

Opioid Response Network

Adolescent Recovery as a Social Process:
Examining and Fostering Social Network Change

Dr. Emily Hennessy

September 24, 2025



Opioid
Response
Network



Working with communities.

- ✧ The SAMHSA-funded *Opioid Response Network (ORN)* assists states, tribes, organizations and individuals by providing the resources and technical assistance they need locally to address the opioid crisis and stimulant use.
- ✧ Technical assistance is available to support the evidence-based prevention, treatment, and recovery from opioid use disorders and stimulant use disorders.



Working with communities.

- ✧ The *Opioid Response Network (ORN)* provides local, experienced consultants in prevention, treatment, and recovery to communities and organizations to help address this opioid crisis and stimulant use.
- ✧ *ORN* accepts requests for education and training.
- ✧ Each state/territory has a designated team, led by a regional Technology Transfer Specialist (TTS), who is an expert in implementing evidence-based practices.



Contact the Opioid Response Network

- ✦ To ask questions or submit a technical assistance request:
 - Visit www.OpioidResponseNetwork.org
 - Email orn@aaap.org



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Funding for this initiative was made possible (in part) by grant no. 1H79TI088037 from SAMHSA. The views expressed in written conference materials or publications and by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.





Approach: To build on existing efforts, enhance, refine and fill in gaps when needed while avoiding duplication and not “recreating the wheel.”

Overall Mission

To provide training and technical assistance via local experts to enhance **prevention, treatment** (especially medications like buprenorphine, naltrexone and methadone), and **recovery** efforts across the country addressing state and local - specific needs.





WE HELP YOU HELP OTHERS



Recovery Science Series Webinars – Past Events

1. Recovery Support Services: Science and Practice, John Kelly, Ph.D.
2. Understanding and Addressing Substance Use Disorder Stigma in Clinical Care Settings, John Kelly, Ph.D.
3. Digital Recovery Support Services, Brandon Bergman, Ph.D.
4. Using Recovery Science to Dismantle Racial Inequities in Opioid Use Disorder, Corrie Vilsaint, Ph.D.
5. Examining Opioid Use Disorder Through the Lens of Recovery, Lauren A. Hoffman, Ph.D.
6. Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs): The Hub of Recovery Support in the Community, Patty McCarthy and Philip Rutherford, Faces & Voices of Recovery
7. Recovery High Schools as a Protective Factor against the Progression of Substance Use & Co-Occurring Disorders, Andrew Finch, Ph.D.
8. Collegiate Recovery: From Science to Policy, Noel Vest, Ph.D.
9. Mutual Help Groups as an Addiction Recovery Resource, Keith Humphreys, Ph.D.
10. Recovery Homes: Potential and Future Challenges, Leonard Jason, Ph.D.
11. Building Adolescent and Family Recovery Capital Through Community Supports, Emily Hennessy, Ph.D.
12. Incorporating Recovery Coaches into General Medical Settings, Dr. Sarah Wakeman and Windia Rodriguez
13. Considerations for Addressing Substance Use Disorder in Emerging Adults, Ashli Sheidow, Ph.D.
14. Integrating Behavioral Therapy with Pharmacotherapy in Treating Patients with Substance Use Disorders, Roger Weiss, M.D.
15. Medications for Stimulant Use Disorder: Evidence, Infrastructure and Cultural Factors that Support Whole Person Care, Steve Shoptaw, Ph.D.
16. Recovery Coaches: What Do They Do, Where Are They Being Utilized, Are They Effective?, David Eddie, Ph.D.
17. The “Age of Feeling In-Between”: Contemporary Strategies to Aid Treatment and Recovery for Emerging Adults with Substance Use Disorder, Brandon Bergman, Ph.D.
18. Mobilizing Schools to Support Student Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns, Randi M. Schuster, PhD



Coming Soon!

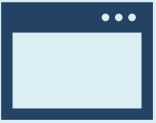
Dr. Amy Yule of the Boston Medical Center will present on on December 10th, 2025, at 12:00 PM EST / 9:00 AM PST.

Prevention and Treatment of Substance Use Disorders in Youth with Psychiatric Disorders

Registration coming soon – will be emailed out to today's attendees



Polling Questions



A pop-up window will appear with the poll questions



You must complete all questions before clicking to submit
---> Remember to scroll down to see all the questions!



We will share the poll results after a few minutes



Your responses will remain anonymous



Disclaimer

Some of the research presented is supported by funding from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (K01 AA028536). The content is solely the responsibility of the author and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

THERE ARE NO CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES TO REPORT.



