Equity and Stigma Reduction: Why Word Matter

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Kentucky Public Health
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Equity & Stigma Reduction: Why Words Matter

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Objectives

1 **Define four (4) types of addiction stigma.**

2 **Examine anti-stigmatizing language and its application.**

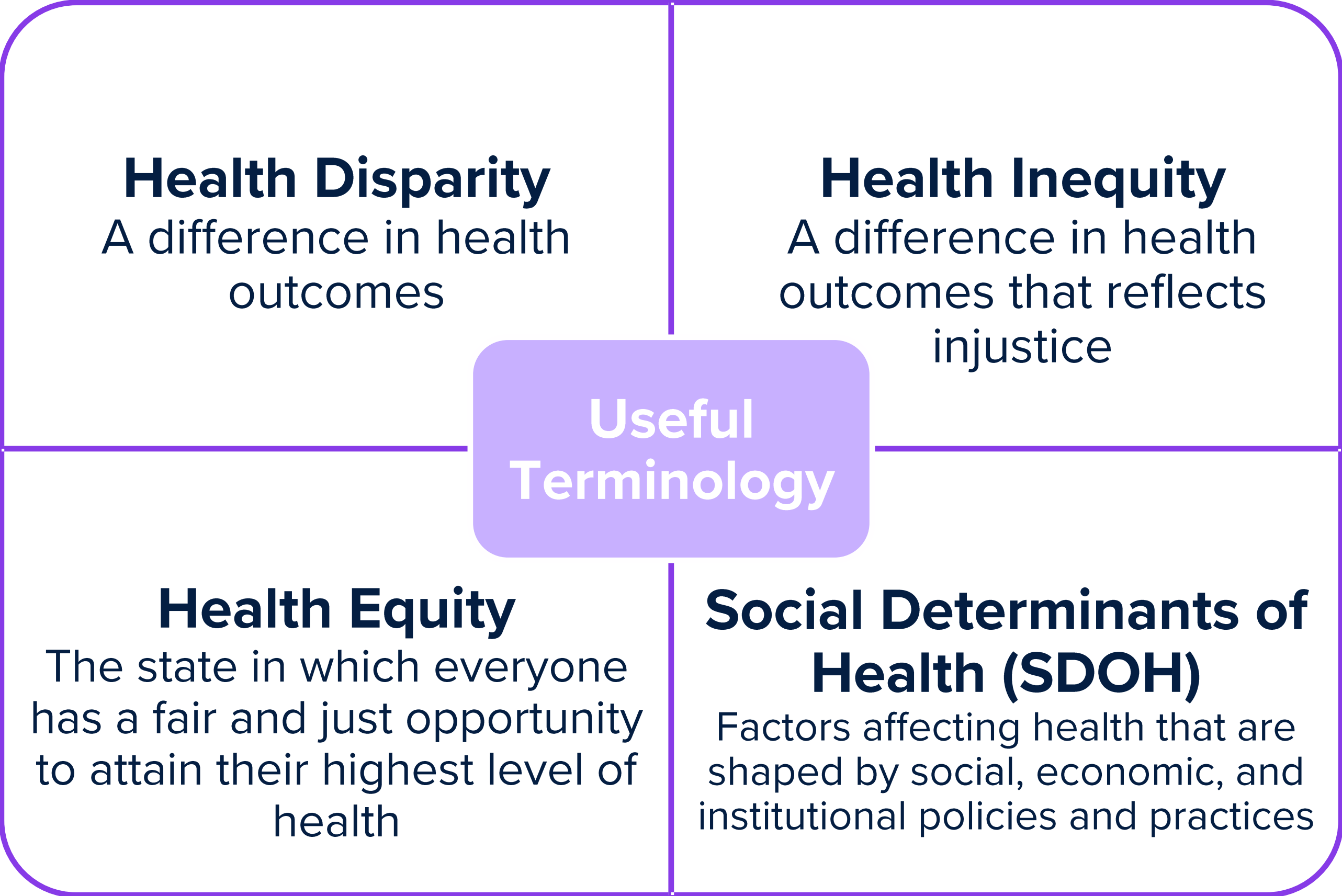**3** **Prioritize equity-focused approaches to stigma reduction.**

Shatterproof
Stronger than addiction

Shatterproof is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis. Our evidence-based projects that seek to have a measurable impact on saving lives include breaking down stigma, transforming treatment, empowering communities, and driving policy change.

