear others using language they feel they do not understand.
<i>Out someone as a survivor without their permission</i>	<i>Let them tell others that they are a survivor, ask before telling</i>	Outting someone as a survivor without their permission takes away their power, violates their trust, and can even be exploitive.

