



# Sexual Wellness: Why It Matters for Individuals with Problem Sexual Behaviors

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**SAFER SOCIETY**

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## My plan for this session

Conceptual models

Ways to organize the information

Activities and ideas

Strategies for success

Hope – for your clients and for you

# Dedication



“The practice of love  
is the most powerful  
antidote to the politics  
of domination.”

bell hooks  
1952-2021



## Words from a colleague

“I think many people working in this area are starving to have clients who are hungry for what they have to offer, rather than just clients who are resigned to attending a treatment program because they ‘have no choice.’ And I can say from experience that as I’ve switched over the years to the lens you are describing, my groups are so much more successful and satisfying. They get to the productive stages of the group process much faster, because they are engaged and curious and motivated. They connect with each other and relate to each other because they’re all more willing to ask questions and share their stories. And, as incongruent as this might sound for this type of group, we have FUN together. They get to experience that they deserve to have pleasure and don’t have to spend the rest of their lives feeling like a piece of s--t.”

--Miranda Hughes, LPC, CSE, Former Sex Offender Program Coordinator  
PA Department of Corrections, State Correctional Institution at Albion

# A thought experiment

An individual in your care wants to have a healthy sexual relationship in the future.

You'd like to begin working with them *now* on mutual, consensual, pleasure-based sexual relationships to help their recovery.

But your employer is not too keen on \*sex ed\* for clients.

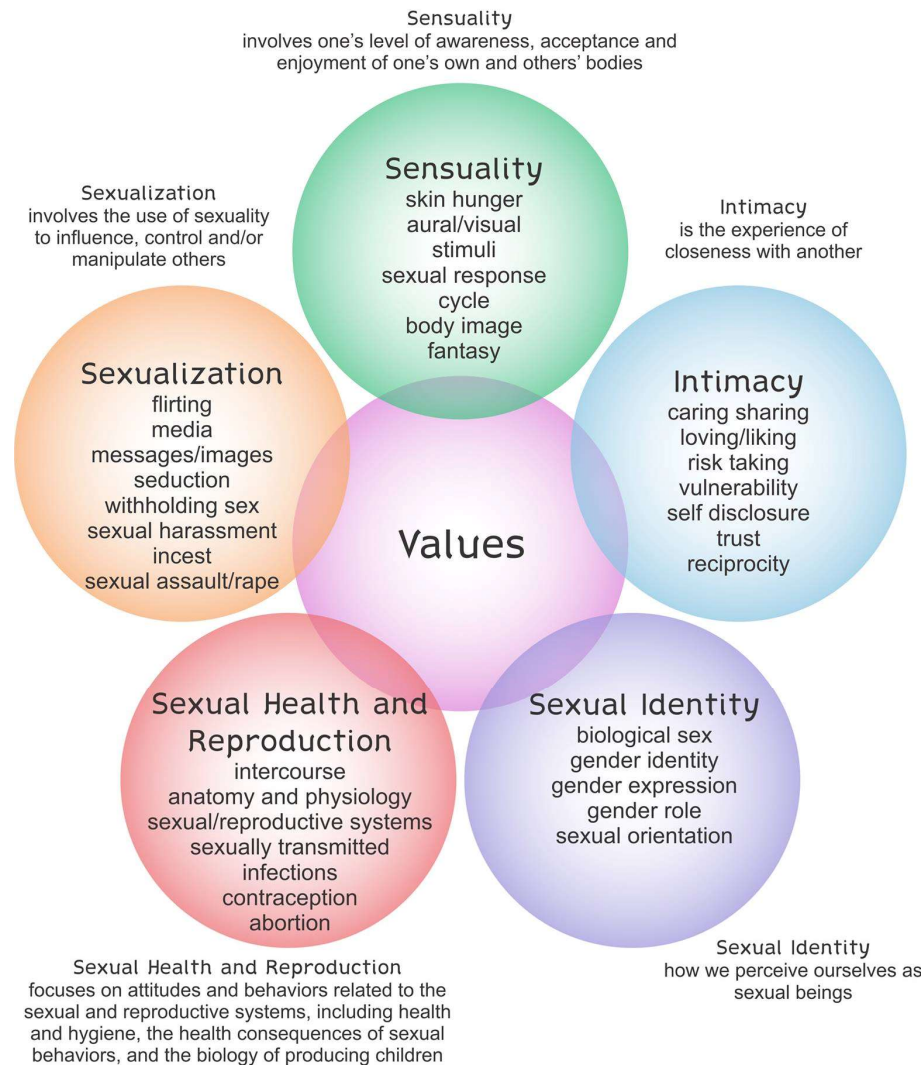
## Questions

- ▶ Your own comfort level?
- ▶ Your team/administration's response?
- ▶ Obstacles? Allies? Tools?
- ▶ Long haul?