Useful Terminology

Health Disparity
A difference in health outcomes

Health Inequity
A difference in health outcomes that reflects injustice

Health Equity
The state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)
Factors affecting health that are shaped by social, economic, and institutional policies and practices

EQUALITY:
Everyone gets the same – regardless if it's needed or right for them.

EQUITY:
Everyone gets what they need – understanding the barriers, circumstances, and conditions.
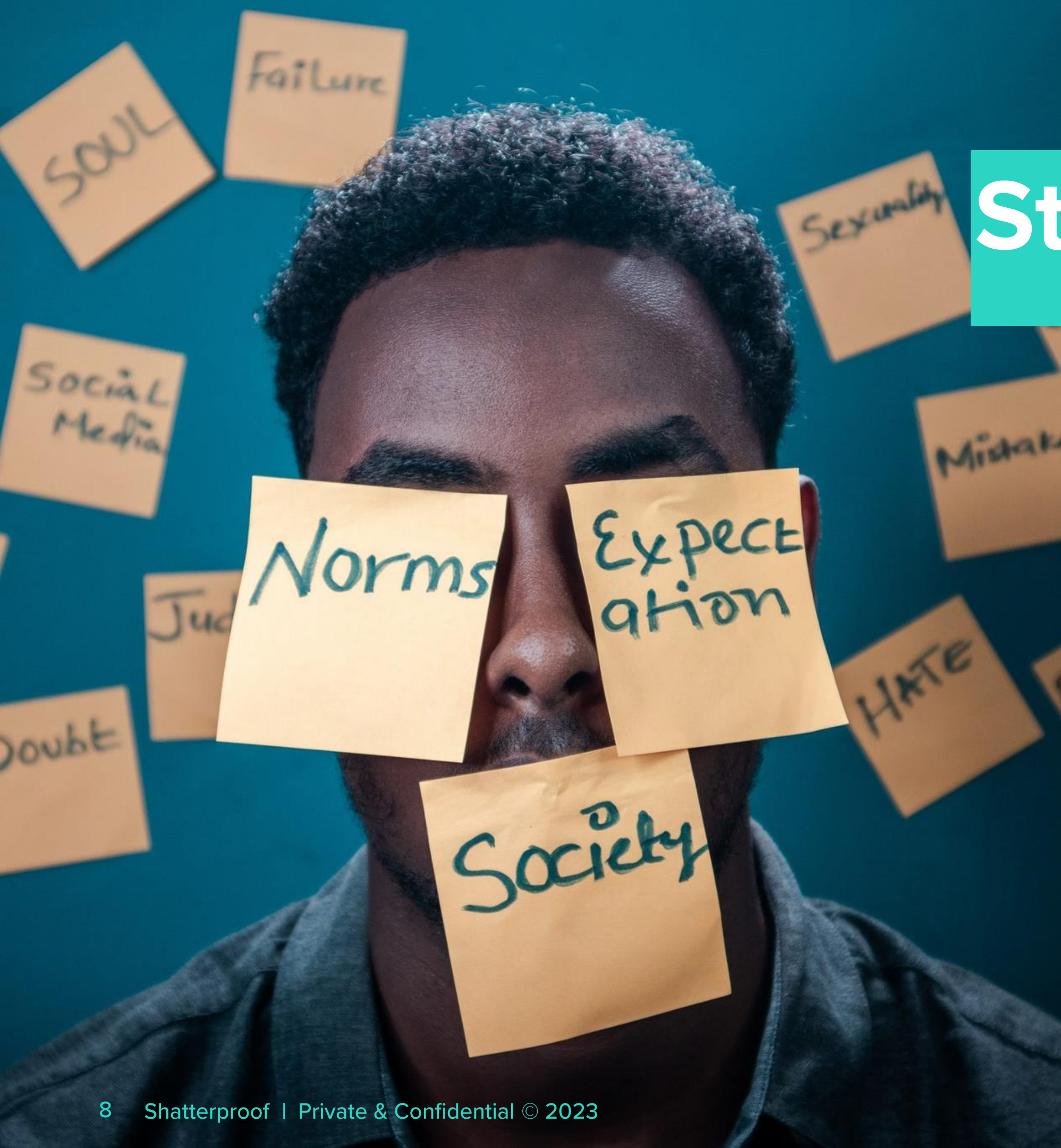
What Is Stigma?

