# BEYOND NARCAN
## HOLISTIC HARM REDUCTION

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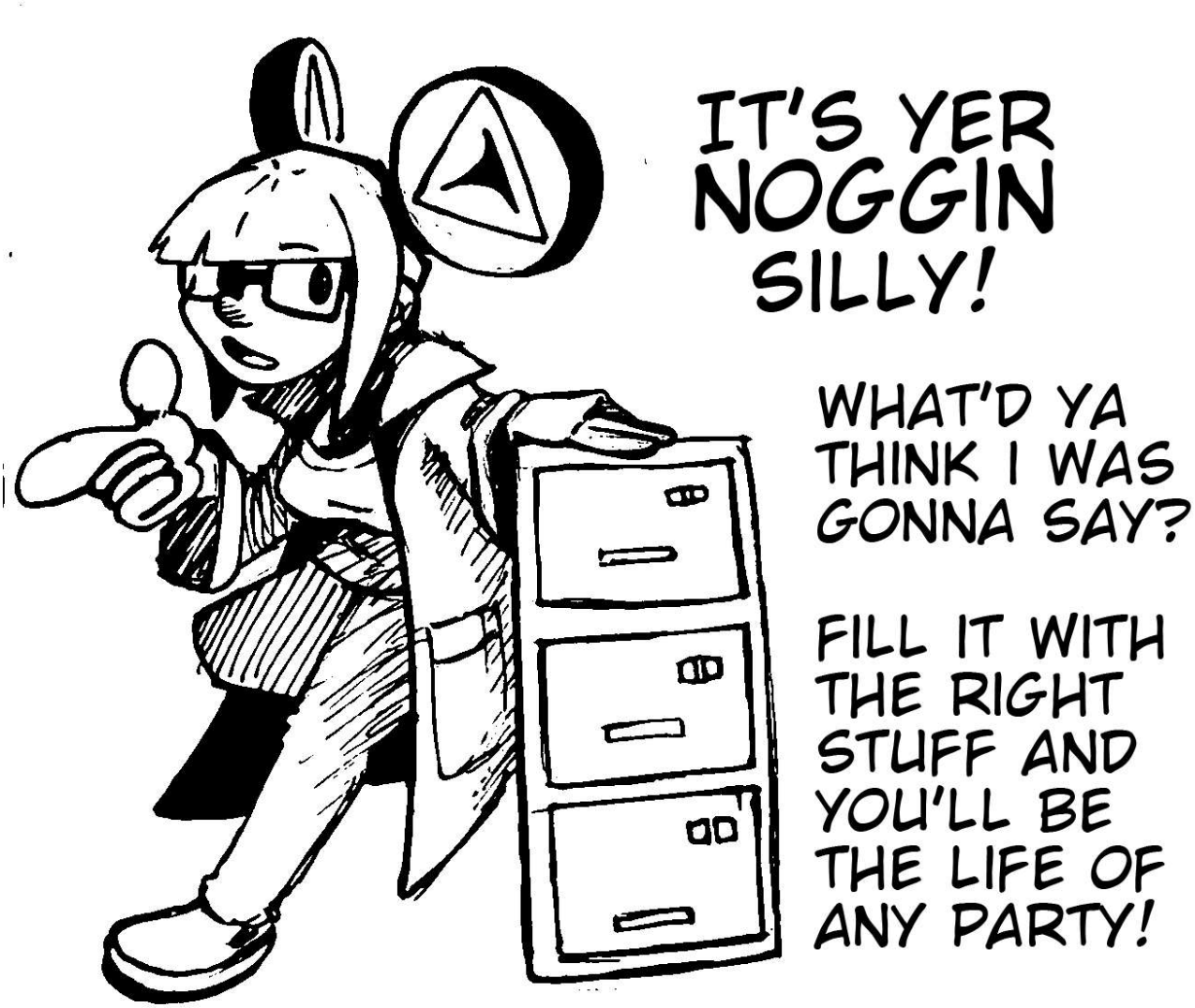
## POP QUIZ TIME!

