Skill Share:
Talking About Sexual Violence When There Are No Words

Zarena Leblanc, MA
Lisa Gilmore, MA, LCPC
Quenette L. Walton, PhD, LCSW

Underserved Summer Institute
Atlanta, Georgia
July 17, 2019

This project was supported by 2016-TA-AX-K034 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.
What do we mean?

- The words are complicated, inadequate, nuanced and non-existent
  - *The complicated, inadequate language of sexual violence* - Constance Grady

- Sex, Sexuality and sex education is often perceived as a taboo subject in certain realms, even though it is so embedded in human nature
  - *Everyday Sexuality and Social Work: Locating Sexuality in Professional Practice and Education* - Priscilla Dunk

- There are literally no words in the language to talk about sex or sexual violence
Why are we discussing this?

- Needs Responsive -- TA Calls
- Intersectionality of Clients
- Cultural Nuances
- Providing Services
Learning Objectives
1. To identify and name the ways that sexual violence is/is not addressed within organizations from the organizational, cultural and community viewpoint.
2. To learn the ways in which peer organizations have used creative methods to introduce, encourage and commit to addressing sexual violence if/when there are not words.
3. To think about how to incorporate or modify the ways in which sex and sexual violence is discussed at organizations, whether there are words or not.
Image Description: Yellow note with the text “Disclaimer” written in black on it pinned with a blue pushpin to a cork board.
Universal Agreements:

- State your name before speaking in front of the group
- Be respectful of others in the room
- One person talk at a time
- Use “I” statements
- Explain any acronyms or jargon you may use
- Ask if you don’t understand something—a word, concept or idea
- Be trigger sensitive—when sharing a story of violence, keep the details to a minimum
- WAIT—Why Am I Talking?
- Land the Plane—please don’t drone on and on, complete your thought so others have an opportunity to speak
Additional Agreements?
Image Description: Cartoon of 4 elephants standing in a small room around a group of 8 people sitting in chairs in a circle.
Group Reflection

Who do you feel comfortable talking about sex with? Coworkers? Clients?

Are there challenges to discussing sex candidly with clients? What are they?

Is sex education, knowledge and information discussed at your organizations and agencies? Amongst the agency? With clients?

What has worked? Why?
Table Activity:

**Tools:**

Papers lettered from A - H on each table

Markers

1 - 2 note takers

Timer
A. What is the process of engaging in discussions about sex, sex education, sexual violence at your organization? Is the process effective? Why or Why not? Mainstream versus underserved populations -- Is there a base knowledge of this information?
B. What (if any) sexual violence language exists in the communities you serve? How does such language exist in the community(ies) you serve?
C. Is there a lot of stigma around sexual violence? If yes, where does this stigma exist? What does it look like? (Answer in whatever feels like a natural response to you)
D. How have you addressed these stigmas internally at your organization? Externally? Is there a difference?
E. Are negative stereotypes expressed in your interactions with clients when talking about issues related to sex? How has that shown up?
F. What does successful relationship building between you, your agency and those you serve look like in order to talk about sex, sex education and sexual violence?
Thank you for participating in this activity!
Report Back
Now what?

**Rhetorical Question:** Where on the spectrum does your organization fall? How would you describe talking about and discussing sex and sexual violence at your organization?
Application

Where can you incorporate these ideas in **outreach, service provision and training** within your organizations and agencies?
Creating the Language

1. Using visual images to convey messages
HEART's Helpful Tips for Menstruating during Ramadan
It’s no secret that Ramadan can bring angst and undue hardships to those who menstruate.

The shame surrounding menstruation is largely to blame.
Well, we’re tired of this.

