



INNOVATIVE HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

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The deets about me: A brief Bio of my work in Harm Reduction

short for "details",
usually details of
gossip

I have been an addiction counsellor since 1991. I have worked extensively in jails, prisons, detention cells and centres, open custody and youth jails. I have worked mainly with people who are street involved, often homeless, in conflict with the law, living with mental health and addiction issues, survivors of trauma and sex trade. I have been active in the harm reduction movement by working towards policy and legislative reform regarding illicit drug enforcement laws, condom, crack kit and needle distribution in jails and prisons + the community, public health policy development, support for drug users unions, and inclusion of harm reduction services within social service settings. Some of the training and speaking that I have done on the topic of harm reduction:

- **The Harm Reduction Warriors** – Co-Founder + Owner
- Our company provides training, education, policy development and program design since 1996.
- **In The Mind's Eye: Issues of Substance Use in Film + Forum:** Street Level Sex Trade
- **The Canadian Naturopathic College** – Harm Reduction Strategies for Health Care Professionals
- **East End Network** – The History of Harm Reduction and Agency Guidelines for Implementation.
- **South Riverdale Harm Reduction Steering Committee, Chair**
- **Imprisoned Women's Empowerment and Advocacy Group, Co-founder/Chair**
- **National Harm Reduction Conference: Utilizing Harm Reduction Strategies in Youth Court Diversion for Youth with Mental Health and/or Concurrent Disorders.**
- **(Co-Author Balpreet Grewal)**
- **National Harm Reduction Conference: Parallel Journeys – The Harm Reduction Practitioner and the Drug User**



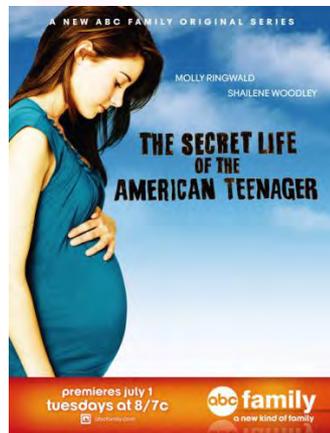
The 411 On 2day:



That's info 4
the over 30!

- Harm Reduction strategies for working with youth
- Harm Reduction issues + strategies specific to youth experiencing mental health and /or addictions
- “Yuting” ur Agency Culture
- Harm Reduction as a Wellness Tool for SSW's

Teenager: teen girl emo kid sex adolescent young teenagers child tween slut music teens stupid boy adult puberty school youth punk teenage annoying life angst kids hot parents loser whore idiot love high school immature drunk nerd bitch gay poser goth fag brat shit lazy random myspace suicide party sexy



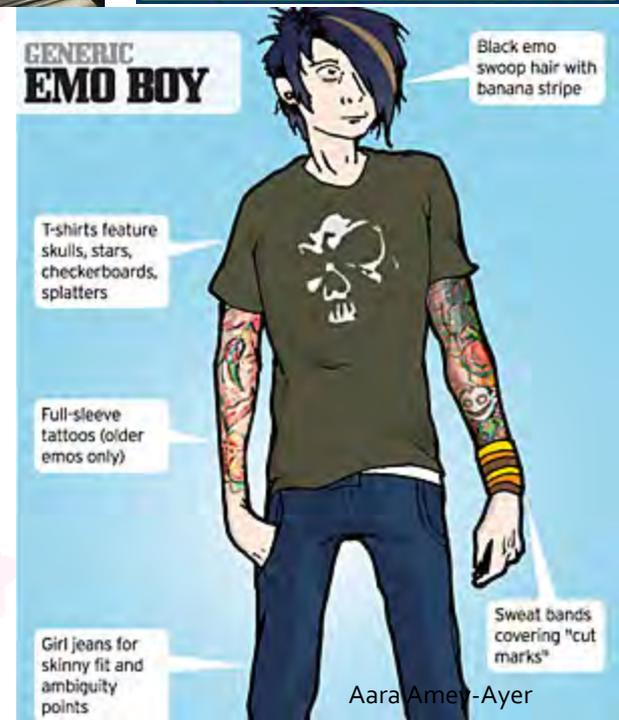
The Urban Dictionary



the **AMERICAN MUSLIM** teenager's handbook
"Amid its witty asides and tongue-in-cheek answers... the handbook clearly staves out a position for a moderate, flexible version of Islam..." —New York Times



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TEENAGERS

Tired of Being Harassed
By Your Stupid Parents?



ACT NOW!

MOVE OUT . . .

GET A JOB . . .

PAY YOUR OWN BILLS.

