

Voices of Courage: using on-campus activism as part of the recovery process for sexual assault survivors.



Sexual assault Support Group

- Collaborative initiative
- Importance of group dynamics
- Need for activism as part of their recovery



Support for our approach



- **Institutional Betrayal (Smith & Freyd, 2014)**
- **Stage by Dimension Model of Recovery (Lebowitz, Harvey, & Herman, 1993)**
- **Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997)**

Important ethical im



Potential for Retraumatization

- Slow bureaucratic processes
- Increased exposure to others' disconcern about the topic
- Survivors feeling exposed in unsupportive environments

Our stance:

- Well-being > successful events
- Exclusive focus on events that aim to increase awareness and survivor support
- Not advertised as a group of survivors
 - Anyone passionate about the cause can join
 - Group members are not asked to disclose

ethical

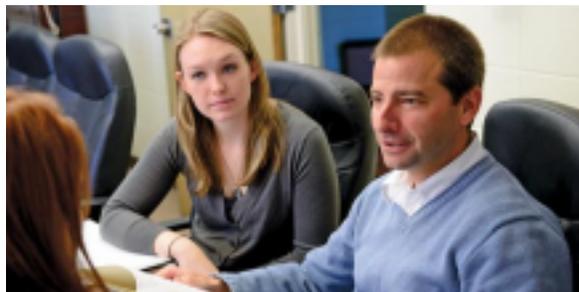
implications

- Working relationships
- Supportive relationships

ConT'D.

Our stance:

- Open communication, clear expectations, and willingness to give and receive feedback in a constructive manner.
- Event planning is not discussed during support group and emotional processing is reserved for support group.
- Strict expectation that gossip or venting is not allowed within either group.
- I seek frequent supervision to discuss the interactions I have with group members.



Sarah's experience as the group's facilitator

My initial reflective concerns:

- My affection for the group members.
- Time management with my other responsibilities.
- Will my personality flaws arise more frequently during event organization and damage a therapeutic relationship?
- Responsibility to mediate working relationships between group members.



- ## ERIN Valenti: A Voices of Courage Leader
- Helped form support group
 - Inspired to continue educating the public
 - Before July 2015 Wyoming had no civil protection for survivors of sexual assault
 - Began working with a team to get a Sexual Assault Protection Order Bill passed into law
 - Bill passed, giving survivors in Wyoming an opportunity to get a civil protection order lasting six months with renewals lasting a year.



“I am proud to be a cofounder of Voices of Courage and although I am no longer in Laramie, I will always feel proud and connected. The support and love saved my life, and I am thankful for the connections and friends I have made.”

Courage Formation and Structure



- Healing needs of members pushing toward advocacy
 - Small advocacy projects in support group
 - Separation from support group to becoming an RSO
- Meeting Structure
 - Hour-long weekly meetings
 - Starting small
 - Equal members
 - Open platform
 - Role delegation and implementation



Voices of Courage

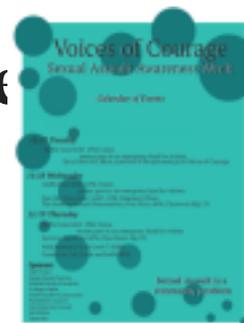
Obstacles

- Misunderstandings with other organizations
- Time management
- Lack of support
 - Conquering a very serious subject
- Delegation of roles
- Group dynamics
 - Working effectively together
- Promoting on campus
- Planning
 - Easier events
 - Not overloading ourselves



Voices of Courage

- Importance of planning
- Raising money for victims emergency fund
 - Tee-Shirt Sales
 - Raffle
 - Born in a Barn fundraiser
- Raising awareness and promoting Voices of Courage on campus
 - Volunteers from other organizations
 - Speak Out
 - Coal Creek Concert
 - Hot chocolate
 - Tabeing in the Union
 - Documentary showings



Maddy's experience as a founding member

Becoming a part of something

Challenging myself

Path to recovery

Acceptance

Push for change

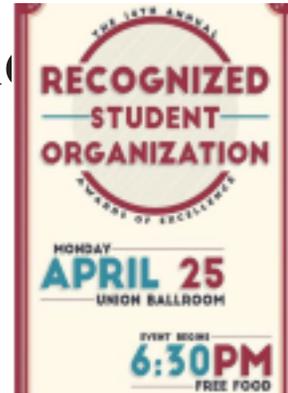
Prevention Models

- Public health model of sexual assault prevention
 - STOP Violence
- Survivor-Activism model
 - Voices of Courage
 - This was previously missing from the Laramie, WY community
- Each of these methods are important
 - To be more effective, a community should have a combination of both.



