



# Harm Reduction: Meeting People Where They're At



Substance use disorders impact millions of individuals, their families and the communities we live in. However, there is hope. Recovery is possible.

Everyone's path to recovery is unique. For many, that journey may start with or include harm reduction. Harm reduction focuses on reducing the negative consequences of substance use as opposed to moving directly to a place of abstinence. By doing so, harm reduction opens a window into recovery for individuals.

Harm reduction for substance use may take many forms, including carrying naloxone, medications for opioid use or alcohol use disorder, along with other safe use strategies. These strategies all take different approaches to harm reduction; however, they have one thing in common: meeting people where they are at.

By utilizing harm reduction strategies, individuals can navigate their recovery journey in a way that is manageable and achievable. In this way, harm reduction is and can be a stepping stone for maintaining long-term recovery. This approach can help people stay safe and alive while navigating the road to recovery.

## Celebrating Recovery

Each year in September, we recognize National Recovery Month, honoring individuals on their path to recovery and celebrating the peers who support them on their journey. However, we can celebrate recovery every day by helping reduce addiction and recovery stigma.

One strategy for reducing addiction and recovery stigma is to be mindful of the language we use. Below are some examples of how language can help change our perception of substance use disorder and recovery.

### Negative Language

Addict, Alcoholic,  
Substance Abuser

Clean, Sober, Former Addict

Substance Abuse

### Positive Language

A person with a  
substance use disorder

A person in recovery

Substance Use Disorder

## Helpful Tips

- Use person-first language. Substance use disorder is a treatable medical condition; it is a part of an individual, but it does not define who they are. By using person-first language, you center the person instead of the struggles they are experiencing.
- Speak with empathy and understanding. We all struggle with something.
- Normalize conversations about substance use and mental health.

## Practical Harm Reduction Strategies and Resources

- Contact the Never Use Alone (800-848-3741) hotline.
- Carry naloxone, which can reverse an opioid overdose. The Naloxone365 Program provides free naloxone at participating pharmacies. Learn more about the program by visiting: [nj.gov/humanservices/stopoverdoses/](https://nj.gov/humanservices/stopoverdoses/). Always call 911 before administering naloxone.
- Test Substances. Use test strips to check substances for the presence of dangerous additives such as fentanyl or xylazine.

Remember, the goal is progress not perfection! Every safer choice is a step towards healing.

## Substance Use Support

If you are using substances and want help stopping, please contact our Peer Recovery Program at **848-303-0008** for recovery support services. If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call 911.