

Save Lives Oregon Learning Collaborative

Harm Reduction Basics

Updated: June 2024



Agenda

- ✓ Welcome & introductions
- ✓ Participant questions and interests
- ✓ What is harm reduction?
- ✓ Harm reduction strategy examples
- ✓ What harm reduction is NOT
- ✓ Harm reduction and substance use treatment
- ✓ Questions

What comes to mind
when you hear
harm reduction?

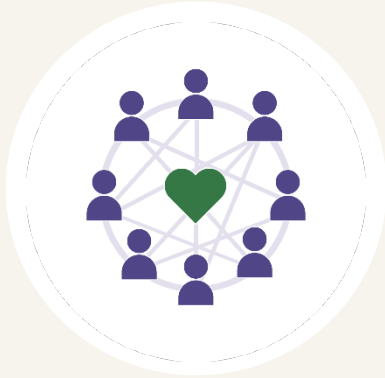
- **Harm reduction** is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences of drug use.
- **Harm reduction** is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in and respect for the rights of people who use drugs.

Source: [Harm Reduction Coalition](#)

- **Embracing Positive Change video** with Dan Bigg



Principles Central to Harm Reduction



Substance use is here to stay

Accepts, for better or worse, that licit and illicit drug use is part of our world and chooses to work to minimize its harmful effects rather than simply ignore or condemn them



Substance use is complex

Understands drug use as a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that encompasses a continuum of behaviors from severe use to total abstinence, and acknowledges that some ways of using drugs are clearly safer than others.



Focus on quality of life

Establishes quality of individual and community life and well-being — not necessarily cessation of all drug use — as the criteria for successful interventions and policies



Services are nonjudgmental and non-coercive

Calls for the non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm

Sources:

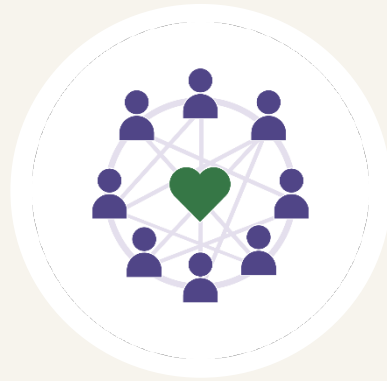
[National Harm Reduction Coalition](#)
[The HaRRT Center](#)

Principles Central to Harm Reduction



Participant driven

Ensures that people who use drugs and those with a history of drug use routinely have a real voice in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them



Participant centered

Affirms people who use drugs (PWUD) themselves as the primary agents of reducing the harms of their drug use and seeks to empower PWUD to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of use



Advocates for social justice and racial equity

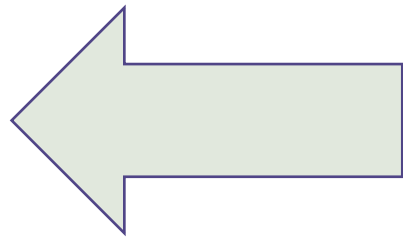
Recognizes that the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination, and other social inequalities affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm



Does not minimize tragic harms and dangers

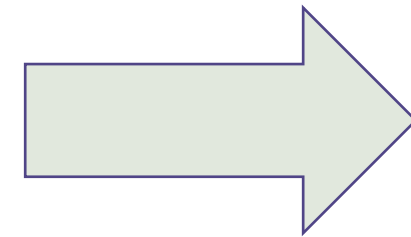
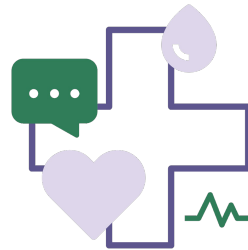
Does not attempt to minimize or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger that can be associated with illicit drug use

