



# Harm Reduction and Life Skills Education for Housed Individuals



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# Objectives



1. Provide basic information about “harm reduction” and “life skills”
2. Discuss how to combine life skills and harm reduction when working with recently housed or about-to-be-housed individuals

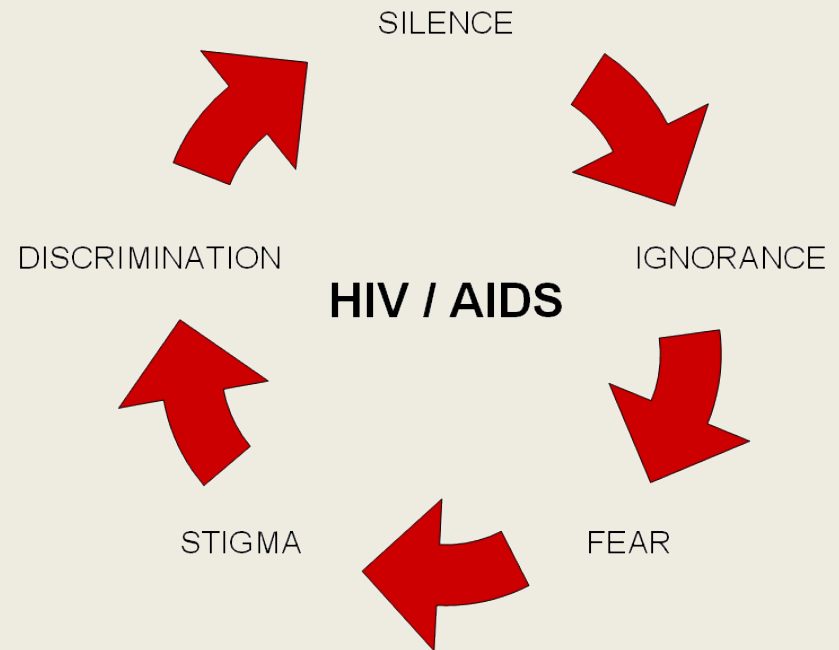
# What is harm reduction?



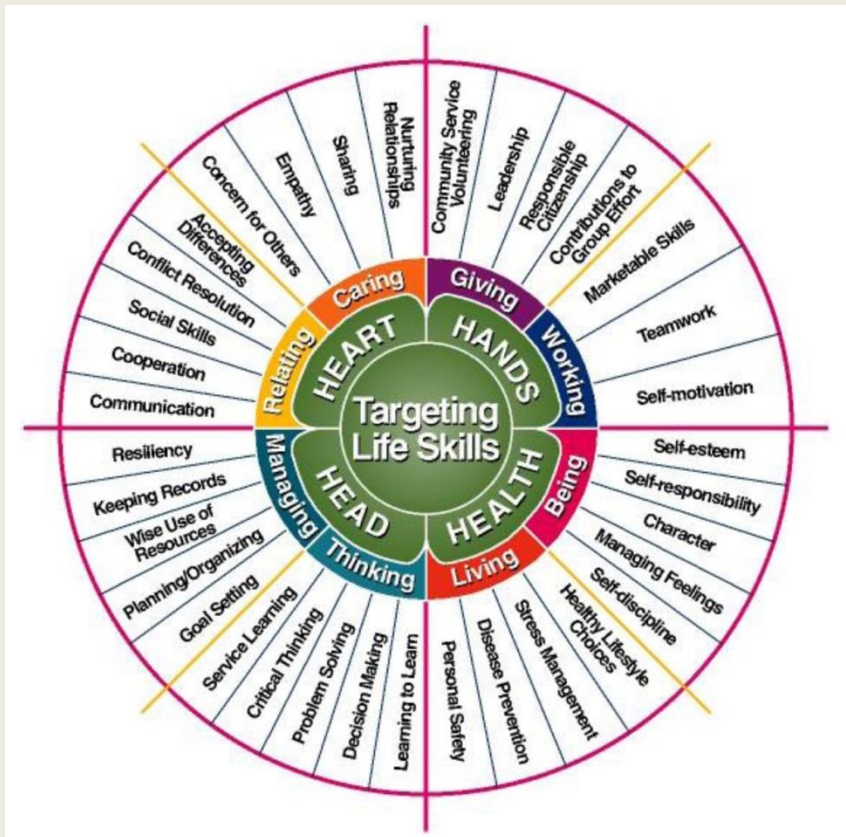
- Originally designed to reduce adverse consequences of drug use
- Opposite of “zero tolerance”
- Change by degree
- Example: Cutting down from 10 cigarettes per day to 8 cigarettes per day

# Why is harm reduction important?

- Behavioral and medical issues are often intertwined and conflated in vulnerable populations and can contribute to feelings of powerlessness
- Can help reduce stigma
- Allows patient to concentrate on “self” and “healing”