Stigma is a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person.

It is a barrier to receiving healthcare and engaging in help-seeking behaviors, and results in discrimination and exclusion.
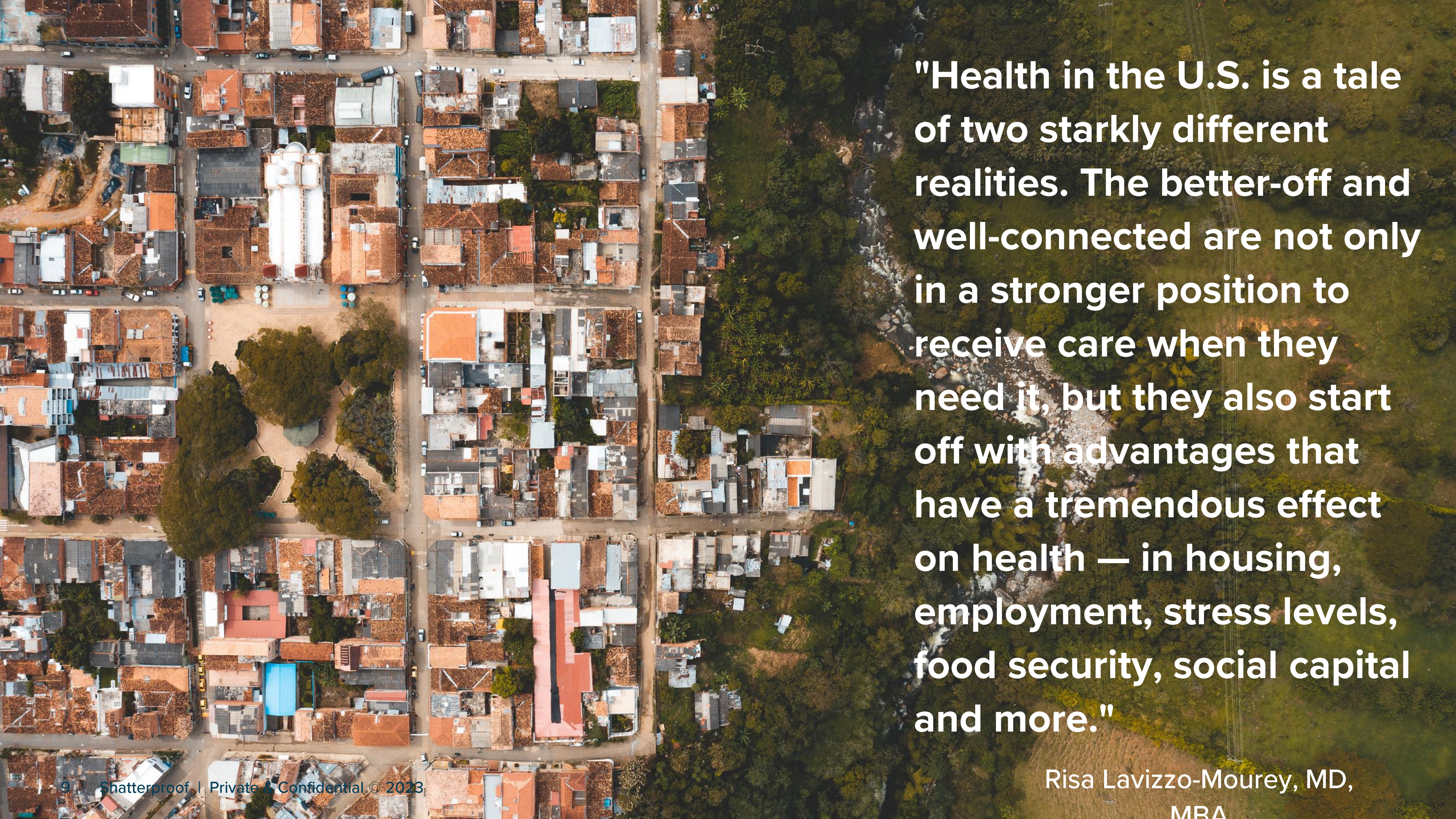
Stigma is...