The Harm Reduction Gap



**Primary Drug
Prevention**

The Harm Reduction Gap



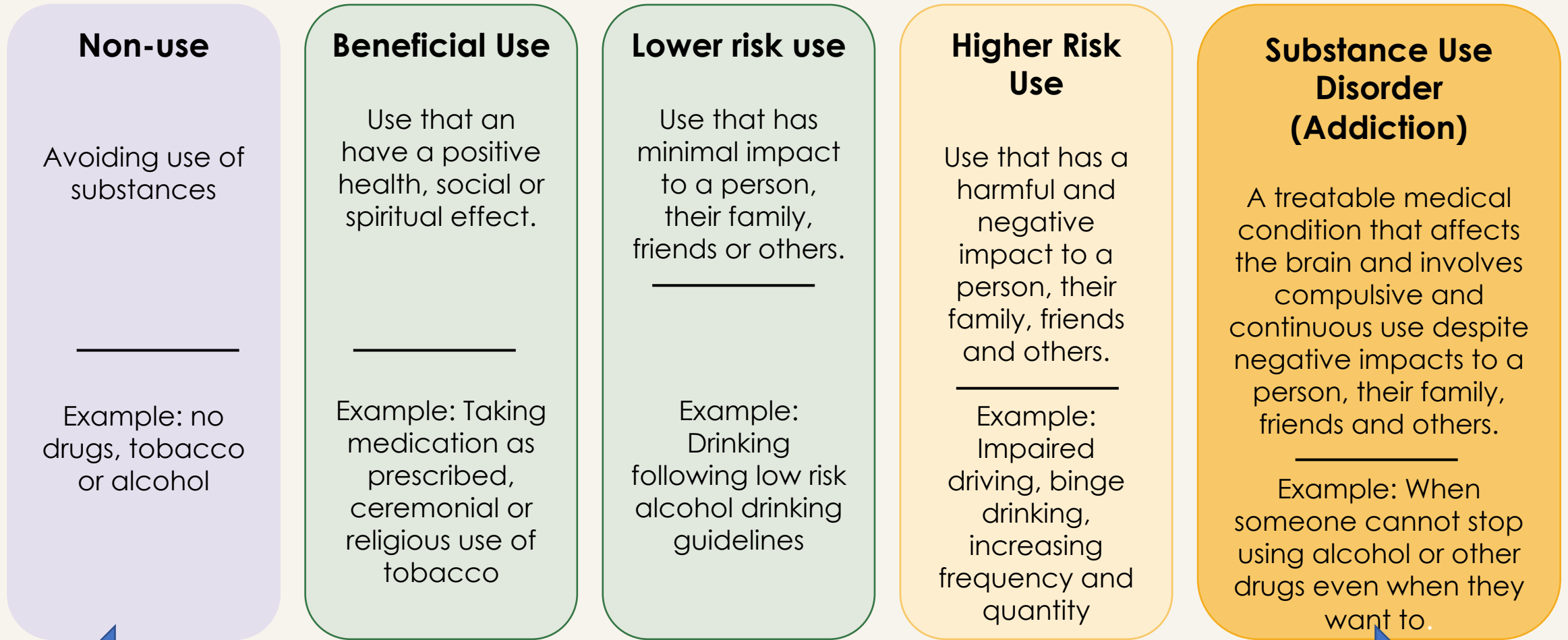
**Substance Use
Treatment**

The **Harm Reduction Gap** is the void in our current continuum of care between abstinence-based prevention programs and abstinence-only treatment programs, where people who currently use drugs are left without access to the knowledge, skills and tools to stay safe.

