Dear %$firstname$%,

This summer I have had visiting young grandchildren and other relatives. As many of us know, one’s family can be challenging! There has been lots of opportunity to notice how my choice of words influences how I communicate with others, and how successful my communication will be. Sometimes I’ve been surprised when I think I’ve been clear and loving in talking with these very important people in my life, but they don’t always hear me that way.

Speaking with our patients, clients and colleagues also requires careful choice of words. Being careful not to label people, or use words that are negative, frightening, or put people into a "box" or category is a very important aspect of communicating with them.

My article this month is about our choice of words in talking with patients, clients and colleagues.

Ellen

Our Choice of Words Really Matters

In the August, 2012 issue of Diabetes Forecast an article titled “The ‘D’ Word …and 8 other terms the diabetes world could live without” by Ellen D. Davis, RN, MS, CDE, FAADE; Michelle Pearce, PhD; and Bryan C. Batch, MD, Duke University Health System, discusses the meaning we give to words used to describe people with diabetes and their treatment. I think they make some great points in clarifying how our medical terms can be heard by patients.

- When you call a person “a diabetic” you are labeling. How about "someone with diabetes"?
- The word “cheat” in the diabetes world is nothing buy negative and blaming. It implies there is one “true diet” that is perfect and anything else is wrong and bad. You may not make the best choice of foods, but don’t expect you will achieve some perfection with your diet.
- When we say someone is “a failure” in the context of diabetes...
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These are just a few ideas, and I’m sure you’ll think of many in your work. Remember, the words you choose in talking with your client make a BIG difference. In Motivational Interviewing, we use neutral language. Your opinion about your client's choices is not part of the conversation, so let them know you are listening, understand and GET them, without judgment.

You are welcome to use Dr. Glovsky's articles in any of your own publications provided you copy the following into the article: “Dr. Ellen Glovsky is a Registered Dietitian and Motivational Interviewing trainer. She is on the faculty of Northeastern University in Boston, MA, where she teaches courses in nutrition, public health and MI. Her website, newsletter, and blog are at Training With Dr. Ellen.”

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From the Training with Dr. Ellen Blog

If you would like Dr. Ellen to speak at your next event, please contact Ellen@TrainingwithDrEllen.com

I observed my daughter parenting her kids, and admire her as a mother. She emphasizes communication, both hers and the children back to her. I watched her be so careful to be very clear in what she tells her kids, especially in what she expects of them and how much she loves them. It was very instructive. I was raised in a very different way. Seldom did people in my family say what they really meant, especially if it wasn’t “nice”. I find Amy’s approach to be refreshing and a huge relief!