

Thank You for being here!

I have something to share at the
end of the presentation!

Cassandra Toppi is your presenter.

Presenting on
Transforming Lives With Harm Reduction!
Whether you believe in it or not!

I'm a Peer with Lived Experience, Coach and a
SMART Recovery National Family & Friends Facilitator.

3:30 to 4:45PM

What am I hoping? That no one walks out! Seriously, that we can accept Harm reduction whether we believe in it or not by the end of the presentation.

I invite you to have an open mind and come from a place of curiosity.

Seeing things from a different camera lens could be helpful for ourselves then in turn others.

What this is not. This is not a debate. This is not a science class. This is not the only and right way to think about Harm Reduction. You do not have to agree with Cassandra.

This is meant to bring understanding to the idea of 'Behaviors make sense'!

Thank you for being here and please enjoy (:



For things to reveal themselves to us, we need to be ready to abandon our views about them.

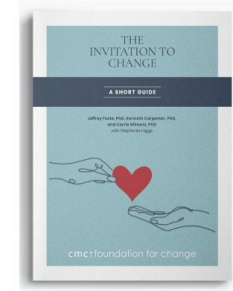
- Thich Nhat Hanh



Presentation is based on
SMART Recovery.



The CMC Foundation's, Invitation To
Change sometimes called ITC.



And Cassandra Toppi's
thoughts and Ideas!



CMC = Center For Motivation and Change.



1 Build and maintain motivation.

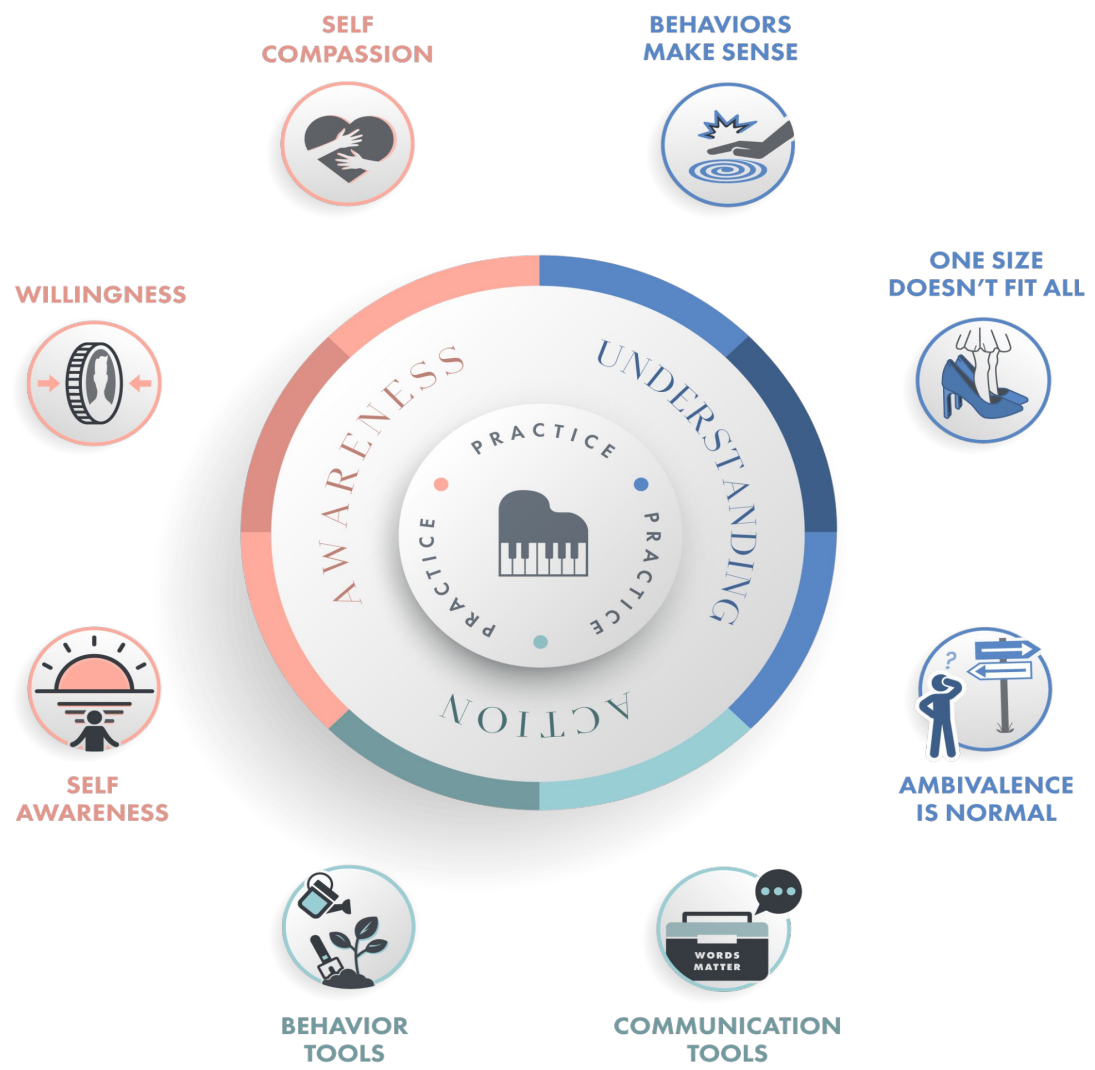
2 Cope with urges.

3 Manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

4 Live a balanced life.

The Whole Picture

The ITC Wheel.



Acceptance to whatever is going on in that very moment. Is not wishing for it to change. And not waiting for it to change. Acceptance is meeting the person where they are at this 'very' moment in time, right here and now.

