

HARM REDUCTION

BRAINTRUST
CANADA

WHAT IS IT?

Harm Reduction includes policies, programs, and practices that aim to reduce harms.

This can apply to the harm caused by anything – for instance, wearing a seatbelt while driving reduces the risk and harm caused by driving. But usually, when people are talking about harm reduction, they are usually talking about reducing the harm associated with using substances.

Harm prevention and reduction is the focus

Harm reduction focuses on reducing harm rather than pushing people to abstain from using substances (unless of course, that is what they want to do).

- Abstinence from using substances is NOT required
- Attention is on a person's active substance use
- Addiction is not a choice

Addiction is not a person's fault. Some of us are more susceptible to addiction, but we all have some kind of risk. Trauma, genetic predispositions, and more all mean that people come from different starting points that might make a person susceptible to substance use and addiction. At the same time, it is important to note that using substances also changes our brain, and may impact how we feel in our bodies and mind.

People can choose to use substances but no one chooses to become addicted. Change is dynamic. Rarely is it ever a straightforward, linear path. Relapses and slips are a normal part of this journey, so please remember to show compassion when those setbacks happen.