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International Technology Transfer Center

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for Drug Demand Reduction

# Facilitating Transformative Change Using a Systems Change Framework

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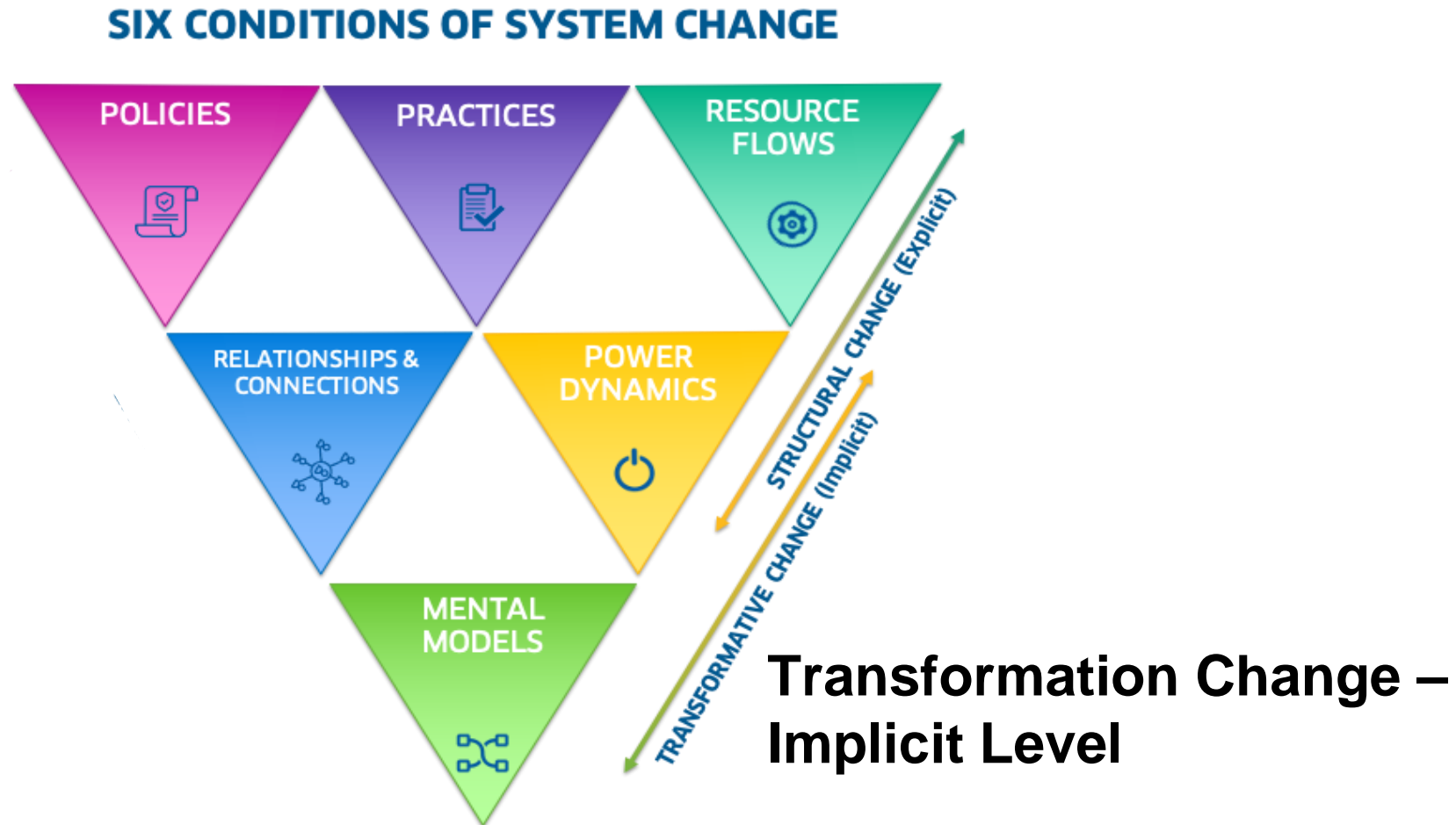
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# Influencing Beliefs, Mental Models, and Assumptions to facilitate Systems' Change

