

WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

and what does it have
to do with sex-ed?

WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

Harm reduction refers to two things:
a method, and a movement.



Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies, ideas, and tools which have the goal of reducing negative consequences, or *risks* related to drug use and other criminalized activities.



Harm reduction is a social justice movement. According to the *National Harm Reduction Coalition*, this movement is “built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.”

RISK IS SUBJECTIVE.

Many day-to-day activities have a certain degree of risk: **for example, driving to work every day.**



Other risky activities are ***criminalized.***

Certain risky activities are ***normalized.***

- Using (some) drugs
- Engaging in (some) sexual activities
- Sex work

Risk is subjective.

It is our responsibility to provide people with the tools and resources to accurately gauge risk and reduce harm whenever possible.

HARM REDUCTION IN PRACTICE.

Harm reduction focuses on reducing the risk instead of eliminating risky behaviors altogether.

No one is **shamed, ostracized, or criminalized** for engaging in risky behaviors.

Instead, people are **educated, offered clean and safe spaces, and cared for.**

There is no rule book for practicing harm reduction, however some examples of methods include:

- Creating safe, clean spaces to use
- Offering free syringes and safe disposal
- Educating people on risk reduction practices
- Managing use through medications like naloxone
- Providing alternative practices or therapeutic care
- Addressing conditions of use along with the use itself

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH SEX-ED?

Sex has risks both physically and emotionally.

(But people are never going to just "stop having sex.")

ABSTINENCE-ONLY SEX EDUCATION VS. HOLISTIC SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Abstinence-only education **deprives** young people of the tools and information they need to keep themselves safe.

Abstinence-only education treats sex as something **shameful** which can lead to a lack of consent awareness and other dangers for young people.

Holistic sexual health education **reduces potential risk** by providing young people with tools and information on:

- Safer sex practices
- Healthy relationships
- Contraception
- Consent

I. PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION*

1. Accepts, for better or worse, that licit and illicit drug use is part of our world and chooses to work to minimize its harmful effects rather than simply ignore or condemn them

2. Understands drug use as a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that encompasses a continuum of behaviors from severe use to total abstinence, and acknowledges that some ways of using drugs are clearly safer than others

3. Establishes quality of individual and community life and well-being – not necessarily cessation of all drug use – as the criteria for successful interventions and policies

4. Calls for the non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm

II. PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION*

5. Ensures that people who use drugs and those with a history of drug use routinely have a real voice in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them

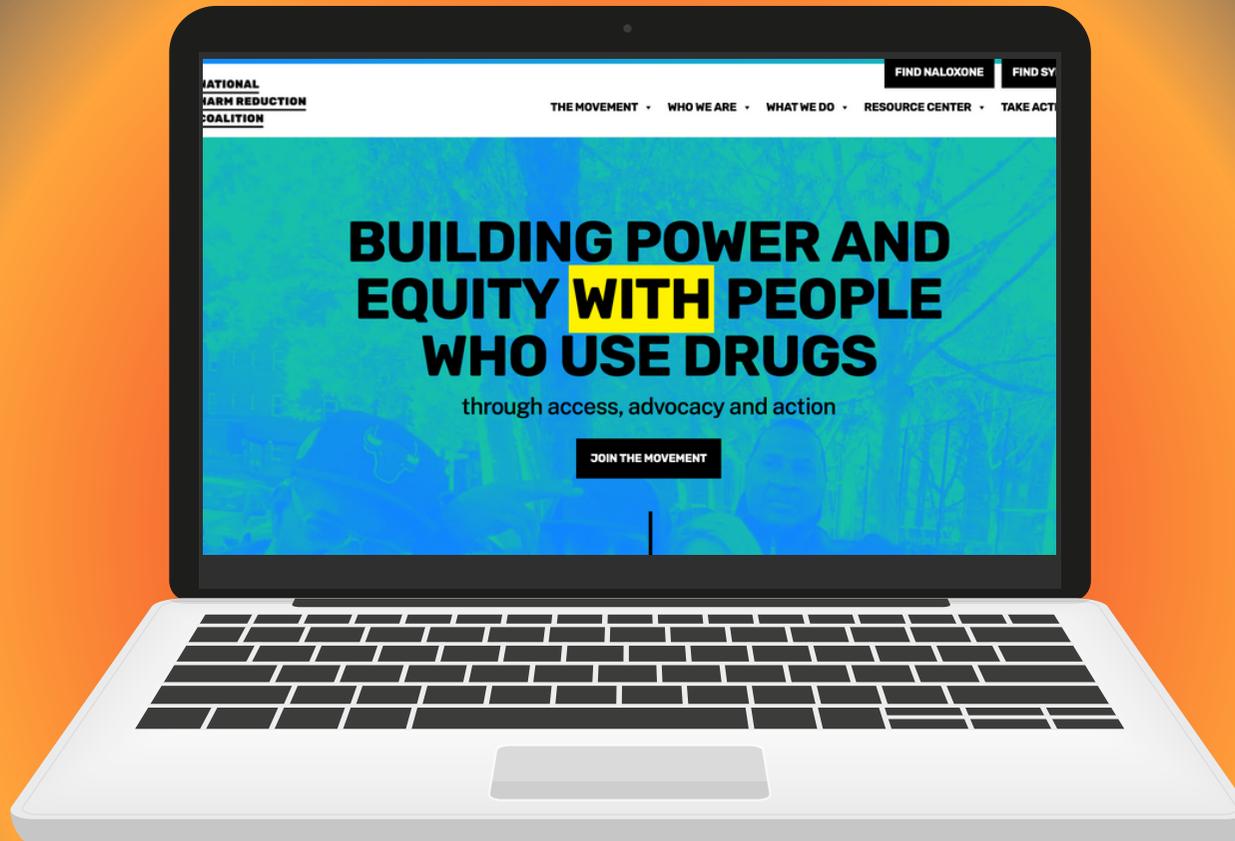
6. Affirms people who use drugs (PWUD) themselves as the primary agents of reducing the harms of their drug use and seeks to empower PWUD to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of use

7. Recognizes that the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination, and other social inequalities affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm

8. Does not attempt to minimize or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger that can be associated with illicit drug use

NATIONAL HARM REDUCTION COALITION

*The Principles of Harm Reduction were created by the National Harm Reduction Coalition.



To learn more about harm reduction, sign up for free harm reduction training, and more: visit www.harmreduction.org

Or follow on Instagram:
[@harmreductioncoalition](https://www.instagram.com/harmreductioncoalition)

