

SAY MY NAME

You are not your disease



How many times have you heard someone being referred to as their disease?
He's asthmatic. She's bipolar. They are autistic.

By referring to a person as their disease or condition, you are conveying that the emphasis is on the disease or condition and not the person.¹

In the move to treat the whole person, not just the disorder or disability, terminology has changed.

You are a person first

Try:

She has diabetes

He has arthritis

They have
hypertension

She has depression

Instead of:

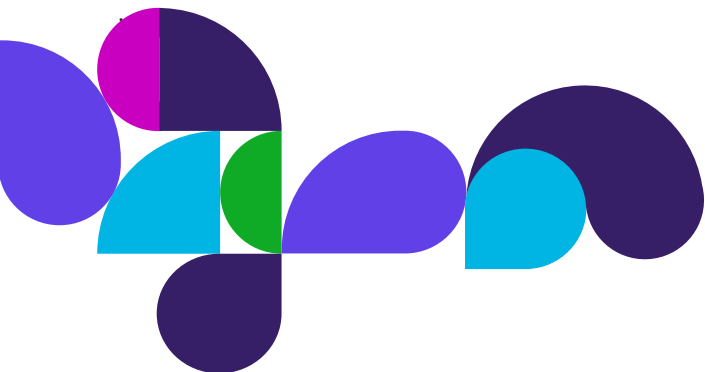
She's diabetic

He's arthritic

They're
hypertensive

She's depressive

Sometimes, people prefer an active form of having their disease. Perhaps she's "fighting" cancer or is an "autoimmune warrior." Until someone makes that statement about themselves, it's safer to stick with generic terms like "has" or "with."



You don't want to become your illness

When you are diagnosed with an illness or condition, it can affect all facets of your life. You may change the way you eat. Your activity level may change. You could face limitations on doing things you used to do. It could affect your ability to work. When you focus on dealing with the elements and effects of it every day, it's hard not to fall into identifying with your illness.

Illness identity states

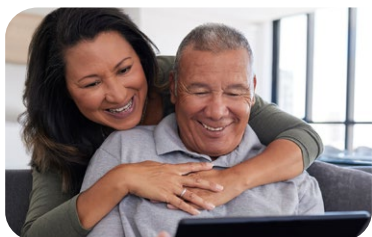
There are four states that typically describe the effect of illness on identity. People can experience some or all of them at times.²

Rejection: You refuse to accept chronic illness as something that affects you. You're in a state of resistance against the illness or its impact. When you reject your diagnosis, you may not follow treatment regimens or make lifestyle changes that support your health.

Engulfment: Engulfment is the opposite of rejection. You embrace your illness to the point of preoccupation. Other elements of your life, like hobbies and friendships, are ignored. Feelings of depression and anxiety may increase in this state.

Acceptance: This is the middle ground. Your illness is neither ignored nor obsessed about. It's something that affects you. You may experience a normal amount of grief as you change your life to adapt to your needs. Feelings of depression and anxiety may decrease in this state.

Enrichment: You may experience positive life changes because of your illness. You may feel more resilient and stronger. Your appreciation for life may increase, and your sense of well-being may improve.



Living with illness or chronic conditions is complicated and often a lifelong journey. Maintaining your sense of self and identity beyond your diagnosis will improve your state of mind.

Learn how we can help support you on your wellness journey.
To sign up or learn more, go to
TeladocHealth.com/Smile/HEALTHYCOUNTRY.

¹<https://www.nih.gov/nih-style-guide/person-first-stigmatizing-language>

²<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/chronically-me/202207/4-illness-identity-states-and-how-work-them>