

Use Your Voice – Reducing Stigma Towards People Who Use Substances

Video Discussion Guide

This video features Jes and Melinda. Jes is a community harm reduction support navigator and peer support worker with over 25 years of lived experience with opioid use. Melinda is a Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner with years of experience supporting people who use substances. In this video, Jes and Melinda explore the stigma often experienced by people who use opioids and other substances when accessing health services and what direct health service providers can do to reduce it and improve the quality of care people who use substances receive.



Objective:

To reduce stigma toward people who use opioids and other substances and improve the quality of care they receive.

Learning outcomes:

- Identify how stigma affects the way people who use opioids and other substances access health care and other social resources
- Explain the person-centred approach to connecting with people who use opioids and other substances
- Describe ways that health-care providers can reduce stigma toward people who use opioids and other substances

Concepts to talk about before sharing the video:

- The epidemiology, comorbidity, and etiology of substance use disorders and their application to providing health care, including readiness to change, prevention, interventions, and motivational interviewing
- The philosophy and practical aspects of harm reduction
- The person-centred perspective, including the right to independence, autonomy, and self-determination
- The importance of compassion
- The role of trauma in substance use disorder
- Why substance use disorder is not a choice
- Internal bias
- The role of the justice system in substance use
- The problem of diagnostic overshadowing



Questions for discussion after the video:

- What stood out most about Jes's story?
- How will hearing Jes's story impact my approach to caring for people who use substances?
- What harm reduction strategies did Jes discuss?
- Which strategies and programs are available in your community?
- What are some tangible ways of showing kindness and compassion when caring for those who use substances?

Other considerations:

- Discuss with audience members how they might advocate within the health-care system for people who use substances, both at individual and organizational levels.

Watch the video [here](#):

Please note: This video covers sensitive topics and includes stories that might activate feelings of distress in some viewers. If you experience distress, support is available from [your local distress centre](#) and [Wellness Together Canada](#). We encourage you to reach out for support should you need it.



Additional resources:

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): Mental health 101 modules

- [Substance use disorder 101](#)
- [Stages of Change](#)

Harm reduction

- [CAMH Harm Reduction](#)
- [National Harm Reduction Coalition: Principles of Harm Reduction](#)

CAMH Trauma-Informed care

- [Trauma-Informed Practice Handout \(PDF\)](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Practice Toolkit](#)

Stigma

- [CAMH Stigma Module](#)
- [A Primer to Reduce Substance Use Stigma in the Canadian Health System](#)
- [Overcoming Stigma Through Language: A Primer](#)

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