# Why use a conceptual model to talk about healthy sexual relationships?

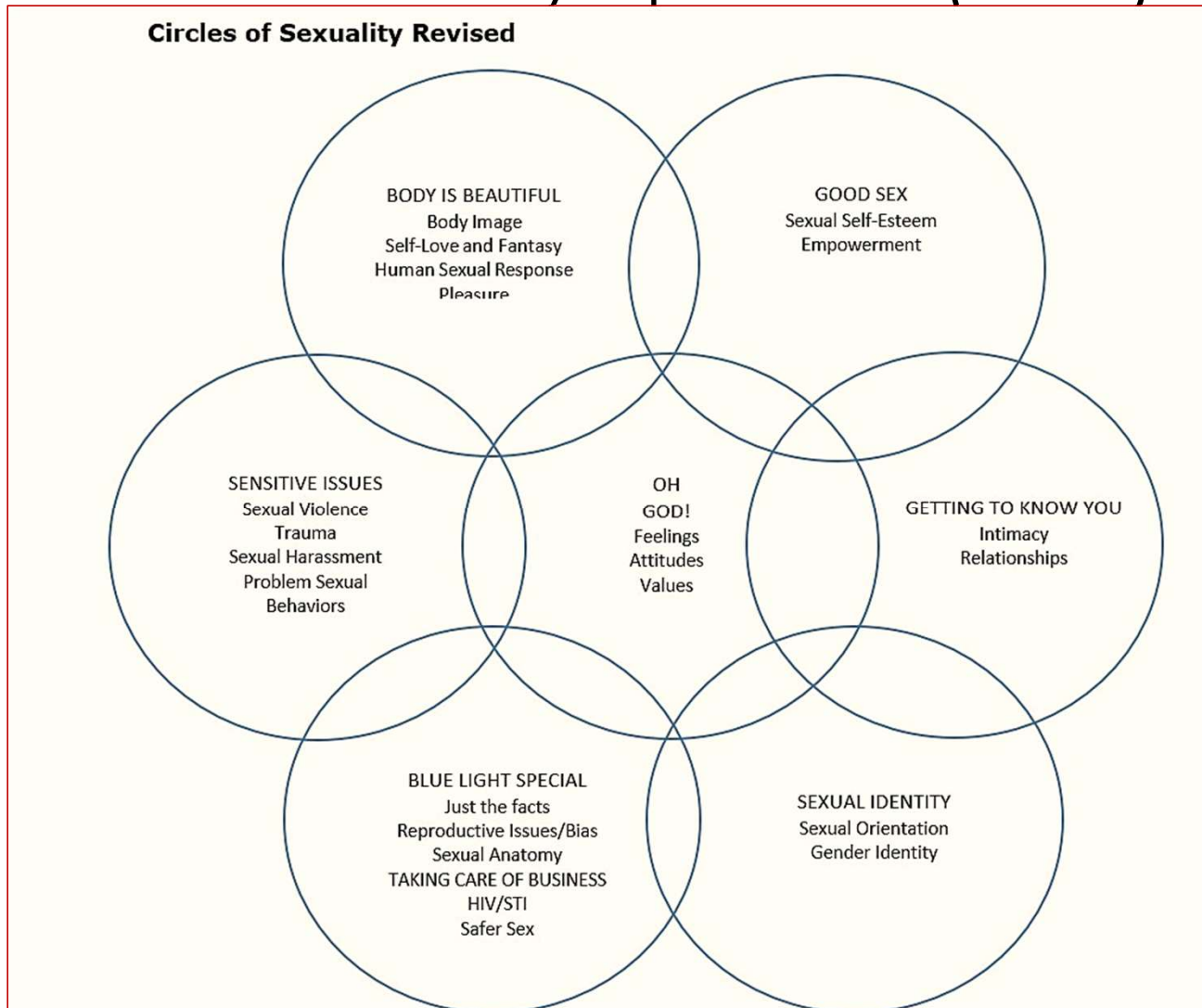
- ▶ **Helps frame issues**
- ▶ **Assists in conveying complex information**
- ▶ **Too often, stuck in “yes/no” binary**
- ▶ **Describes issues multi-dimensionally**
- ▶ **Includes issues of harm**
- ▶ **Speaks to the ethical nature of sexuality**

