



Healthy Sexuality

A Tool for Sexual Violence Prevention

Primary prevention of sexual violence is about ending sexual violence before it starts. It also means that everyone is responsible for sexual violence prevention, not just potential victims and potential perpetrators. The public health model of prevention emphasizes decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors, which means concepts of healthy sexuality can be an important tool for preventing sexual violence.

What is healthy sexuality?

Healthy sexuality is having the knowledge and power to express one's sexuality in ways that enrich one's life. It includes approaching sexual interactions and relationships from a consensual, respectful, and informed perspective. Healthy sexuality is free from coercion and violence (NSVRC 2012).

Risk factors & protective factors

We can increase the effectiveness of sexual violence prevention efforts when we focus efforts on decreasing risk factors while increasing protective factors. Risk factors of sexual violence include: harmful gender norms and hyper masculinity; sexual objectification; coercive sexual behaviors seen in the media and perpetrated in social settings; social norms regarding male entitlement and female sexual submissiveness; and the acceptance and expectation of sexual violence (CDC, 2014).

Protective factors include knowledge of normal sexual functions; negotiation skills around sexuality; comfort with the sexuality and gender expression of one's self and others; and recognizing and respecting consent (CDC, 2014). In other words, healthy sexuality.

Creating a safe & violence-free world

Concepts related to healthy sexuality can play an important role in sexual violence prevention education across the lifespan. Additionally, healthy sexuality can be integrated into the healing process for survivors of sexual violence, as a way for survivors to enhance their own sense of control of their bodies and sexuality.

Healthy sexuality is emotional, social, and physical, yet it has not often been addressed openly and honestly within our cultural dialogue. Yet increasingly, new resources are developed and efforts are made at changing this norm. And as our culture makes strides toward effectively addressing healthy sexuality, we build the foundation for creating a safe and violence-free world for ourselves and generations to come.

“Healthy sexuality is emotional, social, cultural, and physical. It is our values, our attitudes, feelings, interactions, and behaviors.”

— NSVRC



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Bibliography

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Leading the way toward ending sexual violence in Maine