VOCABULARY TOOLKIT

BRAVESPACES
CREATIVE INDIA

This vocabulary toolkit is designed to illuminate the path for those in the creative realms, particularly within the performance arts—actors, directors, producers, stage managers, and dedicated crew members. Its purpose is to cultivate a culture steeped in consent, empathy, and respect within creative spaces. It serves as a beacon to help navigate away from harmful or derogatory language while nurturing an atmosphere of consent in Indian creative spheres.

Words wield extraordinary influence, and in our quest to forge braver, consent-focused environments, the language we select has the power to uplift or alienate. With this toolkit, we at BraveSpaces Creative India aspire to raise awareness about vocabulary that, though often woven into the fabric of daily conversation, can perpetuate harm, discomfort, or exclusion—especially in sensitive contexts that delve into narratives surrounding gender, sexuality, emotional vulnerability, hyper-exposure, and intimacy.

Tailored to the rich cultural and social tapestry of India, this toolkit seeks to reflect and encompass the myriad languages and social dynamics at play, while its principles resonate universally. It aims to be not only a guide on words to avoid but also a cherished resource that highlights the significance of making conscious, empathetic language choices aligned with the values of consent, respect, agency, and openness. In this noble endeavor, the toolkit not only aids in preventing harm but also nurtures a supportive and collaborative environment, empowering all to express their authentic selves safely and freely.

KEY CATEGORIES

1. **Harmful Stereotypes:**
   - *Gender*: Sexist terms, stereotypes, and assumptions about gender roles.
   - *Caste*: Casteist slurs, stereotypes, and assumptions.
   - *Religion*: Religious slurs, stereotypes, and assumptions.
   - *Ability*: Ableist terms, stereotypes, and assumptions about people with disabilities.
   - *Sexual Orientation*: Homophobic and heteronormative terms.
   - *Race*: Racist terms, stereotypes, and assumptions.
   - *Class*: Class-based slurs and stereotypes.
2. **Microaggressions:**
   - *Assumptions*: Making assumptions about someone's identity based on appearances or stereotypes.
   - *Words that Dismiss or Invalidate*: Dismissing someone's feelings or experiences.
   - *Words that imply shame*: Commenting on life choices made by individuals.
   - *Tokenising*: Treating someone as a representative of their entire group.
   - *Gaslighting*: Manipulating someone into doubting their own perception of reality.
3. **Harmful Language Related to Intimacy:**
   - *Consent-Violating Terms*: Terms that imply coercion, manipulation, or lack of consent.
   - *Objectifying Language*: Terms that reduce individuals to their physical appearance or sexual value.
   - *Victim-Blaming Terms*: Terms that suggest victims are responsible for their own harm.
4. **Offensive Terms and Slang:**
   - *Regional Slurs*: Slang terms that are offensive to people from specific regions.
   - *Personal Insults*: Terms that attack someone's character or appearance.
   - *Offensive Jokes*: Jokes that perpetuate harmful stereotypes or make light of sensitive topics.

Examples: Man-up, Don't be a sissy/pussy, Ladki jaise kya kar raha hai, Chhaka, Chhapri, Ghaati, Bhangi, Chamaar, Kanjar, Bhand, Mussalle, Mulla, Jihadi, Katwa, Miya, Khalistani, Kafir, Bhakt, Langda, Lulla, Andha, Behra, Meetha, Pari, Faggot, Parkati, Butch, Ghandu, Kalu, Tambi, Weak, Stupid, Idiot, Crazy, Fatty, Motu, Sikda/Sikdi, Hanger, Slut, Whore, Randi, Chodu, Librandu, Cheeni, Baby, Hottie, Fuljhadi, Phataka.

WHY TO AVOID THEM?

These expressions diminish or dismiss an individual's feelings or experiences, eroding their autonomy and emotional sanctuary. They perpetuate casteism, colourism, and insensitivity towards marginalised communities, entrenching harmful stereotypes that inflict emotional distress or bolster toxic masculinity and gender biases. Such language can stigmatise mental health, exoticise cultural identities, and marginalise those who do not conform to prevailing norms.

Employing such terms can leave individuals feeling uneasy or objectified, undermining the very essence of respect and consent.

USAGE GUIDELINES

- **Consent and Respect:** Illuminate the significance of language in crafting a realm where consent and respect reign supreme. We advocate for the use of compassionate language that honors all identities and experiences.
- **Be Mindful of Context:** The resonance of a word can shift dramatically based on its surroundings. It is vital to grasp the nuances of the regional tongues you encounter and acknowledge that certain expressions may carry diverse weights or meanings across the cultural tapestry of India. Engage with individuals from various backgrounds to ensure that your language remains empathetic and respectful.
- **Listen to Feedback:** Should someone voice discomfort with a particular term or phrase, extend an apology and refrain from its future use. We continually seek suggestions for additional words or phrases to enrich future iterations of our toolkit. Remain receptive to a multitude of perspectives regarding the language you choose.
- **Awareness and Reflection:** Stay attuned to the evolving landscape of language norms and cultural sensitivities. Encourage the practice of self-reflection and awareness concerning the impact of words on those around you. Language is ever-changing, and sustaining a courageous space necessitates a steadfast commitment to both learning and unlearning.
- **Alternative Language Suggestions:** Reframe words and phrases, offering positive or neutral alternatives for those that may be problematic. For instance, swap "crazy" for "surprising" or "unexpected"; instead of "man up," opt for "be courageous." Encourage language that articulates behaviors or feelings without judgment, such as replacing "overreacting" with "expressing strong feelings."

RESOURCES TO BUILD

While we warmly invite all to embrace this toolkit, share its wisdom within their circles, and champion the creation of a consent-forward culture, we also yearn for communities to begin crafting a comprehensive list of slurs to eschew in our creative realms. BraveSpaces Creative India pledges to diligently curate this collection of harmful terms across various categories on a national scale, striving to honor the agency of the vibrant tapestry of identities in India.

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