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT HARM REDUCTION TOOL YOU CAN INVEST IN RIGHT NOW? I'LL GIVE YA A HINT, IT STARTS WITH THE LETTER "N"...



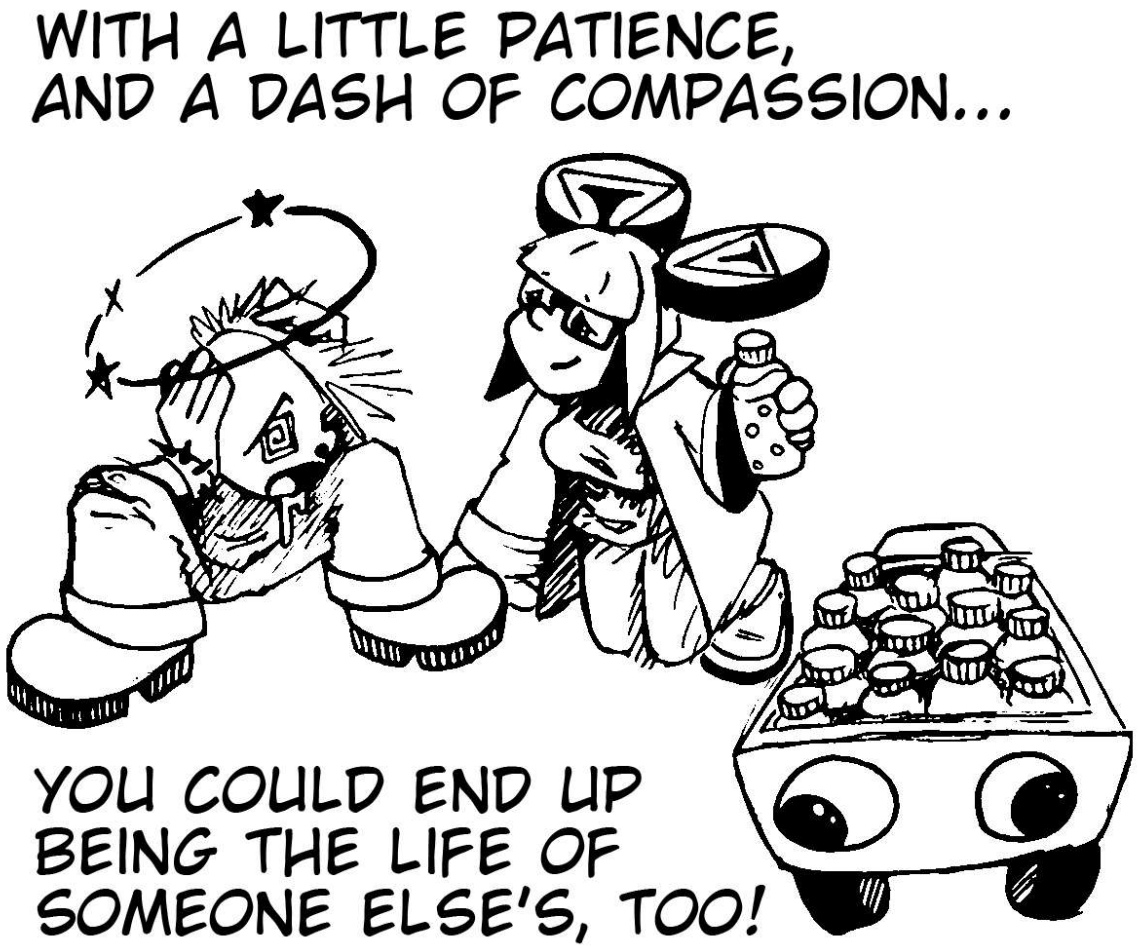

**What is Harm Reduction?**

Harm reduction is an approach to pleasure that seeks to reduce dangers associated with various kinds of pleasure from skateboarding to injection drug use. Harm Reduction includes materials like condoms, helmets and needles as well as education and destigmatization. Harm Reduction as a movement is rooted in the queer anarchist community during the AIDS crisis [1]. As a community

us queer anarchists had to band together to support one another with a mutual understanding that pleasure should not be vilified and people deserve supplies and information that help them manage the risks associated with their chosen activities. We believe that everyone ought to have direct control over their own lives as much as possible as safely as they want.

