

**DECREASING DEMONIZATION FOR
INDIVIDUALS WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND
ADDICTION ISSUES WITHIN HIGHER
EDUCATION**

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PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

- 1- Educate participants on the issues related to substance abuse and demoralization
- 2- Provide specific literature related to demoralization and substance abuse
- 3- This presentation will reflect how education among our nation can teach students to not use violence, blaming, or demonization regarding different cultural perspectives.
- 4- Presenter will provide strategies on how to decrease demonization within higher education domain and integrate cultural differences
- 5- Presenter will provide ways to decrease demonization towards individuals with substance abuse and addiction issues within the higher education domain

OVERVIEW

- This presentation will have a strong emphasis on how to implement non-bias attitudes towards individuals with addiction and substance abuse issues.
- The demonizing of an individual may keep individuals from moving forward to recovery, and can be a barrier resulting in low expectations, poor self-efficacy, and diminished self-worth which cripples the person to create the internal drive to overcome addiction.

WORDS AND STIGMA

- **Demonization**- to portray (someone or something) as evil or as worthy of contempt or blame. (Merriam Webster Dictionary)
- **Language** can be used intentionally or unintentionally to communicate a message about a person or group of people as being “other” and to perpetuate stigma, leading to a decrease in self-efficacy, self-worth, and potential self harm.
- Drug and alcohol use disorder are highly stigmatized conditions , according to an international survey conducted by the World Health Organization. (Room & Room, 2001)
- Important to note that stigma has a strong, negative impact on people with substance use disorder.

WORDS AND STIGMA

- Substance use disorders (SUDs) are defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5)* as the presence of pathological behaviors associated with the use of any substance falling into one of the nine recognized classes.
- Research supports that words such as “abuse,” “abuser,” and “addict” have been empirically demonstrated to increase stigma. Leading to negative outcomes.
- The most obvious example of this is the frequent misuse of the terms dependence and addiction. Physiological dependence is among the eleven criteria to diagnose a substance use disorder. However, it is neither necessary nor sufficient to make the diagnosis. (Wakeman, 2019)

STIGMA

- Having a diagnosis of a substance abuse disorder can be considered as a devalued social identity, and the stigma related to this identity can be perceived as a threat.
- In relation to the stigma induced identity threat model, Major and O'Brien (2005) propose that identity threat can negatively impact health outcomes.
- Overall, individuals have the fundamental need to be accepted and approved by the social groups they want to belong to (Baumeister and Leary, 1995)

A CLIP ON REDUCING STIGMA!

- <https://youtu.be/c2K08mMNcW0>
- Enjoy😊

SELF STIGMA

“I suppose they think you’re the sort of person going to steal their VCR ... ’cause [of] that typical image of a drug addict as some sort of homeless, stinking kind of shambling person who can barely speak and stuff, and I was never like that even when I was using, but that’s the impression.” —

Adam

(Matthews, Dwyer, & Snoek, 2017).

PUBLIC STIGMA

- The quote in the previous slide is just one example of how society has labeled individuals with addiction and substance abuse disorder.
- These types of negative perceptions and perceived images lead individuals to not feel safe, comfortable, or even valued in society.
- It is evident that social persons judge one another, interpret and evaluate each other's behavior, and find ways inevitably to group each other into ready-made normative categories. (Matthews, Dwyer, & Snoek, 2017)

LANGUAGE, WORDS, MEANINGS

- Language **matters** as well as the words society uses to describe people who use drugs, people with addiction, and people with substance-related issues more broadly have substantial impact.
- Negative terminology has been correlated with more punitive treatment recommendations by clinicians and more stigmatizing perceptions among the public.

The image features a solid green background. On the left side, there is a vertical black bar. In the center, there is a light cream-colored, cloud-like shape with a scalloped border. The words "HIGHER" and "EDUCATION" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. "HIGHER" is positioned inside the cream shape, while "EDUCATION" is positioned outside it, overlapping the right edge of the cream shape.

HIGHER EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION- RISE UP

- It is important for educators, students, higher education administration as well as society in general to recognize the impact of demonizing individuals with substance abuse and addiction issues in higher education.
- The demoralizing of such individuals can lead to a lack of empowerment, potential relapse, increase in self-harm, decrease in self-efficacy.
- Hence, individuals facing demonization may not pursue higher education due to the negative perceptions and actions that certain members in society have expressed towards them.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Individuals with substance abuse and addiction may choose to remain stagnant in social circles or withdraw from peers in higher education if they feel they are being demonized based on their past or current addiction issues.
- Educators need to change word choices to acknowledge the “humanness” of the individual versus feeding into the negative stereotypes or labels that are often given to individuals with substance abuse and addiction issues.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Considering a strong focus on acceptance, non judgment, positive regard, and seeking to view the individual with addiction and substance abuse can foster empowerment.
- Empowerment can lead to positive academics, positive self-esteem, self determination, confidence building, and many more optimistic characteristics.
- Offering a safe, non- judgmental space can assist in fostering connections within the classroom, university settings, and in the community.



**POSITIVE
CHANGE**

POSITIVE LEGISLATION CHANGE

- In 2017, attention toward this issue moved to the federal level. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy under then President Obama and Director Michael Botticelli issued an important memorandum entitled “Changing the Language of Addiction”
- The Associated Press took a huge step by changing its guidelines for journalists reporting on addiction. The 2017 edition of the AP Stylebook declares that “addict” should no longer be used as a noun and instead recommends using person-first language such as “people with addiction” (Szalavitz, 2017)

POSITIVE CHANGE STRATEGIES

- Focusing on multiculturalism and not labeling can decrease the demonization and demoralizing of individuals with substance abuse and addiction issues
- Within higher education, advocating for individuals with substance abuse issues to have equal access to education, as well as the supports that they may need to maintain a good quality education
- Educators who highlight recovery and acknowledge “success stories” of recovery can promote a positive change of perception by society for those with substance abuse and addiction issues

POSITIVE CHANGE STRATEGIES

- Society in general needs to let go of the negative messages being sent to others regarding substance abuse and addiction
- Decreasing social media platforms that focus on negative thoughts regarding SA and addiction may be another source to tap into to.
- Students, friends, family members, colleagues, community connections who know people with substance abuse disorder can speak up when they hear a demonizing statement regarding substance abuse and addiction. (Not being a bystander)

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