

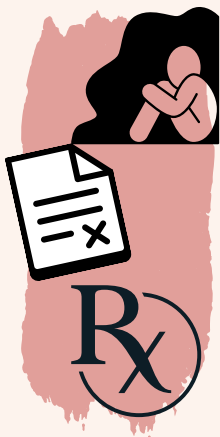
Non-carceral Support: Reference Guide

by Stronger U

Non-carceral” traditionally refers to community-based responses that are divested from the criminal justice system. While interactions with the criminal justice system also regularly occur in mental health contexts, we extend the definition of “non-carceral” beyond the criminal justice system: **Non-carceral support within mental health conversations means responding to crisis and suicidality in ways that prioritize people’s autonomy and rights, and instead honor their humanity.**

What are systemically harmful mental health responses?

- Police presence: wellness checks, 911 responses to mental health crises
- Incarceration in jails or psychiatric hospitals
- Forced medication or other interventions
- Physical and chemical restraint
- Turning people away from jobs, school, etc. due to diagnoses or “level of risk”
- Practitioners’ liability to keep clients alive at all costs

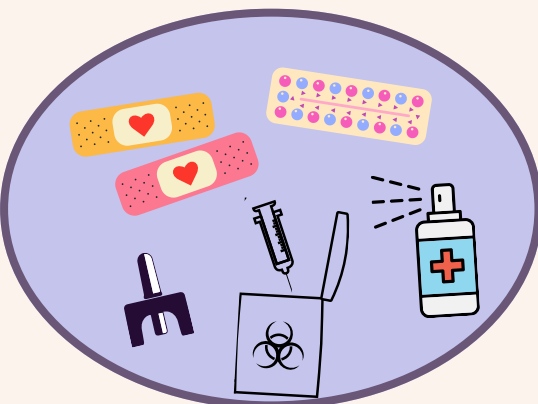


Coercion is common in carceral responses, and also harmful:

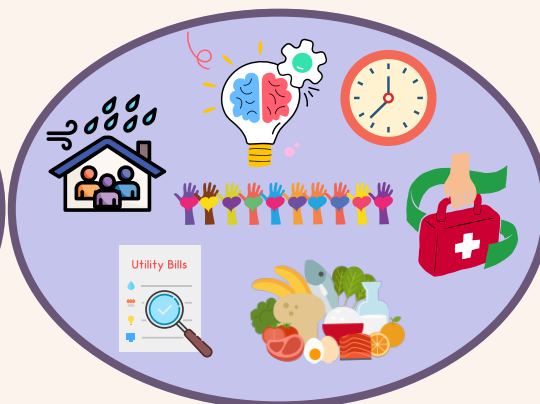
- Safety contracts, ultimatums, threats; guilt tripping someone who is suicidal
- Refusal to work with clients who are “high risk”; pushing people out of community to “get help”
- Using access barriers, or promises to remove barriers, to force submission to treatment
- Requiring letters from providers before services will be rendered
- Isolating people until certain thresholds are met

Non-carceral support mechanisms:

Harm Reduction



Mutual Aid & Meeting Basic Needs



Community





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What can I do instead of calling 911?



Listen, affirm, and be fully present; provide emotional depth

★ End The ★
STIGMA

Normalize talking about stigmatized topics

Center their needs, not what you think they need

"this is your space, you have control"



Provide non-carceral crisis lines or other resources



Create a safe space, physically and emotionally



Learn what feels safe to them right now



Introduce to community, consensually



Help meet their basic needs

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Keep engaging! Check out our Non-Carceral Support Seekers Guide (\$5.50) or our Non-Carceral Support Mini-Course (\$20) in our shop! *Purchases from Stronger U support the free services of THRIVE Lifeline.*

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