



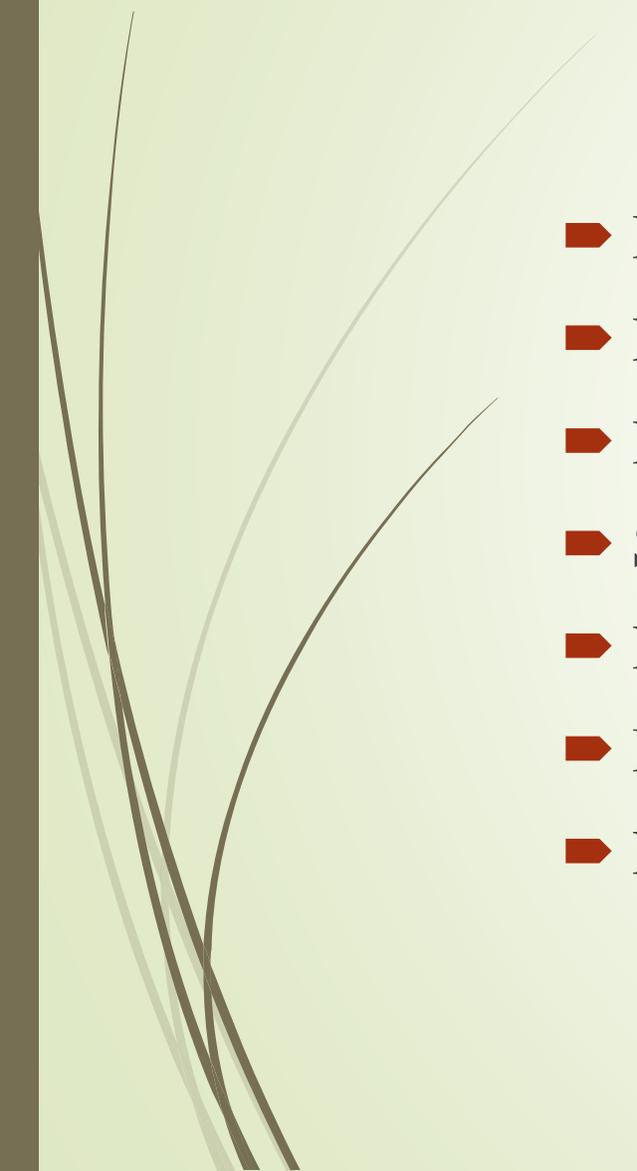
Exploring Substance Use Disorders and Addiction in Seniors

