

PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION

1. Harm Reduction is any action that attempts to reduce the harm of drug abuse and drug prohibition.
2. There can be no punitive sanctions for what a person puts in their body or refuses to put in their body.
3. People use drugs for reasons and not all drug use is abuse.
4. People can, and do, make rational decisions about important life issues while still using.
5. Denial is not actually denial. It is a product of shame and punitive sanctions and is usually quite conscious.
6. Ambivalence and resistance to change are "human". It is our job to work *with* someone's ambivalence, explore it, *not* confront it.
7. Addiction is a relationship, an attachment that offers significant support to the person. Treatment must offer that support, as well as respect that maybe we can't do it as well or with such reliability.
8. Success is any positive change- any step in the right direction.
 - Harm reduction is the winding road towards health/recovery.
 - Obstacles are mental illness, poverty, racism, abuse.
 - This results in hopelessness, despair, self-destructiveness, self-defeating behaviors, abuse of others.
 - People need Relationship, Self Esteem, and Self Care to increase their motivation to reduce harm or more towards "recovery".
9. Change is slow, incremental, with many setbacks. Relapse is the rule, not the exception. Plan for it. Help people stay alive and healthy and connected to treatment *during* their relapses.

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