- Labeling
- Stereotyping
- Separation
- Status loss
- Discrimination

Source: Mental Health in the Workplace

"Health in the U.S. is a tale of two starkly different realities. The better-off and well-connected are not only in a stronger position to receive care when they need it, but they also start off with advantages that have a tremendous effect on health — in housing, employment, stress levels, food security, social capital and more."

Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA

FOUR TYPES OF ADDICTION STIGMA

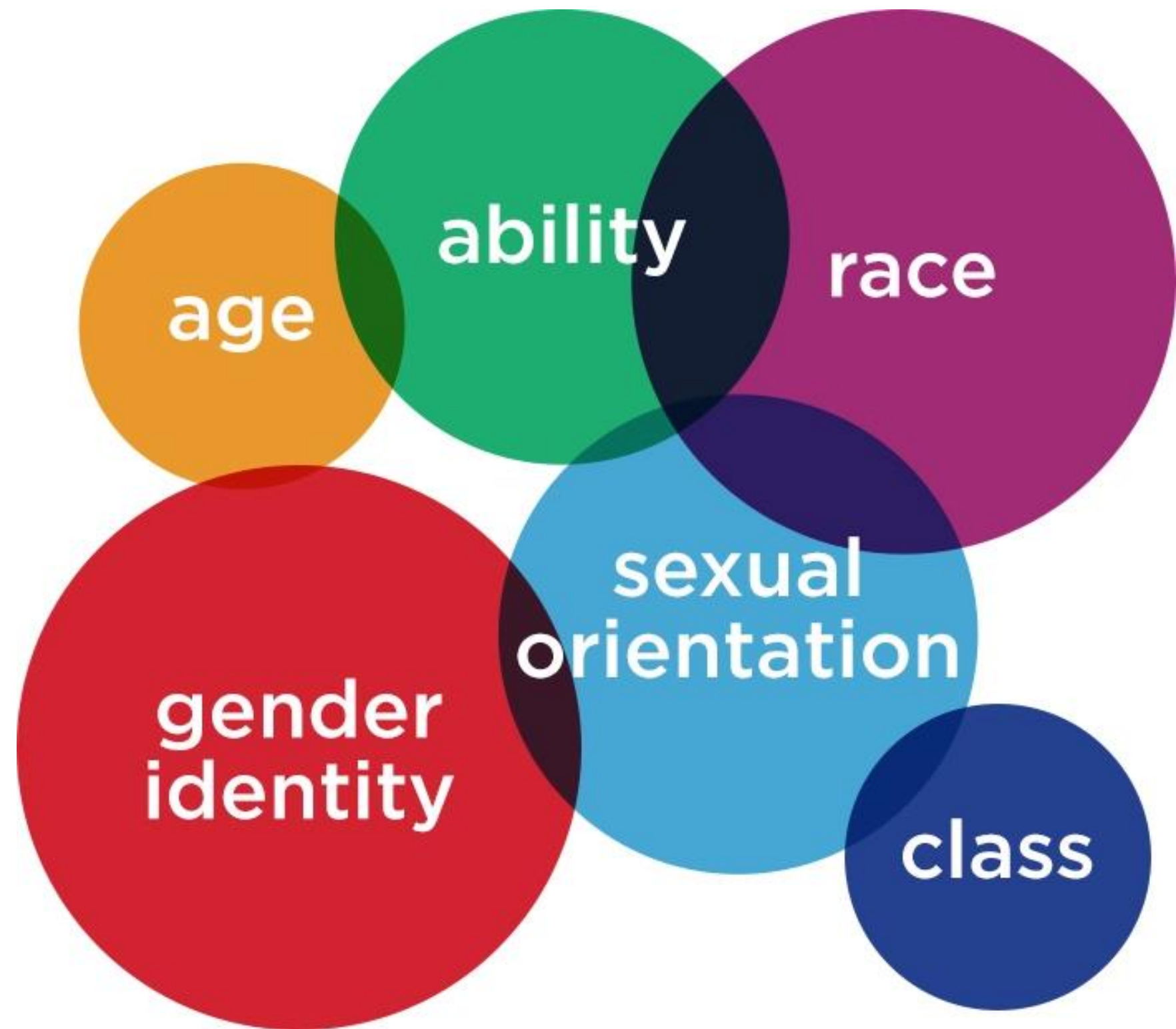| PUBLIC	STRUCTURAL	SELF	MEDICATION FOR OPIOD USE DISORDER (MOUD)
Negative attitudes and fears that isolate those with addiction	Excluding those with addiction from opportunities and resources.	Accepting and internalizing negative stereotypes about oneself.	Belief that medications "trade one addiction for another".