DO IT WHILE YOU STILL KNOW EVERYTHING

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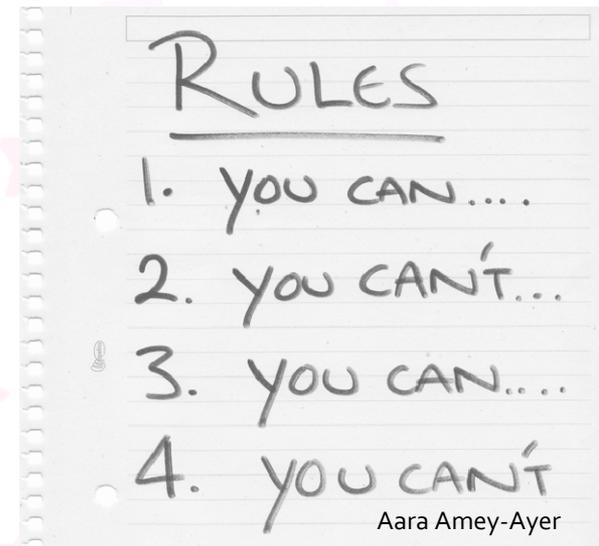
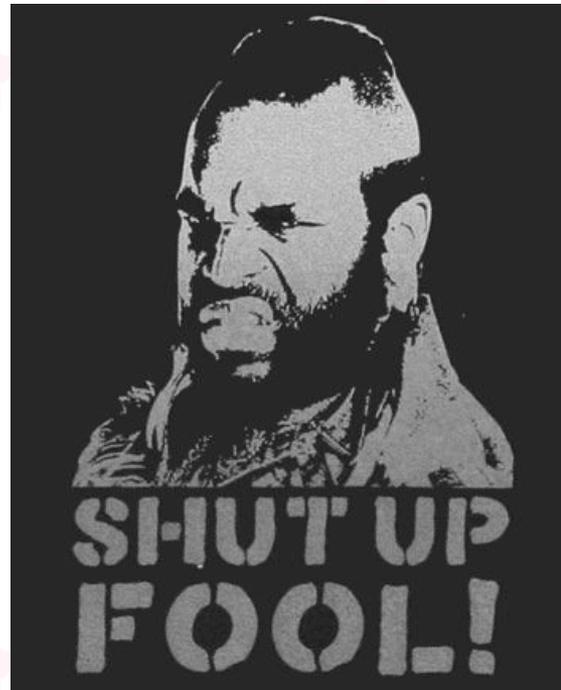
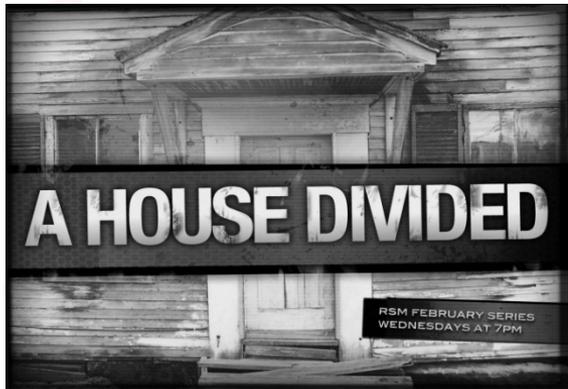
Mothers of teens know why some
animals eat their young

What are yours?

Teen charged with brother's murder



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION



What r they thinking about us?!

Adult: as defined by Urban

Dictionary

- One who thinks they deserve the right to control EVERYTHING there is to control, and usually, in fact most always, results in severe hate by many teenagers everywhere. Mostly practices this believed right on his/her offspring. Does not deserve friends, or a social life.
- A depressed child. Adults have the notion that juveniles need to suffer. Only when they have suffered enough to wipe out most of their joyous spirits and innocence are they staid enough to be considered 'Adult'
- A person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle.

Harm Reduction in Social Service Work:

- Preventing suicide
- Teaching Coping Skills
- Providing info about MH, symptoms and medication side effects
- Assisting with housing and education
- Coaching and mentoring good problem solving skills and resilience



CAMH Position Re: Youth and Harm Reduction Strategies as Guiding Principles :

- “We have seen that a prohibitionist response does not work for adolescents who have a developmental need to take risks, assert their autonomy, develop values independent of their parents and other authorities, find acceptance in a peer group, seek excitement and satisfy their curiosity.
- Taking a pragmatic approach to this generally understood phenomenon, harm reduction avoids taking a uniform stance that substance is bad, but instead focuses on getting accurate and unbiased information on the harm of use to potential users, in order to help them make informed decisions about whether to use, and if they choose to use, what precautions to take to minimize their risk. Young people do not trust authorities they believe provide misleading information on substance use and its dangers when it contradicts their own experience or those of their peers.” Excerpt from: CAMH, submission on Harm Reduction.

Youth Engagement as a Harm Reduction Strategy:

An engaged youth:

- thinks the activity/organization is an important one
- is well-informed about the activity/organization
- sees an important sense of purpose in the activity/organization

When youth are engaged, they may experience many significant benefits. Researchers have found links between engagement and several different kinds of positive health outcomes, including the following:

- Decreased alcohol use
- Decreased marijuana and hard drug use
- Lower rates of school failure and drop-out
- Lower rates of sexual activity and pregnancy in girls
- Lower rates of anti-social and criminal behaviors
- Lower rates of depression

Harm Reduction issues specific to youth experiencing mental health and/or addictions

- **Mental Health + Addictions (Concurrent Disorders):** There are a number of mental health problems that often overlap with substance use problems. Some, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, anxiety, conduct and learning disorders can emerge in childhood and later increase the risk that a young person develops substance use problems. Others, such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia tend to onset during adolescence and young adulthood, at the same time that substance use problems tend to emerge.
- **Suicide + Depression:** Currently suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Canadian youth . Depression is the most frequent mental health diagnosis in teens, yet only about 33% get help. Depression often precedes problem substance use. It is a common practice for youth to use substances to alleviate negative feelings associated with depression.
- **Post-traumatic stress** can manifest through symptoms such as anxiety, depression, self-harming, preoccupation with death, suicidal thoughts or gestures, and flashbacks. The incidence of post-traumatic stress is much higher when the young person has been emotionally, sexually or physically abused.