And we’ve decided to share some helpful tips to make this Ramadan easier for those of us who menstruate.
2. Utilizing educational documents from your peers and advocates
Interpretation: The Importance of Language in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Frankfort, Kentucky June 2015

api: Asian Pacific Institute in Gender Based Violence logo and contact information in the bottom right corner.
Toolbook

Image Description: A page with 6 illustrations. One, an ear with black line across it and the text “hearing impaired” and a hearing aid with the words “hearing aid.” Two, a face with 5 red stars around the face with the text “seizure disorder.” Three, one person gesturing with hands and a second person with a chat circle above their head with black arrow in both directions with the text “interpreter.” Four, two eyes and black line across them with the text “blind.” Five, two crutches and a wheelchair with the text “equipment.” Six, two medicine bottle with pills in front of them and the text “pills.”
3. Informational Postcards and Handouts

Image Description: Postcard with different colors surrounding a rectangular shape and text “Support for Healing” in black ink with red filling in some of the lettering.
General support for healing

These tips can help you support family, friends, loved ones, and clients with disabilities who have survived abuse or sexual assault.

- Focus on the survivor and the support they need, not on your own experiences. Ask, How can I help?
- Avoid letting your own fears and concerns limit their activities.
- Allow time and space to heal and recover — on their schedule.
- Remind the survivor that what happened was not their fault. The perpetrator is responsible.
- Avoid probing questions about the abuse or assault.
- Stay connected, even when it feels awkward or uncomfortable.
- Take care of yourself and know your limits. It’s OK to take a break.
- Encourage the survivor to seek professional support when they’re ready.

Disability Services
A program of SAFE

24/7 SAFEline – Call: 512.267.SAFE (7233)
Text: 737.888.7233 Chat: safeaustin.org/chat

Image Description: White Background with “General support for healing” in black lettering as title with “these tips can help you support family, friends, loved ones and clients with disabilities who have survived abuse or sexual assault” in black lettering with 9 bullet points. One “listen, believe, say, I believe you. Two, “focus on the survivor and support the support they need, not on your own experiences. Ask, how can I help you?” Three, “Avoid letting your own fears and concerns limit their activities.” Four, “Allow time and space to heal and recover -- on their schedule.” Five, “Remind the survivor that what happened was not their fault. The perpetrator is responsible.” Six, “Avoid probing questions about the abuse or assault.” Seven, “Stay connected, even, when it feels awkward or uncomfortable.” Eight, “Take care of yourself and know your limits. It’s OK to take a break.” Nine, “Encourage the survivor to seek professional support when they’re ready” in black lettering. “Disability Services” in red lettering, “a program of SAFE” in black lettering underneath on the left hand corner. Contact information for SAFE Alliance on the right bottom hand corner. 24/7 SAFEline - call 512.267.7233. Text 737.888.7233 and chat safeaustin.org/chat.
4. Interactive Engagement

**INSERT DIRECT POLL LINK** Zarena will insert June 30th

*polls expire after 30 days*

Question will be: How comfortable do you feel talking about sex and sexual violence with your clients, community, organizations now since this training/discussion/activity/etc?
Frame(s) of Reference

- How can we use stories embedded in our culture, history, experiences to have conversations around sex and sexual violence?
- Compare the experiences to something similar
- Be stealthy
Tea! and Consent

Image Description: Video frame with light blue background, a white tea cup and saucer with yellow dots on cup. Three billowing lines come from the cup to represent steam. A white play button is centered in the frame.
Hitting the “Wall”

- Where is it difficult to see the connections to the clients you provide services to? Why?

- If you have a magic wand what would discussions about sex, sex education, sexual violence, etc. look like for members in your community?

- What has not been addressed in this session that needs to be further discussed?
Takeaways/Other Items to Think About
Image Description: A word cloud with “Thank you” written in different languages, colors, and sizes.
References and Resources


Resources and References Continued

Websites, Videos & Links

- Tea and consent
  - Youtube Video
- SAFE Alliance
  - Disability Services Postcards
- HEART’s Women and Girls
  - Helpful Tips for Menstruating During Ramadan

Additional Documents

- Available for viewing at registration table and on ALSO’s Underserved Summer Institute webpage
Contact Information

ALSO Underserved TA Project Email
underservedtaproject@also-chicago.org

ALSO Main Phone Number
(773) 235-5705

Zarena Leblanc Email
zleblanc@also-chicago.org