

## WA - Wordaholics Anonymous

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Have you noticed how the English language is being butchered? It's happening all around us - from talking heads who spew redundancies, double negatives, tired clichés; to newspapers replete with grammar gaffes; and to i-podophiles who are slicing and dicing the language into alphanumeric strings that look more like computer passwords. How much longer before Shakespeare's famous line becomes '2B or not 2B'?

To wordaphiles, or wordos, this daily assault on the English language is difficult to witness, and it would be a measure of comfort if abusers of words and language had access to a linguistic rehab facility whose primary purpose would be to help individuals achieve verbal propriety - like a Betty Ford Clinic, a Better Word Clinic.

Recovery organizations already exist for all types of addictions: narcotics, cocaine, crystal meth, prescription medication, marijuana, gambling, crime, food, sex. There are also 'anonymous' self-supporting programs for hoarders, shoppers, online gamers. For most abuses, once is too many and one thousand is not enough. So it is with words. The damage of a single word cannot be repaired with a thousand soothing ones. Words can be considered the most powerful drug used and abused by mankind, so why not have an international fellowship of men and women who have a language abuse problem - a Wordaholics Anonymous?

A typical WA meeting session would begin with a recitation of the WA lexical prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the verbiage I cannot change, the courage to use and promote proper English, and the wisdom to know the difference between the use and misuse of the English language. The guiding principles outlining a course of action would be this WA Twelve-Step Program:

1. I will refrain from using sexist, racist, or ageist language.
2. I will not stoop to using foul or obscene language to express my emotions.
3. I will avoid the use of doublespeak, jargon, euphemisms, and other forms of linguistic spin.
4. I will guard against the repeated use of tired, tiresome, worn-out sport clichés and overused proverbs.
5. I will not use abbreviations or acronyms without expanding them at the first mention.
6. I will avoid using redundant verbiage, such as irregardless, forward progress, revert back.
7. I will endeavor not to inflate my sentences with such useless weasel words as 'be that as it may,' 'having said that,' 'at this point in time,' 'going forward.'
8. I will accept and apply new words but will avoid abusing words by creating mutated neologisms, such as 'staycation'; or by deforming healthy nouns into sickly verbs such as 'incentivize.'
9. I will make amends to people that I have harmed with my words.
10. I will refrain from bemoaning the deterioration of the English language and remind myself that 'unique' is no longer unique; that 'like' can serve as any part of speech; that change is an inevitable fact in the life of any language; and that part of the glory of English - from Shakespeare to textspeak - is its constantly changing nature, adaptability, and responsiveness.
11. I will take up the good fight against the current trend to make language an impediment to communication.
12. I will try to carry this message to other wordaholics and to practice these principles in all my verbal affairs.