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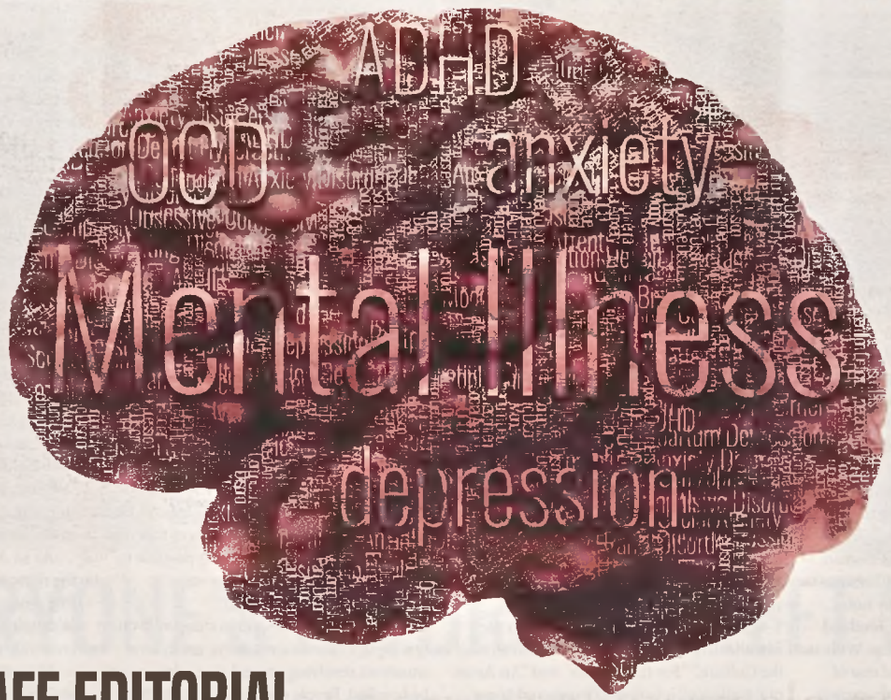

ELENA HERNANDEZ | Designer

STAFF EDITORIAL

Mental illness terminology should not be used casually

HOW WE SEE IT
Elon University students should be more conscious of their word choice in order to combat negative stigmas of mental illness.

Too often, Elon University students use mental illness terminology flippantly in casual conversations; speaking phrases such as "Sorry, I'm so OCD" or "Oh, I'm so depressed."

Mental illness is an issue that affects many students on Elon's campus. While not everyone suffers from such an illness, mental health affects us all. It deserves to be taken seriously and respected as a real problem students are consistently facing.

For students who actually suffer from these mental illnesses, using this terminology is acceptable. But, if they do not suffer from these illnesses, using these words trivializes the issue of mental health and normalizes it in a way that could be harmful to those who actually suffer from mental illnesses.

When students use these illnesses as adjectives to describe everyday feelings or situations, they lessen the severity of these words and minimize the seriousness of these illnesses. This contributes to the general culture of not taking mental illnesses seriously.

Procrastinating on an assignment is not the same thing as suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Having a bad day is not the same thing as having depression.

These illnesses can seriously impact a student's life. Someone suffering from depression may not feel the motivation to go to class. A student with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder may find it difficult to live with a roommate or even go about their daily life.

Using terms such as these could also trigger harmful memories for other students. For example, saying something "makes me want to kill myself" can bring up suicidal thoughts or feelings to those who hear it. It is disrespectful to those dealing with suicidal thoughts or those with friends or family members who have committed suicide to use that word as if it means nothing.

We all need to be conscious of the power behind our word choices. What may seem like an innocent sentence can actually contribute to the larger stigmatization of mental illness. Using these terms as adjectives contributes to the concept that mental illnesses are just in a person's head or not something to be taken seriously.

To combat the negative stigma of mental illness and make the voices of students with mental illnesses heard on Elon's campus, all students should put more thought into what they say and how they say it. Something as simple as a change in word choice can be vital in changing this negative outlook on this issue.

Instead of using these words to describe yourselves, educate yourself on mental illness. Learn about the warning signs of suicide and the symptoms of depression or anxiety. Attend events and join organizations that work to educate students on the seriousness of mental illness. Be an ally to those who are suffering — this is a step toward dismantling negative stigmas.

Digital should not take priority over live interactions

Hannah Benson
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It likely comes as a surprise to absolutely no one that we live in a digital age.

We take photos of everything that moves — we wouldn't dare miss a chance to post something fun or interesting on our Snapchat stories. We even turn on our locations to track our friends by their phones because we would be out of our minds to go somewhere without them.

Millennials were born and raised on the crutch of technology. While in most cases, this allows us to communicate with one another with more ease, there are cases in which technology very openly obstructs communication with those around us.

We all have a friend — or, to some of our misfortune, many friends — who, regardless of the situation will answer a FaceTime call during a private dinner between the two of you. They'll send a text while you're in the thick of a conversation or even shush you so that they can hear the phone call they're making when you're alone together.

This is disrespectful in every sense of the word.

When you make plans with someone, the general understanding is that they are choosing to take time out of their lives to spend with you, so the two of you can indulge in something old and archaic that our ancestors called conversation, wherein you can delight in the company of one another. Regardless of which version of the iPhone you now have or just how strong the Wi-Fi connection is, the physical presence of another should always trump the abstract existence of that person with the incoming call or text.

> REGARDLESS OF WHICH VERSION OF THE IPHONE YOU NOW HAVE OR JUST HOW STRONG THE WI-FI CONNECTION IS, THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF ANOTHER SHOULD ALWAYS TRUMP THE ABSTRACT EXISTENCE OF THAT PERSON WITH THE INCOMING CALL OR TEXT.

To make or take a phone call while you're in the presence of someone you made plans with first is openly saying to the original friend, "You matter less to me than whatever this other person has to say." You are openly choosing one person over another, and the second person doesn't even have the energy or ability to come find you in person themselves, which is another punch in the face at the original companion.

According to a recent study by CNN, the average American spends more than 10 hours a day looking at a screen. You spend so much time looking at screens each day — why choose to do that while you are in the presence of someone you truly care about, doing something that the two of you do for fun?

Partaking in this digital communication with an outside source while in the presence of someone tangible is not only disrespectful and illogical, but it is plainly rude. If you want so badly to hear that outside person's weird dream or painful recount of their day, go to them and get that account firsthand. Anything else is just discourteous.

And hey, if you choose to ignore the warnings, you might just lose the friends you had in the first place. Who would you call then?