Recovery & Adolescents

Defining Addiction Recovery

Recovery is “a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”

- **SAMHSA**



Key Principles to examining adolescent recovery

- ✧ Youth are not simply “mini” adults
 - This is a unique developmental stage
 - *AND* they can be active partners in treatment and recovery
- ✧ Substance use serves a purpose in their lives
 - Find out what matters... by asking them
- ✧ Context matters



Unique Developmental Needs

- Changes in self-regulation skills, social needs, skills, and networks
- Heightened vulnerability to experimentation with and habitual use of substances
- Rely more on peer social networks for support and approval
- Peer networks may reward more risky decisions

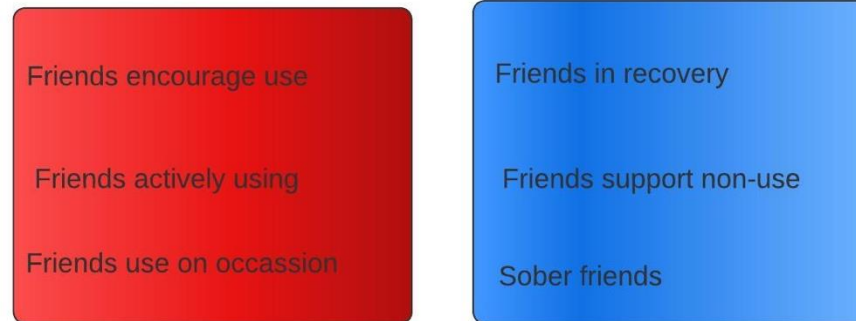


Adolescent Substance Use & Addiction

- ✧ Experimentation
- ✧ Boredom
- ✧ Physiology
- ✧ Friends and Peers
- ✧ Family environment
- ✧ Coping with mental health symptoms or traumatic experiences



Degrees of social support, risks, influence...



Evidence on recovery social influences for youth

	SUPPORT	BARRIER
PEERS	Youth with more social support and friends actively supporting recovery efforts → more likely to be abstinent	Use among peers is strong predictor of relapse
FAMILIES	Structure, i.e., use of “cutoffs” or issuing ultimatums around substance use; Engage in family system treatment; Learning new parenting practices and skills	Noticeable substance use; Strained relationships; Poor communication
RECOVERY ROLE MODELS	Model recovery behaviors; Understand the nature of addiction; Support the youth in their recovery process; Connection to larger recovery community	Lack of access in some communities; negative stigma around recovery culture

Brown et al. 2001; Chi et al. 2009; Ramo and Brown 2008; Ramo et al. 2012; Brown et al. 1994; Elswick et al. 2018; Heller and Russell 2015; Henderson et al. 2009; Hennessy et al., 2024; Liddle et al. 2009; Nash et al., 2019; Stanger et al. 2015; Tanner-Smith et al. 2013; Nash et al., 2015



Theory on Social Influence & Change

Social Categorization and Comparison



- ✧ Divide social world into categories
- ✧ You either belong to a group **or** you see another group as “other”
- ✧ People seek a positive social identity – act in ways the group approves
- ✧ A positive social identity can serve basic developmental needs, certainty, self-esteem, and meaning

