

Harm Reduction Works-HRW

Host Script ©

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Host Script

Before the start of the meeting please distribute “Welcome to Harm Reduction Works”, “You are the Expert in Your Own Life”, “We Believe” and “We Know”

Welcome to Harm Reduction Works. My name is (insert host’s name here) and I am your host for today’s meeting.

For Open Meetings:

This is an open group. Everyone is welcome especially people who aren’t sure what harm reduction is or whether it can help them. If you have been totally abstinent and/or participate in other types of groups, if you are using or drinking and just beginning to wonder if there is a problem, you are welcome here. If abstinence is not your goal, or if abstinence is your goal, if you are on M.A.T. or O.A.T. like methadone or suboxone, you are welcome here. If you are friends or family of someone who is using or drinking, if you are a counselor, therapist or work in treatment, if you work in syringe access, you are welcome here. If you are high, you are welcome here. If you want to learn more about harm reduction for any reason, you are welcome here.

For Focused Meetings:

This is a focused group for people who used drugs or alcohol in the past or currently use drugs or alcohol. If you are not someone who uses drugs or alcohol or you are not someone who used drugs/alcohol in the past, we respectfully ask you to participate in this focused meeting as a witness only. Please look for an open meeting when possible. This is a focused meeting because it's important for people who have or had a direct relationship with drugs and alcohol to come together in order to discuss their lives and shared experience.

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Host Script Continued (for both open and focused groups)

Will the person who has “Welcome to Harm Reduction Works” read our welcoming statement?

-----Person reads “Welcome to Harm Reduction Works”-----

Welcome to Harm Reduction Works

We accept people have a relationship with drugs and alcohol. Some people take drugs or drink for fun to make a good feeling even better, or to make something bad feel tolerable, or to even feel normal. Some people love drugs and drinking. Some people enjoy drugs or drinking only occasionally. Some people need drugs or alcohol to function. Some people try to avoid taking any type of drug or drinking for any reason. In a way, avoidance is still a way to have a relationship with drugs and alcohol.

Some people find their drug use or drinking leads to troubling issues. Still others use drugs or drink and have no major consequences. Some have consequences and do not believe drug use or drinking is in any way a cause. Sometimes people are not concerned by the consequences at all.

In general, consequences for drug use and drinking fall into four broad categories:

- Health. This refers to both physical and mental health.
- Legal. Many drugs are illegal. Simple possession or open containers can carry mandatory sentences or fines. The major weapons of The War on Drugs are arrest and incarceration.
- Social. Relationships with others may change or deteriorate to the point of frequent isolation and loneliness.
- Financial. Usually there is a financial cost associated with drug use and drinking. Drugs and alcohol cost money. Many employers require drug tests to get or keep a job.

When issues start to rise in one, some or all of these broad areas, many people start thinking about what is happening and if there is some change needed.

Host Script Continues

Harm reduction includes all paths to recovery as defined by each person in their own way. This includes moderation, continued use with less risk of overdose, death and illnesses like HIV and Hepatitis as well as 12 step and abstinence from all substances.

Harm reduction even includes continued use with no goal to change behavior. No path is better or worse than another.

The point is, we can talk about drugs including alcohol, harm and how to reduce harm without confrontation in ways that are respectful, kind, compassionate, and free of moral judgement. Sometimes these conversations are incredibly difficult. What harm reduction teaches us is to talk with others without judgement and to listen deeply to the stories people share.

Host Script Continues *as basket is passed*

We rely on donations to meet our expenses. If you have the means, please help us maintain our group. Thank you for your support.

-----**Begin Passing Donation Basket**-----

Host Script Continues

Are there any harm reduction related announcements?

-----**Announcements**-----

Host Script Continues

Will the person who has “You’re the Expert in Your Own Life” please continue with our welcome?

-----Person reads “You’re the Expert in Your Own Life”-----

You’re the Expert in Your Own Life

We are concerned more about how you look at drug using and drinking than what goals you might have to change. Of those who choose abstinence, some will abstain only from one substance. Others might abstain from all mind altering substances. Still others might choose to continue to use or drink. Looking at ourselves means figuring out what works and doesn’t work, what only works partly or what might work better. Often, this leads to some kind of goal and if it does, that’s great too. In general we find goals sometimes fall into one or some combination of the following categories:

- Amount. How much you use when you use or drink. Sometimes just paying attention to how much is consumed can change behavior in ways that reduce harm.
- Frequency. How often you use or drink. Some people have to use or drink everyday or they go into withdrawal. Some people only like to use at night or only on weekends. Sometimes frequency changes depending on the type of drugs or alcohol consumed. Sometimes patterns change when a person's environment is different. Becoming aware of frequency can give people the chance to change a pattern when change makes sense to them and they are ready.
- Method. How drugs are consumed. Sterile equipment reduces risk of hepatitis and HIV and soft tissue wounds. Going slow can reduce risk of overdose. Having water between drinks helps people stay hydrated.