"Nobody cared when it happened to us..."

Intersectionality

Source: The Center

Addiction stigma intersects with other forms of stigma/discrimination/bias such as those related to:

- Race
- Class
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Occupation and others

"...even though OUD rates are similar between Black people and white people, 35 white patients received a buprenorphine prescription for every one person of another race or ethnicity."

"A Movement to End Addiction Stigma" (2021)

Nine Key Drivers of the Overdose Epidemic

{
- Shame and social isolation

- Individuals not seeking help for their addiction

- Insufficient treatment capacity

- Health care coverage & reimbursement disparities

- Non-evidence based treatment

- Criminalization of people with SUD

- Social and structural barriers
}
Impacted by Stigma

- Increased access to heroin and fentanyl

- Marketing of prescription opioids as non-addictive and resulting overprescribing

Stigma plays a significant role in creating a devastating public health crisis.

- Stigma prevents many people with a substance use disorder from seeking treatment;
- Stigma limits the ability of institutions and providers to offer help when someone seeks assistance by limiting resources and perpetuating harmful policies; and
- Stigma fuels a feeling of shame that serves as an obstacle to long-term health, whether or not the individual has received treatment.
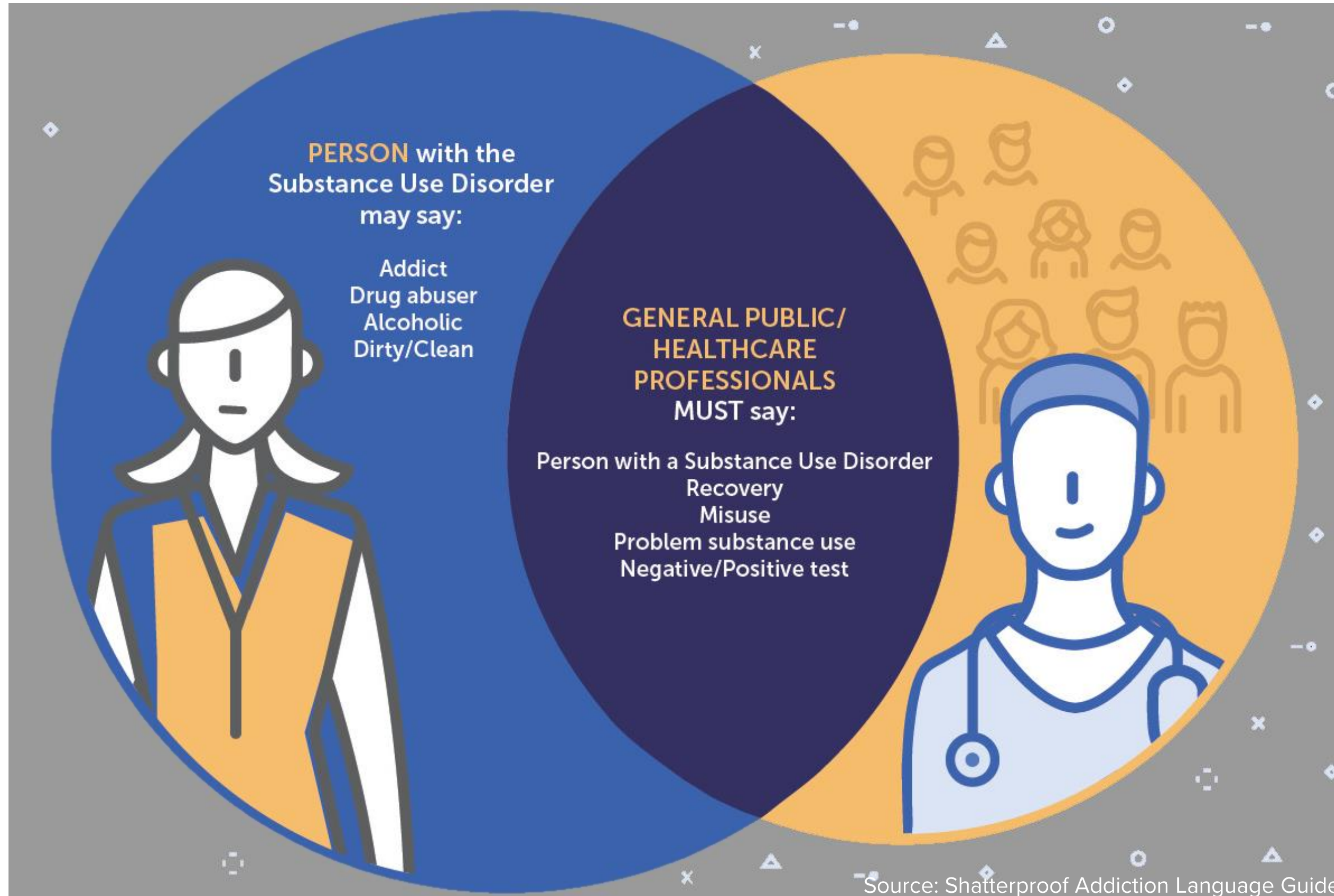
Why Words Matter