**The Current Situation**

Over time harm reduction has been depoliticized into a thing that is solely a health intervention in the form of narcan and needle exchanges[2]. This shift misses the forest for the trees and ignores the underpinnings of pleasure activism and harm reduction as philosophies and practices that seek to radically change our society's perspective and way of engaging with pleasure. When we drop the holistic nature of harm reduction in favor of narrow interventions we abandon ourselves and others to the dangers of life. It's too common nowadays for the conversation around harm reduction to start and end with narcan training. Drug users who use drugs other than opioids aren't provided the same tools and information to avoid infections, STIs and heat stroke.




**The Danger of Puritanism**

Our current societal approach to pleasure is one that causes enormous amounts of suffering. Puritan culture encourages shame, guilt and community blaming towards people who seek pleasure. Blaming and shaming pushes people to mentally dissociate from pleasure behaviors and isolate themselves from community. People

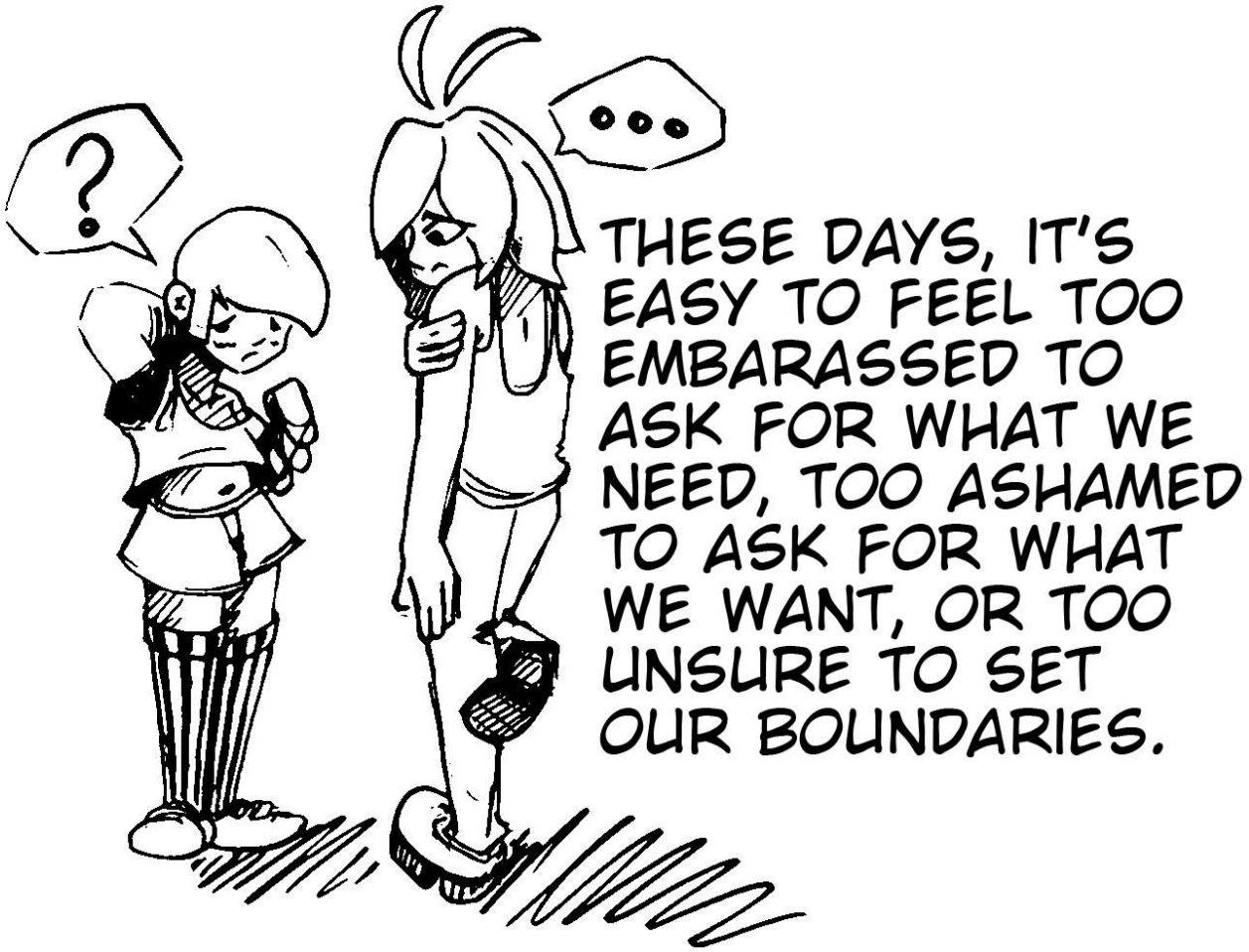
remain unaware of dangers that do exist and aren't provided information or supplies to stay safe and live a happy life.