Session 1



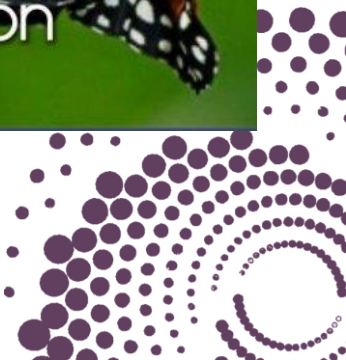
# Six Conditions of System Change



# Transformative Change (implicit-level)

**Mental Models:** Habits of thought—deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk.

Water of System Change, FSG, 2018



# What are Mental Models?

*Ways you perceive things and ideas that affect your behavior without being aware of them.*

*~Marina Piazza*

*Understanding and awareness*

*~ Irina Pinchuk*

*Ingrained belief system*

*~Blessing Uteh*

*Way of thinking*

*~ Laurie Krom*

*Mind-set*

*~ Joy Ariyo*

*Ideology*

*~Nguyen Thu Trang*

*A somewhat static framework, not always evident. ~ Julia Alvarado*

*A cognitive and attitudinal representation about an objeto of reality, is unconscious.*

*~ Cristobal Ovidio Munoz*



# Common Mental Models that create barriers to productive conversations.

<b>Individualism</b>	<b>Us vs Them</b>	<b>Fatalism</b>
Assumptions that problems, solutions, and consequences happen at the personal level.	Assumption that another social group is distinct, different, and problematic.	There is no hope we are doomed.



*“Although people do not always behave congruently with their espoused theories (what they say) they do behave congruently with their theories in use (mental models).”*

Chris Argyris



Invite you to mute your microphone and say the following sentence out loud.

*“I can create my life exactly the way I want it, in all dimensions – work, family relationships, community, and the larger world.”*

Notice your internal reactions to this assertion.