# Circles of Sexuality (1981)



Dailey, 1981

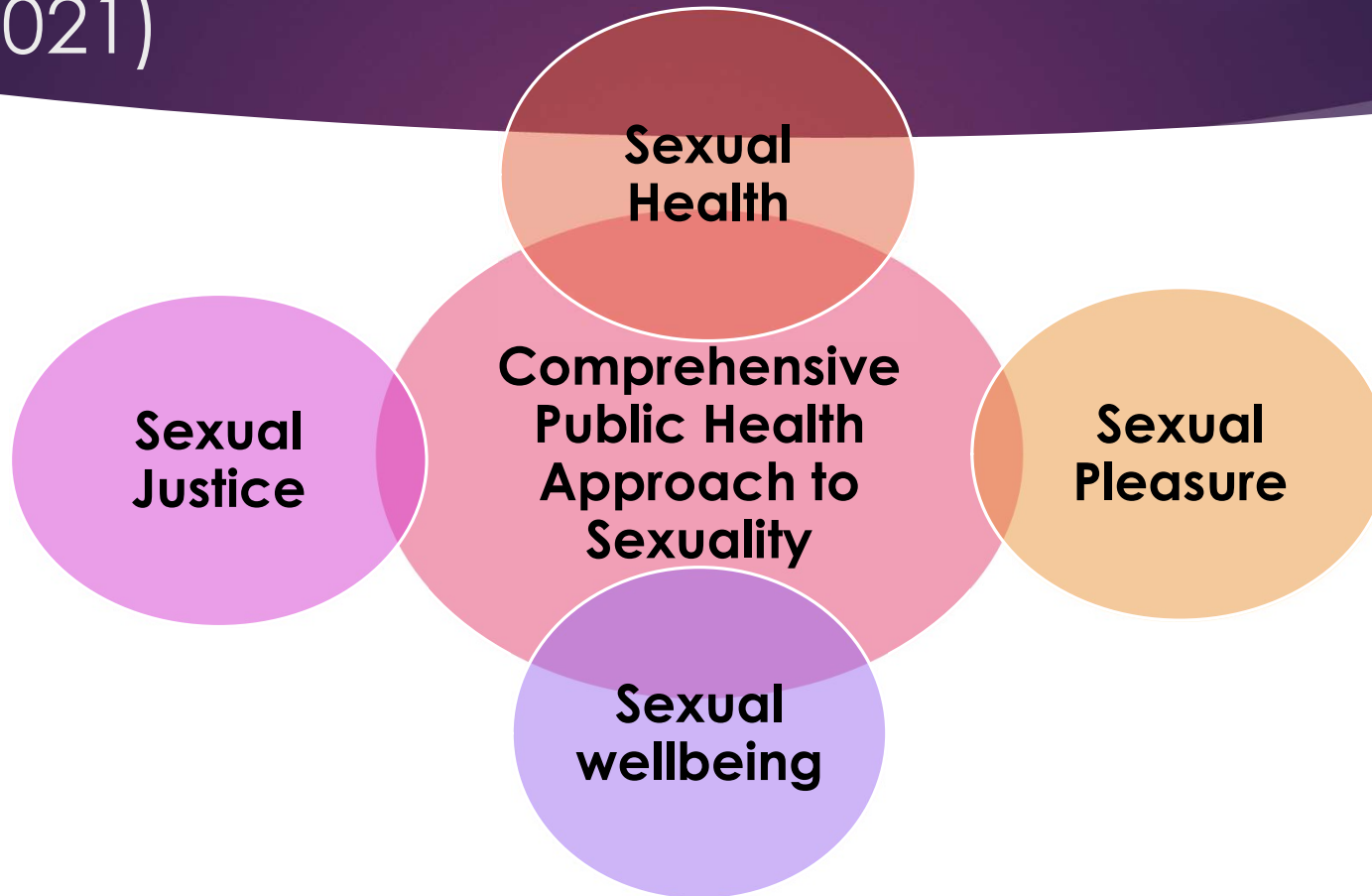
# Circles of Sexuality Updated (2012)



Badger, 2012



# Comprehensive Approach to Sexuality (2021)



Mitchell et al., 2021

# Sexual Health

- ▶ **Fertility and regulation**
- ▶ **Prevention and management of STIs**
- ▶ **Sexual violence prevention**
- ▶ **Sexual functions (desire, arousal)**