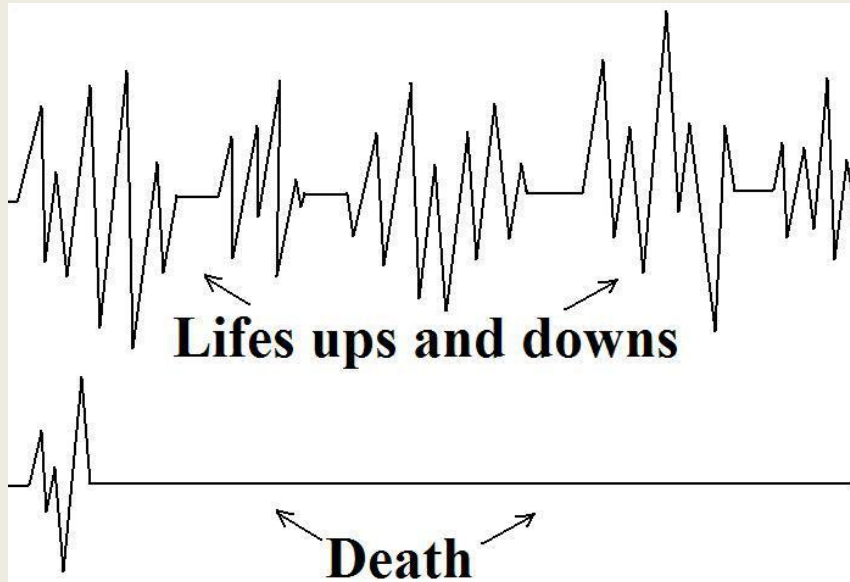


# What are life skills?



- Basic tools to navigate every day life
- Help us stay housed, employed, and happy!
- Examples:
  - Budgeting, cleaning
  - Communicating with landlords
  - Understanding terms of lease
  - Stress reduction
  - Developing social networks
  - Keeping appointments

# Setting Life Skills Expectations with Clients



*"If you're not going through the ups and downs of life, that means your dead."*

- CedricCrawford.com -

- Life skills learned through trial and error
- Many people have mentors
- No one is an expert at all life skills
- Some struggles are struggles everyone faces
- Patients we work with have limited or no housing history
  - Underdeveloped life skills in this area
  - Damages client's self-esteem

# Developing Life Skills with Your Clients



- Developing life skills with your client can...
  - Reduce stress
  - Help with assimilating in world around them
- Set “shared goals”
  - Remind your client they have you and your entire team to support them in accomplishing goals that THEY set forth
  - You guide them, they take action
- Define and acknowledge success
  - Think about what a successful housing situation looks like for your client



**Your  
expectations  
for housing...**







## Your landlord's expectation for housing...

Key message:  
Sometimes we work with people whose viewpoints don't align with ours. Dealing with this is a life skill.



# Case Study #1



The client is having difficulty paying the rent in a timely fashion. Lately, he/she is about one week late paying the rent.

*How would you approach this?*

# Case Study #1 (cont.)



- Make sure your client understands his/her responsibilities
  - Review terms of rental agreement and make sure client understands his/her responsibilities
  - Plan a weekly schedule for responsibilities that will arise when housed
- Be an active listener
  - Nod, agree, or make eye contact
  - Ask them: “How’s the housing going?”
  - Identify the root of the problem
  - Understand your client’s motive for being housed/not being housed

# Case Study #1 (cont.)



- Be a supportive listener
  - Address late payments from a strengths-based approach
  - Don't use words like "don't", "can't", "shouldn't", "wrong", etc.
  - Watch your tone
- Identify potential solutions
  - Research options ahead of time
  - Negotiate with landlord
  - Discuss payee services with the patient
  - Plan a budget
  - Look for rental assistance, funding from drug assistance program
  - Look for community resources

## Case Study #2



The client's apartment is messy, and is a barrier to staying housed.

*How would you approach this?*

# Case Study #2



- Be direct, but understanding
  - Bad: “You are going to lose your housing if you don’t clean this place!”
  - Good: “I’m concerned that the state of your apartment could affect your overall health. I’m also worried the landlord may notice and take issue.”
- Reframe cleaning into a less mundane life-task
  - Promote cleaning as stress reduction
  - Encourage client to clean place a little bit every day

# Helpful Resources



- Budgeting Sheet (complex)
  - <https://www.balancepro.net/pdf/mmp.pdf>
- Budgeting Sheet (simple)
  - <http://www.moneyunder30.com/downloads/really-simple-budget.pdf>
- Grocery Shopping List
  - [http://www.squawkfox.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/printable\\_grocery\\_list\\_template.pdf](http://www.squawkfox.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/printable_grocery_list_template.pdf)
- Food and Mood Diary
  - <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/content/assets/PDF/159555/MHF-Food-and-mood-diary.pdf>
- Cleaning Checklist
  - [http://files.smead.com/pdf/organomics\\_checklists/Printable\\_House\\_Cleaning\\_Checklist.pdf](http://files.smead.com/pdf/organomics_checklists/Printable_House_Cleaning_Checklist.pdf)

# Final Thoughts and Questions?



**Thank You!**