Harm reduction approaches may be challenging for some to start using over some of the past interventions, strategies or belief systems, such as the "abstinence only" idea.

Accepting that being a helper is the willingness to pick up and hold both sides of a coin.

ITC invites you to remember that pain is part of connecting with what's important and it doesn't need to go away.

Willingness is a new way to relate to pain.

WILLINGNESS



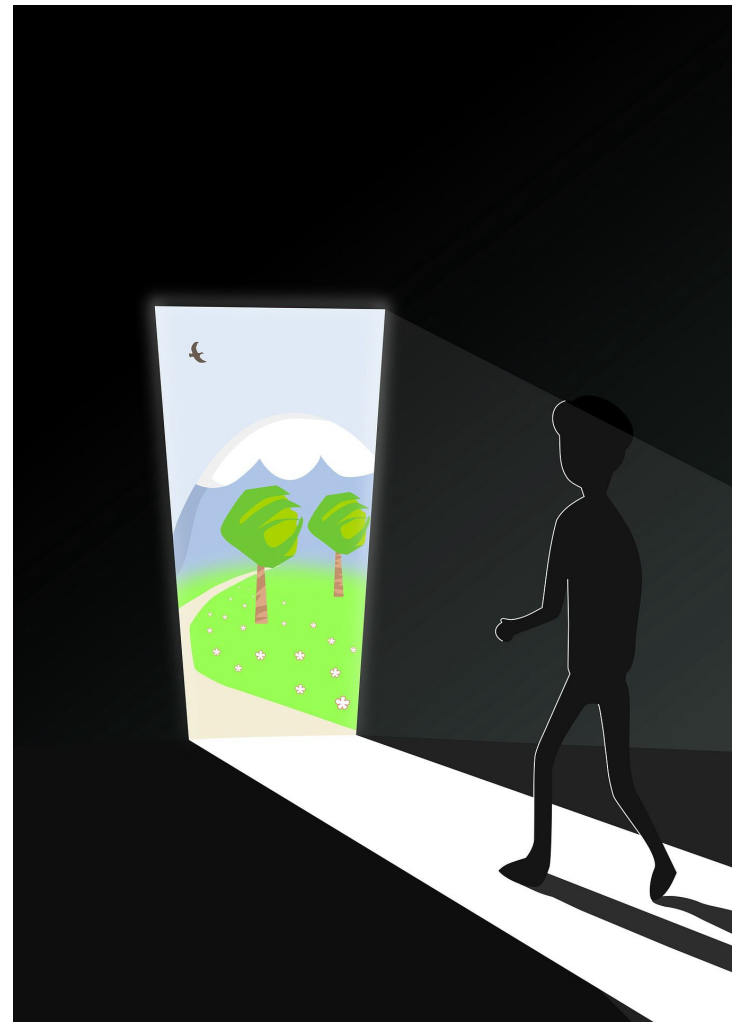
BEHAVIORS MAKE SENSE



ITC reminds you that actions matter, when we act intentionally, by pressing the Pause Button and not reacting, we are better able to positively support positive change by remembering Behaviors Make Sense.

Understanding does not mean I agree, I am
condoning or that I am happy with what it is
you are doing.

Understanding just gives us a doorway of
coming from a different place and not being
closed off.



Frequently Asked Questions

Some questions that might be helpful to answer.

What exactly is harm reduction? Although there are many descriptions and statements regarding harm reduction. For the purpose of today's presentation, **we are not going to bring up papers and argue for it or against it.**

Today I invite you to come from a place of curiosity and open mindedness!

Think of harm reduction as a compassionate set of ideas to help navigate, decreasing the negative harm associated with any behaviors of concern.

It prioritizes autonomy, dignity, and safety over demanding abstinence at this very moment in time. Or having to do it the way we think a person 'should'. It meets people exactly where they are.

I invite you to removed the word 'should' from your Vocabulary today!

Is harm reduction evidence-based?

Yes, harm reduction is supported by years and years of public health and clinical research. Studies confirm Harm Reduction does have effectiveness in reducing overdose deaths, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, increasing engagement in treatment by using ideas from CRAFT, Invitation To Change, SMART Recovery, and by supporting **ANY positive life changes. Key word being ANY!!**

Can harm reduction work for severe addiction?

Yes. Harm reduction is effective across the entire spectrum of substance use, including severe substance use disorders. By supporting any positive change, it creates an accessible pathway to help reduce risks and **improve quality of life**, where abstinence only methods often fail to provide that.

Is moderation a realistic goal?

- *For many individuals, yes, moderation is a realistic and appropriate goal.
- *The goal is always defined by the Person.
- *For others, abstinence remains the safest and most effective goal.
- *Harm reduction supports the person in exploring and pursuing whichever path whether in moderation, safer use, or abstinence, whichever best aligns with the person's values and improves their well-being at this time right now.
- *The person often tries Harm Reduction to see if they are able to include that in **their own life**.
- *This idea can fall under Ambivalence is normal. [That the reason someone uses and reasons they don't want to use can coexist and make sense all at the same time. Understanding that the person find a balance that actually works for them. - CMC](#)



**AMBIVALENCE
IS NORMAL**

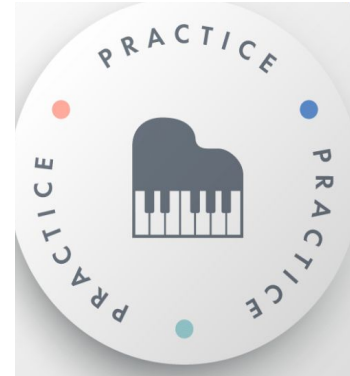
Harm reduction is a set of practical, everyday strategies aimed at reducing the negative consequences of risky behaviors, focusing on safety and well-being rather than requiring immediate abstinence.