**Sexual  
Health**

# Sexual Pleasure

- ▶ **Self-determination**
- ▶ **Consent**
- ▶ **Safety**
- ▶ **Privacy**
- ▶ **Confidence**
- ▶ **Communications**
- ▶ **Negotiations**
- ▶ **Person-related and Event-related**



**Sexual  
Pleasure**

# Sexual Justice

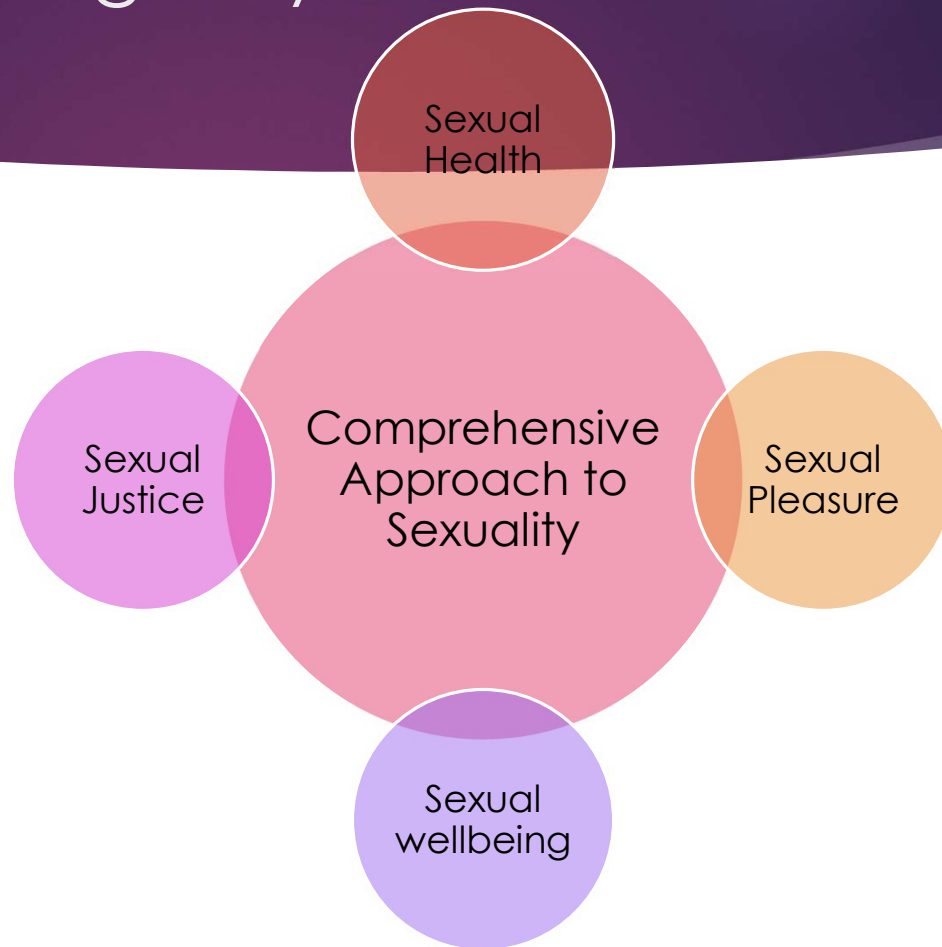
- ▶ **Sexual rights**
- ▶ **Sexual citizenship**
- ▶ **Sex positive practice**
- ▶ **Larger efforts to ensure equity**



**Sexual  
Justice**

# Sexual Wellbeing only exists in the context of:

- ▶ **Sexual health**
- ▶ **Sexual pleasure**
- ▶ **Sexual justice**



# Sexual Wellbeing

- ▶ **Sexual safety and security**
- ▶ **Sexual respect**
- ▶ **Sexual self-esteem**
- ▶ **Resilience in relation to past sexual experiences**
- ▶ **Forgiveness of past sexual experiences**
- ▶ **Self-determination in one's sexual life**
- ▶ **Comfort with sexuality**



**Sexual  
wellbeing**



## Why sexual wellbeing is integral to your work

- ▶ **A marker of health equity for clients**
- ▶ **A meaningful indicator of wellbeing overall**
- ▶ **Refocuses the ethics, form, and practices of clinical work**
- ▶ **Centers sexual health, pleasure, & justice in clinical work**

# Sexual Wellbeing and COVID-19

- ▶ **Personal losses**
- ▶ **Interpersonal effects of quarantine, distancing**
- ▶ **Pervasive economic consequences**
- ▶ **Widespread emotional, psychological impacts**
- ▶ **Enduring effects on sexual wellbeing**

