Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that we are all sitting on the unceded and traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples.

I am situated on the territory of the Mi'kmaw (meeg-maw).

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Substance Use Related Language & Stigma

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Addiction Models

The Moral Model

- Old model of addiction
- We have a choice, so “just say no”
- Addiction = a character defect
- PWUS are weak, lack will power
- Substance use is simply a function of bad decisions
- This lead to STIGMA!
- Makes PWUS have poor image of themselves! Feel like “bad” people.
- We as a society need to change this way of thinking about PWUS

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Addiction Models

The Disease Model

- Arose in the mid-twentieth century

- SUD is a disease of the brain, an illness

- Suggests SUD comes from a problem in our body and brain--biological & neurological

- Permanent & progressive disease--each return to substance use gets worse, drug use gets worse over time

- Periods of returning to active drug use is a normal part of disease & recovery process

-Naysayers argue it leaves out: environment, how a person was raised & the effects of the society we live in

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A New Way Forward

New studies have a more *holistic* approach:

- Individual traits
- Biological factors
- Social factors
- Trauma and other life/events
- Neurological

MUCH better because...

- This approach recognizes that there are **BENEFITS** in functioning to the person who uses the drug
- Also acknowledges that not everyone who uses has a problem

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Stigma

What is it?

-Dictionary: “A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person.”

-Includes: discrimination, judging, labelling, stereotyping, isolating and prejudice

Why is it a problem?

-Causes guilt, shame & low self-esteem in PWUS & their loved ones

-Makes the cycle of substance use worse! More pain = more use

-Prevents PWUS from seeking treatment & their loved ones from getting help

-Prevents society from having compassion & empathy for PWUS

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Current way society thinks:

Drugs fit into 2 categories:

1. Harmful & Illegal - heroin, meth, cocaine, etc.
2. Unharmful & legal - alcohol, marijuana, caffeine, nicotine, etc.

These attitudes come from:

-Criminalization
-Poverty
-Racism
-Current drug policy
-Tainted drug supply
-Language

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Types of Stigma

Social Stigma

- Negative attitudes
- Use of harmful labels
- Use of negative images
- Ignoring PWUS or their families

Structural Stigma

- Drug policies
- Not taking requests of PWUS seriously
- Not connecting PWUS with services
- Designing services that enhance stigma

Self Stigma

- Internalizing social & structural stigma
- Applying outward stigma to oneself

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Language related to substance use

Use "People First" Language:

- PWUD, PWUS or PWLLE
- Someone who has a SUD
- Someone in recovery
- Someone who sells drugs

Also Use...

- Sterile/unused syringe
- Safer use supplies
- Actively using
- Not currently using
- Pos/neg. test result
- Unregulated/illegal drugs

Consider:

- Overdose
  VS.
- Accidental
  Drug Poisoning

Try to Avoid...

- Addict
- Clean & sober
- clean/dirty needle
- Addiction
- Drug Dealer
- Abuse or abuser
- Habit
- Relapse/slip
- Illicit drugs

These are more obvious:

- Crackhead or junkie
- Alcoholic/drunk

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Language Specific To Clinical/Research Settings

- Connection-seeking behavior vs. attention-seeking behavior
- Person experiencing barriers to accessing services rather than “unmotivated”, “non-compliant” or “treatment resistant”
- Equity-deserving populations vs. marginalized populations
- Participant vs. patient

👍 Substance use health

👎 Drug-seeking behavior

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Discussion Time!

- Questions?
- Comments?

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♥ *Thank-you for having me!*

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