

Saying yes to Good Safe Sex

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The Pleasure Project

Introduction

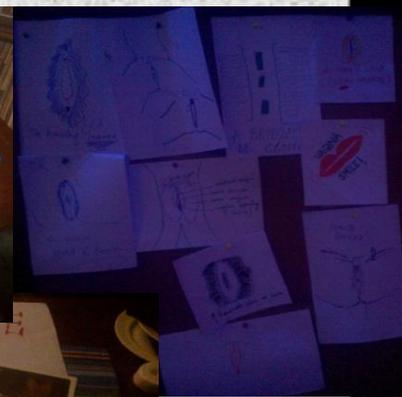
Safer sex promotion campaigns and research have been, and continue to be, overwhelmingly negative. They tend to focus on fear, risk, disease and the negative outcomes of sex. The Pleasure Project has brought the discussion of pleasure and desire into the realm of safer sex, showing how using one of the primary motivations for having sex – pursuit of pleasure – can improve receptiveness to safer sex messages. There is strong evidence that the pursuit of pleasure is one of the primary reasons people have sex, and that fear of disease is not a strong motivator for safer sex. In ignoring pleasure, the HIV & AIDS community is ignoring one of its most potent tools in stopping the spread of the disease.

Results

This toolkit includes pleasure as a key element and has been tested in several countries in Asia by training young peer educators and sexuality education programme implementers. Sex educators are keen to learn new 'pleasure' skills, and despite different cultural contexts across Asia, including Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, among others, the toolkit and training exercises have been received with enthusiasm.

Materials and Methods

One of the ways in which The Pleasure Project has worked to ensure that sex education not only highlights the importance of pleasure, but also ensures that pleasure is a key motivator for good and safe sex, is by developing a sex education toolkit for programme planners, sex educators, health professionals and other HIV prevention specialists. The training materials include pleasure as a key quality indicator of good sex education. This toolkit has been tested in several countries in Asia by training young peer educators and sexuality education programme implementers. It is currently being transferred to an online format that would enable HIV prevention workers and others from around the world to access the modules and use and adapt them.



Conclusions

Programme implementers who find talking about sex and sexuality difficult have been able to obtain the language required for these discussions. Young peer educators, who struggle with promoting condoms due to the perception that they reduce pleasure, have gained skills in communicating about condoms in the context of pleasure.

LESSONS LEARNED: Neglecting the role of pleasure in public health and behavioural interventions is part of a broader omission and reductive treatment of sexuality in HIV prevention programmes. The Pleasure Project has found examples of the eroticisation of safer sex from the private sector (contraceptive social marketing, erotic media and the sex industry), which could provide learning for the non-government and public sectors. The sex education toolkit ensures HIV professionals, sex educators and young people incorporate sex-positive, pleasure-based messaging in their behavioural interventions and ensure more effective programmes

talk dirty to me

putting safer sex theory into practice



References

The Global Mapping of Pleasure: A directory of organizations, programmes, media and people who eroticize safer sex 2nd Edition, with support from Realising Rights research programme, Knerr and Philpott, 2009

'Everything you ever wanted to know about Pleasure and Safer Sex but were too afraid to ask' Knerr and Philpott, 2013
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