Reasons for Using Substances %

- To socialize 78%
- To have more energy 77%
- To escape 74%
- To stay up all night 63%
- To sleep 59%
- To feel more sexual/want to have sex 51%
- To avoid withdrawal symptoms 50%
- To feel safe 33%
- To keep weight down/not want to eat 26%
- To feel healthy 25%
- It's part of my spiritual practices 19%

Coping: Reasons for Using Substances %

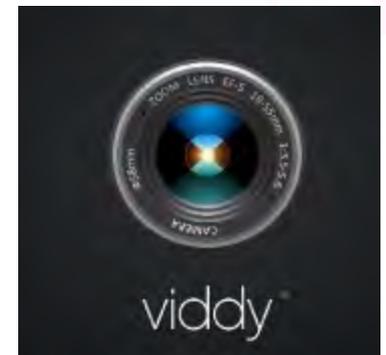
| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| ▪ Stress | 86% |
| ▪ Emotional pain | 81% |
| ▪ Boredom | 81% |
| ▪ Physical pain | 68% |
| ▪ Loneliness | 66% |
| ▪ Homelessness | 65% |
| ▪ Mental health issues/symptoms | 41% |
| ▪ Illegal work | 41% |
| ▪ Legal work | 33% |
| ▪ Hunger | 32% |
| ▪ School | 23% |
| ▪ Other | 2% |



Things You can Do To Engage Young People:

- Involve youth in decisions that affect their lives
 - Assist young people in developing skills
- Actively listen to, and respect the ideas of, young people, the process is as important as the product
- It's important for adults to avoid taking control of projects or activities just because they want things to get done "right" or quickly.
- When working with youth, adults should think about what they can learn from young people, not just what they can teach them
- Adults who work in partnership with youth need to learn how to give up control, "depower" themselves, and share power with young people

The Tech Savvy Social Worker



“Yuting” Your Agency + Culture:

Partnership agreements with Youth Agency's

Youth Visibility: pamphlets, posters, programming, consultation + inclusion.

Resources, connections and referrals that r contemporary + relevant

Evidence that yutes r a part of our agency culture ie. peer workers, volunteers, board members, working group members, core training.

Vinny Gambini: It is possible that the two yutes...

Judge Chamberlain Haller: ...Ah, the two what? Uh... uh, what was that word?

Vinny Gambini: Uh... what word?

Judge Chamberlain Haller: Two what?

Vinny Gambini: What?

Judge Chamberlain Haller: Uh... did you say 'yutes'?

Vinny Gambini: Yeah, two yutes.

Judge Chamberlain Haller: What is a yute?

[beat]

Vinny Gambini: Oh, excuse me, your honor...

[exaggerated]

Vinny Gambini: Two YOUTHS.

Making your Organization and Programs Youth-Friendly (From a Youth Perspective)

- Allow us to learn from experience. Don't be too pessimistic. Instead of telling us that we can not do something, let us try for ourselves and see if we can make it. We'll learn from our mistakes.
- Ask us open ended questions like "what would you like to see happen as a result of this project?" Those kind of questions will get us talking.
- Don't be a dictator. It breeds rebellion! If you want us to do something, ask us respectfully. Later on in the working relationship, we will know what our responsibilities are, so we will just do our duties without having to be asked.
- Don't ridicule or disrespect us.
- Our identities are forming and changing. Please don't label us.
- Don't be judgmental.
- Use our language.

Harm Reduction as a Wellness Tool for SSW's:

- Learn your triggers
- Learn your boundaries
- Learn your personal "Safe Zone"
- Learn to identify burn out / vicarious trauma
- Request Supervision
- Ask for Help!
- Take breaks
- Debrief

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Harm Reduction Warriors

416-300-6260

harmreductionadvocate@hotmail.com



Sources, Contacts + Resources:

- <http://www.toronto.ca/health/drugstrategy/index.htm>
- http://www.canadiancrc.com/UN_CRC/UN_Convention_on_the_Rights_of_the_Child-Overview.aspx
- http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/research/affordable_housing_research/drugs-homelessness-health-homeless-youth-speak-out-about-harm-reduction/
- <http://canadianharmreduction.com/>
- <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>
- http://www.engagementcentre.ca/files/Whatis_WEB_e.pdf
- <http://www.tripproject.ca/trip/index.php>
- <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/the-3rs/vision>
- [/www.camh.net/Publications/Resources for Professionals](http://www.camh.net/Publications/Resources_for_Professionals)
- http://wiki.media-culture.org.au/index.php/Youth_Culture_and_New_Technologies