



a recipe for prevention

from the kitchen of: the Action Alliance
serves: Virginia

promising prevention recipe!

Promoting Healthy Relationships and Healthy Sexuality in Violence Prevention

Public health success stories tell us that if we want to make a lasting impact, we've got to promote the actions we want people TO take. But when we're trying to prevent violence, it's really easy to fall back on a list of things we want people NOT TO do...focusing solely on keeping the bad stuff from happening. So what's the fix? Promote the positive! Communication, respect, equality, choice, empathy, enjoyment and other factors associated with healthy relationships and healthy sexuality are things we can and should embolden in our work.

An Arizona based primary prevention initiative called **Peer Solutions** has got the perfect recipe for promotion and fostering safety, equality, and respect as norms. The "Yes" team conducted a mini-interview with Peer Solutions founder and director, Jen Rauhouse. Jen is an expert at spinning things to promote the positive! While it sounds easy enough, envisioning the world as we'd like to see it (free from violence) is a pretty radical thing.

Yes: Peer Solutions' Stand & Serve (S&S) works to prevent not only sexual and intimate partner violence BUT ALSO gang membership, gun use,

fresh ingredients:

1/2 cup Promotion

Prevention is also promotion!
Promote factors associated with healthy relationships and healthy sexuality like communication, respect, equality, choice, empathy, and enjoyment.

quick links:

[Peer Solutions](#)

["A Glimpse of Life with Stand & Serve" Video](#)

[Yes, A Recipe Card for Prevention!](#)

[Virginia Primary Prevention](#)

[Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance](#)

school violence, suicide, depression, oppression, substance abuse, eating disorders/poor body image, poor school performance, homelessness and other issues before they begin - how does all of that tie in with the promotion of healthy relationships and sexuality?

JR: We believe and several bodies of research support that the underlying conditions of all of the above horrors are boiled down into 3 basic categories: 1) Oppression, 2) Silence and Denial and 3) Violence Perceived as Normal. For many, these are the perceived norms on individual, relationship, community and societal levels. The result is generations of harm. In order to interrupt and reverse this trend, Peer Solutions has learned through 30 years of education and practice that it is not only necessary to address the underlying conditions but it is critical to cultivate the opposite across the social-ecological model. Peer Solutions defines the opposite as SAFETY, EQUALITY and RESPECT (SER) as norms. ALL OF THESE ARE NECESSARY INGREDIENTS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY. To cultivate SER is to promote healthy relationships and sexuality resulting in generations free from sexual, relationship and family violence, child abuse and much more. This is Positive Social Change, this is Primary Prevention.

Yes: Having seen S&S at work in local schools and communities, how does this campaign make respect, choice, communication and other protective factors/developmental assets the “norm”?

JR: We do this in a wide variety of ways. We begin with educating our staff and participants on definitions and core concepts connected to theory and evidence based research. Primary Prevention, Social Change, SER, the issues we work to prevent and the underlying conditions are examined while building empathy, validation, intuition and safe bystander responsibility skills at home, with schools and in the community. Older S&S members are peer educators and mentors for younger participants. They teach others what they learn while designing and implementing their own solutions. For example: Our S&S Coalition, comprised of over 40 active school, family and community partners, spent the past two years designing THE GUTS TO BE GOOD (G2BG), a primary prevention initiative launched in January of 2011. As Jacob, an 8th grader explained, “Everyone has guts, so everyone has THE GUTS TO BE GOOD.” G2BG is about five simple things we can all do to cultivate safety, equality, and respect as norms to prevent harm before it begins. 1) The guts to be RESPECTFUL, 2) The guts to be COURTEOUS, 3) The guts to SPEAK UP, 4) The guts to be HONEST and



STAND & SERVE members work to end sexual violence.



STAND & SERVE members having fun at a coalition meeting.



STAND & SERVE members receiving the 2010 City of Tempe Diversity Awards.

5) The guts to LEND A HAND. G2BG is about building a world we want to live in. We saturate our target community with a wide variety of S&S activities reinforcing SER as norms. Activities include weekly meetings during lunch, after school and the summer. Monthly coalition meetings and educational outreach includes: staff memos, announcements, lunch time activities, Days at the Capitol, Town Halls, service projects, presenting at local/national conferences, training, evaluation and family and cultural celebrations.

Yes: How are these messages initially received by folks?

JR: We have spent many years trying to figure out how to encourage others to join and/or support our work. It is clear that everyone would rather hear about and take part in positive solutions. It makes more sense and truly is the most cost effective solution. It is about semantics. We choose our words very carefully. It's kind of hard to argue against our message without sounding ridiculous. It works and people are ready for it. We also believe our messages are so positively received because we build authentic relationships with school, family and community partners.

Yes: What do you do to counteract years of potentially damaging socialization?

JR: The good news is that young people are very bright. We help them articulate what they already know. Peer Solutions is celebrating 15 years and believes we are cultivating new generations that have internalized the mission. I like to call our approach "Pre-Womb." Youth attend a meeting or an event and they are overwhelmed with the feelings of acceptance and respect that permeate our activities. Many of them have been searching for a place to find love and to be themselves, and they instantly know that S&S can be that place for them. In the blink of an eye their whole world view can be changed by simply experiencing the positivity and respect that S&S members practice. This lights a fire within them to become active members and to create social change in their hearts, homes, schools, and communities.

Yes: What would you say proves to be the biggest obstacle in promoting and fostering healthy attitudes? How do you overcome this?

JR: The biggest obstacle for us is the lack of understanding and support for primary prevention. We are overcoming this by educating everyone we can locally and nationally and about the positive effects of promotion work. Locally we have seen many partners

outside of our field very interested in supporting our work. They understand primary prevention as stopping problems before they start with positive solutions. We are also working to educate funders and encourage them to adopt a policy to have a percentage of their funds go to primary prevention. This is a new tactic and will involve working with businesses, foundations and local and state governments. We are very lucky to have and appreciative of the support from Carol Hensell, SVPEP Program Manager for the Arizona Department of Health Services as she stands behind the primary prevention of sexual violence.

Yes: In order for promotion to be effective, the audience must find it relevant. How does Peer Solutions keep prevention tactics community specific as opposed to using a one-size-fits-all kind of model?

JR: After 30 years of doing this work, I am a firm believer that every community must design and implement their own solutions. Canned approaches just don't work as well. Activities must be structured with a purpose and go beyond individual level strategies. If possible, stay away from one time or even multi-session workshops and spend your time building authentic relationships with all identities including age, start or rename your group a coalition and offer year round meetings and events that are fun with a purpose.

Yes: In your opinion, how important is promotion to successful prevention programming?

JR: I believe that with so few resources available, promotion work is essential to maximizing efforts. According to Dr. Victor LaCerva, 90% of behavior is learned through modeling. Unfortunately with the overwhelming presence of the underlying conditions of harm reinforced by the fact that our media is over 55 times more violent than reality, we have some real work to do and the time is now! Promoting good, prevents bad. It is that simple. The brightest light of all, is that safety, equality and respect are actually the true norms. They really are what everyone really wants for those they care about and themselves. It feels good because it is good. Good Wins. We all have THE GUTS TO BE GOOD!