Doin’ It Well: Approaching Sexual Violence Prevention from a Sex Positive Framework

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Learning Objectives

- How to incorporate a “sex positive” approach to sexual violence prevention education
- Skills for balancing discussions about healthy sex and unhealthy sexual violence, including how to guide audience members through these discussions
- Information to create a model program outline appropriate to use with their target audiences
Who’s In the Room?

- What kind of an agency do you work within?
- Who is your audience?
- Do you have specific training in rape prevention education?
- Do you have specific training in providing sexual health education?
Sexual Violence Prevention

- Stopping perpetrator from perpetrating, simply.
- Social issue: requires social change
- Prevention: Not just the absence of something, presence of something new
What is Good Sex?

- Make a List

- Many struggle with making this list

- When we ask college students they say...
Good Sex Is…

- Mutual pleasure
- Communication
- Everybody orgasms
- Passionate
- Protection
- Love

They also say...
Good Sex Is...

- “Eiffel Tower”
- “69”
- Whip Cream
- Handcuffs, whips, chains
- Lots of sex

But... (they add)
This is not the kind of sex college students are having
Sex Is Complex

- Difficult for participants to talk openly about what good sex is
- No one has asked them to think about this before
- Taking an active role in defining their sexual encounters may be unnerving
- There are many rewards and challenges to open introspection and communication
Barriers to Healthy, Supportive Sexuality Education

- All-male spaces
- Hyper-sexualized culture with very little accurate sex education
- Double-bind faced by women
Contextualizing Healthy Sexuality Within Everyday Sexual Violence Prevention

- Good sex in a “world without rape”
- Yes must mean yes, if no is to mean no.
- How would this change rape crisis work if healthy sexuality was a primary focus?
Stay (Sex) Positive

- Sexuality is an important component of physical and emotional development
- Everyone should have access to medically accurate sexual health info
- Fostering and promoting consensual, healthy sexual interactions
- Combating messages that sex should be shameful, bad, or violent
Challenges of Sex Positive + Rape Prevention Approach

- Perceptions about both approaches
- Sexuality seen as fun/funny; rape is serious and traumatic.
  - What a drag!
  - May feel distracting from the “real issue”
- Rape is an act of violence, not sex, but...
Rape Is Not Sex, And…

- Our culture promotes a power-over view of sex (this is sexy)
- “Good sex” in the media often violent
- For men who commit rape, not identified as “rape”
- Rape is an extension of our society’s views of sex and gender
Misperceptions of Sex Education

- Sex educators = “anything goes”
- Stuck on “as long as it’s two consenting adults”
- Calling out sex negativity & violence somehow limits positive sexuality
Misperceptions about Sexual Violence Prevention

- Anti Sex
- Anti Men
- Has nothing to do with sexual health or sexuality information

We must work with our sexual health colleagues to build understanding and collaboration
Challenges (cont.)

- Requires facilitator to balance fun, “good sex” dialogue with more serious topic of rape
- Facilitators and audience members like to compartmentalize sexual health information & rape information
- Difficult to integrate concrete info with a “rape culture” framework in ways the audience can grasp
Collaboration Barriers

- AASECT trashed @ anti-porn conference
- Feminist Against Pornography trashed by some in AASECT
- Our lenses are different
- We need to challenge ingrained rape culture in ways that are not sex shaming
Successes

- Audiences eager to learn about both violence & good sex
- Sex Educator adds credence to the sexual violence prevention mission
  - Of course the sex educator isn’t “anti-sex”
- Promotes discussions that enhance sexual violence and sexual health education (i.e. “sex negative messages in porn”).
- Models that sex is natural & healthy, and sexual violence has no place in “good sex”
BUILDING UNDERSTANDING

Sex Education

Sexual Violence
Applying To Your Context

- How can you incorporate a sex positive approach in any classroom while remaining age/context appropriate?
  - Teach “respect” skills along with any “refusal” skills
  - Acknowledge sexuality as important aspect of identity
Developing ability to talk about both simultaneously

- Requires cross training
- Sexuality educators get sexual violence training more frequently than visa versa
- Sexuality education often lacks a feminist perspective
Training

- 40 hour
  - Sex Educators should attend!
  - Include sex positive messages/activities

- AASECT, SSSS & other conferences for violence prevention folks

- CME’s, public health, Planned Parenthood trainings
  - Even if it seems non-related
WE CAN’T DO IT ALL!
We’re all Responsible for Healthy Sexuality

- Everybody deserves a happy, healthy sex life, need to work to ensure it.
- Social responsibility – among friends, family, etc. – to change the ways we encourage “good sex”
- Working with colleagues doing this work – encouraging them to get cross-trained
“Wasted Sex”: A Model Program

- Needed to discuss alcohol consumption, sexuality, & sexual violence
- Partnered with alcohol educator
- Developed workshop integrating our approaches
- Available via...
Resources

- Yes Means Yes
  yesmeansyesblog.wordpress.com

- Moving Upstream Newsletter
  www.vadv.org

- Doin’ It Well
  www.doinitwell.blog.com

- Our Whole Lives (OWL)

- The Survivor’s Guide to Sex (Haines)

- Wendy Maltz
  www.healthysex.com
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