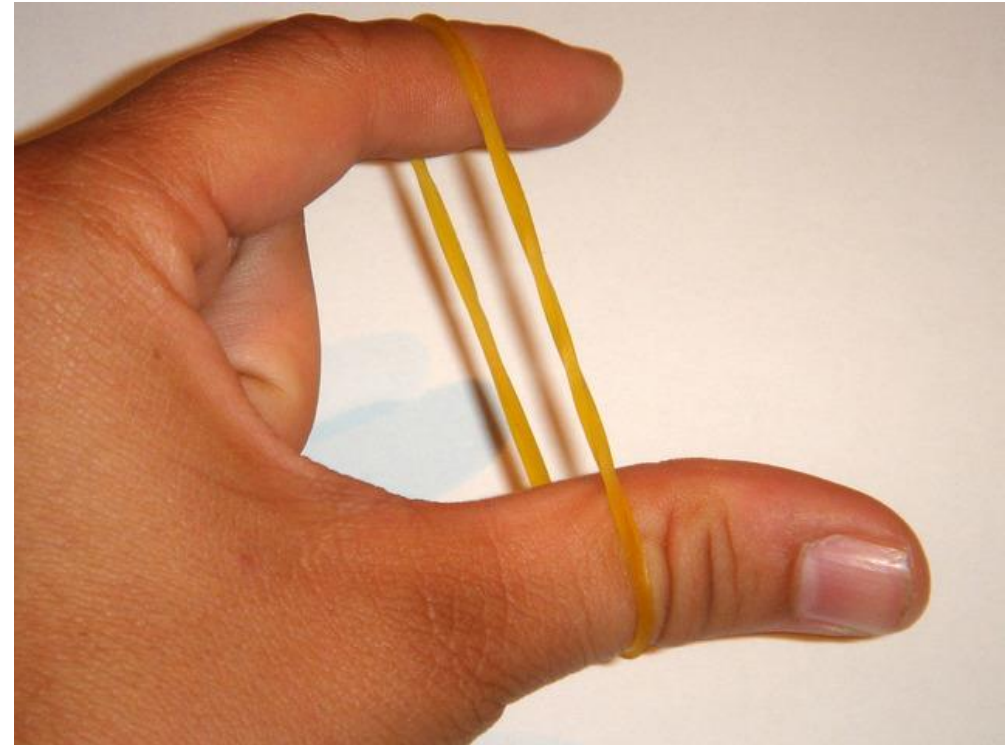
# Shifting Mental Models

1. What - generate a hypothesis on both a) the current models holding back progress, and b) the desired mental models, perceptions, and beliefs that will unlock change.
2. Who – identify which stakeholders hold the mental models and are the target for change.
3. How – design strategies to influence mental models, beliefs, and behaviors among these target stakeholders.



# Shifting Mental Models

**What** - start by generating a hypothesis on both a) the current models holding back progress, and b) the desired mental models, perceptions, and beliefs that would unlock change with a broad and diverse group to consider different perspectives.



FSG – Change your Mind Before You Change the System



# Shifting Mental Models

**Who** – identify which stakeholders hold the mental models and are the target for change.

- Enlist the input of individuals with lived experience (peers, clients, customers)
- Invite diversity of experience into the conversation
- Target stakeholders who hold power (government officials, funders, administrators)



# Shifting Mental Models

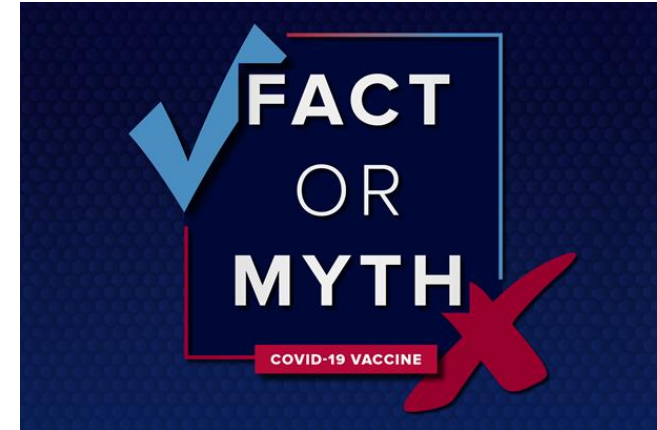
**How** – Design strategies to influence mental models, beliefs, and behaviors among these target stakeholders.

FSG – Change your Mind Before You Change the System



# What doesn't work?

1. Confronting people about their mental models and putting them on the defense.
2. Correcting people's mistakes (Fact Sheets, Myth Busters)
3. Using data, and more data, and data on top of that.



**What do we  
know about  
effective ways  
to shift mental  
Models and  
practices?**

Utilizing the skills of  
reflection and advocacy.