GREENESTONE MUSKOKA THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

Kim Laurie, MACP



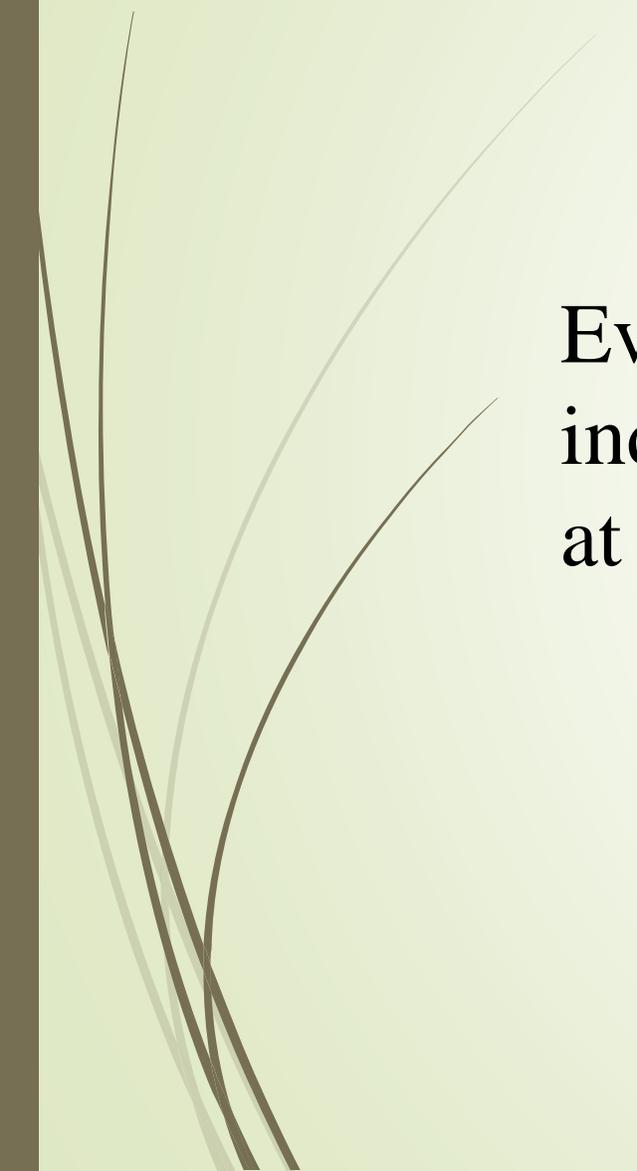
Topics covered in presentation

- Definition of substance use and addiction.
 - Potential consequences of S.U.D.
 - Risk factors for older adults that can lead to increased consumption.
 - Screening tools for older adults.
 - Recognition
 - Barriers
 - Pictures
- 



Defining older adult

Everyone must consider level of activity, cognition, independence, and health status rather than looking at only the chronological age of the adult.