**Allows for a shift in thinking about sexuality in our work from a binary approach to a multi-dimensional approach**

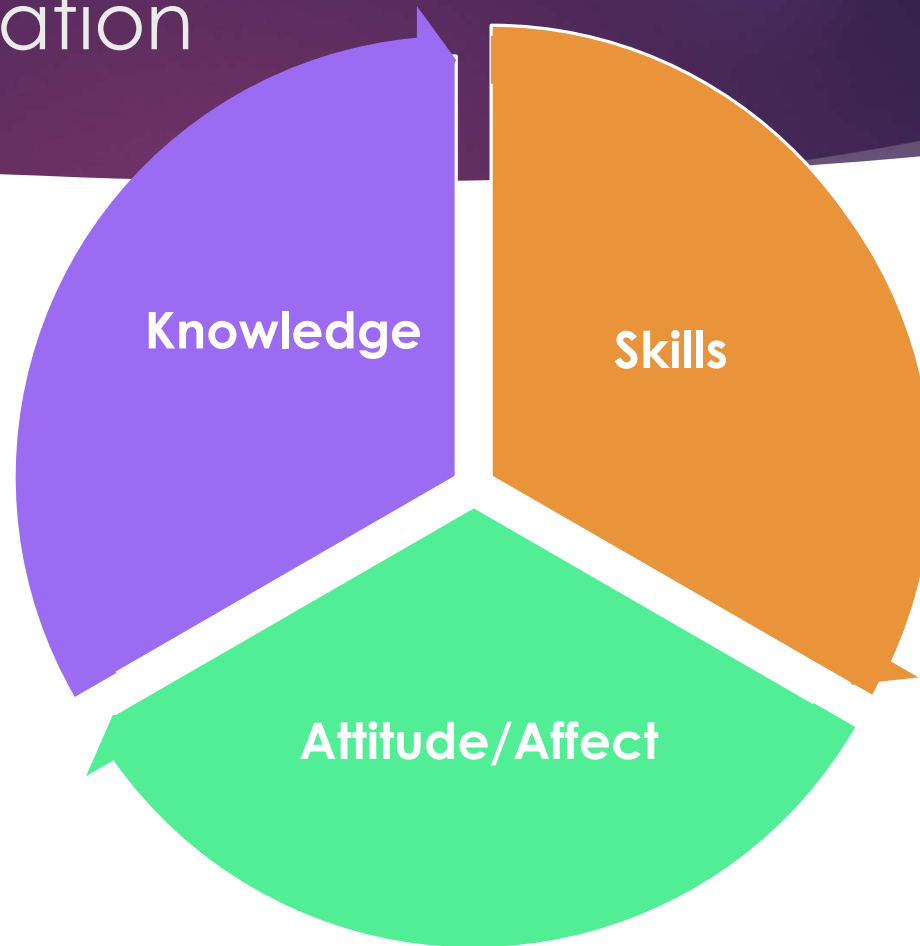


# Sexuality Education

▶ Knowledge

▶ Skills

▶ Attitude/Affect

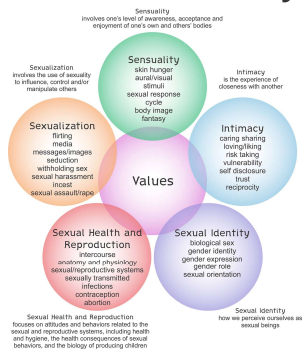


# ACTIVITY: Using a Model in Your Work

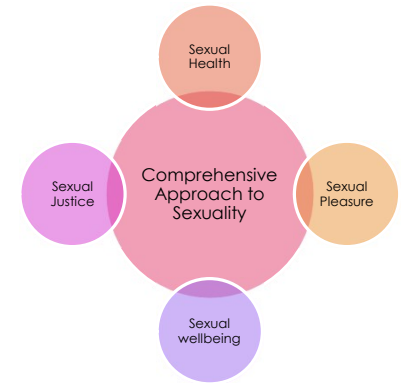
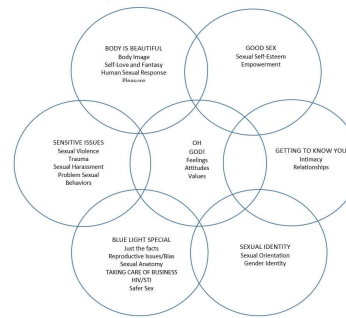
Activity: List 3 ways the model can be useful in your work.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Circles of Sexuality



