

“The Stories We Tell: Public & Governmental Campaigns”

Episode Overview

In this episode, I talk about how public and governmental campaigns shape how we understand overdose, influence stigma and behavior, and reveal broader beliefs about addiction, responsibility, and recovery.



- Public campaigns do more than educate; they construct narratives about who uses drugs, why overdose happens, and what responses are appropriate.
- Campaign strategies vary widely, from empathy-based storytelling and harm reduction messaging to fear-based or shock tactics.
- These campaigns are shaped by political priorities and can unintentionally reinforce inequality by highlighting some groups while excluding others.

TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Public campaigns can increase awareness and shift attitudes, but their effects are uneven and often limited, as they are rarely accompanied by structural change.
- ✓ Messaging that humanizes drug use and emphasizes harm reduction is generally more effective than fear-based approaches, which can enforce stigma.
- ✓ How overdose is portrayed in campaigns influences not only public perception, but also policy decisions, resource allocation, and willingness to help.

References & Future Reading

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