Definition of Addiction

- ▶ A Brain Disease characterized by repeated use of a substance (or behavior) despite the appearance of problems resulting from the use (or behavior).
 - ▶ There must be a presence of a Physical, Emotional, Mental, Relational, Financial, Legal, and/or Social consequence/s.
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Functional Definition of S.U.D.

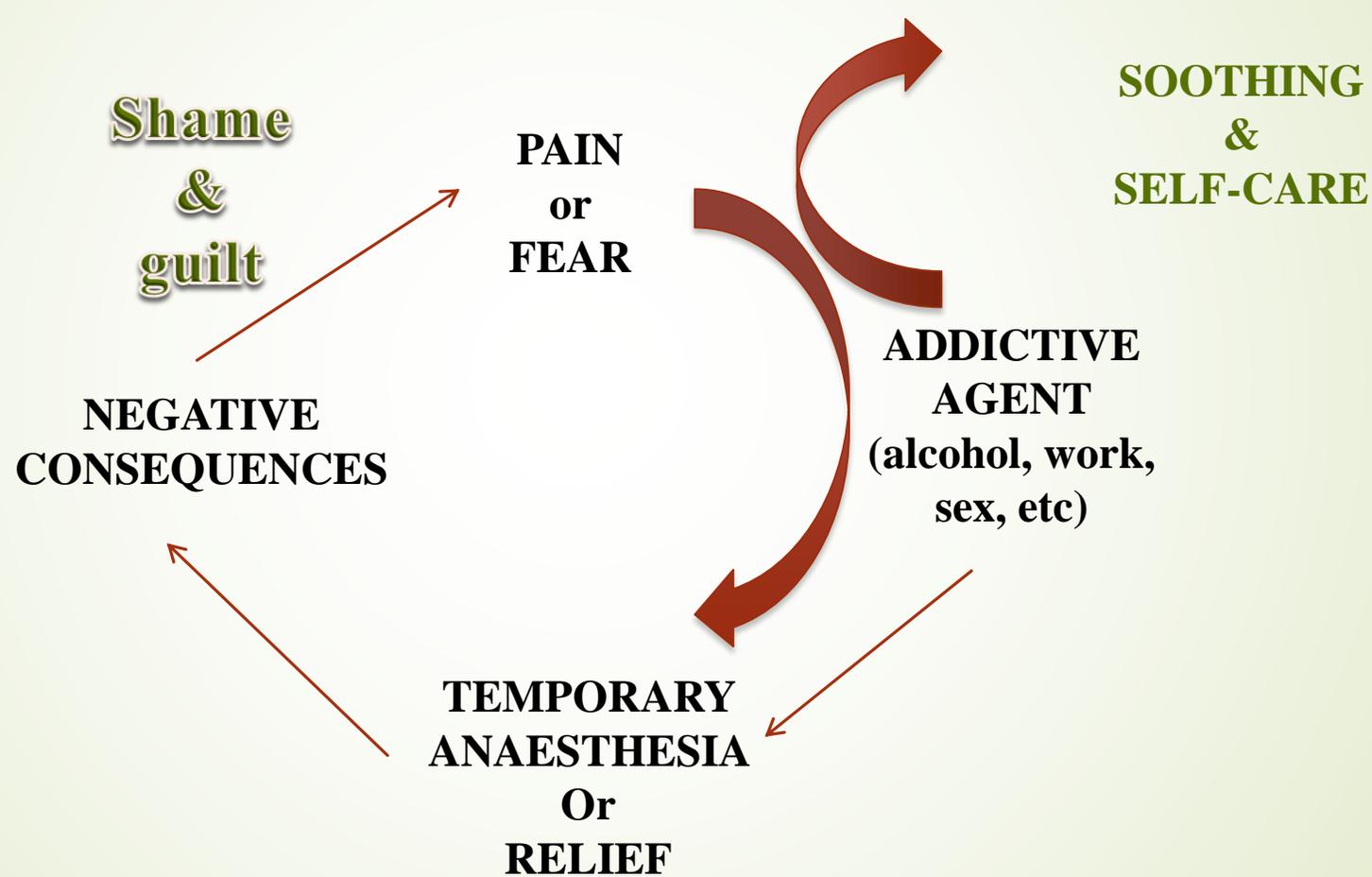
- Use of a substance or behaviour resulting in HARM
- Use of a substance or behaviour resulting in HAZARD