*These practices are common in everyday life, often revolving around health, safety, and injury prevention. harmreduction.org

Some Harm Reduction ideas make sense and some don't. It doesn't have to make sense to us. We do not need to agree with Harm Reduction ideas.

Doesn't that take the pressure off? That it doesn't have to make sense to us! We can Roll with the Resistance, think Motivational Interviewing.

ITC reminds us that practice, practice, practice is the glue that holds it all together, that behavior change is hard, it takes a lot of practice to make these changes in a meaningful and sustainable way – it's worth the effort! Isn't it worth sharing what we know regarding SMART Recovery! The effort to have a better relationship with your loved one, even if it's a tiny improvement!



Reducing the stigma linked to addiction:

When we look through a compassionate harm reduction lens, then negative attitudes toward addiction can be reduced.

This act can help support individuals who grapple with all behaviors of concern. Feeling like they can go somewhere and not be shamed or coerced into something they're not ready for, and that could be very freeing for the person who is struggling with behaviors of concern.



Sometimes that's the very first step in the recovery process for that person.

Here we are reminded that in ITC Self compassion can impact our efforts to help because we will be more able to recognize and acknowledge the stress and emotion involved in trying to help another person. And then you'll be able to better deal with stress and emotions regarding our interactions with others as a helper. Taking care of yourself is always a crucial aspect. **Self compassion is kindness and kindness helps everything. Self compassion helps you go to distance.**

**SELF
COMPASSION**





Harm Reduction is effective even though it doesn't stop the Behavior of Concern.

Doctors often express, 'Harm Reduction brings people in'. - Dr. Josh King, CMC NYC.

That includes bringing a person into SMART Recovery meetings whether in person or online.

**ONE SIZE
DOESN'T FIT ALL**



In One Size doesn't fit All, ITC invites you to take the other person's perspective and "walk in their shoes" as away to start helping.

What are the benefits of Harm Reduction in 1 word?

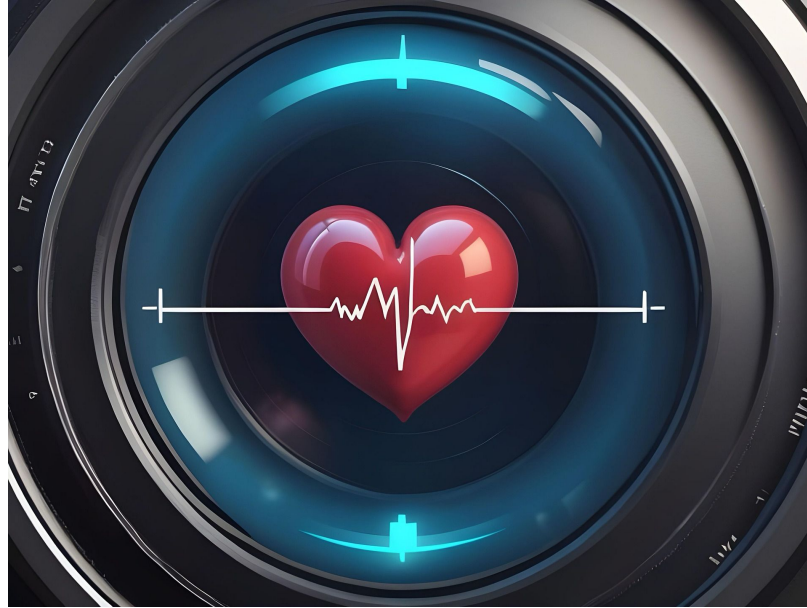


Harm reduction is a well-studied approach used to engage people who use drugs and equip them with life-saving tools and information to create positive change in their lives and potentially save their own lives.

Core principles of harm reduction.



The Goals of Harm Reduction are to Empower people with substance use disorders, behaviors of concern and their families, with the choice to live a healthy, self-directed, and purpose-filled life.



How Do We Accomplish This?

By treat everyone with compassion, without judgment, and without discrimination, acknowledging that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and by remembering Behaviors Make Sense.

Also by remembering we catch more bees with honey than with vinegar.



What are the most common reasons for not seeking treatment?

9. No openings in a program (1.7%) having to wait.
8. Belief treatment would not help (4.3%)
7. Did not have time (5.2%)
6. Did not feel a need for treatment at the time (5.6%)
5. Did not want others to find out (6.5%)
4. Believed could handle the problem without treatment (9.0%)
3. Might cause neighbors/community to have a negative opinion (11.9%)

2. Did not find a program that offered the type of treatment that they wanted (14.4%). I found that very interesting. That applies to us too!! Are we meeting them where they are with the type of help they are inquiring about?

1. No healthcare coverage and could not afford cost (19.1%)

Why else might we want to think it's okay to invite Harm Reduction into our lives even if we do not agree with it?

Because it improves the health and quality of life.

That in itself could be a great motivator for ourselves. WHY?

Because we can choose to press the Pause Button and remind ourselves that we are helping plant the seeds of Recovery at any given time.

Often times that happens to be the very first time a Participant might be arriving at a meeting or a Loved One deciding to talk to us!

Now that's some powerful stuff.



Pressing the **Pause Button** can fall under **Self-awareness**, having a new perspective where you are now noticing and experiencing your feelings your thoughts your reactions and how your body is doing during any point in time.