Source: The Harm Reduction Gap by ~Sheila P. Vakharia

Harm reduction and substance use treatment

Substance Use Spectrum

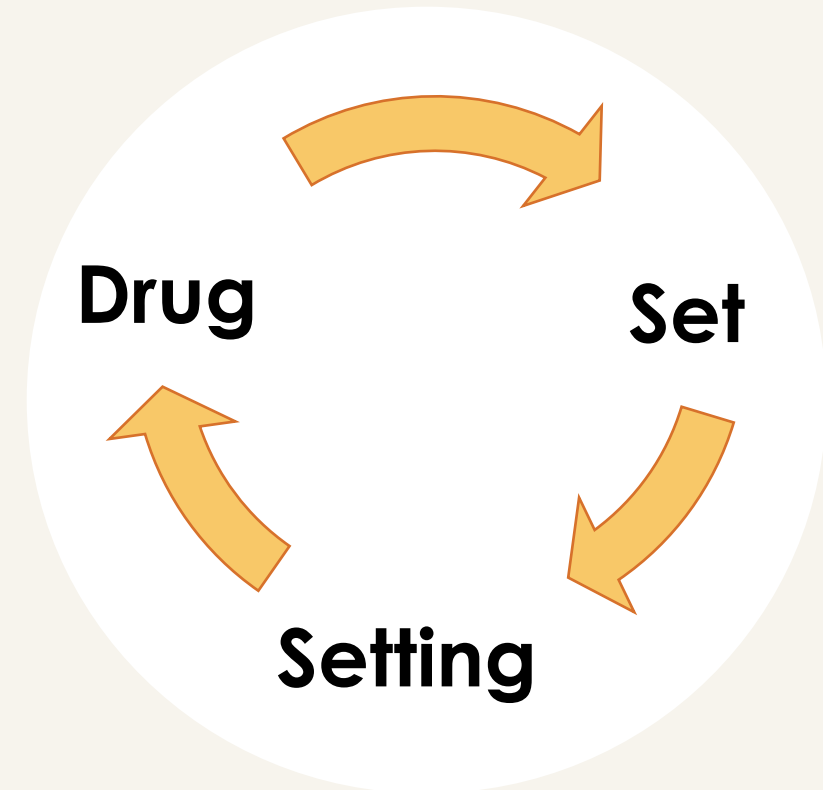


A person may move back and forth between stages over time

Interventions Drug, Set and Setting

Drug, Set and Setting Model

- **Drug (and associated risk)**
What is the drug or drugs? How is the drug taken? What is known about how the drug works? What are the risks of overdose? What other harms may exist? Is the drug what the person thinks it is?
- **Set or “mindset” (of the person who uses the drug)** For example, how are they feeling? Are they in physical pain or hurt? Do they need to “get well”? What is their age, health situation, prior experiences etc.?
- **Social setting and environment where the drug use occurs.**
Where is the person? Is the person at home? At work? On the street? Who is around the person? Family, bystanders, police, partners? What are the norms and legality of use?



Harm Reduction Intervention and Strategy Examples



- Safer use supplies: syringe access and smoking supplies
- Naloxone “Leave Behind” kits
- Naloxone distribution to people who are currently using drugs
- Accurate drug education
- Other examples?

What harm reduction is NOT

Harm Reduction is NOT the same as Use Reduction

Use reduction *can* be one goal.



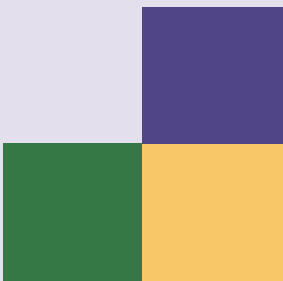
HOWEVER



Harm reduction is the true goal.

Questions?

**Closing: The National Harm Reduction
Coalition Video [Harm Reduction Truth](#)**



For more information

Website

- [National Harm Reduction Coalition](#)
- [UW Harm Reduction Research & Treatment Center](#)
- [NIDA Harm Reduction Approaches to Reduce Overdose Deaths](#)
- [Health and Human Services \(HHS\) Harm Reduction](#)
- [SAMHSA Harm Reduction Framework](#)

Books

- [*The Harm Reduction Gap: Helping individuals left behind by conventional drug prevention and abstinence-only addiction treatment*](#) by Sheila P. Vakharia
- [*Undoing Drugs*](#) by Maia Szalavitz
- [*Harm Reduction Treatment for Substance Use*](#) by Susan Collins
- [*Saving Our Own Lives: A Liberatory Practice of Harm Reduction*](#) by Shira Hassan
- [*Fighting for Space*](#) by Travis Lupick
- [*Light Up the Night*](#) by Travis Lupick
- [*OD: The Politics of Overdose*](#) by Nancy D. Campbell

Thank you

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Salvando Vidas
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