

Health Promotion defined

According to the World Health Organization, Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health. Health promotion represents a comprehensive social and political process, it not only embraces actions directed at strengthening the skills and capabilities of individuals, but also action directed toward changing social, environmental and economic conditions so as to alleviate their impact on public and individual health. Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over the determinants of health and thereby improve their health.

The Ottawa Charter identifies three basic strategies for health promotion. These are advocacy for health to create the essential conditions for health indicated above; enabling all people to achieve their full health potential; and mediating between the different interests in society in the pursuit of health. These strategies are supported by five priority action areas as outlined in the Ottawa Charter for health promotion:

- *Build healthy public policy*
- *Create supportive environments for health*
- *Strengthen community action for health*
- *Develop personal skills, and*
- *Re-orient health services*

In Ontario, the Ministry's vision is to enable Ontarians to lead healthy, active lives and make the province a healthy, prosperous place to live, work, play, learn and visit. Ministry of Health Promotion sees that its fundamental goals are to promote and encourage Ontarians to make healthier choices at all ages and stages of life, to create healthy and supportive environments, lead the development of healthy public policy, and assist with embedding behaviours that promote health.

Basic concepts:

SEXUALITY

Sexuality refers to a core dimension of being human which includes sex, gender, sexual and gender identity, sexual orientation, eroticism, emotional attachment/love, and reproduction. It is experienced or expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, activities, practices, roles, and relationships. Sexuality is a result of the interplay of biological, psychological, socio-economic, cultural, ethical and religious/spiritual factors. While sexuality can include all of these aspects, not all of these dimensions need to be experienced or expressed. However, in sum, our sexuality is experienced and expressed in all that we are, what we feel, think and do.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Sexual health is the experience of the ongoing process of physical, psychological, and sociocultural well being related to sexuality. Sexual health is evidenced in the free and responsible expressions of sexual capabilities that foster harmonious personal and social wellness, enriching individual and social life. It is not merely the absence of dysfunction, disease and/or infirmity. For Sexual Health to be attained and maintained it is necessary that the sexual rights of all people be recognized and upheld.

EROTICISM

Eroticism is the human capacity to experience subjective responses that elicit physical phenomena perceived as sexual desire, sexual arousal and orgasm, and usually identified with sexual pleasure. Eroticism is constructed both at individual and societal levels with symbolic and concrete meanings that link it to other human dimensions.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Sexual activity is a physical manifestation and behavioral expression of one's sexuality where the erotic component of sexuality is most evident. Sexual activity is characterized by behaviors that seek eroticism and is synonymous with sexual behavior.

SEXUAL PRACTICE

Sexual practice is a pattern of sexual activity that is exhibited by an individual or a community with enough consistency to be expected as a behavior.

SAFER SEX

Safer sex is a term used to specify sexual practices and sexual behaviors that reduce the risk of contracting and transmitting sexually transmitted infections, especially HIV.

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection recognizes and upholds the World Association for Sexology's Declaration of Sexual Rights. These are critical to consider when providing communities with informed choices about (sexual) health promotion:

1. The right to sexual freedom
2. The right to sexual autonomy, sexual integrity, and safety of the sexual body
3. The right to sexual privacy among consenting adults
4. The right to sexual equity
5. The right to sexual pleasure
6. The right to emotional sexual expression
7. The right to sexually associate freely
8. The right to make free and responsible reproductive choices
9. The right to sexual information based upon scientific inquiry
10. The right to comprehensive sexuality education
11. The right to Sexual Health care

***Disclaimer about the use of nudity and/or perceived eroticism in our HIV prevention education work:

Sexual imagery may only be used to promote sexual health and the prevention of HIV and other STIs. Imagery that is not associated with a sexual health message may be deemed offensive/inappropriate to some and therefore, should not be displayed publicly.

Vetting process for materials; refer to Policy # _____.

References:

PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION (2000)

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA (2009)

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (2010)