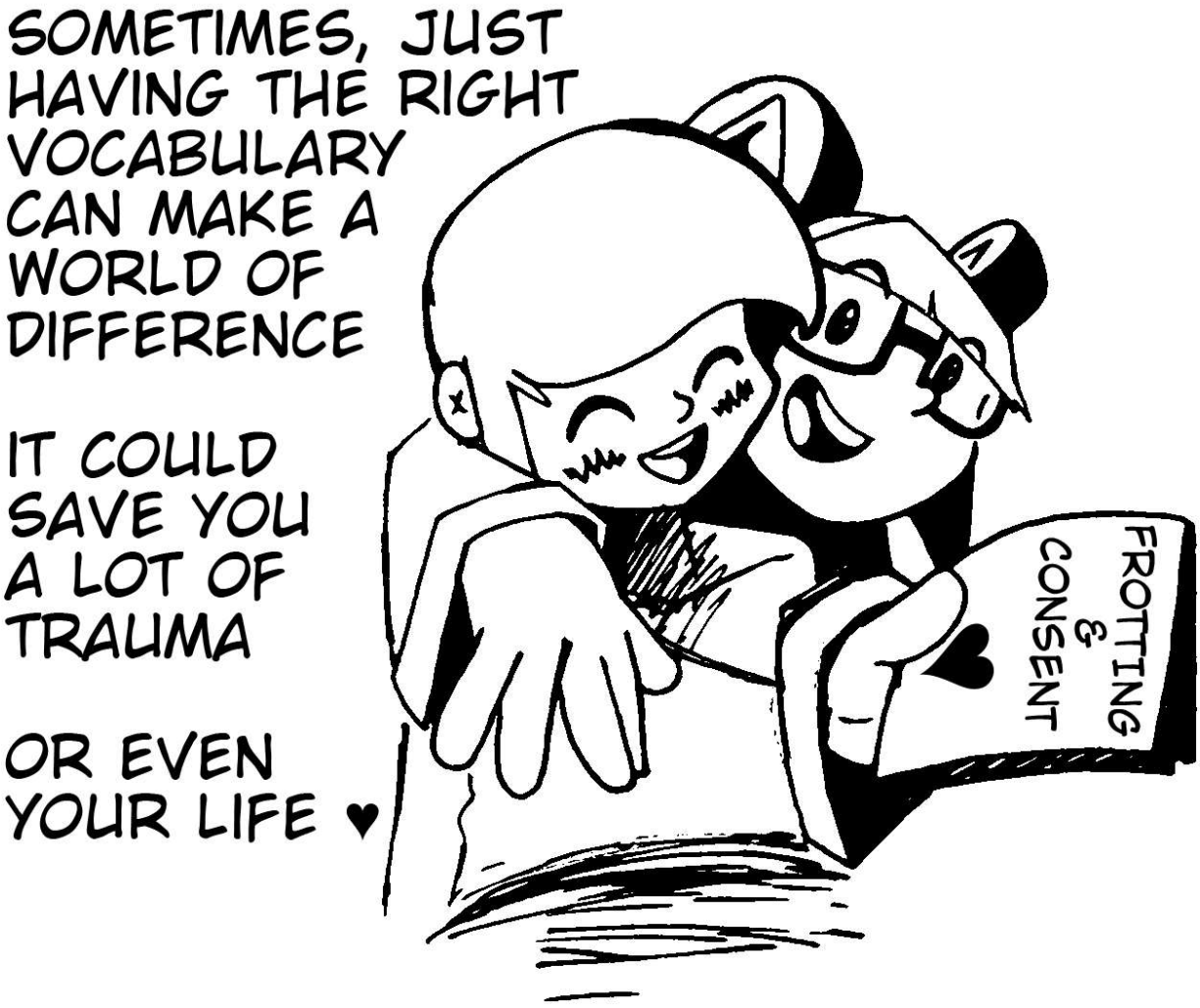
When we give people inaccurate information about pleasure it leads people to ignore the measures they can take to protect themselves and their loved ones. This lack of information causes unwanted pregnancies, concussions, STIs, sexual assault, abscesses, blown out veins, overdoses, drunk driving and a host of other issues that pop up when we seek out pleasure knowing nothing, being given no support and being bullied away from learning.

