



Harm Reduction: An Introduction

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Food for Thought – March 8, 2022 – 12:00-12:30 pm

Land Acknowledgement

Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference.

We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. We are standing on the ancestral lands of the Dakota people. We want to acknowledge the Dakota, the Ojibwe, the Ho Chunk, and the other nations of people who also called this place home. We pay respects to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the treaties made by the Tribal nations that entitle non-Native people to live and work on traditional Native lands. Consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. Please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.*

*This is the acknowledgment given in the USDAC Honor Native Land Guide – edited to reflect this space by Shannon Geshick, MTAG, Executive Director Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Objectives

- Develop a beginning understanding of harm reduction principles
- Understand the challenges to all parties involved in working with harm reduction.
- Discuss ways to practically apply harm reduction principles to professional and personal life

breathe

As we begin, let's take a moment to pause and transition from wherever you have come into this space.

Beginnings of Harm Reduction

- Harm reduction as a treatment methodology began in the substance abuse field. E.g., handing out clean syringes to addicts to reduce the potential for diseases.
- Harm reduction can be used with situations that are at the very least difficult, and may be, traumatic, e.g., HIV, drinking and driving.
- Harm reduction as a method can minimize re-traumatization so that some kind of positive change can be made.
- Since the initial application of harm reduction, its principles have been applied to a variety of diagnoses and behaviors, E.g., safe sex – condoms, etc.

Hoarding and Harm Reduction



What is Harm Reduction?

- An evidence-based set of practical strategies that reduce the negative consequences of a particular health issue. (See SAMHSA.gov for HR information.)
 - This does include Covid-19. HR could be applied to helping people be more careful, even if not perfect, in their actions to be safer.
- The goal is not to eliminate a behavior itself but to minimize negative, unwanted consequences that accompany the behavior.
- Does not require the individual to have “insight” into reasons for their behaviors.
 - This is not the time for a deep understanding of an individual’s actions, rather, it is time for a quick change.
- Does require the individual to recognize the potential for harm to themselves and to agree to minimize the risk.
- Helpful for individuals with cognitive impairments or for people who are unwilling to seek treatment.

How to Use Harm Reduction

- Find out what the goals are of the individual. (Motivational Interviewing)
 - What do they want?
 - How can you address the issue of control with the individual?
 - What can realistically happen?
 - How can you join them in their goal? Or, how can you meet them in the middle when there are absolutes?
 - What do they need to be as safe as possible and still accomplish their goals?
 - Create a specific plan with details and ways to know that progress is actually happening.
 - Explore avenues of support for the individual. And you, too!

Control – Theirs and Yours

- What role does individuality and control play in harm reduction? - Theirs
 - Put your ideas in the chat.
- Responsibility – Yours
 - What are your own goals?
 - What is your position?
 - What are your values?
 - What can you compromise on?
- Let's be clear: this isn't an easy way to work – a lot of grey area – black/white thinking seems simpler.

The Outcome of Harm Reduction

- When you work from the individual's goals, you get buy-in from them. When you have buy-in, they are much more likely to accept that change needs to happen, even if the individual can't have everything they want.
- Compromise.
- Once they acknowledge and achieve compromise, then the idea of harm reduction becomes clearer to the individual.
- Important to note we want to come from a place of information and data rather than personal opinion.
 - E.g., Housing Inspector guidelines rather than "This is how I would keep my home."

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Thank You!