



# Recovery Begins With Harm Reduction



Addiction treatment and recovery must change to address horrific spike in overdose deaths:

- Losing 100,000+ Americans/year now
- 1 million+ lost since 1996, when OxyContin launched with lie that opioid pain pills are minimally addictive.
- Powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl leading killer today.
- Including alcohol, another million people will die this decade.

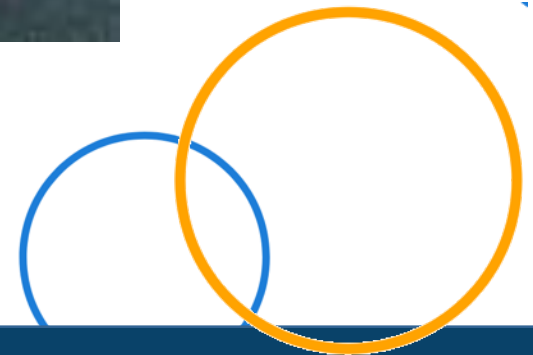
***Without radical change, overdose deaths will reach 2 million by end of this decade.***

## What Needs to Change

*The magnitude of this crisis demands a willingness to jettison old, unhelpful, and unsupported assumptions about what treatment and recovery need to look like. Among them is the traditional view that abstinence is the sole aim and only valid outcome of addiction treatment.*

*~ Nora Volkow, director, National Institute on Drug Abuse*





Most deadly assumption:

- Recovery doesn't begin until people stop drinking or using drugs

Even worse:

- People must hit rock bottom to become motivated

**For many drug-users, rock bottom is six feet under**

To stop deaths, need proven measures:

- Clean syringes
- Fentanyl test strips
- Naloxone (Narcan), to reverse overdoses
- Not using alone
- Harm reduction centers | ER treatment
- Medication Assisted Recovery (MAR)



## Global Gold Standard for opioid users to recover safely

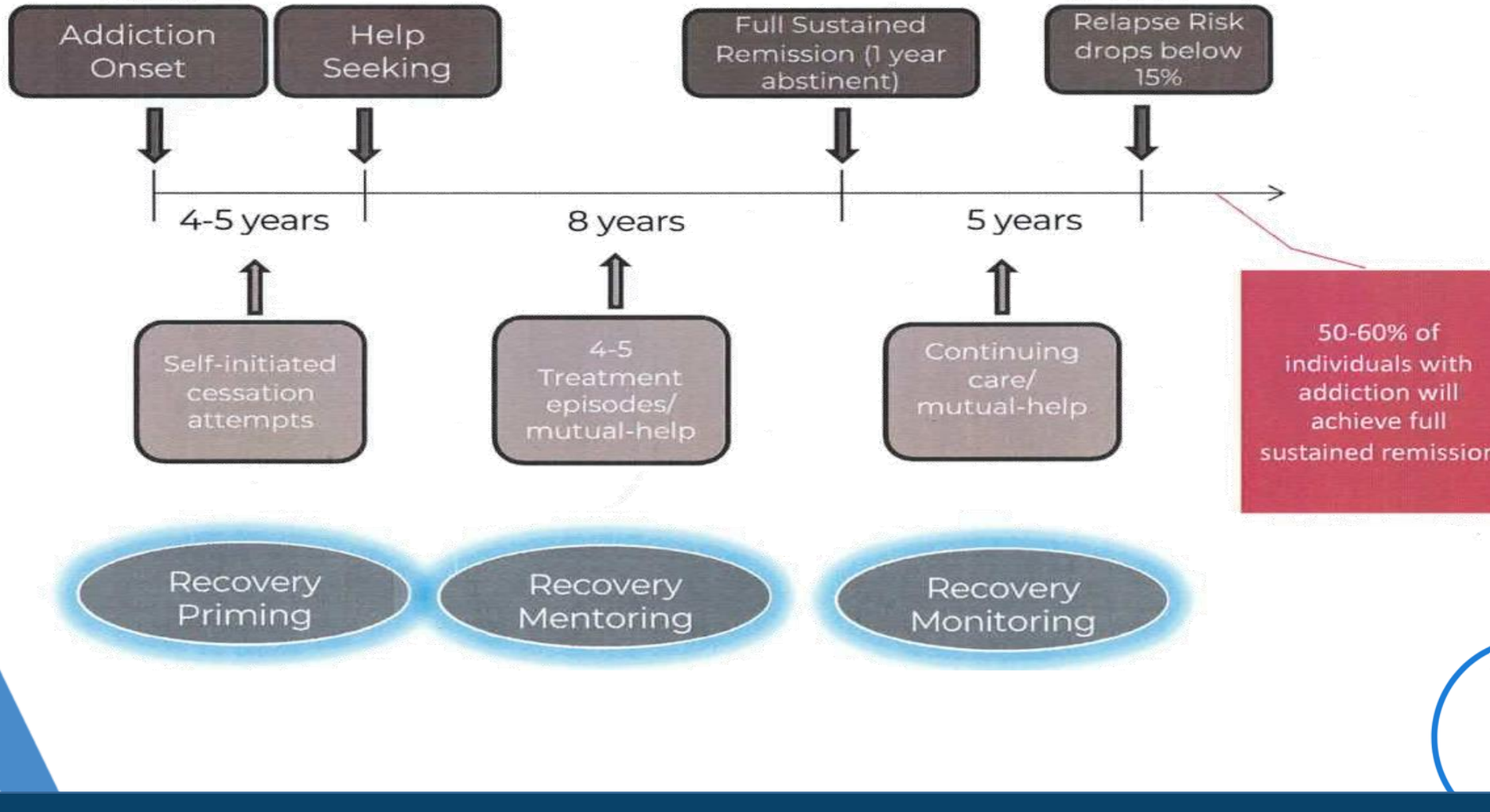
- Medications to sustain opioid tolerance and prevent overdoses — methadone, buprenorphine
- Professional therapy-counseling
- Mutual aid meetings, e.g., SMART, that welcome people using MAR

