

## Stigma Class Activity

This exercise can be structured as an individual or a large-group activity, depending on class needs and norms. If you want to preserve anonymity and encourage internal reflection, or perhaps protect privacy around biases etc, use the **WRITING** prompts. If you want to encourage open conversation and exploration of assumptions and biases in the group, use the **DISCUSSION** prompts.

### Instructions

1. Start by introducing the activity to the class, as follows:

“We are going to start with a brief experiential activity.”

**WRITING:** Please pull out a pen and paper. I’m going to ask you to write for 30 seconds, without pausing. Please write down whatever comes into your mind in response to my next word: “Addiction.”

**DISCUSSION:** We are going to spend the next 60 seconds brainstorming. Please call out whatever comes to you mind in response to my next word: “Addiction.” During the brainstorm period, the instructor (and perhaps a student assistant, if needed) records every word on a board or screen visible to the class.

2. When time is up, ask the students to identify how many negative, positive, and neutral words they have generated.
3. Ask the class to consider: What do the words you associated with addiction say about your attitudes toward addictions? Towards people who might be classified as “addicts”? This can be discussed with the full group or in small groups.
4. Now, please keep these words and accompanying attitudes in mind as we go through this next set of slides.
5. Transition into Stigma Slide Deck.

### **VARIATION** on the Activity

Split your class into two groups. Give one the prompt of “Addiction”. Give the other group the prompt “Substance Use Disorder.” Complete steps 2-4 above, and discuss any differences that emerge in the Language Matters slide in the Slide Deck.

*Additional Discussion Questions* – either before or after you review the slide deck

6. How do attitudes, both positive and negative, develop? Where do people hear these kinds of descriptions of addictions or people who have an addiction?
7. What do you think could be the impact of negative attitudes/stigma on people with substance use disorders? Would it make them more or less likely to seek help? Why?
8. As a future health professional, how might your own stigmatizing attitudes impact your work with people who have SUD? What actions can you take to manage or change your own biases? What action can you take to minimize stigma?