/ am who / am – we are who we are

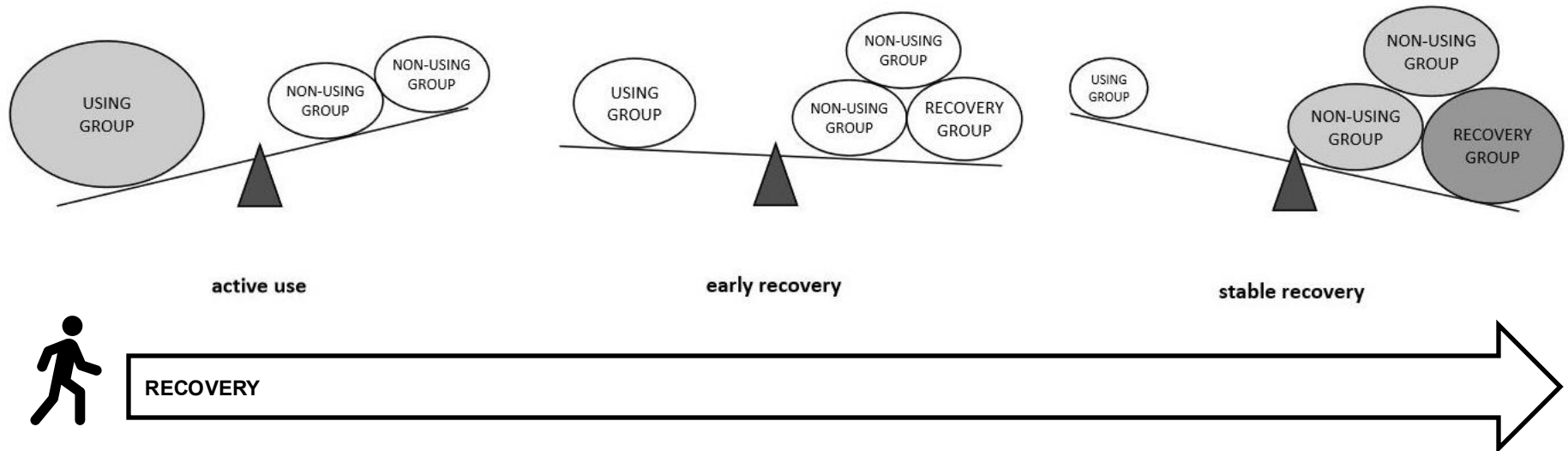


Experimenting with different social identities

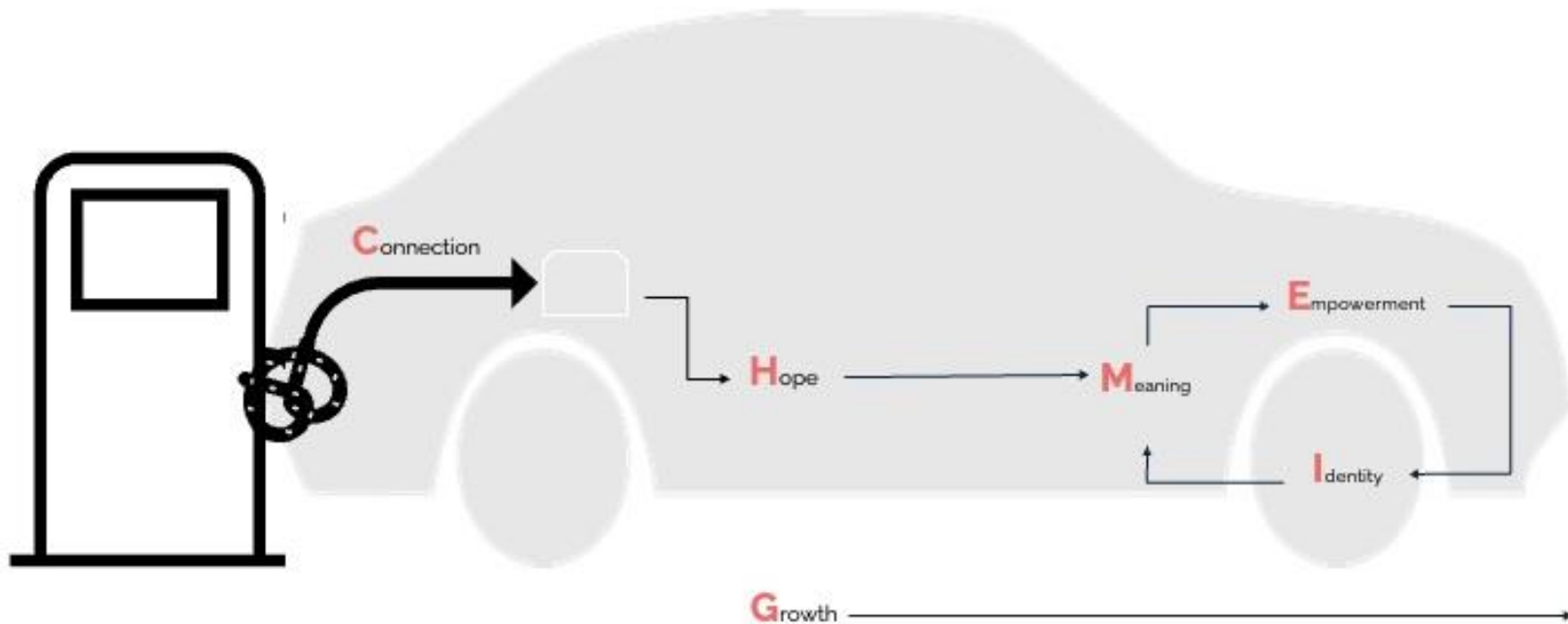


Social Network Transition

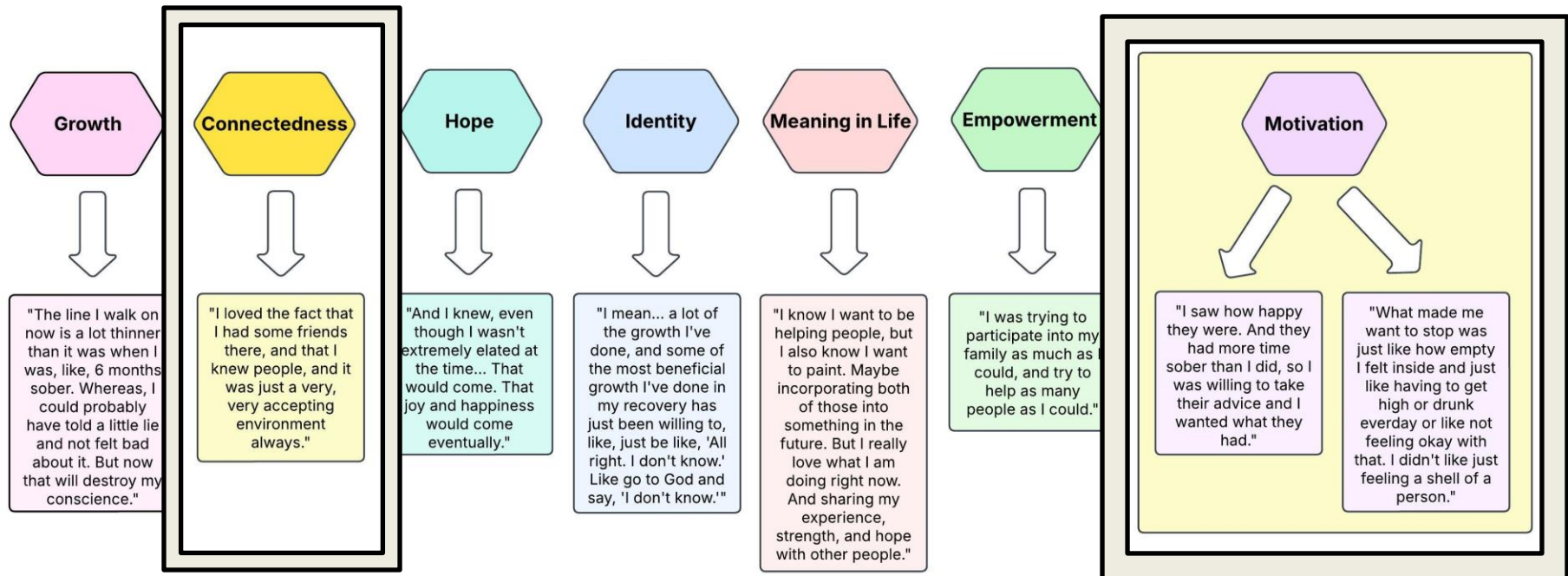
RECOVERY CAPITAL $+++$ $\longleftrightarrow$ $---$ BARRIERS TO RECOVERY



G-CHIME: Engine of Recovery



G-CHIME+Motivation



Stigma

An individual or group is considered to have a **devalued trait** that can lead to **being negatively judged, left out**, or other **negative consequences**



Perceive



Enact



Internalize



Highly stigmatized condition

People need to realize, like, it's more than just someone choosing to do the drugs at first... it's like a bad nightmare that just keeps going on every day.

