

Addiction Recovery Field Polarization

Belief 1	Middle Ground	Belief 2
All drug use is addiction	Addiction is real and describes the minority experience of people who use drugs. Some, but not all, AOD problems constitute an addiction	Addiction is a false concept
"Harm reduction is killing people"	Abstinence, MAT, needle exchanges, overdose prevention sites, and moderation (both successful and unsuccessful) present unique benefits and risks for each individual	"Abstinence is killing people"
12-Step recovery is the only way	12-Step recovery is one of many pathways to recovery, and can be wildly beneficial for some and harmful for others	12-Step recovery is an exclusively destructive and stigmatizing path
Meth and fentanyl are evil / purely destructive / a "scourge"	Some, even many, can use are drugs that lead to physical addiction and sometimes death drugs without developing an addiction, but experimentation is inherently dangerous	Meth and fentanyl are innocuous substances, if we had zero stigma and limitless Narcan - all would be well
Treatment is perfect as-is (if treatment doesn't work for you, it's because you "didn't work it.")	While there are certainly bad actors in the treatment industry, people are generally trying the best they can to help others deal with addiction. Progress has, and will continue, to be made in increasing treatment efficacy	Treatment is killing more people than AOD use is
MAT = "relapse"	MAT is lifesaving for many, but is not without its risks and downsides. Additionally, it's important to be mindful of the pharmaceutical industry's influence on public discourse around MAT and the demonization of anyone who has questions about or misgivings with MAT	MAT is the "gold standard" and is thereby the only valid form of treatment
Addiction is a spiritual disease / exclusively because of genetic predisposition / no other factors are relevant	Addiction is a multifaceted brain disorder that is brought about through a multitude of influences (epigenetics)	Addiction is always a result of childhood trauma
All AOD problems could be alleviated via eradication of AOD ("prohibition")	Both prohibition and decriminalization / legalization create a set of risks and harms to individuals, groups, and society at large that would need to be harmed	"Safe supply" would address all AOD problems
Psychedelics = "relapse" for everyone	The research on psychedelic utility in treating a variety of concerns is promising, but risks are often understated. Unique benefits, but also grave consequences, can come from psychedelic use (especially for people in recovery)	Psychedelics = panacea for addiction

This document is meant to serve as a brainstorming exercise for myself, and other professionals in the field, to examine belief systems. These are my unpolished thoughts as of 7/19/23 and will be open to revision, change, and updates. None of this information is prescriptive, definitive, or finalized. While I've talked with colleagues who have said this might have utility in discussion with clients / patients, I'm more so interested in sharing and discussing with other addiction recovery professionals.