Puritanism restricts access to the tools required for safe pleasure like clean needles, milligram spoons to measure powdered drugs, water, condoms, birth control and more. The lack of material supply and information leads people to have unprotected sex, reuse and share needles. At worst, puritan culture leads people to use potentially lethal drugs in isolation because the people who could be around to save their life are busy moralizing or sitting in social awkwardness that it "isn't the vibe" to use opioids or other drugs in a given space.

Puritan culture pushes the idea that through abstinence only sex education, criminalization of drugs and abortion and a culture of blaming and shaming we can reduce supposedly sinful behaviors like sex, masturbation and drug use. Instead this gets their family member unintentionally pregnant and leaves another body dead in isolation because no one could administer narcan or put them in a recovery

position. Drug use in isolation kills people and maintaining puritan moralizing does little to deter drug use and sexual behavior, instead driving people who've been shamed and denied education to hide and ignore potential risks. If we want to live in a society where we care genuinely for one another we have to stop blaming and shaming people. We have to change our cultural attitudes about pleasure and encourage openness and acceptance.






**Holistic Harm Reduction**

Holistic Harm Reduction seeks to reassert the pleasure activism and philosophical foundation of harm reduction. Holistic Harm Reduction returns harm reduction to its roots: pleasure is not evil and people are allowed to seek pleasure without blaming or shaming. Harm reduction is about normalizing drug use, creating more honest communities and empowering people to make thoughtful educated decisions about their own bodies and lives. Harm reduction is not one specific practice but

about meeting people where they're at without controlling them or disregarding their desires as wrong or foolish. It's about listening to what people need, whether that's clean pipes and needles, condoms, support groups or a safe place to use drugs and have sex. If we want a society where people are free to enjoy themselves, without hiding in a corner running off of half rotted information, we have to approach harm reduction as a holistic philosophy. Harm reduction means putting out a public use drug table, a sex tent, giving without asking, teaching without moralizing. We won't overcome the puritan culture of stigma, guilt and shame with just tables of narcan.

[1] https://usa.anarchistlibraries.net/library/c-b-daring-j-rogue-deric-shannon-and-abbey-volcano-queering-anarchism#toc37
[2] https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/christopher-b-r-smith-harm-reduction-as-anarchist-practice