

THIS IS NOT A PHASE

A HARM REDUCTION NEWSLETTER

AN INTRODUCTION

THIS ISSUE IS INTENDED AS AN INTRODUCTION FOR THOSE NEW TO HARM REDUCTION APPROACHES.



CHALLENGE MISCONCEPTIONS

The idea of harm reduction may raise concerns that need to be addressed. The following set of concerns and responses are adapted from: Harm Reduction: A British Columbia Community Guide.

Harm Reduction Enables Drug Use & Addiction

No. For those who do not want to quit, cannot quit, or relapse into drug use, harm reduction can effectively prevent HIV, hepatitis C and other types of drug-related harm such as overdose

THE BREAKDOWN

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with 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. When we break it down, it harm reduction encompasses values that guide our work and interactions with people who use drugs.

The following principles have been adapted from the Harm Reduction Coalition;

CHALLENGE MISCONCEPTIONS

Harm Reduction Increases Likelihood of Drug Use Among Non-Drug Users

No. Many scientific studies have shown no evidence that the introduction of harm reduction strategies increase drug use. Though some people feel that providing needles may encourage others to start using drugs, this view underestimates the complexity of factors that shape people's decisions about whether to use drugs.

Harm Reduction Drains Resources

Harm reduction interventions are

relatively inexpensive and cost effective. They increase social and financial efficiency by interrupting the transmission of infectious disease at a lower cost, rather than waiting to treat complications of advanced illness at a much higher cost.

Harm Reduction Encourages Decriminalization & Legalization

Harm reduction attempts to deal with the harms from drug use as it occurs within the current global regulatory regime. Harm reduction itself is neutral

regarding the question of legalization. The philosophy of harm reduction applies equally to alcohol and tobacco use, which is legal in most countries.

Harm Reduction Threatens Public Safety

Evidence has demonstrated that harm reduction programs do the opposite. They have a positive impact on public health by reducing the prevalence of viruses such as HIV and hepatitis C.

For more info; www.health.gov.bc.ca



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**ACCEPTS THAT FOR
BETTER OR WORSE,
DRUG USE IS A PART
OF OUR WORLD.**

BREAKING IT DOWN

- Accepts, for better and 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- Affirms people who use drugs themselves as the primary agents of reducing the harms of their drug use, and seeks to empower users to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of use.
- 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 attempt to minimize or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger associated with licit and illicit drug use.

For more information, please visit www.harmreductioncoalition.org