- If only 1, consider “abuse”.
- If both present, consider dependence.



Patterns of Use

- Life-long excessive use without serious consequences (“functional alcoholics”).
- Abstinent or social drinkers with late onset escalation (“late bloomers”).
- Polysubstance- Alcohol, Rx, O-T-C (“therapeutic use”).
- Masked by concurrent disorders.

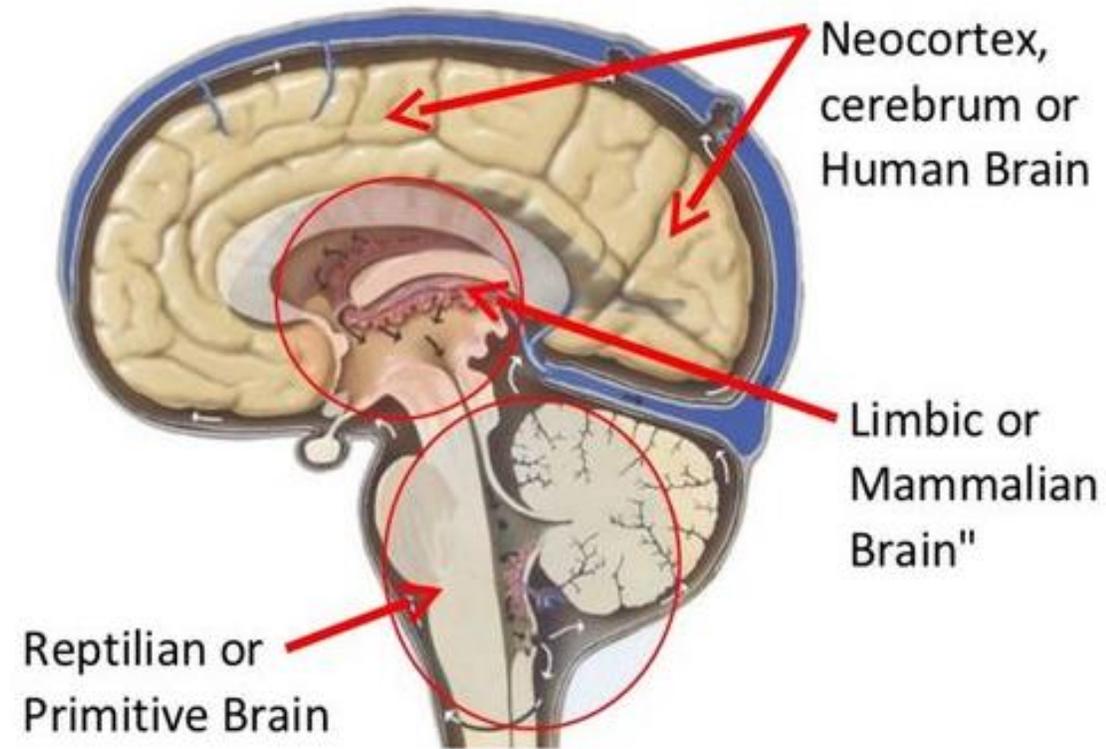




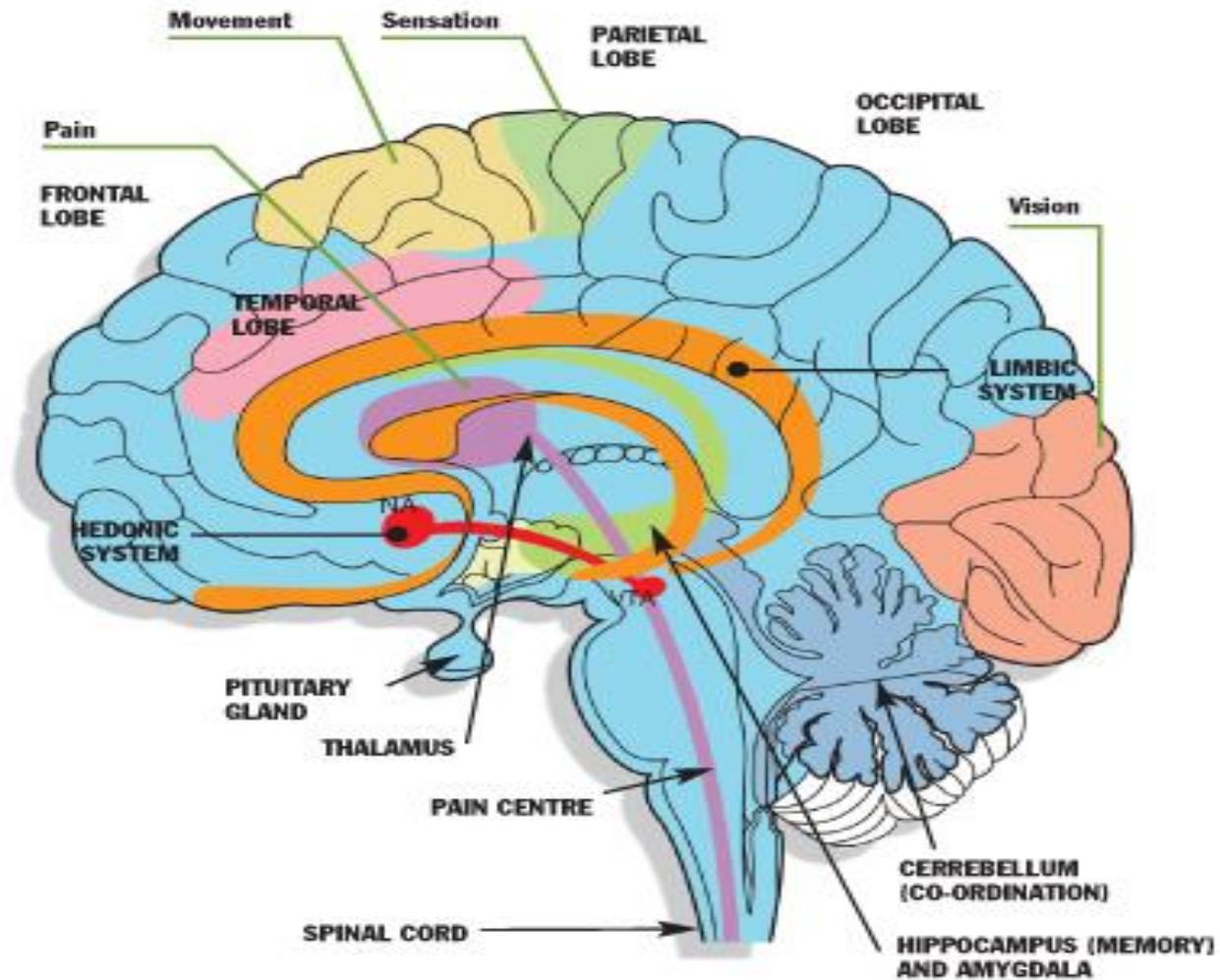
Gathers sensory data, smell, sound, sight, touch.
Controls vital functions, hunger, lust, temperatures, hydration.
Mobilizes the survival response.
Initiates copulation, organizes assault and signals retreat.