## Real Addiction - Recovery

- Abstinence an ideal goal and needed for many, but takes up to 20 years
- See Clinical Course of Addiction, John Kelly, PhD, Elizabeth R. Spallin Professor of Psychiatry in Addiction Medicine, Harvard Medical School Presented at SMART Silver Anniversary Conference in 2019
- Reflects shortcomings that need to change



- . The clinical course of addiction and achievement of stable recovery can take a long time ... but most achieve remission



## Real Addiction - Recovery

- Great patience-persistence needed to navigate this course
- SMART treats lapses as learning opportunities
- We celebrate progress
- Abstinence not best measure of recovery
- Strive for balanced, purposeful, fulfilling life (SMART Point 4)

## SMART Seeking Harm Reduction Grants

- \$1.2 million to bring harm reduction measures and SMART meetings to 8 states devastated by opioid epidemic in Midwest and Appalachia—WV to WI.
- Partner Above and Beyond will deliver harm reduction services and counseling.
- SMART will add 66 meetings to the 200 already there.
- All help will be free for anyone who seeks help—whether they're still using or want treatment.

- Established in 1994
- A 501(c)3 organization
- Volunteer-driven organization
- Less than 20 employees
- Converted 600+ meetings to online during COVID-19
- Recognized by leading health organizations worldwide: NIH, SAMHSA, and comparable agencies in Australia, Ireland, UK and elsewhere



- **Evidence-based**
  - Created by addiction recovery professionals and peers working together
  - Based on CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) and MI (motivational interviewing) techniques
- **Stigma-free and self-empowering**
  - Addiction is a behavior that can be corrected, not a condition that defines a person's identity
  - We discourage labels like *addict*, *alcoholic*, and *clean*
  - Research shows labels undermine motivation



01

Build and maintain  
motivation.

02

Cope with urges.

03

Manage thoughts,  
feelings and  
behaviors.

04

Live a balanced life.

- All are important to overcome any form of addictive behavior, sensible framework for recovery.
- Discussions focus on these 4-Points; and the SMART Handbook is organized in this way.

