Beyond Shame and Blame:

A new paradigm for Health Education

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Project Background

- Program started as a thesis project is to work in conjunction with the HSU Student Health Center’s health education dept. to:
  - Develop an on campus peer health education program
  - Develop a set of goals/definitions for what health education is
  - Produce a guide to creating and sustaining a peer education program that includes measuring effectiveness.
Why this?!

- What was needed on campus:
  - Need for peer educators (why important)
  - Redefining Health education through social justice
  - Opening of new Rec & Wellness Center
Program Description

- 10 paid Peer Health Educators
- Classroom presentations, small workshops, one-on-one office hours, and large scale programming
- Student lead topics
- Active response to campus health needs
Why Beyond Shame & Guilt?

What are some of the ways shame, fear, and guilt are used currently in health education?

What are some examples of specific programs or institutions that use this model?
Who gets left out?

- When shame, fear, and guilt are the primary motivators for changing habits/educating about health we create barriers to care.
- Not only are these initiatives failing to make significant changes in behavior, they are also harmful because they are tied lowering self worth. Health education doesn’t just teach us about what we should and shouldn’t do, it teaches us how to have a relationship with our body and with our health.
What is Stigma?

- Negative, often thought of as unfair beliefs that are attached to an action or person based on things they usually cannot control

- What are some examples of stigma?

- Why is discussing stigma important to health education work?
Health & Identity

- Hypertension example

- What are some ways you observed the link between identity and health?
Health Education AS Social Justice

- Social Justice is a broad concept, the way we are using it is to talk about power, privilege, and social inequality, Oppression as a cookie metaphor!

- Health is directly linked to issues of Race, Class, Gender, Sex, Ability, Size, Nationality, Ethnicity, and many other identity categories
If not fear, shame, and guilt then what? And how?

- As a health education program we are founded on the work of many social justice and health education theories.
- These Theoretical frameworks and activist models give us tools to reframe the conversation about health education and to critically view the models we often are required to work with.
“In response to such high rates of drinking and drinking-related consequences, most college campuses have developed alcohol awareness programs and universal prevention programs. Many college prevention and awareness programs have specifically focused on providing information about the negative effects of alcohol and the benefits of abstention. These programs rarely provide education about moderate drinking, nor do they provide the necessary cognitive and behavioral skills for students to make educated decisions regarding their alcohol use. There is an inherent misconception that discussing alcohol, without an emphasis on nondrinking, will cause students to drink more. This is analogous to schools not providing education about earthquake safety because of a fear that discussing earthquakes will cause them to happen. In reality, colleges should focus on providing education and instruction on drinking-safely (872).” Marlatt, K. Wikiewitz
Intersectio nal Feminism

“‘problems of exclusion’ of Black women from both mainstream anti-racist politics and feminist theory ‘cannot be solved simply by including Black women in an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated.” –Kimberle Crenshaw
Fat Positivity

“When people say they want to lose weight they often mean, “I want to be respected. I want to be loved. I want to be seen. I want Liberation from fear and self-loathing.” Weight loss culture will never give us those things because it is founded on fear/hate based systems like sexism, racism, classism and ablism.” – Virgie Tovar
“Incorporating the perspective of people with illnesses and disabilities into our models of embodiment and subjectivity has important implications for how we conceive of self-identity. Anyone who lives with illness needs to develop both particle and theoretical strategies for living with a body that no longer provides a stable ground for self (148).” Kristin Lindgren
“Health promotion was at the core of the second-grade teacher’s phoning my mother because I was spending free time baking pretend pies in our classroom’s Easy-Bake oven. Most powerfully, health promotion may have been directed at me by the gangs of boys who would taunt and bully me, chiding me to walk, gesture, cross my legs, and inflect my words in gender-conforming ways (124).” Eric Rofes

“Not only did safe-sex campaigns function to create a hegemonic view of “acceptable” gay males sexual activity, but these health promotion campaigns may have also included elements that function as triggers for resistance. Does the inclusion of “safe: in the term “safe sex” make this seem like a hot and exciting activity to pursue, or does it simply serve to diminish the heat surrounding the suggested act (128)?” Eric Rofes
Reproductive Justice

“This definition as outlined by Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ) offers a new perspective on reproductive issues advocacy, pointing out that for Indigenous women and women of color it is important to fight equally for (1) the right to have a child; (2) the right not to have a child; and (3) the right to parent the children we have, as well as to control our birthing options, such as midwifery. We also fight for the necessary enabling conditions to realize these rights. This is in contrast to the singular focus on abortion by the pro-choice movement that excludes other social justice movements (1).” Sistersong
Liberatory Education

“Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive (21).” bell hooks
“...studies show that sexual partners who discuss contraception are more likely to use it. This seems self-explanatory, but bears noting because it is often forgotten in arguments that sex education should be about safety and not pleasure. A person who feels guilt and discomfort over sex is generally going to have a difficult time talking about it... If we want people to engage in safer sex, we need to give them the tools they need to engage in safer sex, and that’s more than just showing them how to put on a condom (308).” Yes Means Yes
The tropes of fear, shame and guilt are entwined in most of the health education materials and methods that are given to us from a young age, can you think of other ways of educating about some of the following topics that do not rely on these tropes?

- STIs/STDs
- Nutrition
- Smoking
- Drinking
Weeding through the material

- Often times we will have and produce materials for educational purposes that aren’t perfect.
  - They will sometimes use the messages of fear, shame, and guilt
  - They will lack inclusiveness for issues of gender, class, race, ability etc...
  - They will use dated language that doesn’t appeal to our community
How this effects our outreach

0 Many of the topics here are not accessible to the general campus community. While we may not be able to educate every student on why we do what we do and every topic we cover. The important part is setting our outreach in these foundational ideas.

0 We want people to be able to talk to us and get information from us! This means being accessible and connecting with students on a peer level!

0 Our work should reflect the needs, attitudes, and culture of our campus!
What we do!
Thank You!