Where realizing what are your values and checking in on what matters to you..

Like why you decided to run a group, why you decided to spread the word about SMART Recovery and if you're a family member remembering **WHY** you chose to show up at the meetings, what is your **wanted** connection to your loved one?

And knowing that behaviors will upset you plain and simple.
Pressing the pause button and not reacting to what we are thinking and feeling can be quite helpful to anyone, including Ourselves and our Loved Ones.

Self-awareness lets you be you and choose who you really want to be!



**SELF
AWARENESS**

The Stages of Change in Harm Reduction.
Is something helpful for us
to remember in the Recovery process.

Change is not only difficult, but also comes with
drawbacks.

“It’s not so much that we’re afraid of change or
so in love with the old ways, but it’s that place in between that we
fear...

It’s like being between trapezes.

It’s Linus, when his blanket is in the dryer. There’s nothing to hold
on to.”

- Marilyn Ferguson, Author, Philosopher





In *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, Linus is known for his security blanket, which symbolizes comfort and fear.

In a symbolic moment, Linus drops his blanket when saying "fear not," representing the release of anxiety and reliance on inner strength.

Is it possible coming from a Harm Reduction mindset and Empowering people, can make people feel stronger and break free of this struggle?

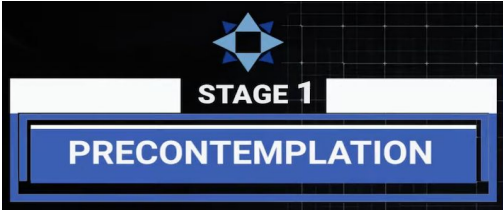
YES, YES IT IS!!

How are we doing
so far?

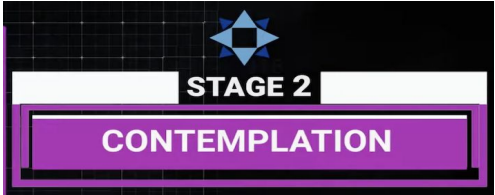


The Stages of Change
regarding
Substance Use And Behaviors of Concern.

Pre-contemplation do not see that there is a problem. No need to change.



Contemplation maybe there is a problem? Starting to think about change.



Walking the walk!

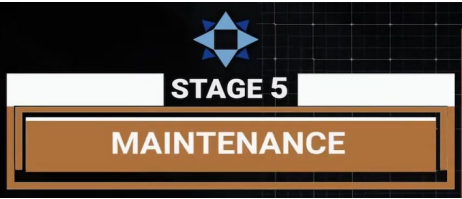


Lapse, a slip up for a short period of time.
Relapse returning to old patterns of behavior.
Learn from each lapse.

Preparation thinking, and looking at ways to make changes.



Maintenance sustained change new behavior replaces old.



Action making active changes.



The Transtheoretical Model: Stages of Change

Stage	Intervention
Pre-contemplation	Empathy/Understanding
Contemplation	Explore & Amplify Ambivalence
Preparation	Clarify Focus, Plan, & Set Goals
Action	Support Self-Efficacy
Maintenance	Monitor Relapse Triggers
Relapse	Roll with it – Reassess and Revise

Things to Keep in Mind Regarding Stages of Change and Us the Helper.

Don't engage in persuasion, "I think you should", it's not effective in cultivating internal motivation for change and can be felt as coercive and then can be harmful.

Be aware of an individual's resistance or if their guard is up and understand it as a cue that **WE ARE NOT** meeting the individual where they are.

Refocus on the goal to reduce harm, **NOT** eliminate the risky behavior altogether.
I really want to acknowledge that this can be very hard!!

Empower people with how they can stay safe today to foster Trust.

Remember our Trust Bank from SMART Recovery.



These thoughts also fall into why communication matters, think traffic lights, think 'red light - green lights'.

Effective communication starts with a very basic idea that if you want to hear and be heard, you'll need to pay attention to the signals.

The signals your conversation partner is giving you. Driving without paying attention to the traffic lights is a sure fire way to have an accident; similarly, when you don't pay attention to cues coming from the person you are talking to, you can cause a conversation to crash.

Communication that is collaborative instead of controlling, confrontational, one-sided, or dismissive of your loved ones perspective decreases defensiveness, and invites the kind of conversations that support Change. **Words Matter.**



Shake your hands!

Now Clap them together and rub!



Setting Harm Reduction Goals - think of your North Star or what kind of Lighthouse do you want to be?

Building trust and hope with people one non-judgmental and empathic moment at a time.



To increase positive behaviors.

Even though you are upset, you reinforce any improvement in behavior because you truly understand how hard it was for the person to even show up.



**BEHAVIOR
TOOLS**

Let's take a minute to think, what might you intend to do differently going forward?

Keeping in mind that we know we catch more bees with honey!



Moving forward might look like thinking consciously of the change talk you are hearing, for example..

- ★ Planned substance use schedule.
- ★ Predetermined the amount to be used and they are preparing accordingly.
- ★ Scheduled at least one abstinence day a week.
- ★ Used one drug at a time.
- ★ Talked about ways they are willing to reduce frequency and or intensity of use.
- ★ Started with the lowest dose possible, then waited.
- ★ Kept track of their responses to the substance.
- ★ Increased very slowly until they achieve their desired goal.

Remember our 'Exchange Vocabulary' worksheet it states -
REBT does not endeavor to eliminate emotions. Quite to the contrary!
Emotions are very useful and part of the human advantage – when appropriate!

