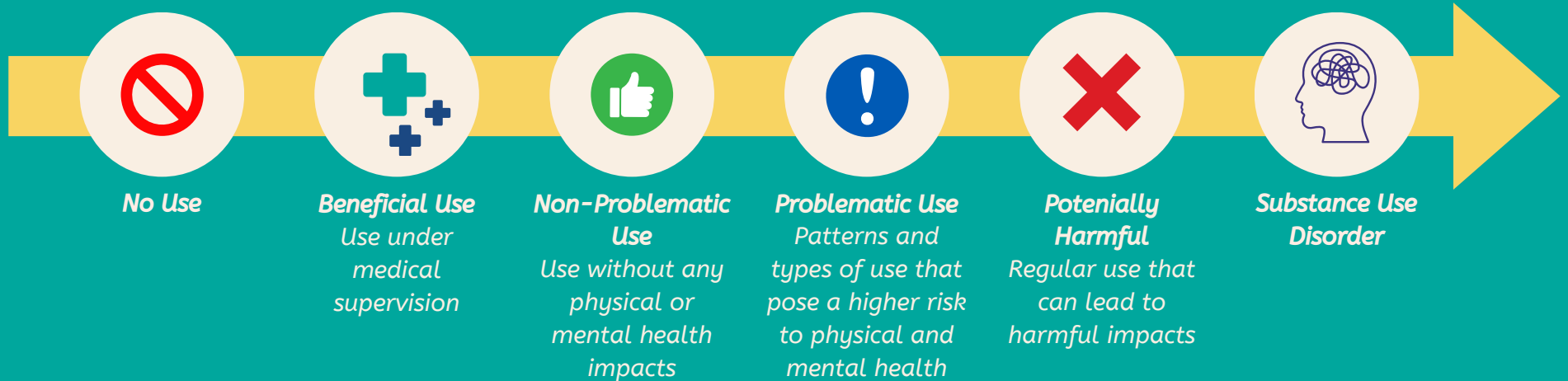


UNDERSTANDING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION

Substance abuse and addiction are complex conditions characterized by dysfunctional, compulsive behaviours despite negative consequences. Formerly viewed as moral failings, we now recognize addiction as a neurobiological disorder influenced by genetics, environment and, psychological factors such as Trauma.

CONTINUUM OF SUBSTANCE USE



When someone is subjected to abuse, bullying, grief or other traumatic experiences, the use of substances and engaging in addictive behaviour is often a coping mechanism. What began as beneficial can easily shift to becoming problematic and potentially harmful. Recognizing the role that trauma plays in this continuum helps to tailor interventions and treatment strategies, as addressing the underlying trauma is essential for the effective prevention and management of substance use disorders.



KEY INSIGHTS

- Addiction alters emotional states, driving compulsive behaviour
- Both substances and rewarding behaviours can lead to addiction
- Treatment focuses on emotional regulation skills, adaptive expression, processing of trauma and grief which are crucial for sustainable recovery

A harm reduction model empowers individuals by prioritizing safety and agency in substance use, countering shame with self-compassion and client-led goals.

Recognizing that not everyone can quit immediately, harm reduction addresses negative consequences to rewire the brain to its baseline and heal the psyche. Behavioural change involves stages crucial for recovery (**see upward spiral diagram**), driven by motivation and engagement, guiding individuals toward reconnecting with healthy communities.

Pre-Contemplation

“What problem? I don’t have to change anything.”

Contemplation

“I wonder if there’s something wrong? ...or maybe not.”

Preparation

“I have a problem, what can I do?”



UPWARD SPIRAL

Where You Learn from Each Relapse



Relapse

“It’s OK. Let’s try again. How can I get back into active recovery?”

Maintenance

“I’m doing great! How can I support my recovery?”

Action

“I’m ready to do something about it.”

Clients Lead Their Own Treatment

CLIENT-LED COUNSELLING AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Focuses on safety first
- Assesses readiness and goals
- Explores and understands why someone uses substances
- Creates a plan collaboratively to regulate emotions
- Develops tools and skills to cope with pain and trauma that causes the addiction

RESOURCES & SUPPORT ON THE OTHER SIDE

Effective counselling addresses the trauma before the addiction. This approach encourages kindness to oneself and places an emphasis on clients leading their own treatment.

RESOURCES FOR SUBSTANCE USE AND ADDICTION

SAFE USE, SAFE INJECTION SITES ETC.

- Insite
- Pulse Safe Injection Site
- Vancouver Coastal Health's Safe Injection Sites
- BC Centre for Disease Control
- YouthSafe

PEER SUPPORT AND SUPPORT GROUPS

- Harm Reduction Coalition of BC
- BC Association of People Who Use Drugs
- Smart Recovery
- YouthSafe
- Reach Youth Society

DRUG TESTING

- Pacific Harm Reduction Services
- Vancouver Coastal Health's Drug Testing Program
- YouthSafe
- Reach Youth Society

DETOX REHAB CENTERS

- BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services
- Vancouver Coastal Health Addiction Medicine
- Polaris House
- Pacific Treatment Centre

“
**THE ONLY TIME YOU SHOULD LOOK DOWN ON
SOMEONE IS WHEN YOU'RE HELPING THEM GET
BACK UP.**
”

- Destiny Newton, Former Dan's Legacy Client



*Dan's Legacy provides trauma-informed and culturally sensitive counselling and life-skills intervention programs. Youth can refer themselves at any time for **free counselling and wrap-around services** to help support them!*

[DANSLEGACY.COM/HELP](https://danslegacy.com/help)