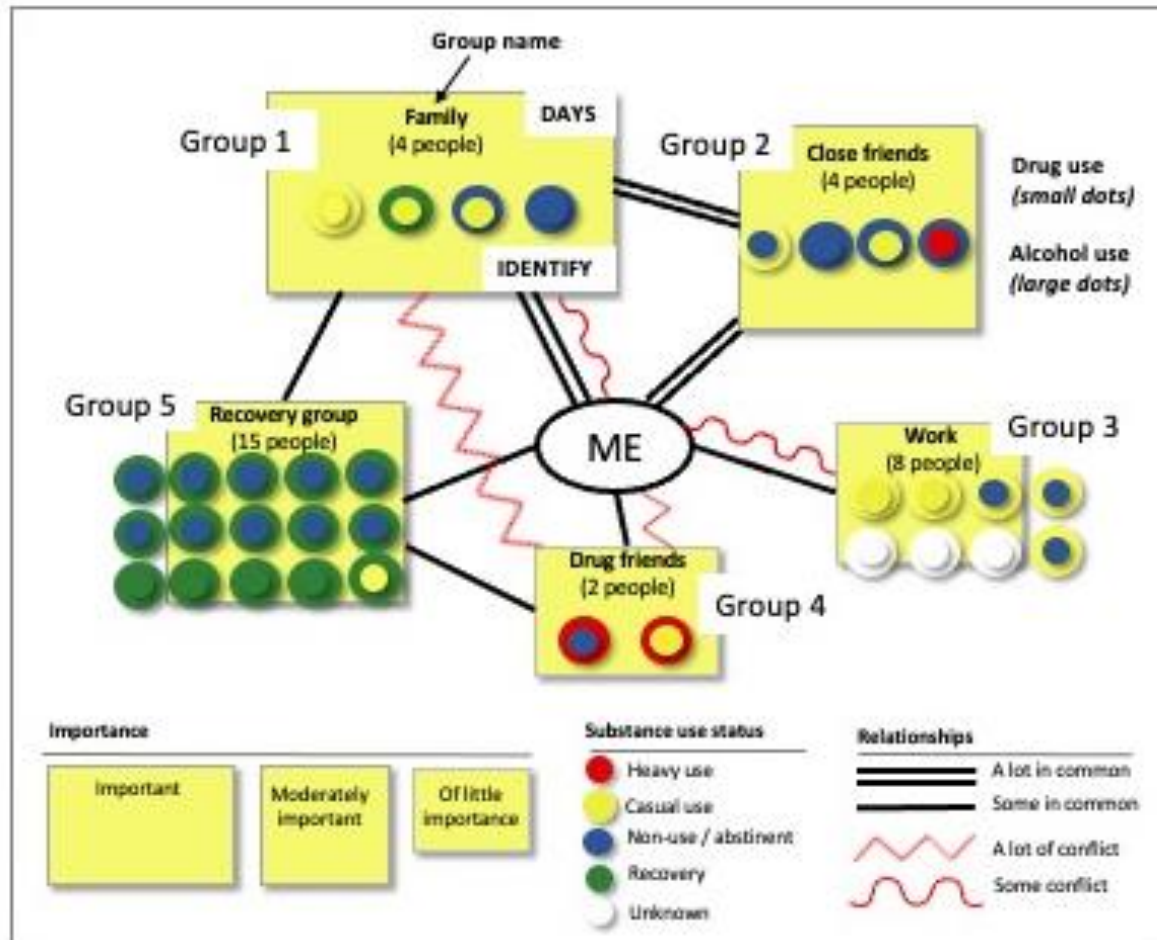




Measuring & Examining Social Influence

Social Identity Map

Tool for data collection and (potential) intervention...





55

Views

0

CrossRef
citations to date

6

Altmetric

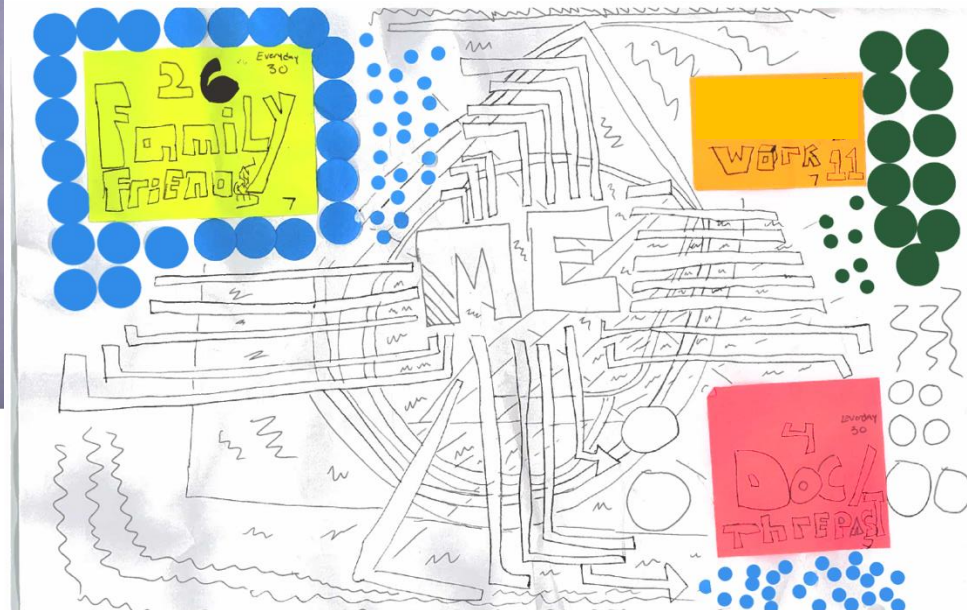
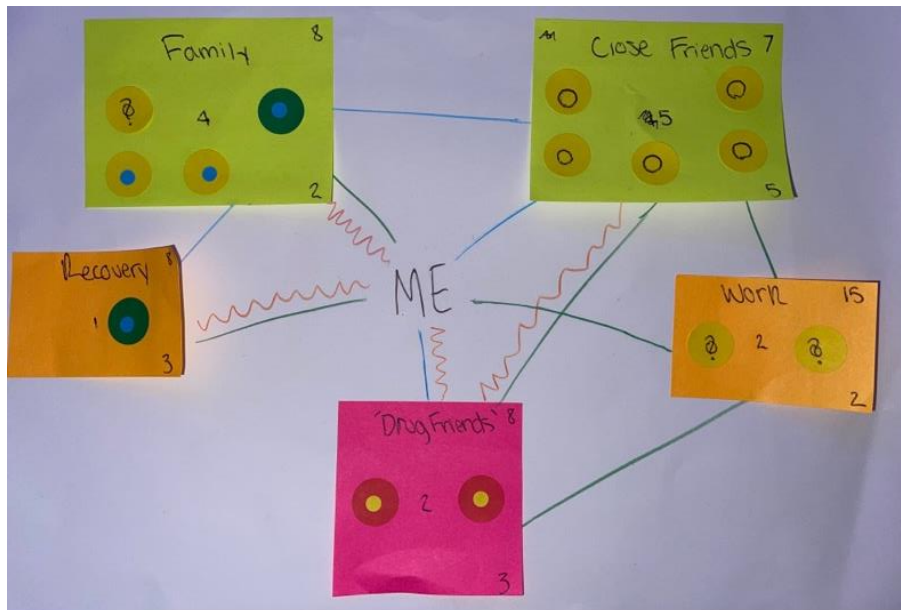
Original Articles