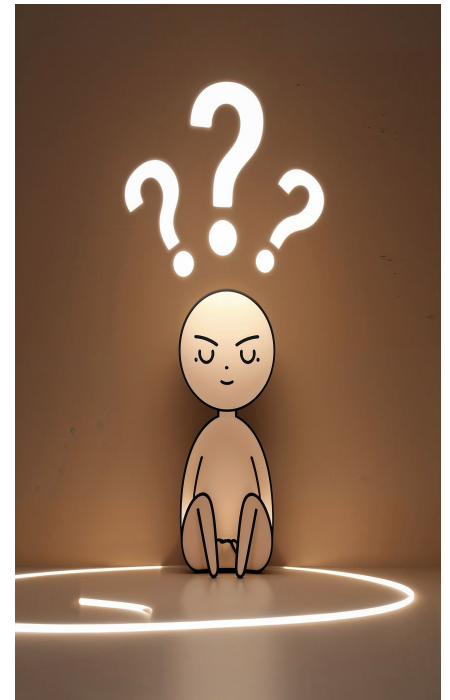
- ★ Harm reduction provides non-judgmental compassionate care and consistent positive regard while meeting people where they are, and does not strive to leave them there.
- ★ Focus on reducing harm, not eradicating the behavior.
- ★ Provide practical options to minimize harm, not to condone risky behavior.
- ★ People are the experts on themselves and lead the process.
- ★ Allow people to be empowered to reduce their harm.

Find out what they want to “call” the problem.

“What would you say were the events that led up to what happened today?”

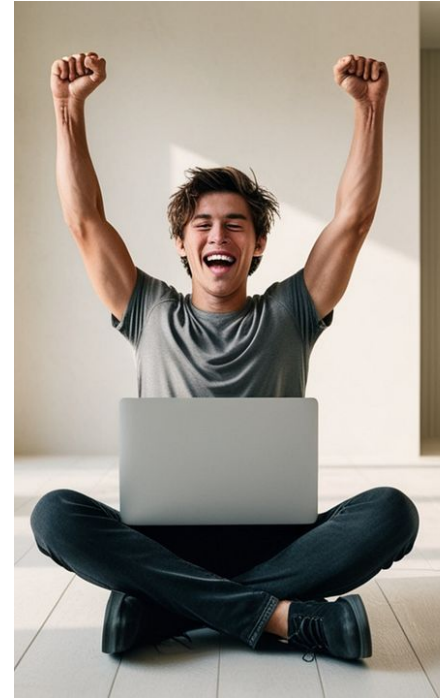
“What have you done to try to make it better or reduce use?”

What are their concerns about the condition or treatment?



Harm reduction reinforces safe interactions with helpers and promotes the development of motivation.

Harm reduction is person centered care with the thoughts that Individuals can help themselves - **they are a resource too.**

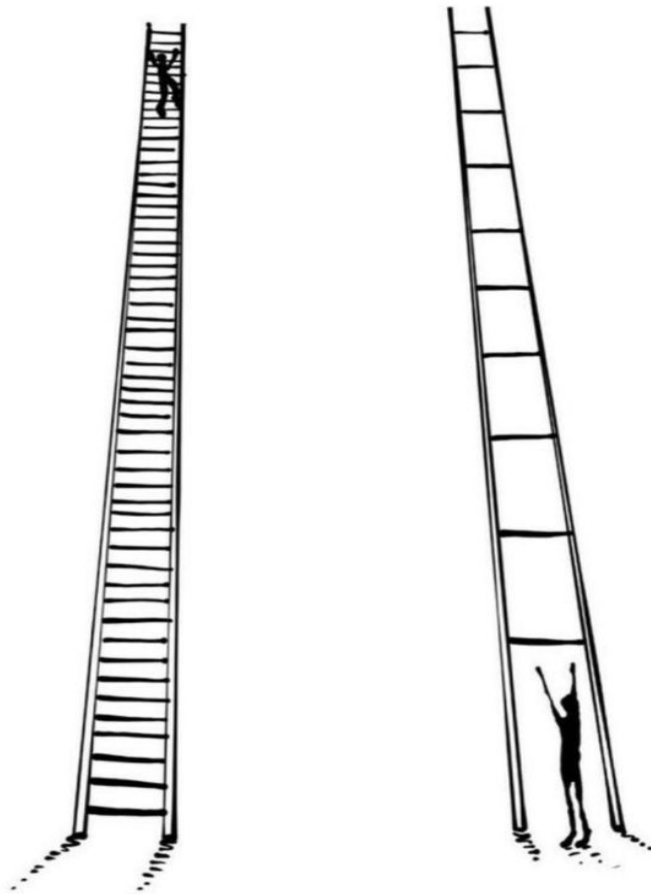


Recovery is not a linear process and success includes multiple small steps rather than a couple huge steps.

Remembering that Even tiny Baby Steps get us around the block!



The importance of small steps



Remember we know and have seen that people might still be engaged in the Behaviors of Concern in spite of their own suffering as a result of their Behaviors of Concern.

Engaging in usage is due to the person IS ALREADY Suffering.

We also know when people feel worse they engage in their Behavior of Concern more.

I invite you to have curiosity.. I invite you to have openness..
You do not even have to accept or even embrace
Harm Reduction.

Remember what was shared already, just because we
understand does not for one second have to mean
'I agree with, I am condoning or I am happy with your choice!!'

**With this knowledge,
we are now armed to share with people,
'there is another way'.**



That is where our Northstar comes in. I invite you to think of your Northstar, which might be wanting to share your knowledge regarding SMART Recovery or your knowledge of the tools and how you've used the program to help yourself!