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Person-First Language

- Places emphasis on people rather than their diagnosis or condition

- Shifts the way way people with substance use disorders are viewed

- An individual is no longer defined by their condition

Source: Shatterproof Addiction Language Guide

Who should change their language?

PERSON with the Substance Use Disorder may say:

Addict
Drug abuser
Alcoholic
Dirty/Clean

GENERAL PUBLIC/ HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS MUST say:

Person with a Substance Use Disorder
Recovery
Misuse
Problem substance use
Negative/Positive test

Source: Shatterproof Addiction Language Guide

Non-Stigmatizing Language

Use This...	Not That...
Person who uses drugs	Addict
Person with substance use disorder/opioid use disorder/alcohol use disorder	Drug Abuser, Junkie
	Alcoholic, Drunk
Person who engages in excessive drug/alcohol use	
Medications for addiction treatment/medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)	Replacement/substitution treatment
Person in recovery; Person who previously used drugs	Former addict, reformed addict
Substance use disorder, addiction; physical dependence	Habit
Not currently drinking/using drugs	Sober

Language and identity are personal. Our goal is not to challenge self-identification, but rather to educate and encourage the use of non-stigmatizing language within the general public.

Equity-Focused Stigma Reduction

Build Trust with Communities

- Show up
- Lean in and meet people where they are at
- Consistency

Ensure the voices of people with lived experience are not just heard; but amplified, respected and used to catalyze action

**Check Yourself:
be intentional about
correcting your language**

Curated WITH community, Driven BY community

About Unshame Kentucky

- Statewide movement to end the stigma associated with opioid use disorder (OUD)

- Uses contact-based strategies and our collective impact model

- Leverages social media platforms and hosts bi-monthly webinars to provide educational resources and share the stories of individuals affected by OUD

- Together, we humanize the disease of addiction to end stigma

Data-Driven Approach

Assessed

11 analogous social-change movements to understand how they shifted beliefs & behaviors

Conducted interviews

100+ experts in social change, mental health, and addiction

Prioritized and reviewed

50+ publications and reports related to stigma reduction

Shatterproof embarked on a twelve-month project rigorously reviewing and analyzing analogous movements to inform Shatterproof's plans to significantly reduce the stigma associated with SUD and, ultimately, behavioral health more broadly.

Unshame Kentucky — Implementation

Evidence-Based Content

Marta

Germaine

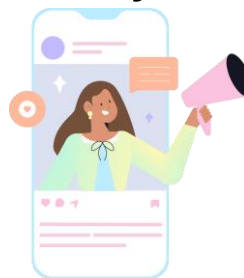Stories of recovery that reinforce key campaign messages

Kim

Brandon

Priority Channel

Community Partners

Digital influencers & targeted paid media

Earned media, website, & social channels

Target Audiences

- People in recovery, their loved ones, others impacted by SUD

- Targeted messages to reach specific communities

- General public and regional communities

In addition to distributing content, the campaign plays an active role providing technical assistance and capacity building to local community-based organizations to amplify the outreach and further impact.

The Power of Words in Action

June Webinar Featuring:

Alison Jones Webb, Author of

Recovery Allies: How to Support Addiction Recovery and Build Recovery-Friendly Communities

In partnership with MORE

LIVE WEBINAR

Thursday, June 22nd at 12pm CT/1pm ET

Thank you!

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