

Key Best Practices for
Effective Sexual Violence Public
Education Campaigns:

A Summary

by: Dr. Lori Haskell, Psychologist/Researcher/Educator

**KEY BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE SEXUAL VIOLENCE PUBLIC
EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS: A SUMMARY**

Introduction	3
PART 1 – Framing the Issue	4
PART 2 – Key Elements of Effective Social Marketing	5
PART 3 – Applying Social Norms Theory: How to Change Behaviour	7
PART 4 - Engaging Bystanders: An Important Strategy	8
PART 5 – Campaign Message Considerations	10
PART 6 – Campaign Messenger: Who Should Deliver the Message	11
APPENDIX A: The Spectrum of Prevention	12



INTRODUCTION

In the last decade a great deal has been learned about how to create and deliver effective sexual violence public education campaigns. Using public education is part of a broader range of prevention efforts to end sexual violence – called the “spectrum of prevention.” The Spectrum identifies that there are multiple levels of intervention and encourages people to move beyond the idea that prevention is only about simply providing educational or informational messages. See Appendix A for a description of the six levels of prevention in the Spectrum.

This means changing societal norms, organizational practices, community attitudes, and behaviours of potential offenders in order to bring about positive social change.

Prevention is no longer the exclusive domain of specialists, and it requires an investment from diverse communities, including policy makers, social marketers, the medical community, the corporate world - in essence all members of community. The most effective public education campaigns on sexual violence prevention incorporate effective social marketing strategies and are based on the most cutting edge knowledge gleaned from research and evaluation of past sexual violence prevention efforts.

This summary highlights:

1. What effective social marketing brings to sexual violence public education campaigns?
2. The best practices in public education campaigns.

The summary is in six parts:

1. Framing the Issue
2. Key Elements of Effective Social Marketing
3. Applying Social Norms Theory: How to Change Behaviour
4. Engaging Bystanders: An Important Strategy
5. Campaign Message Considerations
6. Campaign Messenger Considerations: Who Should Deliver the Message

Each section of this Summary begins by introducing the “The Main Ideas” on the subject, and is followed by selected “Key Points about Best Practices” which explains the significance of these ideas. A “Checklist for Effective Sexual Violence Public Education Campaigns,” accompanies this Summary of Best Practices. Where relevant, some “Best Practice Tips,” and/or some examples are provided in some of the Summary sections.

PART 1 – FRAMING THE ISSUE

THE MAIN IDEAS

- A clear understanding of why sexual violence is happening and how it might be addressed is essential for effective public education.
- Linking sexual violence to the context of gender inequality is key.

Understanding the cause of a problem is the first step toward recognizing a solution.

For sexual violence prevention this involves linking sexual violence to the context of gender inequality.

There are 3 key ideas here:

1. The first is that the way an issue is defined shapes the responses to it. The context and causes of sexual violence must be addressed in prevention efforts. This speaks to the “framing” of the issue of sexual violence.
2. The second is that preventing sexual violence is everyone’s concern. It is not a “women’s issue,” but is an issue for all of us – women and men alike.
3. The third is that tailored, single gender programs have been found to be the most effective.

KEY POINTS ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

Properly framing the issue of sexual violence engages the audience in the solution:

- The way we identify the problem makes all the difference in how people are able to view the proposed solutions.
- When people understand social problems as individual issues, they may feel critical or compassionate but won’t see larger social change as part of the solution.
- Campaigns should aim to create a context for public engagement, as part of the framing of the issue as a social problem of concern to all.
- One of the primary causes of sexual violence is a culture of unequal power between men and women. Gender inequality must be part of the conversation about sexual violence.
- Positive sexual violence prevention messages aimed at men should build on men’s values and predisposition to act in a positive manner. Studies have shown that men are more receptive to positive messages outlining what can be done, instead of negative messages that promote fear blame or shame.