Reptilian

Your Three Brains

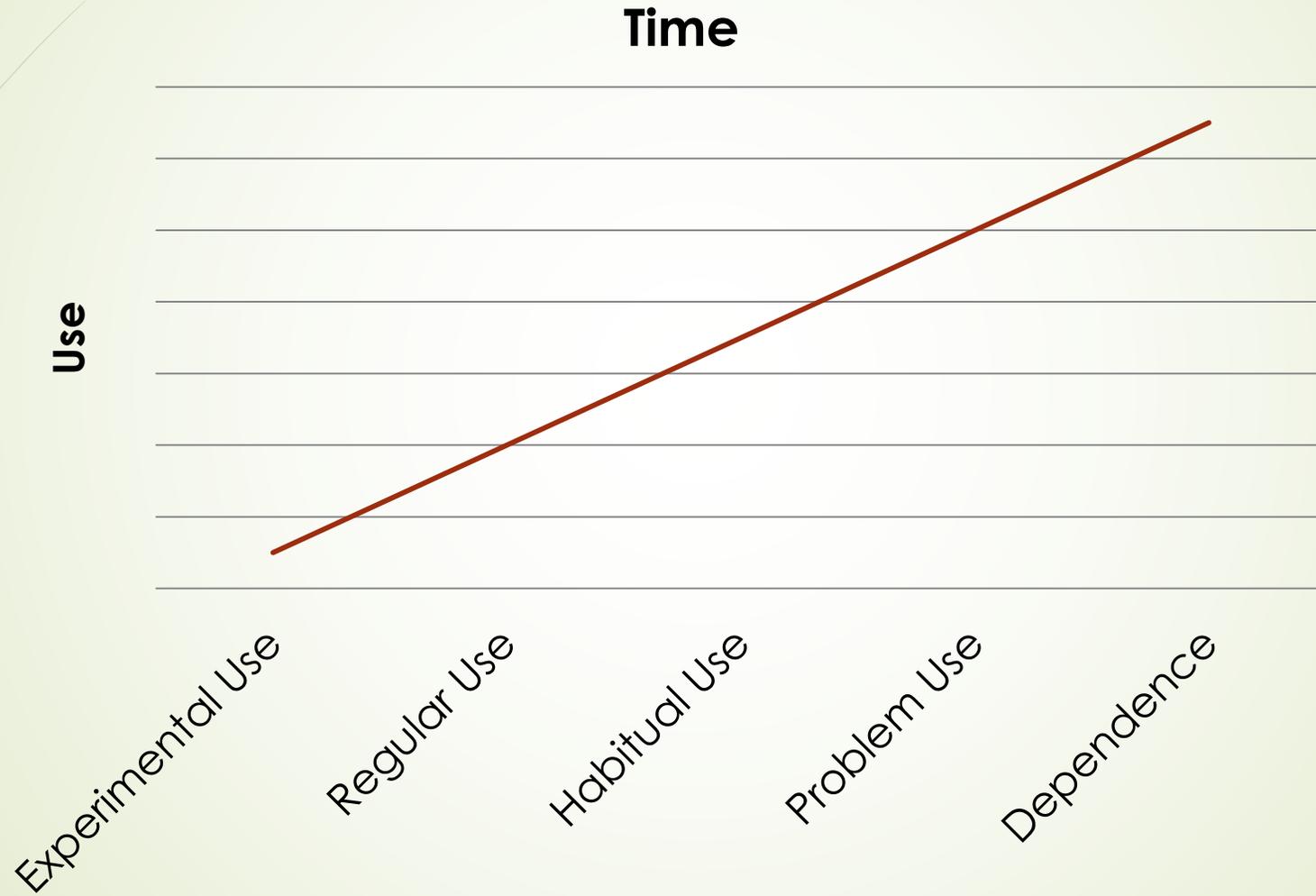


Beautiful Brain





Substance Use Diagram





Potential consequences of use

- Falls and other household injuries
- Cognitive Impairment, Intermittent Confusion
- Tremor
- Anxiety (symptom magnification)
- Loneliness, Sadness (“depression”)
- Grief avoidance
- Social Isolation



Falls and other household injuries

- Alcohol or medication consumption fits 3 of 4 categories for risk factors set by Canadian Falls Prevention Curriculum.
- Biological factors: muscle weakness, impaired balance/gait...
- Behavioral factors: medications, excessive amounts of alcohol, poor diet...
- Social/economic factors: poor family support, financial hardship...



