

Euphemi sm

**A Study in Connotation and
Doublespeak**

Euphemism

- Made up of three bound *morphemes*:, all Greek in origin:

eu (good) +

phem(voice) +

ism (act/result)

Examples of Euphemisms

1. garbage man → sanitation engineer
2. old people → senior citizen
3. pregnant → in the family way
4. die → pass away
5. the dead → the deceased /the late
6. burier → undertaker / mortician
7. lunatic asylums → mental institutions



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"Hey dad, you were wrong. I've counted them all and gran is playing with a full deck of cards!"

The term "concentration camp," was once used to describe camps used to house civilian prisoners in close (concentrated) quarters, by the British during the Boer War, primarily because it sounded bland and inoffensive.

After the Third Reich used the expression to describe its death camps, the term gained enormous negative connotation.

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"I have an announcement to make. Harry has decided to spend more time with his pension."

Connotations change "Idiot," and "moron" were once neutral terms for those of limited mental ability.

Negative connotations tend to crowd out neutral ones, so the phrase mentally retarded was pressed into service to replace them. Now that, too, is considered rude.

A similar progression occurred with *lame* → *crippled* → *handicapped* → *disabled* → *physically challenged* → *differently abled*

Comedian George Carlin gave a famous monologue of how he thought euphemisms undermine attitudes towards serious issues. For example:

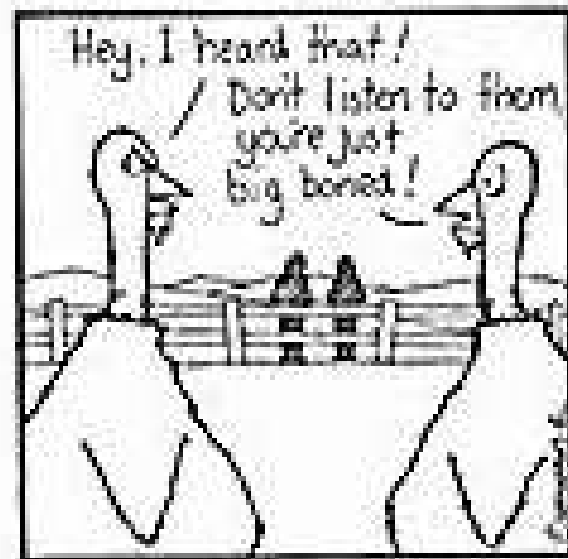
Shell shock (World War I)

Battle fatigue (World War II)

Operational exhaustion (Korean War)

Post-traumatic stress disorder

(Preferred since Vietnam)



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Thank you for your attention !





Brown Material
Road ↗

Dead Parrot



The Dead Parrot sketch from Monty Python and the Flying Circus contains many euphemisms for “dead”

Sanitary landfill for *garbage dump*

Ill-advised for *bad decision*

Pre-owned vehicles for *used cars*

A student being held back a grade level for having *failed*.

Correctional facility for *prison*

Enhanced interrogation technique for *torture*.