WHAT IS STIGMA?

Stigma is a social process linked to power and control which leads to creating stereotypes and assigning labels to those that are considered deviate from the norm or behave “badly” -- stigma creates the social conditions that makes people who use drugs believe they are not deserving of being treated with dignity & respect, perpetuating feelings of fear and isolation.

WHAT DOES LIBERATION LOOK LIKE?

- Liberation is the act of setting someone free from imprisonment, slavery, or oppression
- In the context of drug use & sex work, liberation is about freedom from thoughts or behavior -- “the way it’s supposed to be” -- and how we are conditioned to perpetuate harms to others

WHAT DOES STIGMA LOOK LIKE?

- Stigma limits a person's ability to access services they need because they feel unworthy of receiving or requesting services
- Stigma creates barriers while receiving services by people feeling unwelcome or judged by program staff that offers services

TREE OF LIBERATION

**Leaves: Actions**
- Create plans together based on their goals
- Ask clarifying questions to understand the whole story & needs
- Share resources & education for their friends to have

**Trunk: Beliefs**
- “They can do ______”
- “They’re telling me the truth”
- “They care about the community”

**Roots: Perceptions**
- Capable
- Trustworthy
- Caring

TREE OF STIGMA

**Leaves: Actions**
- Ignore the story & project your own agenda
- Require mandatory XYZ because “they won’t do it otherwise”
- Only talk about the “disease” & not about what they have control over

**Trunk: Beliefs**
- “They’re probably lying”
- “They don’t have the willpower”
- “They can’t help themselves”

**Roots: Perceptions**
- Not trustworthy
- Lazy
- Sick

FOR MORE RESOURCES, VISIT [HARMREDUCTION.ORG](http://harmreduction.org)

Revised 2020
### HOW WE STIGMATIZE PEOPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathologizing drug use &amp; patronizing people who use drugs</th>
<th>Blaming people who use drugs &amp; imposing own moral judgements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implying that people who use drugs are diseased, don’t have control over themselves, or can’t be trusted</td>
<td>Telling people that use drugs that they don’t care about themselves or their community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminalizing people who use drugs</th>
<th>Creating fear around people who use drugs which serves to isolate them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asking someone who may look like they use drugs if they have ever been incarcerated during an employment interview &amp; being immediately disqualified</td>
<td>Believing people that people who use drugs are morally corrupt, untrustworthy, dangerous to children &amp; the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HOW YOU CAN BRING IT TO YOUR WORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actively include people who use drugs &amp; experience marginalization for their expertise when developing new programming or evaluating current one</th>
<th>Ensure services are grounded in understanding of how people’s health, priorities, &amp; experiences are shaped by criminalization of drug use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize building relationships &amp; trust with people who use drugs as important outcomes</td>
<td>Ensure all services are provided in culture of respect &amp; safety within workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider how past histories of trauma, violence, layers of disadvantage &amp; stigma may affect a person’s ability to engage with providers</td>
<td>Review documents &amp; materials to ensure we are using people first language/non-stigmatizing language &amp; change them if necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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