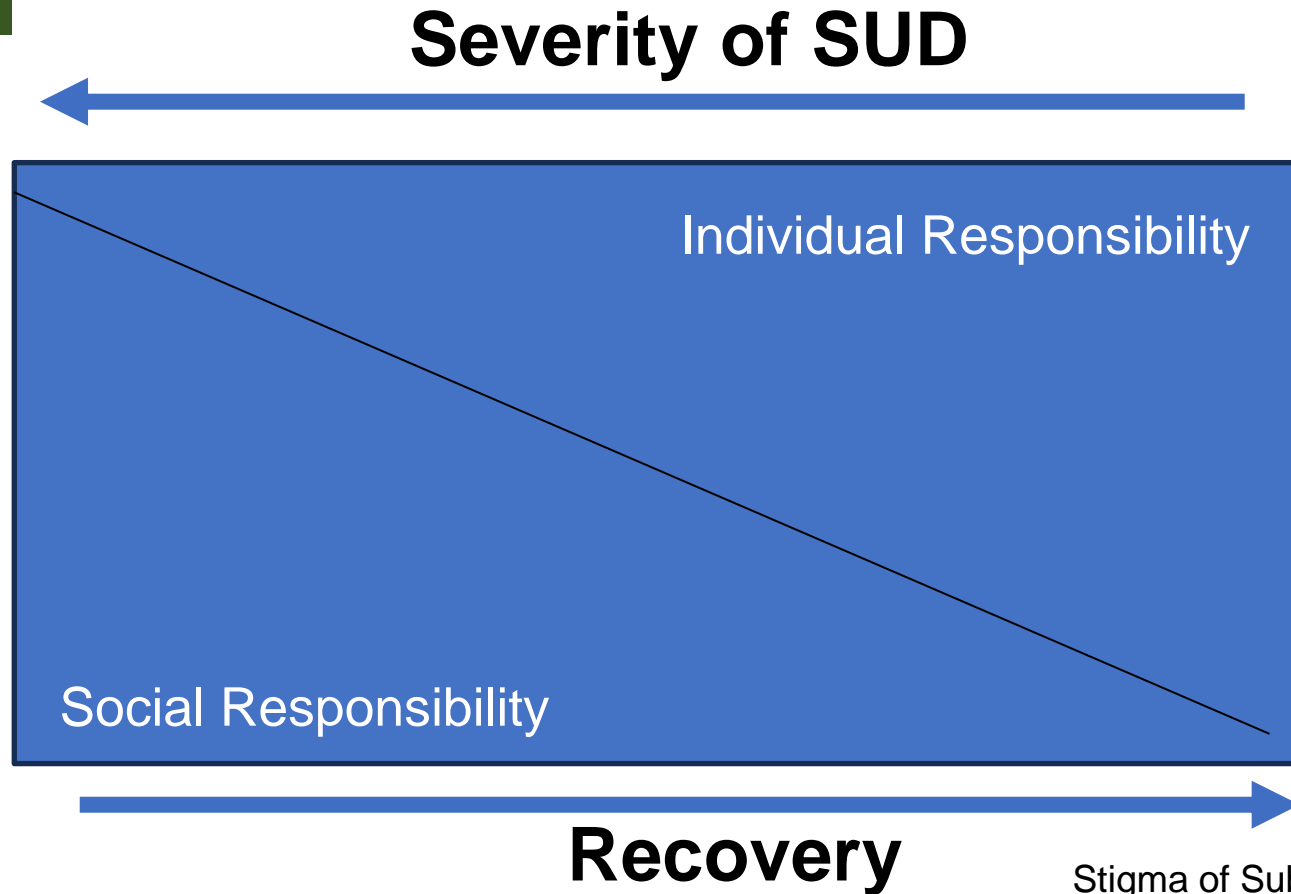
Senge, P. (1990) Fifth Discipline



# What do we know about effective ways to shift mental Models and practices?

Redirecting attention to what works.

Sweetland, J. (FSG Webinar, 2019)



Stigma of Substance Use Disorders, 2022



**What do we  
know about  
effective ways  
to shift mental  
Models and  
practices?**

Creating proximity between stakeholders, particularly those holding different perspectives and world views.





**What do we  
know about  
effective ways  
to shift mental  
Models and  
practices?**

Creating new narratives that include a “carefully chosen explanatory metaphor” that makes sense to people.

Sweetland, J. (FSG Webinar, 2019)



# What do we know about effective ways to shift mental Models and practices?

Mental Model strategies can be achieved through targeting different levels of change:

- individual
- community/organization
- population



# What do we know about effective ways to shift mental Models and practices?

Using Strong-tie versus weak-tie networks.

What influences social support for the change – is the confirmation that the change is safe and legitimate and that people like us are making the change.

Reinforcing messages . . . from multiple directions . . . from people you think are like you – that's what drives transformative change.



# Resources & References

1. [Change Your Mind Before You Change the System: Taking a Closer Look at Mental Models and the Water of Systems Change – FSG](#) (John Kanai, June 2023)
2. [Shifting Mental Models to Advance Systems Change webinar - Collective Impact Forum](#) (Julia Sweetland, June 2019)
3. [Unsticking Stuck Mental Models: Adventures in Systemic Change - Collective Impact Forum](#) John Kunia (August 2019)
4. The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization. (1990) Peter M. Senge
5. Change: How to Make Big Things Happen (2021) Damon Centola.