So with those thoughts 'harm reduction' can mean simply, I support you trying to figure this out, I support you and what positive things you might want to try. I support you in caring for yourself.

And when we are coming from that compassionate place naturally, we can then again come from that place of curiosity and ask questions along the lines of;

What might that look like to take better care of yourself?
What might that look like for you to not drink during the week?
How would you go about not drinking during the week?

Does that feel more empowering to you All?!



People might then be motivated to start with a goal of doing something small as opposed to stop using completely at this time.

I ask you to think of something that you've wanted to do in the past.

Now I'm going to ask you to think of a number from 0 to 10. 0 being unable to do this to 10 being easily able to do this. I would like for you to pick something that is a 4, 5, or 6.

Now, how does it feel to you if I start to badger about why is it not a 10?

Why are you not at 10 yet?

You know that you have to do this, what's going on with you?

Might it be better to come from a place of...

I want an improvement of my loved ones life and I will partner with you.

I want an improvement of the participants so that they attend my meeting so then we could come from the place of establishing a good relationship possibly.

Now, how does that sound and feel to you all?



You could maybe ask yourself -

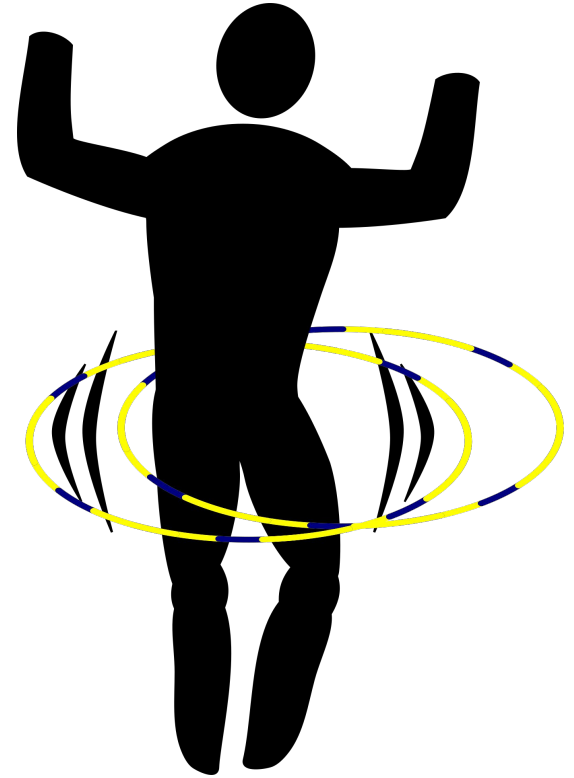
What do the people you are engaging with;
would wish people who press abstinence-only
interventions would understand?



I can still have hope and want people achieving the greatest reduction of harm and wanting people to stop using altogether!

All of our hopes, aspirations, thoughts and wishes are in our own hoop.

What other people are doing outside of our hula hoop is of course outside of Our Hula Hoop!



Let's imagine this for a moment.

If people are not even sure that they want to stop doing something.

Or that they can even stop whatever they're wanting to try to stop doing.

Then add to that mix, sometimes people are afraid they're not going to be able to do it.

So it's maybe just easier to not even try to do it so they don't have to disappoint people around them or even themselves.

From what I just shared, it might be clear now that we can't control people into doing anything especially when they're not even sure if it's something they want to do or even try.

So then what is the option? Drum Roll please.



DUN DUN DUN DUNNNNNN - think Safety first! WHY?!

Because Safety first brings us into the harm reduction mindset.



So if someone is trying to figure out how they can continue to use and cut back on using, and if we tell them that they're not going to be successful no matter what they try to do.

They might give up and say why even bother trying anything.



As opposed to someone seeing how other people are maybe doing it. Maybe they will choose to be open minded combined with listening to how other people are testing things. Then being open to learning tools, learning strategies, learning to surf urges, and all that from us WITHOUT telling them how something can and should be done.

They for themselves can see what action steps they can take to possibly cut down, which would be a form of harm reduction.

Now that is exciting all because we didn't tell them 'NO HARM REDUCTION DOESN'T WORK OR WORKED FOR ME' or anything like that.

See why we do not even have to say we believe in or not believe in Harm reduction for a person to stop engaging in the Behaviors of concern?!

Learning the tools is also a form of harm reduction! Counting drinks is a form of harm reduction! Setting out to eat 2 bites of dessert as opposed to eating the whole dessert is Harm Reduction!

And all of that matters when trying to figure out if we're wanting to stop something or not.

This empowers the person, this helps the person find their own motivation. Their own motivational ideas for Change. This helps us than not impose our own opinions and this saves us from possibly losing contact with the person who was exploring help. That is a win-win situation!



Unconditional Acceptance:

We are all imperfect beings in an imperfect world!



Unconditional **Self**-Acceptance (USA)

“I have worth, just as I am.”

“I am more than just my behavior.”

“I cannot change the past, but I can change my future.”



Unconditional **Other**-Acceptance (UOA)

“Other people don’t always act in ways that I prefer.”

“Other people have value, regardless of their flaws.”

“Other people are as worthy as I am, no more and no less.”



Unconditional **Life** -Acceptance (ULA)

“Life is full of ups and downs.”

“Life does not always treat me fairly.”

“I don’t have to like something in order to accept it.”

Disputing our own Negative thoughts -
Think of Unconditional Life Acceptance.