Goals are not always the same for everyone because priorities, needs, wants and desires are not the same for everyone. Goals are personal because everybody's story and circumstances are different.

Everyone is welcome unless this is a focused group for people who are currently using drugs including alcohol, have history of personal use of drugs and alcohol or considering using drugs or drinking. Feedback can be offered but it can be politely refused at anytime before or during feedback. Please let the person speaking complete

their thoughts and generally avoid interruption. This is not the place to argue or debate.

We are here to support each other and explore our lives. The only right path for any of us is the one we choose. Each of us is the expert in our own lives.

Host Script Continues

Now let's do introductions. Just state your name and if you would like, a very brief sentence of what you hope to get from the meeting today. There is no need to introduce yourself as an addict or alcoholic. I'll start. My name is _____ and I hope to get _____ from today's meeting.

~~-----Group members introduce themselves.-----~~

Host Introduces

book/article/presentation/exercise

Introduction should be brief. If reading, remind people to simply read one or two paragraphs before passing it on to next person. Adapt as necessary for type of exercise.

Presentation is conducted for 10-20 minutes

Host Script Continues

Because this meeting does not discourage feedback, it can be more conversational than other groups. At first, people who are new or less vocal may not feel comfortable joining in. We are all responsible for welcoming people and helping each other feel included in the discussion. We are all responsible to remind each other to ask permission before offering feedback. Please let the person speaking complete their thoughts before offering feedback. Well intentioned encouragement to do something can feel shaming to a person not ready to change. People change when they are ready and it makes sense to them.

If conversation is moving too fast, or if you need to talk about a new topic please raise your hand. I will ask from time to time if anyone needs some space to talk to encourage new voices to add to the conversation.

Will someone volunteer to begin the discussion? Please say your name before speaking. Please remember feedback can be offered but ask for permission first. Feedback can be politely refused both before and at anytime during the feedback.

-----**Discussion**-----

-----**15 minutes before ending the meeting**-----

Host Script Continues

Before we close is there anyone who needs to speak?

-----**5 to 10 min before ending the meeting**-----

Host Script Continues

Will the person who has “We Believe” please read, followed by the person who has “We Know”.

-----**Person reads “We Believe”**-----

We Believe

- We believe recovery is not the same as abstinence and abstinence is not always necessary for recovery.
- We believe creating stories that waver from the truth always have consequences.
- We believe everyone has the right to determine their path, even when others might judge that path self-destructive.
- We believe what we do and don't do affects those around us.
- We believe stigma divides people and destroys community.
- We believe we can figure out when to change and how to change if we decide to change.
- We believe meeting people where they are in their change process means respecting balance in relationship.
- We believe people deserve respect and compassion.
- We believe respecting each others' choices and actions is an expression of freedom.
- We believe another word for stigma is oppression.
- We believe in each other.

-----**Person reads "We Know"**-----

We Know

- We know harm reduction works.
- We know harm reduction includes abstinence and all paths to abstinence.
- We know harm reduction includes continued use, continued use with less harm and no changes in behavior.
- We know harm reduction makes space for all stories and for people to speak the truth of their lives.
- We know harm reduction supports people's efforts regardless of outcome; everyone who changes behavior keeps trying until behavior changes.
- We know the War on Drugs has failed.
- We know harm reduction saves lives.

Host Script Continues

Thank You for Being Here. We hope this gathering has been helpful to you. We do not encourage or discourage relationships outside this meeting room. However, we do encourage interactions come from kindness, patience and compassion for one another always. One of the ways to create trust is to hold each other's names and stories in confidence. Keeping this confidence is a primary way we show respect for one another.

Regardless of personal goals we reduce each other's harm by respecting each other's choices, especially during our gathering time.

No one has to die from drug use. If you haven't used for a while please be mindful of decreased tolerance. Use less than typical. Use slower than typical. Use with others. Carry Naloxone and know how to use it. Whenever possible use sterile equipment. Take care of yourselves and each other. Please tell others our beliefs and what we know. We exist. We are here. Tell people about HRW and bring them. Help us grow.

Harm Reduction Works (HRW)

Group Documents:

- 1. “Welcome to Harm Reduction Works”**
- 2. “You Are the Expert In Your Own Life”**
- 3. “We Believe”**
- 4. “We Know”**

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