

## What is Harm Reduction? Video Transcript

Video begins with SERC logo (stylized, rainbow “S”, and then the letters SERC, and “Sexuality Education Resource Centre MB”) and Teen Talk logo (“Teen” is black, and the word “talk” is white lettering in a turquoise speech bubble.)

A bald, bearded person sits casually on a stool. They are wearing a black t-shirt that says “Silence = Death” and black shorts. Behind them are several geometric and nature pictures decorating the wall. They speak directly to the camera.

“So what exactly is harm reduction? Well, harm reduction realized that all activities in life come with risks, but there’s also always ways to make things safer. It happens in little and big ways every single day. It’s looking both ways before you cross the street or using a seat belt whenever you go for a drive. Those are both examples of harm reduction when it comes to cars.

“Harm reduction when it comes to substances like drugs or alcohol includes learning accurate information, it’s accessing supplies like needles or medication like Naloxone. Harm reduction centres the dignity, respect, and knowledge of people who use drugs and knows that they’re the experts in their own lives.

“So when did harm reduction start? Well, people have always been using substances, whether it’s for medication, for ceremony, for recreation, or as a way of coping. And throughout all of this, knowledge keepers—including other people who use drugs—have always taught one another ways to stay safer.

“This could be an elder at a ceremony, this is a pharmacist when you get your prescription, or this could be a friend who’s used before. The term “harm reduction” itself emerged in the early 1980s amidst the AIDS crisis, from organizing groups in the Netherlands, such as JunkieBond and their work, like the world’s first government needle exchange program.

“They recognized that people who use drugs are the experts in their own lives. This model quickly spread across the globe through other community groups, activists, and eventually with government support. The first government harm reduction programs in Canada emerged around kind of towards the late eighties, in the Toronto and Vancouver areas.

“The thing is research shows that harm reduction works. It saves lives. It keeps all of us healthier. Since the eighties we’ve grown to include approaches like safer injection sites, housing first models, and education sessions like the one we’re doing right now.

“So what is harm reduction exactly? Well...”

[At this point the screen transitions to showing a variety of SERC staff members in various office settings talking about harm reduction, one person at a time.]

“It’s free from judgment and stigma.”

“Harm reduction meets people where they’re at.”

“Harm reduction saves lives.”

“Harm reduction recognizes that use is on a spectrum from abstinence to often and everywhere in between.”

“It’s access to supplies, gear, and safe places to use.”

“Harm reduction is the right to accurate information.”

“Harm reduction centres people who use drugs in the conversation.”

“Harm reduction is decolonizing.”

“Harm reduction is intersectional.”

“Harm reduction is respect.”

“Harm reduction recognizes that some people use drugs and that’s okay.”

“Harm reduction is support.”

“It’s compassion.”

“Harm reduction is care.”

“Harm reduction is community.”

“Harm reduction is love.”

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