ULA = life is full of ups and downs, life does not always treat me fairly and and **I don't have to like something in order to accept it.**

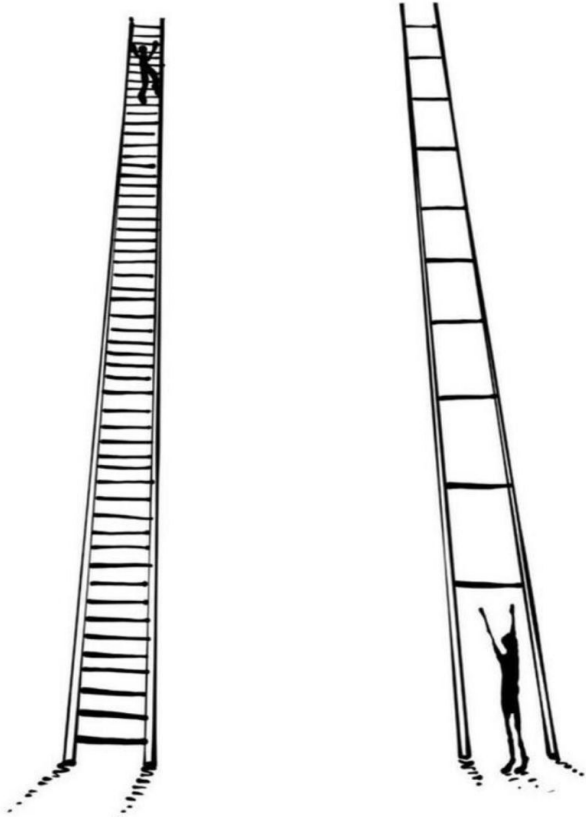
An example of how I handle this negative thought if I see that, Oh Harm Reduction is not working for this person, creeping into my mind because after all I am human, having my own thoughts.

I remind myself, I cannot control the first thought that pops into my head.

What I can say in response to my thought is; regardless of where the person is, I am leaning on hope and with that I am so very happy that person is here.



The importance of small steps



As a Helper we are reminded that the story, thoughts and ideas of the person we are interacting with are super important.

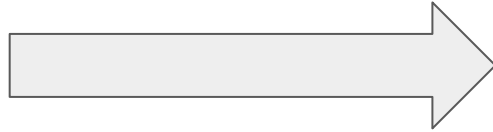
Remembering they are a source too.

Remembering small doesn't mean insignificant!

The most important point!!

WHO WANTS TO BE
TOLD WHAT TO DO,
TYPICALLY??!!

(SEE LIST!)



Okay everything we went over so far brings us here.

If everything discussed so far has not gotten you even more curious about how you can see Harm Reduction as a starting point of Recovery in a whole lot of areas of Recovery.

I invite you to lean on Motivational Interviewing, right about now.

THINK CAPE!



In motivational interviewing, CAPE stands for Compassion, Acceptance, Partnership, and Evocation or Empowerment.



These four elements constitute the foundational "spirit" or the mindset of MI, fostering a supportive, empathetic, and collaborative environment that empowers people to find their own motivation for positive change.

Compassion: Actively prioritizing the person's needs, welfare, and best interests.

Acceptance: Respecting the person's autonomy, worth, and perspective without judgment.

Partnership: Collaborating with the person as equals, rather than taking an expert and recipient role. It emphasizes are doing it together approach.

Evocation or Empowerment: Drawing out the person's own ideas and motivations for change, rather than imposing them.

You do not need to believe in or even agree with Harm Reduction to meet Loved Ones and Participants where they are! How freaking amazing is that!!?? Just use CAPE!

Harm Reduction is often times the first step in the Recovery Process -

Cassandra Toppi

The greatest gift that you can give to others is the gift of unconditional love and acceptance. - Brian Tracy



Summary: Studies confirm Harm Reduction does have effectiveness in reducing overdose deaths, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, increasing engagement in treatment in many different forms by using the ideas of CRAFT, The Invitation to change approach (ITC), SMART Recovery, and by supporting ANY positive life changes. **Key word being ANY!!**

Remember, you are human and we cannot unlearn the natural want to fix something and that is okay.

SMART Recovery Family and Friends and ITC can help you and your loved ones, by creating a life, grounded in kindness, mutual respect, collaboration, support for healthy activities, and your core values.

While the changes you were hoping to see won't happen instantly, I hope SMART Recovery and ITC can bring you a sense of helpfulness purpose, greater connection, and ultimately hope. Page 102 ITC & Cassandra

Harm reduction provides non-judgmental compassionate care and consistent positive regard while meeting people where they are, but does not strive to leave them there.

People are the experts on themselves and lead the process - allow people to be empowered to reduce their harm.



365 New days, 365 New chances...

What are you going to do with your 365 New days
and 365 New chances with your Loved one or Participant?

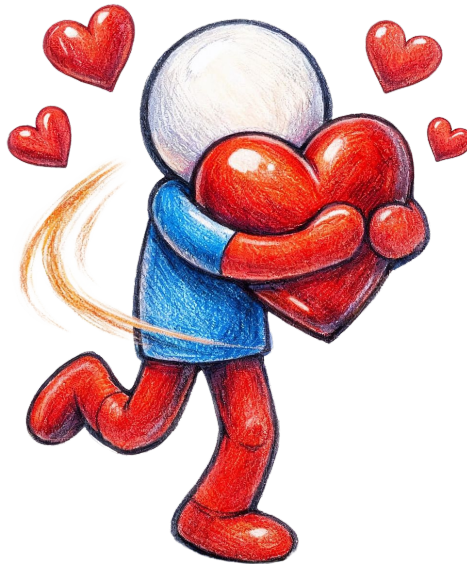
That is my cute dog!
Maggie Alice!



I invite **you** to exercise
your Power of Choice.