Visualizing the Influence of Social Networks on Recovery: A Mixed-Methods Social Identity Mapping Study with Recovering Adolescents

Emily A. Hennessy , Jordan Jurinsky, Kiefer Cowie, Agata Z. Pietrzak, Sophia Blyth, Paige Krasnoff, ...show all

Pages 1405-1415 | Published online: 13 May 2024

 Cite this article  <https://doi-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1080/10826084.2024.2352618>



Network Supports and Barriers

✧ Alcohol and drug use (n = 108)

✧ Conflict

✧ Belonging/Connection

✧ Identity & Stigma

- 29%: *no* heavy use groups in their networks
- 24%: *2 or more* heavy use groups
- 26%: *no* recovery groups

- Youth with more recovery groups had 3 fewer days of alcohol use than those with no recovery groups
- Youth with heavy substance use groups had 11 more days of marijuana use and 7 more days of other drug use than youth without any heavy substance use groups
- Youth with no heavy use groups or at least one recovery group had higher recovery capital compared to youth with at least one heavy use group or no recovery groups



Network Supports and Barriers

- ✧ Alcohol and drug use
- ✧ **Conflict (n = 108)**
- ✧ Belonging/Connection
- ✧ Identity and Stigma

~1 high conflict, 2 moderate conflict and 2-3 low conflict groups in networks: Females reported slightly more high conflict groups

- More high conflict groups associated with lower recovery capital ($r = -0.23, p < .05$)
- More low conflict groups associated with higher recovery capital ($r = 0.23, p < .05$).



Network Supports and Barriers

- ✧ Alcohol and drug use
- ✧ Conflict
- ✧ **Belonging/Connection**
- ✧ Identity and Stigma

They let me talk to them about recovery and actually help me to set boundaries with them about what I'm comfortable with being around, never complaining or seeming upset if they can't use around me.

My college friends... encouraged me to be the best version of myself and work hard. And they also are really— make me excited about next year.

I usually go to the addicts or my sober friends, because I can tell them anything in the whole world and they won't say a single thing and be like get out of here.



Network Supports and Barriers

Disclosure

Adolescent chooses who to tell

Adolescent experiences unintentional disclosure

Adolescent chooses not to tell certain individuals or groups

Potential targets of disclosure

Close friends or recovery groups and trusted extended family

Immediate family and extended family groups, sometimes adult staff in programs or peers (e.g., if absent from school/treatment)

Coworkers and acquaintances, new groups after a transition (college age youth)

Experiences after disclosure

Mixed responses

- Feeling supported but not watched over
- Mixture of helpful and unhelpful interactions

Stigmatizing interactions

Resilience

- Increased awareness of actions and terminology used by groups can support recovery or act as a barrier

Word Usage

Preferred terminology (e.g., Person with an addiction, in recovery)

Word Usage

Disliked terminology (e.g., Addict, alcoholic)



