Stories and Voices 2019
The Stigma of Addiction & Stories of Hope

Agenda:

- Welcome & Introductions
- Purpose & Guidelines
- What does Addiction Look Like?
- Adjusting the Lens
- Challenging the Familiar Story
- Stories of Hope
- The Ecology of Solutions
- What are we Dreaming?
What does addiction look like?

84% are ashamed to talk about their addiction with their physician

38% of adults in 2017 battled a drug use disorder

85% of those in the US prison system were incarcerated for substance related reasons

“No one’s immune to it. You could be a lawyer or you could be a doctor, it can happen to anyone.”

-Nick, in recovery

“The big thing is that we see students as whole people. You know, if they come in for alcohol or other drugs, that’s not all we talk about.”

-Michael Glennon, UNH Alcohol and Other Drugs Counseling

“Addiction can affect anyone. Factors like economic status, race, age, career or education may sometimes increase a person’s risk, but in the end, addiction can happen to anyone.”

- Nova Recovery Center

Who is Addicted?
More than 7 million people suffer from substance use disorder and one in four deaths can be attributed to alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.⁷

“Addiction is not a choice. It’s not a moral failing or a character flaw, or something that ‘bad people’ do.” ⁴
- Shatter Proof

Those with mental health disorders are at higher risk for drug use and addiction.⁸

Q: How are you connected to the issue of addiction?

In 2013, the drug rates across American show that Asian Americans had the lowest level of illicit drug use, while Native Americans and Alaska Natives had the most at 12.3%.
Language Matters

“Words are powerful; old, inaccurate, and inappropriate descriptors perpetuate negative stereotypes and attitudinal barriers. People First Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Using a diagnosis as a defining characteristic reflects prejudice, and also robs the person of the opportunity to define him/herself.”

- The Arc

I wish people would understand that somewhere in every single person is someone good. Instead of shutting people out, writing them off as a junkie, look for the good in them.

- Corey, in recovery

Q: What are your thoughts on these words often associated with addiction?

Q: How do these words influence how we understand addiction?

Take a moment and reflect on these words.
“With both cancer and HIV: when stigma was reduced, lives were saved. And the same can be true of addiction.”

- Shatter Proof, Nonprofit

The Real Stigma of Substance Use Disorders

In a study by the Recovery Research Institute, participants were asked how they felt about two people “actively using drugs and alcohol.”

One person was referred to as a “substance abuser” and the other person as “having a substance use disorder.”

No further information was given about these hypothetical individuals.

THE STUDY DISCOVERED THAT PARTICIPANTS FELT THE "SUBSTANCE ABUSER" WAS:

- less likely to benefit from treatment
- more likely to benefit from punishment
- more likely to be socially threatening
- more likely to be blamed for their substance-related difficulties and less likely that their problem was the result of an innate dysfunction over which they had no control
- they were more able to control their substance use without help

Stigma...

Defined as a mark of disgrace or infamy, a stain or reproach as one’s reputation.

Q: How has stigma become a barrier to our solutions?

“By using accurate, non-stigmatizing language, we can help break the stigma surrounding this disease so people can more easily access treatment, reach recovery and live healthier lives.”

- Michael Botticelli
Dr. Bruce Alexander challenges the familiar story

Dr. Bruce Alexander

Brucekalexander.com

The "Familiar Story"

"Addictive drugs and 'foolish' people who get 'hooked' on them are the problem, they lack the free will to resist their cravings, and the only way to recover is professional help."

How do race, class, media, work, education, etc. contribute to social division?

What else creates isolation in our society?

How do these insights challenge the familiar story?
What stories do you have of recovery? What role do these concepts play in your story of recovery? Identity? Social connection? Belonging?

“I think it’s less about the drugs and more about identity.”

“People struggle with identity. I think it’s being able to see having an identity in recovery.”

“There are so [many] positives in the drug using community that we don’t think about, I guess. Like when it is all your friends and family and you have been through hell together, they know your story, your drama, and what you have been through.”

- Kerry Nolte, UNH Nursing Professor, Needle Exchange Program
“I actually started volunteering early on helping addicted people, just like myself. I saved up $50,000 just by working my face off, non-stop, and that’s how I got the down payment to buy the first house. And then in 2008, I started the state of New Hampshire’s very first sober living house.”