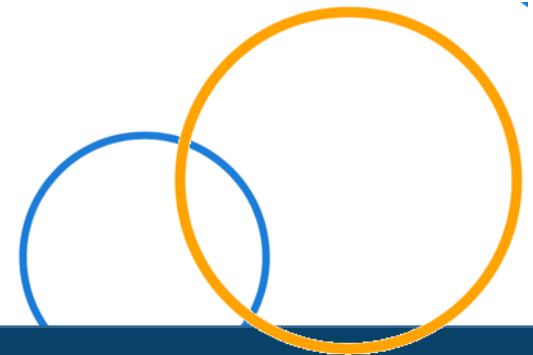


- Cost/Benefit Analysis (CBA)
  - Short- and long-term benefits and negative consequences
- Hierarchy of Values (HOV)
  - What is most important to you?
- Relapse danger signals – prevention – Urge/Trigger Logs
- Unconditional acceptance of yourself, others, and life circumstances (pandemic).



## Tools for Life, Not Just Recovery

- What is a “balanced” life? Why is it important?
- Adding meaning to life, not just “stuff”
- Self-Care/Wellness
  - Adjusting to change
- Vital Absorbing Creative Interest (VACI)
- Lifestyle Balance Pie Assessment



- **Recovery Tools & Insights**

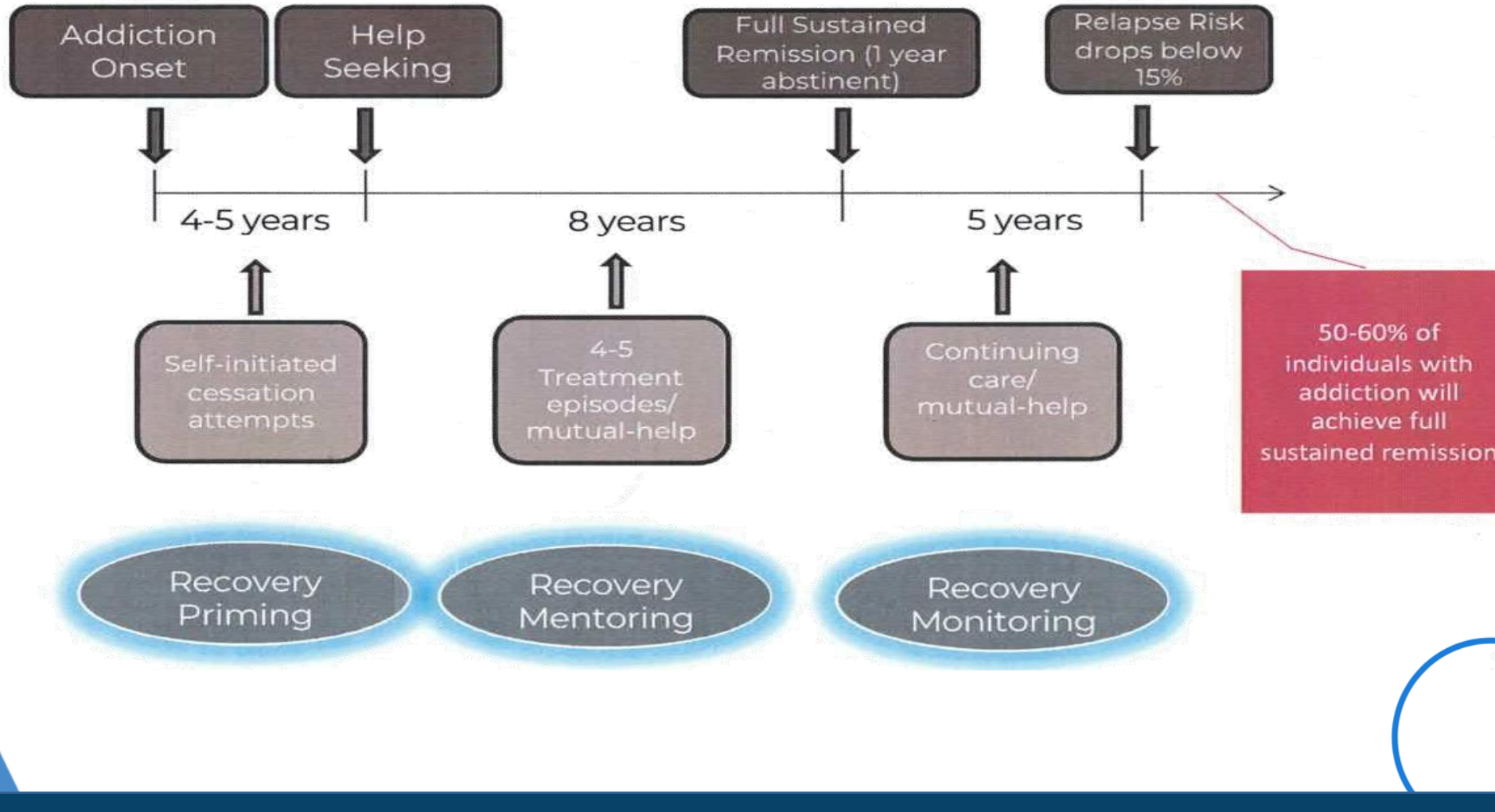
- Toolbox, blogs, podcasts, videos, and more can be found on our website