Voices of Courage Success

- Recognized by the university as a premier organization
- Attendance by students that care
- Money raised for STOP Violence Emergency Fund



Voices of Courage and Our Community

Climate of Wyoming

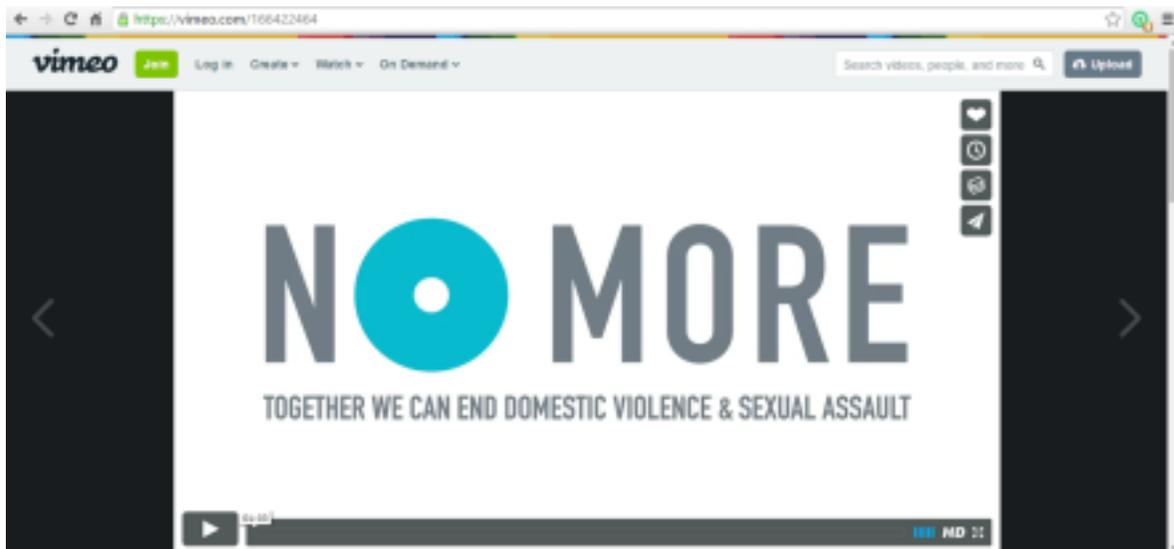
- Forever West
- Fiercely Independent
- Bootstraps Ideology



Voices of Courage and Our Community (con't)

Laramie Community

- College town
- Tight-knit community
 - Community support
- More progressive city



<https://vimeo.com/166422464>

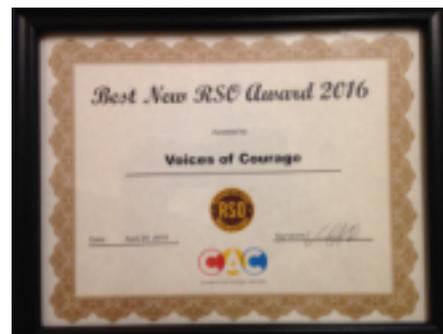
Dakota's experience as a founding member

- ~~Something was missing at UW~~
 - As a survivor, I found little justice. In meeting other survivors, I realized that few others found any degree of justice or support either. This motivated me to begin working to make a difference in our community in order to help survivors. I asked around in the Spring of 2015 and found that no such group existed for students.
- Voices of Courage has been both challenging and rewarding
- Difficulty aligning my passion and my duties as a student

What we learned this

Year

- Campus Resources
- Advertisement
- Communication
 - Officer elections
- Planning events
 - Need to get group members on board for the same activities
 - Simplify events
- Leadership skills



Leadership gained

- NSAC Conference
- Lessons learned within the group
- Bystander Prevention training
- Build working relations with other groups - Professional communication skills
- Being detailed oriented



Future Plans



- Gain new members → Identify a goal + advisory committee
- Create stronger community involvement
 - Gain more support from other clubs and organizations on campus
 - Become more involved in the campus community decisions (i.e., student government and administrative decisions)
- Become a larger on-campus resource for people to utilize
 - Recruit more members from other clubs
- Group facilitator position is changing
 - Kendal is replacing Sarah

this year



- Week of Action in October by “Its on Us”
- SAAM - a week of events
- Talk to Greek life, athletics, and other organizations about prevention and bystander prevention training
- Reach out to other clubs and get more involved in other campus activities
- Do more within the Laramie community

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Rachel's experience as a new member

- I am a sexual assault survivor from the age of 14
 - I was nervous to come to the support group because I was scared I couldn't connect with a collegiate survivor group
- Joined Voices of Courage in hopes of helping an on campus community that wanted to help people be a part of sexual assault prevention
- Happy to find a group of people I can connect with and who want to actively find a solution
- Made me feel like a bigger part of campus and helped me make more friends

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