

## WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction is the sets of strategies and policies we put in place to keep people safe while they do an activity that could cause them harm.

### HARM REDUCTION ACTIVITIES



**Oven Mitts:** protect our hands from the heat of the oven. We are allowed to use ovens even though they could cause serious burns – so we use oven mitts.



**Seatbelts:** protect people in vehicles from being injured during a car accident. Driving is one of the most dangerous things we do, but seatbelts make it safer.



**Life Jackets:** protect people near water from drowning. People who can't swim are allowed to play in water even though its especially dangerous for them.



**Cigarette Filters:** protect smokers from some of the chemicals in cigarettes. Smoking is bad for our health but people have the right to smoke if they want.



**Drunk Driving Laws:** people have the right to use alcohol, but drunk driving laws protect everyone from the dangers of driving after using alcohol.



**Needle Exchanges:** just like alcohol, people have the right to use substances even if its not what is best for them. Needle exchanges keep people from acquiring HIV and Hep C, which make them sick.

### MYTH #1: HARM REDUCTION ENABLES DRUG USE

Before



After



Before making all drugs legal, 25% of people in Portugal had tried drugs. Now that all drugs are legal, only 12% of people have tried drugs.

At a Vancouver needle exchange, **57%** of people who used the service, which is over half, transitioned to drug treatment.

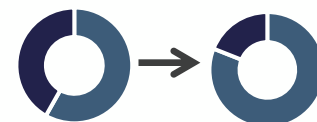
Drug use is one of those things where people won't use it just because it is available. Harm reduction helps those who use drugs quit slowly, which is better for long term success.

### How many people are successful at quitting...

Smoking	3 – 5%
Opioids	3 – 9%
Habits (General)	5%

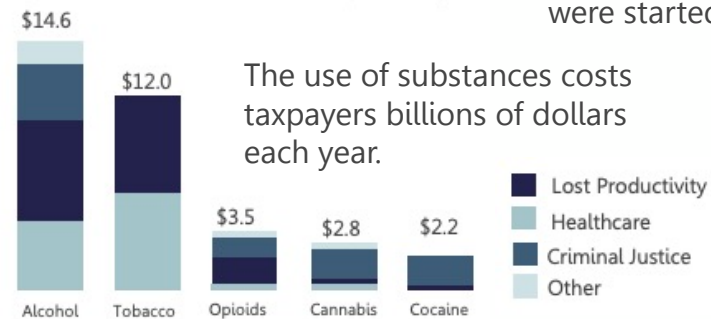
Quitting cold turkey has very low success rates – less than 10% of people who quit cold turkey on anything actually manage to kick the habit.

### MYTH #2: HARM REDUCTION ISN'T A GOOD USE OF TAXPAYER'S MONEY



In Canada, \$40,000 will either buy one lifetime of HIV medication or enough harm reduction supplies to prevent 30 new HIV patients.

In Ukraine, the percent of people with HIV dropped from 42% to 19% when harm reduction programs were started.



Harm reduction saves taxpayers money in terms of medical costs, criminal justice costs (like fighting drug cases in court) and decreases drug use so money is saved in lost productivity.

### MYTH #3: HARM REDUCTION IS ONLY FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

EVERYONE!

Harm reduction is for everyone! Read about harm reduction activities that all of us use on the page to the left!