- **Bookshop**

- SMART Recovery literature pertaining to our tools, life skills and guidelines that are available for purchase. Facilitators enjoy a discount for handbooks purchased from the store.



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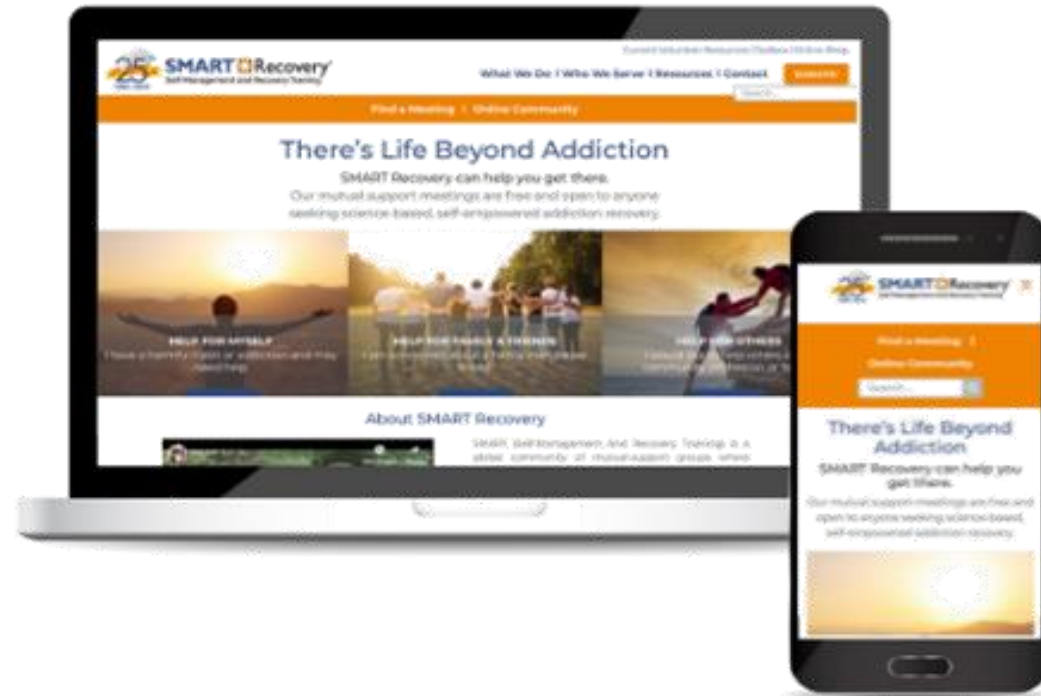


- Harm reduction measures can shorten Recovery Priming
- Better treatment/recovery support should cut in half Recovery Mentoring.
- Whether abstinence is your goal, quality of life is the truest measure of recovery.
- Kelly co-authored a study published last year, which found that more than 22 million Americans—9% of adults—have recovered from a substance use disorder.
- A recent CDC study put the recovery rate at 75%—three in four Americans who try to recover.
- All these numbers are associated with the highly flawed system we have today. Imagine how much faster recovery could be with the improvements we're seeking.
- And save maybe half a million lives or more this decade.

- There's more than a little hope because we know how to treat addiction with medications, therapies, many forms of mutual aid.
- This is not heart disease or cancer or other incurable illnesses.
- Like our new campaign, we just have to SMASH the Stigma, Take on Addiction, and use the proven measures that work.







For more information, visit:

[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)



## Behavioral Health Awareness Series

**If you are an Evernorth or Cigna customer and have questions about Substance Use treatment or about your benefits and how to use them, please contact:**

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