You are an important part of the Healing process.

Remember: Selfcare, selfcare, selfcare and again selfcare.



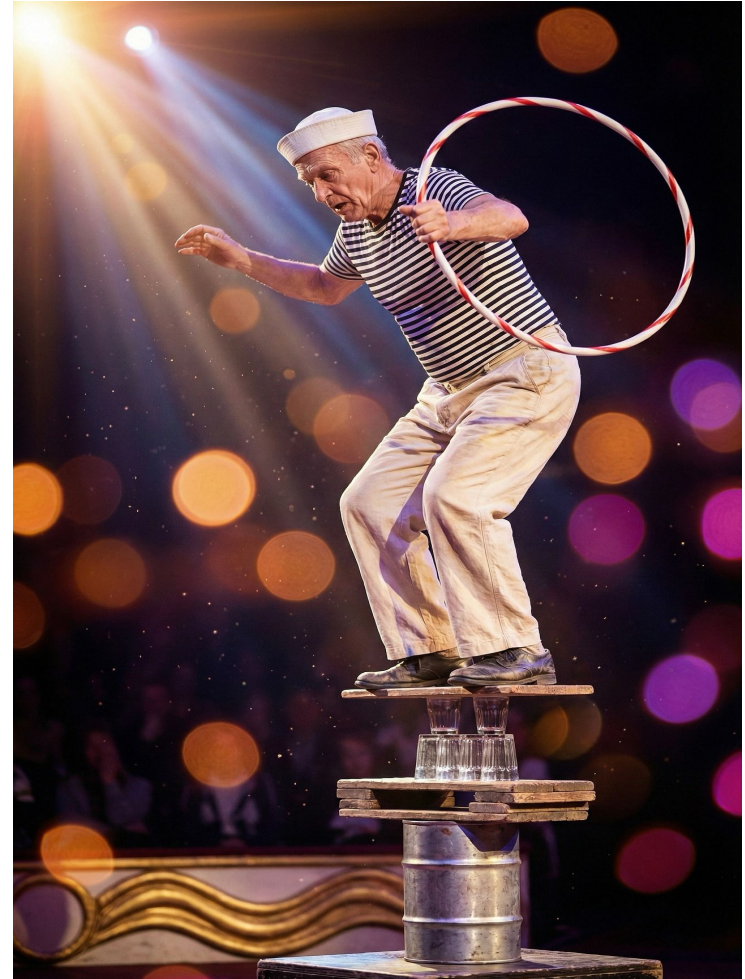
I have a question for you, are you ready to see and welcome Harm Reduction as a starting point without having to embrace it?

If you are still having opposition to this thought I have another question, are you staying in your Hula Hoop?

Yes

No

Or Maybe so?



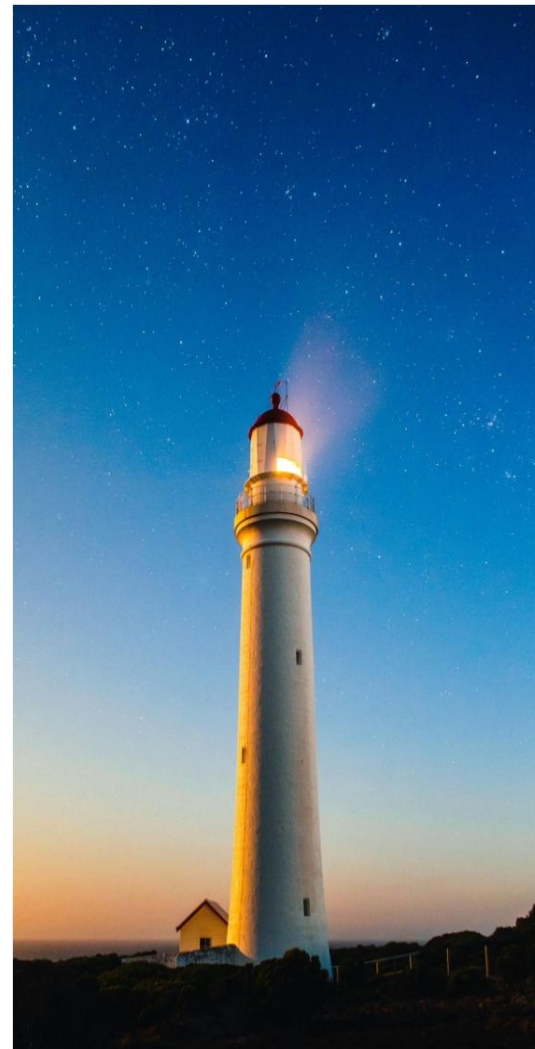
The Lighthouse

“Consider a lighthouse. It stands on the shore with its beckoning light, guiding ships safely into the harbor. The lighthouse can't uproot itself, wade out into the water, grab the ship by the stern and say, "listen, you fool – if you stay on this path you will break up on the rocks.”

No. The ship has some responsibility for its own destiny. It can choose to be guided by the light in the lighthouse. Or, it can go its own way. The lighthouse is not responsible for the ship's decisions.

All it can do is be the best lighthouse it knows how to be.”

Page 103 first addition in *Family and Friends Handbook* & Page 102 Second Addition.
Paul T. Mason and Randi Kreger from "Stop Walking on Eggshells"



Thank you
for not walking out
on my talk (:

You are all freaking amazing!

Here is what I wanted to share
with you ALL.



A special discount code for the Training offered by the CMC Foundation for
the Invitation To Change Approach **FFC20 (20% off) code!**

Thank you,
Cassandra (:

Time for your Questions!