- Eric Spofford, CEO of Granite State Recovery Centers

“It was a spiritual route that I ended up taking, I was in a rehab facility...I just hit my knees one night and begged God to either kill me or make me better and I woke up the next morning and I just felt different. I felt different and that was the beginning for me of my recovery. I felt different, I felt a presence that I wasn’t alone.”

- Amy, in recovery

“You realize you can do things without using drugs, and actually enjoy things and have fun sober.” – Corey, in recovery

Drug Court
Court program that helps offenders who have substance use disorder. A person who goes through will be assessed of risks & needs, then a judicial interaction, monitoring and supervision, sanctions and incentives, and finally, treatment & rehab. There are currently 3,000 drug courts in the US. Drug courts have been shown to lower re-arrest rates by 20%.\textsuperscript{19,20}

Alternative Sentencing Rehab
Low level/first time offenders can qualify for the choice between attending a treatment program or serving jail time. This program can save individuals from future troubles because the court wipes their slate, any criminal background checks will be free of crime charges.\textsuperscript{21}

Operation Granite Shield
This is a large grant that New Hampshire received in cities with larger drug dealing, trafficking, and addiction issues. Eighty-eight local, state and federal law enforcement agencies executed one of the largest ever drug sweeps in NH that resulted in 151 arrests and the seizure of 551 grams of heroin and fentanyl.\textsuperscript{23}
Medical

The National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services reports the efficacy of a long-term drug rehab program vs. out-patient, or 28 day programs is doubled with long-term drug treatment exceeding 120 days.

**SHORT TERM TREATMENT SUCCESS RATE AFTER 1 YEAR**

**LONG TERM TREATMENT SUCCESS RATE AFTER 4 YEARS**

Naloxone (Narcan and Evizio)

93.5% of people survived an overdose when given Narcan. A year after the overdose, 84.3% of those who had been given the drug were still alive.

Sobriety Statistics

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A Study on Spirituality

Those who had the lowest religious beliefs experienced a 38.5% remission rate. Those with the strongest religious beliefs had a remission rate of 45.1%.

Safe Stations

People with substance use disorder can go to any fire station (of an area that is doing the program) and ask for help. Overdoses dropped by 24 percent in the first year of the program.

Methadone Clinics

These clinics have a success rate of 60-90%. The longer people stay in this program, the more they improve their chances of achieving long-term abstinence.

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**Education and Early Intervention**

Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) service programs have been implemented in various states. Individuals who reported baseline illicit drug use had a 67.7% decrease of use in a 6-month follow-up.

Recovery Centers

Preliminary data show that Recovery Community Center participants (in recovery for 4 years on average) report that their center engagement has been extremely helpful in their recovery and overall well-being. Center volunteers report the highest levels of perceived helpfulness.
The Ecology of Solutions

Legal

Medical

Social

Individual

How are these systems related? How do they create barriers for one another? How do they work together? How CAN they work together better?

What about insurance companies?

What social structures or safety nets are needed?
What are we dreaming?

“I think if I showed up and there was one miracle, it would be that there was nobody in the community who didn’t understand what we were doing, or why we were doing it, or the importance of what it was.”

- Nick, Leeds Needle Exchange Program

“I dream that one day there will be safe stations across the entire state of NH, for those who want treatment to have access to the resources they need.”

-Durham Police Officer

“I would love to see in my world when somebody comes into the ER with an overdose or alcoholic hepatitis, we wrap our arms around them the same way we do our neighbor or friend who comes in with a heart attack.”

-Dr. Tom Sherman

Q: What do we dream? How can we better address barriers to healing in the ecology of recovery? What do we need to make that dream happen in New Hampshire? Where can we do better?

“If you could walk into your family practice doc and that [physician] had as much training and background in mental illness and [SUD] as they had in diabetes or hypertension, you would have a completely different experience.”

-Dr. Tom Sherman

“A lot more people in rehab programs, accessing services rather than being incarcerated. National change in terms of priority. We would look at the country as an entity full of people who all have different and individual unique needs, rather than numbers and funding. If everything was ideal, everyone would be able to kind of access that ideal picture in their brains.”

- Emily Blood, Social Worker

Addiction is considered a highly treatable disease. About 10% of American adults say they are in recovery from SUD.8

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