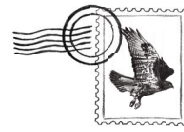


Everyone's Recovery is Different



NEXT Distro
STAY ALIVE, STAY SAFE.

Harm reduction *meets people where they are*—harm reduction programs like NEXT Distro offer people what we're able to offer and let the people who use our services tell us what they need. This is true not just for the supplies we offer, but when we talk to people about recovery. In harm reduction, we believe that recovery can look different for everyone and that there's no one right or wrong way to be in recovery. We also believe that people shouldn't be forced or coerced into any kind of recovery if they don't want to be.

This definition of recovery is in line with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA)'s, which defines recovery as [“A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”](#) By this definition, recovery is:

- Self-directed, or a decision people make for themselves
- A change in behavior that improves health
- Not just abstinence

The Continuum of Substance Use



The continuum of substance use (above) is one tool that can help us understand that different people have different relationships to substance use—and different relationships to recovery.

- Abstinence / No use: Choosing not to use a substance (or any substances) at all
- Experimental: Trying a drug once, to see what it feels like
- Situational / social: Using a substance in certain situations or settings, like doing cocaine at a party
- Habitual / regular: Using a substance with some kind of frequency, like smoking meth every weekend
- Binge: Using a lot of a substance (or multiple substances) at one time
- Dependence: Needing a certain substance to feel physically or mentally well, or to not have withdrawals
- Chaotic: Using a substance or substances in a way that feels like it's negatively impacting your life, or in a way that you don't feel like you can control

People can often hop around this spectrum, and/or be in different places on the spectrum with different substances. Someone might choose to abstain from heroin but feel like they can use other substances socially, experimentally, or even with regularity without moving into chaotic use. Someone who uses substances regularly but feels in control of their use may not feel the need to move towards recovery. It's up to people to decide for themselves what their relationship with substances is, how it impacts their lives, and if they'd like to make a change.

What are some different ways people can be in recovery?

There are as many different ways to be in recovery as there are people who use/d drugs, but here are a few:

- Committing to using new and sterile safer use supplies every time
- Decreasing and/or moderating substance use (i.e. Going from ten bags a day to five, using only on the weekends, or waiting until after work to use.)
- Not using drug(s) that have been problematic, but continuing to use ones that haven't. (i.e. Choosing not to use meth because of previous chaotic use, but continuing to drink socially.)
- Methadone, suboxone, or other forms of medication as treatment
- Abstaining from all substances and choosing not to use medication as treatment

But how do I help people recover?

The biggest thing you can do to support people's recovery is to offer them support, supplies, and honest, nonjudgmental information no matter what their substance use looks like and whether or not they have a desire to "recover." You can do this by:

- Asking them, without judgment or shaming, about their relationship with substances: What do they like about their use? What do they get out of using their substance(s) of choice?
- Offering accessible, and low threshold services, so people know they can rely on you to support them in staying safe and healthy
- Don't bring up recovery unless they do, and don't assume that your path to recovery is the best path for them
- If they are looking to make changes, ask them what, realistically, they need to make those changes.