

Breakout Room Discussions

BREAKOUT ROOM: Problems & Goals

Describe the problems from stigma. Where does it happen? By who?

- Comes from health care workers and other people providing day-to-day care
 - Lots of stigma occurs in hospitals.
 - Happens in ER's and trauma rooms
- Health care systems and policies (e.g., College of Physicians)
- Law enforcement, including probation; bylaw
- Stores
- People without knowledge
- Toxic masculinity in trades, creates an atmosphere of stigma
- Local Government, and leadership – where they put the resources
- Negativity by society for people with a substance disorder, mental health or homelessness
- Families – old beliefs driven by the war on drugs culture
- Occurs with mental health issues as well. We all carry some stigma, it's about how we are willing to recognize and address that stigma; try to change. Anything different from us may evoke stigma (ethnicity, language, background, etc.)
- In DTES, lots of stigma from police. They treat PWUD differently than anyone else. It's disturbing. Excessive force is seen in the buildings we run.
- It takes courage to admit we have stigma. Even people we work with can be critical of words we use. We all need to help each other.
- In Cowichan, CAT is working very hard to change messaging around temporary supportive housing. Outcry from community is startling – they actively try to thwart our efforts.
- Social service settings and usually where there are interactions amongst people
 - It happens everywhere, regardless of the stigma
- In neighborhoods and in schools, at grocery stores
- There are strong voices in the community re: expressions of stigma in Maple Ridge, a Facebook page for the protection of Maple Ridge, moving people along in camps, take their belongings, 'clean and safe', using a 'we're helping' propaganda.
- Systemic support for stigmatized work
- Prejudice on Facebook especially that often leads to vigilante-ism

Consequences?

- Care providers may reduce the pain medication they prescribe if they know a person uses drugs. It harms the care a person will get
- Lack of care, autonomy, dignity
- Discrimination, being targeted

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- People don't access services because of it; they are uncomfortable or feel shame
- Limited supports that you are able to access, such as housing
- Distrust in systems
- Death and poor health
- Leads to homelessness
- Sense of self-worth negatively affected - makes people feel powerlessness, hopelessness, not worthy, negative, poor hospital experiences,
- You feel worse; ends up killing us; can't handle the stigma so I don't go for help.
- People judged by appearance and actions
- When in recovery peers felt that their voices were not heard because they were just an "addict", not given an opportunity to show who they really are
- They do not have primary care and end up in Emergency- message is that other people are more important when they are having to wait for care
- How do you describe the problems, with some many problems connected to it? So many, not specific to drug use:
 - Stereotyping is common, hard to fight
 - Stigma can happen at any place, and can be given by anyone, anyone can project stigma
 - Stigma can impact an individual's confidence and self-esteem, then not be able to access services and not share what they are going through
 - Creates inequity
 - When working with internalized stigma, it can be done through educational programs
 - Lack of understanding
 - People use alone
 - Did a video with equip, geared towards professional population
 - There was a benefit of stigma discussed: once they were going through very strong and negative stigma, someone invited them to a meeting where there was the opposite of stigma. They were brought into the rooms of recovery and didn't believe what they saw at first; the acceptance and love found, non-judgmental support – took time to believe and have trust but by coming back it worked to build self-esteem and self-worth
- People forget that people are people
- Isolation, Insecurity, Negativity, heavy burden
- Healthcare system and stigmatized in the hospital not seeing the level of care they should be receiving.
- Stigma between Drugs and Alcohol – thinking that alcohol may be easier to treat
- People get turned away (we think you just want a bed – people who are coming in from the street)
- Perception – everyone gets lumped together
- Stigma quiz from "Mindspring" helps identify peoples' personal stigma.

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- Difference – disability leading to mistreatment and then when stand up for self then being seen as a trouble maker. In the hospital and especially in psych ward.
- When you stand up – staff want you to grovel, to be seen and not heard.
- Power dynamic. Need advocate to witness
- People say they won't judge and it's a load of crap.
- **Safe places program** is a great way to help. This could end stigma if it was everywhere.
 - For information on Safe Places jamesor586@gmail.com
- Different stigma attached to different scenarios and creates barriers to all types of care
- Painting all drug user in the same light ie: as people who are homeless as the scourge of society
- Blame is often shifted around because of lack of education, it's important for the public to be engaged in meaningful understanding around substance use and mental health

What are the goals of anti-stigma media & messaging (what do you hope to change)?

- Finding ways to normalize substance use and mental illness in our communities
- Working towards both internalised and externalized stigma through acceptance and commitment as wellness as getting an increased awareness on stigma and stigmatizing concerns.
- Creating awareness can reduce internalized stigma, helps the person understand who they are
- Establishing relationships
- Want people to become more accepting, open, less judgmental
- Be aware before making judgements of other humans
- Some peers have been motivated to change their own responses – when challenged by stigma – used to feel powerless now can feel strong in themselves.
- Suggested artwork, stickers and cards – talking about your human rights, and what you want to express. Expressing self through artwork. Individualize self through artwork.
- Want to change - Discrimination in the community, People tend to discriminate against you without knowing your struggle/story.
- Focus on whole community and work to eliminate the us and them.
- Learning, talking, no different than others.
- Shift to compassionate view point.
- Removing judgement
- Seeing it as a health issue like diabetes
- More accurately portray what is substance use – not everyone is a street person, not everyone can't control their substances, Eliminate stereo types. Not everyone is street entrenched
- Media is depicting substance disorders incorrectly – Missing that everyone in every demographic is impacted

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- Increase acceptance and equal treatment, whatever a person's mental health or substance use issues. Everyone deserves to get the help they need. Otherwise people isolate and don't reach out for the help they need.
- Increase awareness and language around people's issues.
- Doing the work of CATs can be a circle of frustration and anger. To be not part of the problem, need to do personal healing work. Focus on solutions and not be part of the problem. If I'm not happy what good am I to anyone?
- Increase education and exposure to new ideas – people go to fear when they don't know. Videos help break down the barriers of "us and them".
- The Trail CAT is working specifically to create acceptance of a coming supportive housing unit.
- See that PWUD are not all drug seeking; everyone needs respect; nobody wakes up and thinks I want to be a substance user
- People should not think they are above – you are one step above being in the place we are
- Get your head straight
- Education, greater supports, less overdoses, more supports, peer led organizations, policies will change
- Peoples outlook on addictions & mental health need to change
- Providing some understanding for the public around substance use and the realities of it
- Clarifying and defining what anti-stigma means, and maybe anti-hate would land better or no judgment
- Building acceptance and understanding through relationships and learning more around the struggles and trauma that can often lead to substance use