Cognitive impairment: a result of too much...

- Confusion may be part of the impairment making it difficult to assess substance use/misuse.
 - Memory issues over and above the natural aging memory “fuzziness”.
 - Tracking conversations may be a challenge or absent.
 - Getting lost, missing appointments.
 - Anger or other strong emotions.
- 



Risk factors for older adults

Life transitions such as:

- Retirement
 - Birth of grandchildren
 - Isolation
 - Natural aging of body: mobility, mental capacity
- 



More...

- Increase risk of mental illness
 - Decrease in self-worth
 - Change in financial status
- 



Grief and Loss

- 
- Financial loss
 - Peers
 - Family
 - Purpose in life
 - Health



Screening tools

- MAST – G
 - AUDIT-C
 - CAGE
- 



Barriers to recognition of SU by client

- It is a form of entertainment
- Shame & fear
- Denial
- Stigma attached to drinking/using/gambling
- Medication interactions



Barriers to recognition of SU by others

- Lack of physician training in recognizing s/s of substance use disorders.
- Peer enabling system.
- Family enabling system.
- Medical enabling system.
- Societal attitudes related to aging.

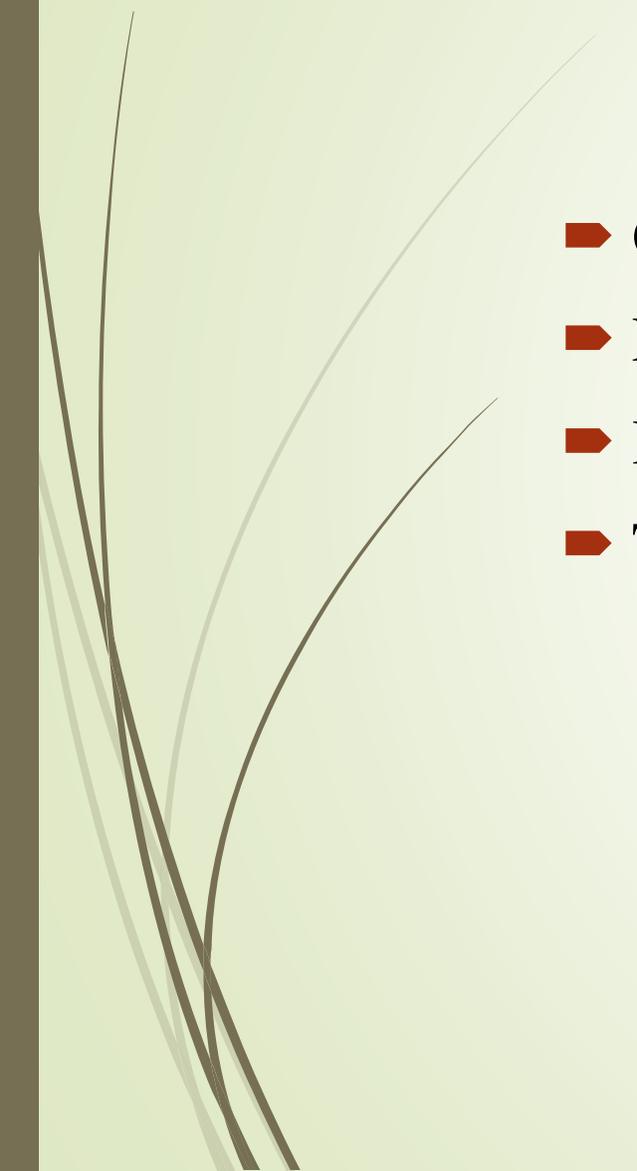


Treatment barriers

- Abstinence based treatment methods
 - Treatment centers/programs are not created for older adults
 - Lack of flexibility in programs: in-patient programs
 - Lack of training for staff treating older adults
 - Physical access to buildings/therapist offices
 - Transportation needs
- 



Treatment Options

- Outpatient counselling, 1:1 or groups.
 - Like-minded groups with similar ages and issues.
 - Harm-reduction.
 - Team approach including family members.
- 



How Can I Be Supportive?

- Validate the person.
- Most importantly-talk.
- Avoid making assumptions/talking behind backs/walking on eggshells.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!
- Importance of safety.
- Reduce risks of harm and this includes falls.
- Watch out for your own judgments.



Thank you

Questions?