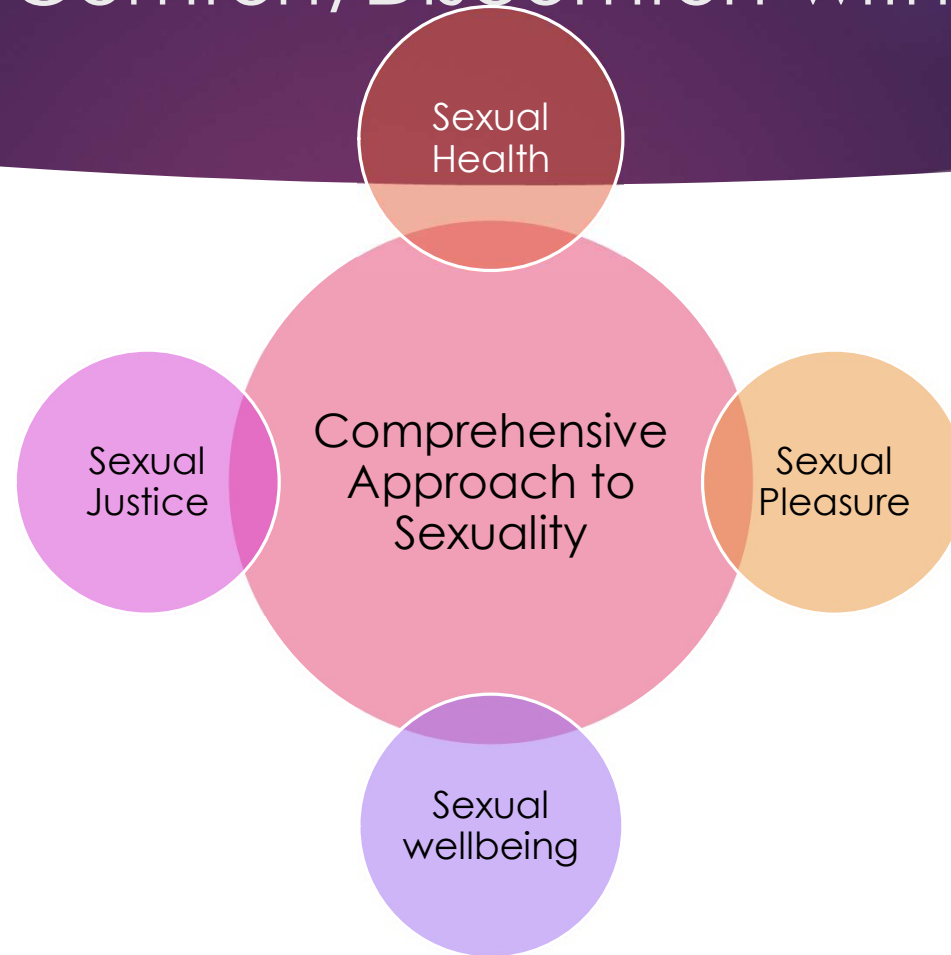
Circles of Sexuality Revised





# SAMPLE ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE SEXUAL WELLNESS WITH CLIENTS

# ACTIVITY: Comfort/Discomfort with Sexuality



# ACTIVITY: Using Pizza to Teach Consent

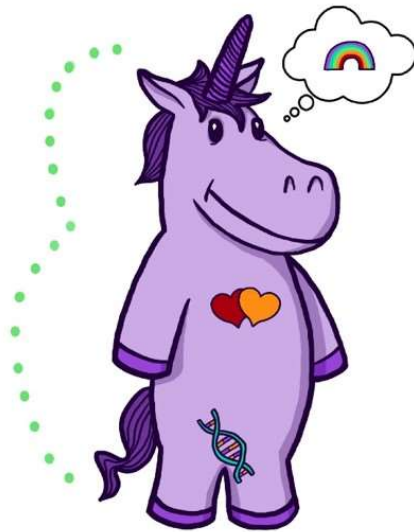



Vernaccio, 2014

# ACTIVITY: Looking at Gender and Orientation in a Sexual Wellbeing Lens

## The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:  
**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources



 Gender Identity  
Female/Woman/Girl  
Male/Man/Boy  
Other Gender(s)

 Gender Expression  
Feminine  
Masculine  
Other

 Sex Assigned at Birth  
Female      Male      Other/Intersex

 Physically Attracted to  
Women  
Men  
Other Gender(s)

 Emotionally Attracted to  
Women  
Men  
Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to:  
[www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