✧ Alc

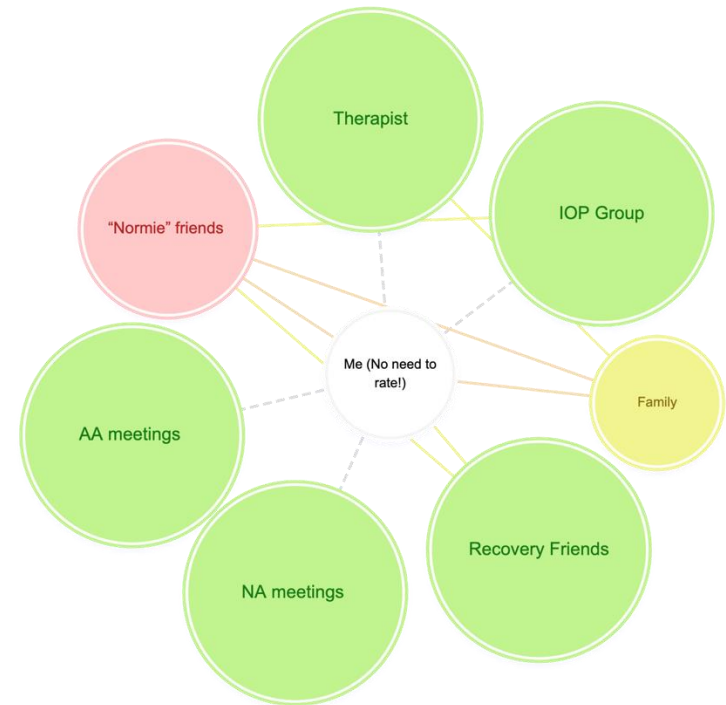
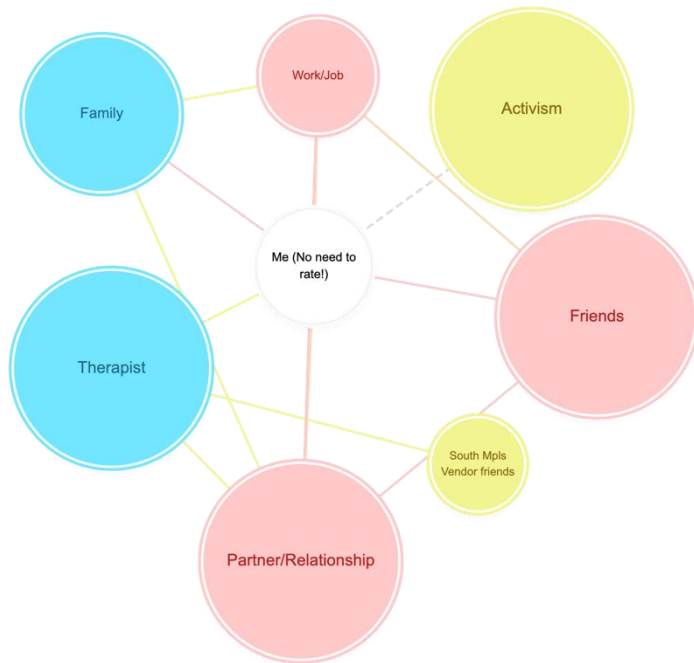
✧ Col

