

# **Making Connections: Incorporating Healthy Sexuality into Sexual Assault Prevention and Counseling**

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# The Why?

Historically, the fields of sexuality education and sexual assault prevention and counseling have existed in separate spheres.



# The Why?

In order to gain entry into classrooms, sexual assault prevention had to clearly define itself as focused on sexual violence and leave out content that may be construed as sexuality education.



# The Why?

Recently the argument has surfaced that, in order to provide truly effective sexual assault prevention and counseling, healthy sexuality education must be included in training for staff and as part of the overall discourse.



# Foundations

## Knowledge Increases Comfort

- Increasing knowledge around sexuality has been shown to create more open attitudes and higher levels of comfort (Lewis & Bor, 1994). Training aimed at increasing knowledge around healthy sexuality will likely impact attitudes and help to increase comfort.

# Foundations

## Healthy Sexuality Education Can Help Support Sexual Assault Prevention Education

- Incorporating healthy sexuality education into sexual assault prevention programs may help improve outcomes by teaching characteristics of healthy sexual interactions, allowing for avoidance of unhealthy interaction such as sexual violence (Perry, 2006).

# Foundations

## Healthy Sexuality Information Can Help Survivors

- 58.6% of female survivors experience sexual problems compared to 17.2% of non-assaulted women (Becker et al. in Bolen, 1993). Sexual assault counselors can utilize training around healthy sexuality to help support survivors who are facing sexual problems post-assault.

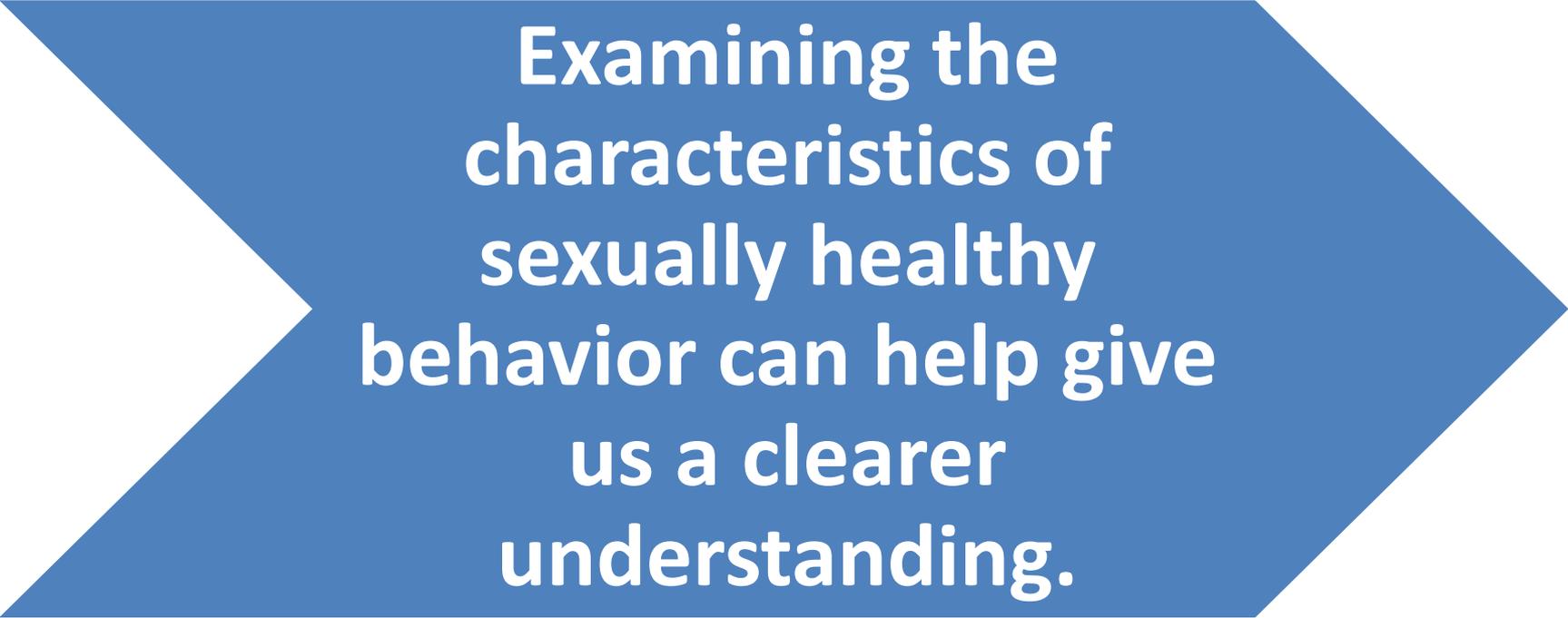
# What is Healthy Sexuality?

Can be a difficult concept to define.

A variety of definitions and models exist.

*Activity- How would you define healthy sexuality?*

# Characteristics of a Sexually Healthy Adult



Examining the characteristics of sexually healthy behavior can help give us a clearer understanding.

# Training Should Be...



Aimed at exploring values, building knowledge and increasing comfort.



Designed with input from sexual assault agency staff.



Learner directed and focused on problem solving.

# Core Curricular Content

Values  
Clarification

Increasing  
Comfort

Understanding  
Healthy  
Sexuality

Communicating  
Around Issues  
of Sexuality

The Impact of  
Gender on  
Sexuality

# Additional Recommended Content

**Sexual  
Orientation**

**Gender  
Identity**

**Sexual  
Anatomy**

**The Sexual  
Response  
Cycle**

**Healthy  
Sexuality  
Resources**

# Benefits



Increased provider comfort when dealing with issues of sexuality.



Increased information and resources available for clients served by sexual assault agencies.



Potential improvement in the delivery of sexual assault prevention education programs.

# Lessons Learned

**Comfort level with issues of sexuality beyond sexual abuse and assault was relatively low.**

- **During needs assessment, many were reluctant to even complete the survey.**

**As predicted, staff indicated that they had received little to no healthy sexuality training.**

- **Prior to training, participants expressed feeling less knowledgeable regarding healthy sexuality.**

# Lessons Learned

**Interest and engagement in training on topics related to healthy sexuality were high.**

- **Staff expressed interest in wanting to learn more.**

**Time constraints that non-profit agencies face are an important factor to consider.**

- **Training may need to be concise or broken up into multiple shorter trainings.**

# Prior to Training

## Conduct a Needs Assessment

- Creates staff buy-in
- Allows training to be tailored to needs of your staff



## Build Partnerships

- Planned Parenthood
- Community Based Organizations
- Sexuality Educators, Trainers, Consultants

# Other Considerations

Training around sexuality can be challenging and, in some cases, triggering. Both the *format* and the *facilitator* need to reflect this.

# Remember the Challenges

## Format

- **Allow for breaks**
- **Chunk content**
  - Values vs. Knowledge
- **Allow for anonymity**
- **Small group work**
- **Provide follow-up**

## Facilitator

- **Experienced in teaching about sexuality**
- **Acknowledges the challenges**
- **Understands the audience**
- **Able to “read” the room**

# Future Directions



**Healthy Sexuality Incorporated  
into Training for All Sexual Assault  
Agency Staff**



**Collaboration Between Sexuality  
Education & Sexual Assault  
Prevention Fields**



**Evaluate Training to Ensure  
Efficacy**

# Questions?

**Thank you!**

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# Sources

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