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# ACTIVITY: THE HOURGLASS

Consider the hourglass as a symbol:

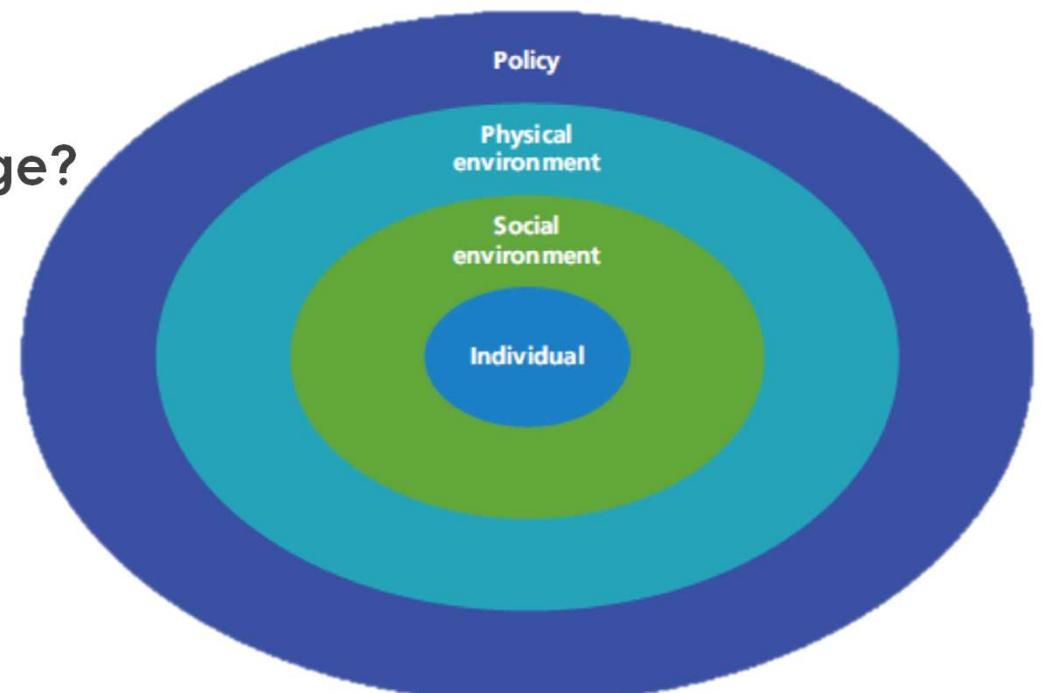
- ▶ What felt good on your body as a child?
- ▶ At the narrowing, what traumas occurred?
- ▶ In recovery, what kinds of pleasure is possible?



Remember that thought experiment we did earlier?

Consider the barriers:

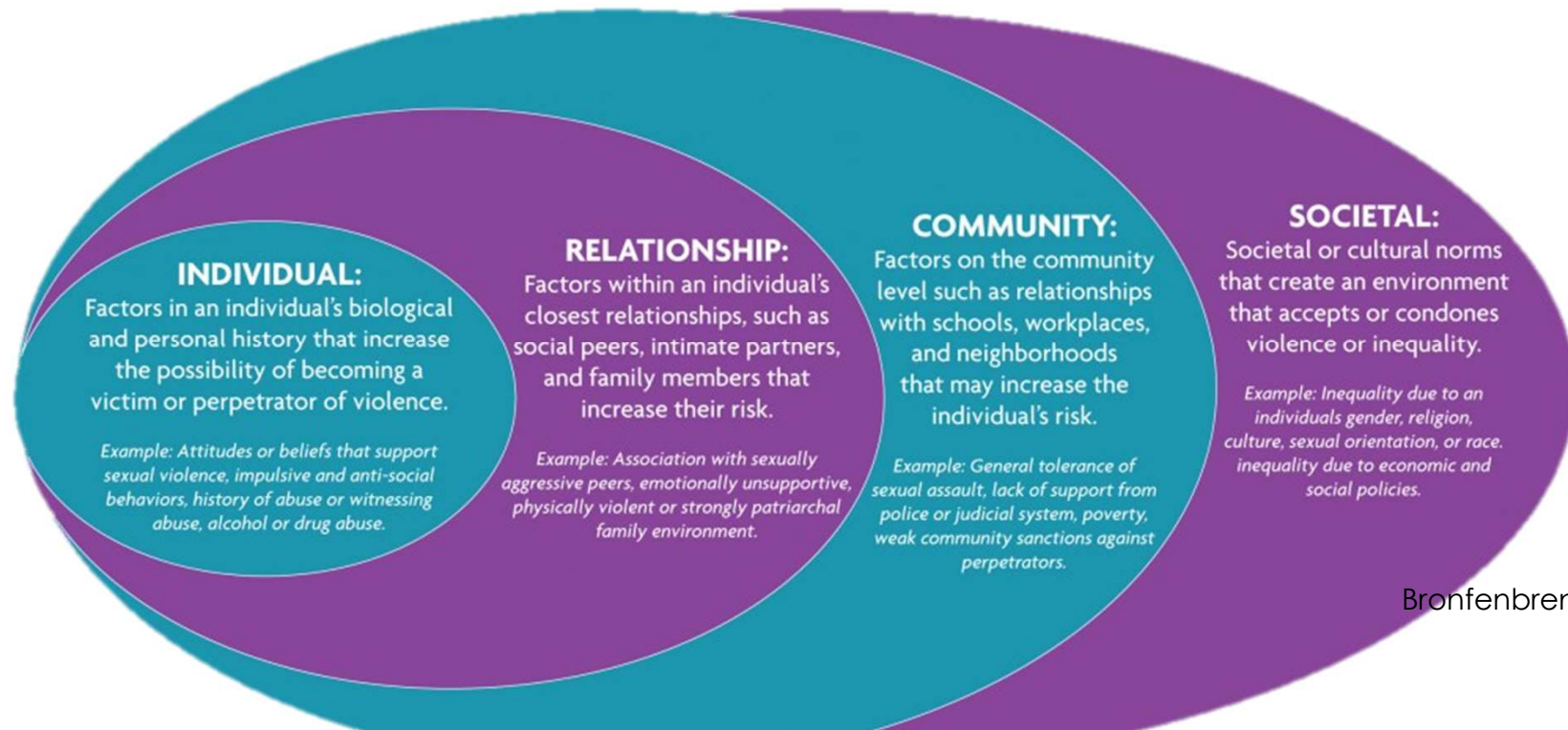
- ▶ Your own confidence or knowledge?
- ▶ Your role?
- ▶ Your employer?
- ▶ Something else?





# Looking at Changes in Practice at Many Levels

## SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL



Bronfenbrenner, 1979



# Creating Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Your Program

**To make this happen:**

- ▶ **What KSA's do you need as an individual?**
- ▶ **What do you need to discuss with your team?**
- ▶ **What does the facility need?**
- ▶ **What needs to change on a policy level?**
- ▶ **Other concerns?**

# Helpful Tips to Teaching Sexuality

1. Remind yourself that it's OK to feel uncomfortable.
2. Seek "teachable moments" to share your values.
3. Don't wait until your clients ask questions.
4. Be "askable."
5. Consider the question behind the question.
6. Listen and be present.
7. Remember that facts are not enough.
8. Talk about the joys of sexuality.
9. You're talking to your clients because you care about their happiness and well-being.
10. Pleasure is possible.

# Helpful Web Resources

[AASECT.org](http://AASECT.org)

[Advocates for Youth](http://AdvocatesforYouth.org)

[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

[collegesextalk.com](http://collegesextalk.com)

[condomania.com](http://condomania.com)

[fatherhood.org](http://fatherhood.org)

[MedLinePlus](http://MedLinePlus.gov)

[iwannaknow.org](http://iwannaknow.org)

[www.ourbetterhalf.net](http://www.ourbetterhalf.net)

[pflag.org](http://pflag.org)

[plannedparenthood.org](http://plannedparenthood.org)

[teenwire.com](http://teenwire.com)

[thenationalcampaign.org](http://thenationalcampaign.org)

[prochoice.org](http://prochoice.org)

[Scarleteen.com](http://Scarleteen.com)

[sexetc.org](http://sexetc.org)

[sexualhealth.com/channel/view/disability-illness/](http://sexualhealth.com/channel/view/disability-illness/)

[siecus.org](http://siecus.org)

[Sylvia Rivera Law Project](http://SylviaRiveraLawProject.org)

[talkingwithkids.org](http://talkingwithkids.org)

[teenpregnancy.org](http://teenpregnancy.org)

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# One last thought

**What I am suggesting is daunting.**

**To live as fully healthy sexual beings, your clients deserve to learn about sexual wellness.**

**It's quite possible that no one has ever talked with them in this way.**

**Why not be the person who begins to change all of that?**

Grateful for the time





For more  
information and  
conversation:

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