

Prevention Discussion and Activity Guide

Unplugging the Dang Fan: A Primary Prevention 101 Activity

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My first experience learning about Primary Prevention was probably like a lot of yours' - the "Moving Upstream" story. As it goes, a person near a large river notices someone in the water, struggling against the current. They jump in to help this person out of the water, and both make it to shore. But, shortly after, they see another person struggling downstream. And another. And another, until our concerned friend decides to move upstream to see where all these people may be coming from.

Here, we find our bridge collapsed which is the reason folks keep falling into the river in the first place. In repairing the bridge itself; addressing the core issue causing all this harm, we've got primary prevention.

This analogy, credited to community organizer Saul Alinsky, can be a helpful way to explain the rationale behind primary prevention, whether focused on sexual violence or other systemic issues in society. This is a story I have regularly used through my work and I appreciate it's clear, simple message of getting to the root causes of harm.

While this analogy is helpful in illustrating prevention I sometimes wonder if it is too simplistic in the context of sexual violence prevention. While it is just an analogy, the tendency to simplify responses to violence and trauma as clear-cut, individual responses (such as someone jumping in the river to rescue another, or fixing a bridge, case closed) can prove problematic when looking at the complexities of survivor-centered responses to sexual violence.

As someone like myself who often trains in a monologue-style, I am continuously exploring opportunities to further engage communities in primary prevention efforts. What ways might brief, analogous stories like 'Moving Upstream' be limiting?

We may paraphrase or read the story aloud to a group, or possibly popcorn it around the room to get more involvement. While these options might be helpful for the realities of time-management in facilitation, they leave out a lot of opportunities for more direct engagement and only cater to a few specific learning styles.

While prepping for a recent peer education training with my teen program, I decided to think of a new way to *show* primary prevention vs. tell. My goal was to find an alternative approach that gave space for youth to explore the key themes of prevention. The objective was to explore a way to show primary prevention that was more trauma-informed and acknowledged the structures that uphold sexual violence. Through engaging the program participants with the activity that follows, I sought to provide space for them to connect dots to concepts.

The Activity

I'm hastily calling this activity "Unplugging the Dang Fan." Through this 10-15 minute activity, participants will work either individually or as a team toward a simple, common goal - keeping a stack of lightweight paper stacked for 10 full seconds. The catch? There's a big ol' fan blowing directly at it!

There are two parts to this activity. In Round 1, participants only get instructions about how they can or can't interact with the stack of paper (ex: no touching the paper stack for more than 3 seconds, no placing other objects on top of the stack). As may be expected, things get chaotic, fun, and that stack of paper flies pretty much everywhere.

Before beginning Round 2, the group discusses some of the challenges and strategies folks implemented. While some folks may have worked individually, catching the paper as it flies through the air, others may have developed strategy with the group as a whole, giving space for multiple ways and styles to engage with the activity. Prior to

Round 2, participants are reminded of the general ground rules, but attention is drawn to the fan and the fact that there weren't any actual rules attached to how folks can interact with the fan.

As you might guess, participants pretty immediately either turn the fan off or unplug it completely in Round 2. In the case where a group or groups had thought to unplug the fan in Round 1, discussion questions can still be easily shifted to accommodate a shorter activity, drawing on the same themes of working to catch each individual paper as opposed to getting to the root of the problem - the fan itself.

For the youth in my program, this activity was a chance for us to build movement, team-building, and fun into an intense day of training on important and sometimes tough topics. Additionally, it was an opportunity to explore the themes of primary prevention in a more hands-on way that encouraged critical thinking, team approaches, and gave room for different ways to engage.

In taking characters and plot out of the activity, youth had more opportunity to draw conclusions about the concepts we had been discussing throughout the day. They had more space to organically discuss what a challenge it is to simply "unplug the fan" when we think about what the fan actually stands for in relation to the topic of sexual violence. Following this activity, our group's participants appeared more rooted in their understandings of why we talk about big concepts and had space to discuss the overwhelming fears and possibilities of trying to address systemic issues.

While I made this activity with a group of youth ages 14-19 in mind, I am a big proponent of play and interactive learning for folks of all ages. I encourage folks to adapt this however best fits the needs of their particular group. I look forward to hearing how folks may shift and adjust this activity, or what other activities this might spark!

Unplugging the Dang Fan - A Primary Prevention 101 Activity Outline

Time:	What's Up:	Materials Needed:
15 minutes	<p>Welcome & Check-in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group check-in (names, pronouns, Happy & Crappy from the week, etc) ● Icebreaker Game ● Reviewing community agreements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Going a bit more in-depth about ways to care for one another & practice consent in sharing as we begin to define sv topics in Prevention 101 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - posted community agreements if relevant to group needs - icebreaker supplies
5 minutes	<p>Activity Time!</p> <p>Round 1: Explain to group that we're talking about some important, intense topics, so we're going to take a moment to move a little and do an activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set up fan (bigger the better!) and a tall stack (at least 6 inches tall is best) of quarter-sheet paper ● Explain to group that the goal is to keep the stack of papers stacked in front of the fan for 10 whole seconds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No one can touch the stack for more than 3 seconds ○ No objects can be put on top of the stack to hold it down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fan (standard size or box fan is best) -quarter-sheets of paper (bigger the stack the better, and messier) **copier paper is best - want it light enough to catch air! -instructions posted on presentation pad or PowerPoint

	<p>Round 1 Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How successful were folks? ● What were the biggest challenges to keeping the papers stacked? ● What were folks' strategies or approaches to this task? 	
5 minutes	<p>Round 2: Explain that we're going to try this again, but this time, let's do some thinking about the fan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remind that the only rules are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No one can touch the stack for more than 3 seconds ○ No objects can be put on top of the stack to hold it down <p>Round 2 Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How successful were folks this time? ● How did people's focus change when the fan was mentioned? 	-fan, papers
5-10 minutes	<p>Some broader Discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In this activity, we were able to prevent these papers from flying everywhere by turning off or unplugging the fan. What could "unplugging the fan" look like when we think about primary prevention and rape culture? 2. What are some examples of what you think the fan represents when we're talking about rape culture and primary prevention? 3. What might the stack of papers be representative of? 4. Unplugging or turning the fan off is a pretty simple action here. How is this different than when we think about these topics in society? 	-presentation pad for notes or PowerPoint

	<p>5. What are some ways you think we can better address and get to the root causes of rape culture and oppression?</p> <p>6. (many more possible questions - move with the group!)</p>	
<p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Call to Action & Wrap-up: These are heavy topics, so important to emphasize what we can do & are doing even in this space - areas of agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Final thoughts ● Great time to determine specific root topics group wants to learn about moving forward ● Reflection activity 	<p>-any needed supplies for reflection activity</p>

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