No Shame Needed: Rethinking Prevention Messaging

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MARCH 31, 2017
TEXAS CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY 6th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
COMPONENTS OF STIGMATIZATION

- Connecting Labels and Stereotypes
- Separation
- Status Loss and Discrimination
- Perceived Stigma vs. Self-Stigma
EXAMPLES OF STIGMA IN SEX EDUCATION

- Sexual activity among teens is immoral
- Teens who have contracted STDs are irresponsible
- Teen parents are irresponsible
- Teens with multiple partners are promiscuous or “sluts” (slut shaming)
- Teen pregnancy as a “consequence” of sex
- STDs as a sign of someone who is “dirty” or not taking care of themselves
- Social ostracizing as a consequence of sex as normal
Harmful effects of stigma:

- Lack of knowledge of sexuality as part of healthy adolescent development
- STD-related stigma as a barrier to seeking early STD screening, treatment, and care
- STD-related stigma as a negative influence in healthy relationships
- Teen pregnancy-related stigma as a negative effect on young parents
Our Conceptual Model: Levels of Stigma

Societal Framework:
Moral panic about youth sexuality and normative expectations around pregnancy prevention.

Media:
Representations of young parents that promote myths or stereotypes, marketing campaigns that condemn young parents.

Policy:
Federal/State educational programs that promote abstinence, programs that discriminate against young parents in education, health care, or social services.

Institutional:
Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of social workers, school administrators, and other professionals that interact with young parents. Policies within institutions that discriminate against young parents.

Community:
Knowledge, attitudes, behaviors of peers and elders in communities.

Individual:
Concerns about judgment, experiences of discrimination, self-judgment, and loss of support among young parents. Expectations of poor treatment among young people making pregnancy decisions.
SEXUALITY EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT
EMPOWERING YOUTH

- YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION
- DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS
YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

How much of a say do youth have in the work that directly impacts them?

Are you developing youth assets?

Adapted from Rogers Hart ladder and European Minority Youth Inclusion Training
Youth Empowerment

- Utilizing Youth Assets
- Create Youth Adult Councils/Youth Advisory Boards to gain youth involvement and participation
- Train Peer Health Educators to facilitate curricula, lessons, or activities
- Have youth take ownership of messaging in classroom lessons
- Provide leadership roles of participants in the classroom
- Create relationships with youth
- Provide youth friendly services based on evidence-based standards
Positive Messaging
Creating a positive/supportive environment

- Help create a safe setting for teens to learn and share
- Provide straightforward and factual information
- Provide and connect to local resources
- Clarify your own values
- Be aware of the messages you send
- Be inclusive and respectful of everyone’s experience
Recognize and affirm the sexual rights of teens:

- The right not to express your sexuality unless you want to
- The right to say no to any unwanted touch of any kind
- The right not to be pressured into being physical or sexual
- The right to make decisions about sexuality, at any time
- The right to stop being physical or sexual with a partner at any point
- The right to express sexuality safely, without the risk of pregnancy, or STDs including HIV/AIDS.
HOW TO RESPECTFULLY TALK ABOUT
Teen Pregnancy Prevention

1. Focus on the need for accurate, shame-free, comprehensive, LGBTQ-inclusive sexual education and dialogue centering healthy relationships and safe consensual sex
2. Ensure conversations are genuinely open and honest and expect difficult answers and prepare to answer them honestly and directly
3. Understand the macroinfluences on teen pregnancy, such as abuse, poverty, homelessness, sexual exploitation and lack of equitable access to education, healthcare, safety, support and resources
4. Avoid use of stereotypes, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, shame, stigma or any comparisons to other groups of people
5. Acknowledge that young people have the right to autonomy and agency over their own bodies, sexual health, and reproductive choices.

#NoTeenShame
Group Activity: What’s YOUR message?
Questions?
Thank you!

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