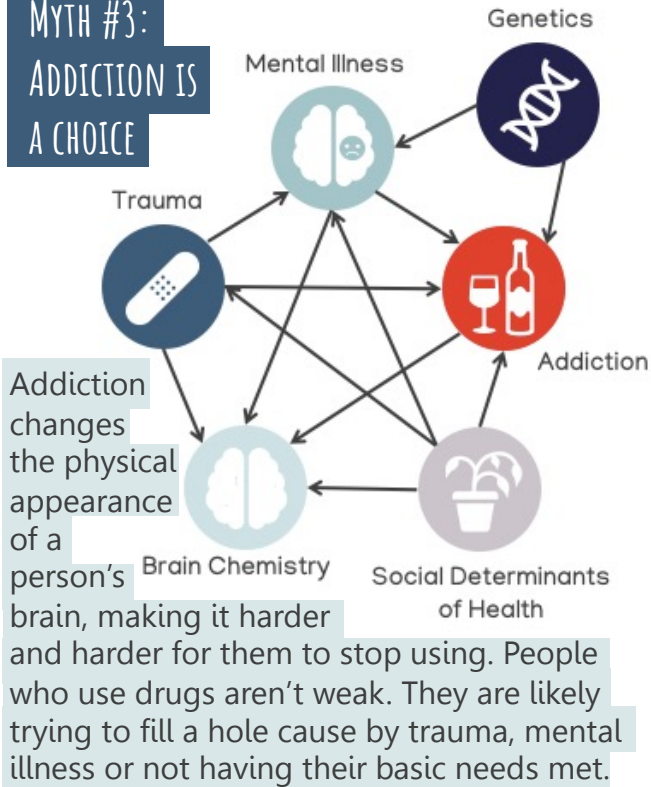
THE COMMUNITY

Harm reduction doesn't have an impact on crime rates and it leads to a decrease in discarded drug supplies.

### FAMILIES

Harm reduction saves lives, keeping our loved ones with us for longer. Harm reduction also decreases substance use which leads to decreases in family and partner violence.

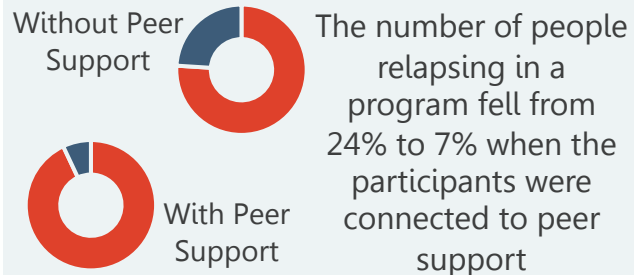
### MYTH #3: ADDICTION IS A CHOICE



### MYTH #4: THE "TOUGH LOVE" APPROACH WORKS FOR PEOPLE USING DRUGS

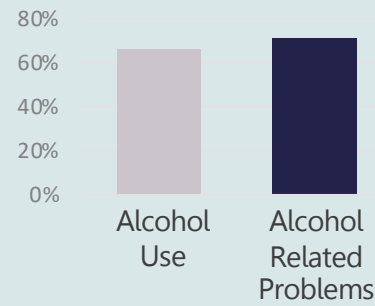
Those who feel estranged from others are more than twice more likely to relapse

Those who feel estranged from others are almost 5 times more likely to be incarcerated



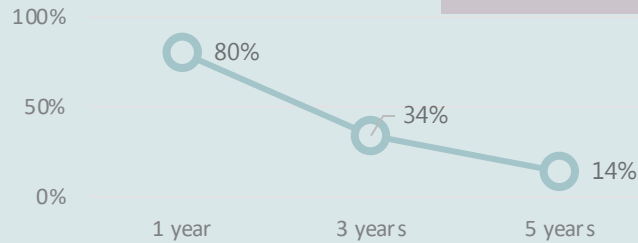
### MYTH #5: REHAB IS THE ONLY WAY TO BEAT ADDICTION

Any Reduction in Use is a Win!



In one harm reduction program that focused on managing alcohol use, there was a 66% decrease in alcohol use and a 70% decrease in alcohol related health issues.

Abstinence is a long, difficult road. Managing use is easier.



Likelihood of relapsing decreases with each year of abstinence but when each day is difficult, 1 year can seem like forever

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HARM REDUCTION AND  
OTHER TOPICS, FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Know Your Status
- @\_knowyourstatus
- knowyourstatus.ca
- @knowyourstatus\_yxe