✧ Bel

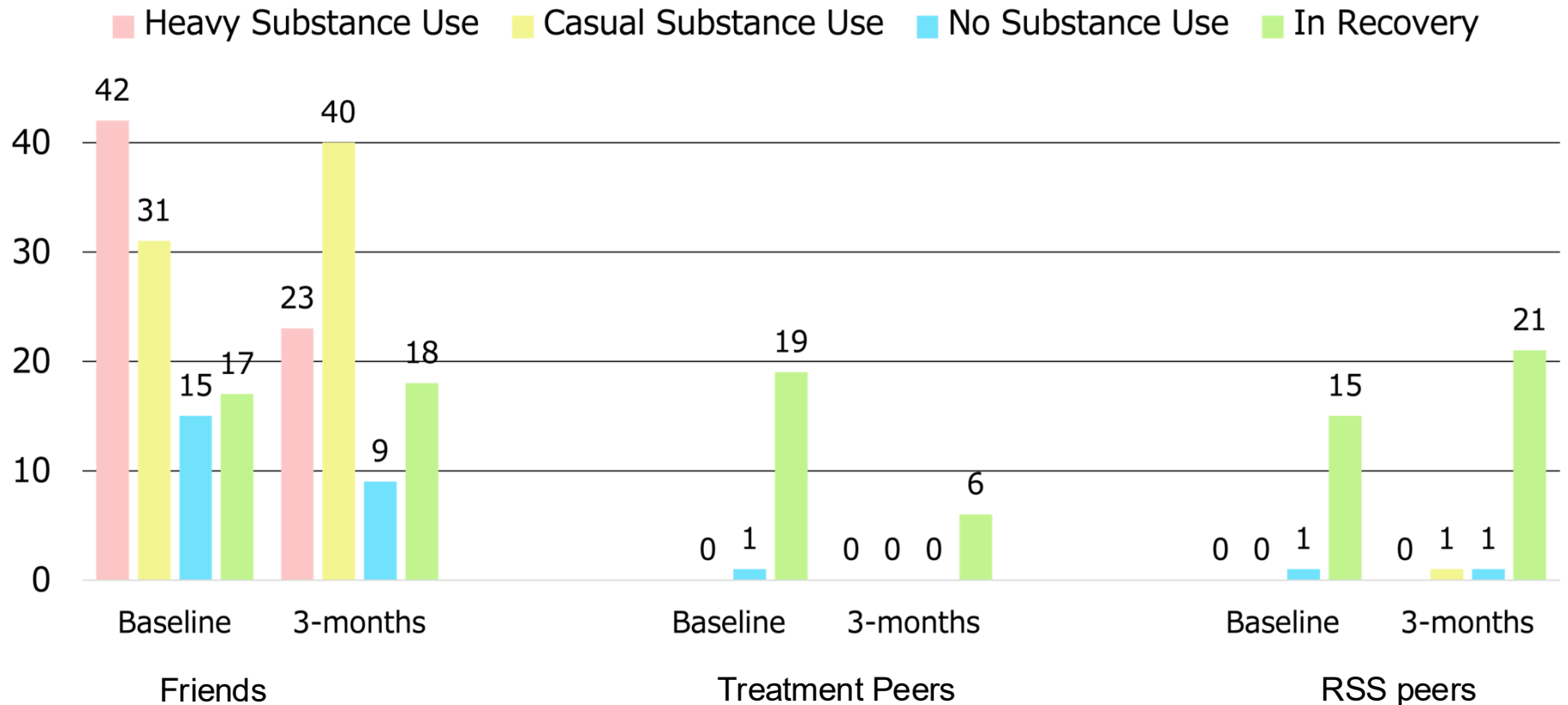
✧ Ide



Changes over time: Baseline to 3-months



Subset of 60 participants



Social Group Characteristics: M = 5.9 groups (SD = 2)



George et al., 2025 (poster)

How does this group support your recovery?

Operationalizing support...

Supportive Relationships

“They let me **talk to them** about recovery and actually help me to **set boundaries** with them about what I’m comfortable with being around, **never complaining** or seeming upset if they can’t use around me...”

“They **pressure me to not smoke** while **encouraging me to activities to boost my mood**. Together we find other ways to keep me busy and occupied.”

Un-Supportive Relationships

“Not supportive want me to continue to use as they **see me as more fun when I use.**”

“I don’t get much support from using friends, **they often try to get me to use.**”

Mixed Support Relationships

“People **I can trust and I love** but i know for the better **I can’t be around them or I will use again.** I have made many friends by using and it’s hard to let go of the drug but also the friends.”

“They **respect my boundaries** but **talk about using frequently.**”

“[They] want we to smoke some times but are ok with me being sober and provide support.”

Importance of “seeing” your network**

- Substance use among family and friends: *“I feel like I knew it, but, like, seeing it... there’s such easy access to me continuing to use”*
- Appreciated seeing progress: *“I may have some bad apples, but... the good support that I have completely outweighs the bad support... I have a good support group, is what I learned”*
- Requests to see/have social network maps over time



Summary of Research Findings

- Youth in recovery report many relationships with individuals who use substances in their social groups
- Youth in recovery also have relationships with individuals who are not using substances or are in recovery
- Conflict is present throughout these relationships - many sources and types of conflict
- SIM is a useful tool for understanding the recovery process among youth: visual and hands-on, “fun”
- SIM could be a useful for intervening in the recovery process among youth: may promote the development of insight**



Emily Hennessy

ehennessy@mgh.harvard.edu

recoveryanswers.org

youthrecoveryanswers.org

 Recovery Research

   @RecoveryAnswers

 recoveryanswers.org



ORN Evaluation Survey Link

The grant that provided funding for this training requires that we request you to complete the brief survey linked below. Your feedback is important and provides support for this type of work to continue. Scan the QR Code to access the SAMHSA feedback survey.



Link to Survey: <https://lanitek.com/GPRAOnline/GPRASurvey.aspx?id=753330&type=PostEvent>

The survey will ask about your satisfaction with the training program you just completed as well as some basic demographic information. Your responses will help the Opioid Response Network improve the services they provide.



Thank you in advance for completing this survey!