SOME BEST PRACTICE TIPS

1. Social context should be integrated into public education campaigns

- Context establishes the cause of the problem and who is responsible for solving it.
- Context can further thinking beyond an individual scale to a social scale.
- Context must be built into showing the introduction of the problem.

2. Integrating social context into sexual violence public education campaigns:

- Allows the public to understand what is at stake and what it means to neglect this problem.
- Defines the problem so that community influences and opportunities are apparent.
- Communicates how well the community is doing in addressing this problem.
- Assigns responsibility.
- Presents a solution, or set of solutions.
- Connects violence against women to root causes, to gender inequality.

3. Link Issues and Context

For example:

- Research demonstrates that a significant number of sexual assaults, particularly amongst young people, involve alcohol or drugs. This does not mean the drugs or alcohol are the cause of the sexual assault, but it means that drugs and alcohol can be part of the context of a sexual assault.
- Effective sexual violence campaigns can draw on collaborations between those working to educate students about drugs and alcohol and those seeking to prevent sexual assault.

PART 2 – KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MARKETING

THE MAIN IDEAS

- Social marketing aims to change behaviour in a positive way.
- Effective social marketing campaigns aim to create social change by inspiring opportunities and possibilities for change.
- *Sexual violence prevention efforts are enhanced by integrating social marketing research and psychological theories of behaviour change.*

What is social marketing?

Social marketing is an approach that applies marketing principles and techniques to create change for social, environmental and public health problems. The idea is to attempt to influence individuals to act in more socially responsible ways. As such, the social marketing approach seeks to move individuals beyond becoming aware of a problem to actual behaviour change. An important aspect of this approach is understanding the audience and understanding the known causes of a targeted behaviour.

The objective is to promote positive social change in the individual, community, and society at large.

This is achieved by using behaviour change theory to develop strategies to shift behaviours to make positive social change.

Social Marketing is:

- A social or behaviour change strategy
- Most effective when it activates people
- Targeted to those who have a reason to care and who are ready for change
- Strategic, and requires efficient use of resources
- Integrated, and works in increments

Social Marketing is not:

- Just advertising
- A clever slogan or messaging strategy
- Reaching everyone through a media blitz
- An image campaign
- Done in a vacuum
- A quick process

(Excerpted From "The Basics of Social Marketing," by Turning Point)

KEY POINTS ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

Social marketing campaigns require a development process which begins by emphasizing a very clear understanding of what the selected audience needs to know.

Social marketing, therefore, starts with the intended audience and attempts to identify the "emotional hooks" that can link audiences with positive behaviours.

The key components of such a strategy include:

- orienting the campaign toward a specific audience,
- conducting research to formulate and pre-test effective messages, and
- developing strategies to overcome barriers to adopting the new behaviours.

SOME BEST PRACTICE TIPS

1. Campaign development should:

- “Know” the audience. Social marketing begins and ends with identifying and understanding the intended audience.
- Aim to influence a very precise behaviour or set of behaviours, based on knowledge of exactly who the intended audience is and what they think about the issue or problem.
- Address what motivates people to make changes in their lives.
- Offer benefits to help people “over the hump” when making change.

2. Make changes in attitude and behaviours:

- The process of heightening awareness, shifting attitudes, and strengthening knowledge is valuable if, and only if, it leads to action.
- It must be clear what the audience is expected to do.

3. There must be a benefit:

- To get people to give up, or modify an old behaviour or accept a new one, they must be offered something very appealing in return.
- A strong link is also found between men who participate in athletics and men who perpetrate violence. Therefore, effective sexual violence campaigns may draw on collaboration between athletics and violence prevention.

4. Social Context Helps Frame Sexual Violence as Everyone’s Concern

Calling violence against women a women’s issue is part of the problem. Jackson Katz creator of the Mentors in Violence Prevention program- the first bystander initiative, tells us that framing violence against women as a “women’s issue” gives men an excuse not to pay attention.

- Sexual violence prevention involves a conversation about understanding violence against women as also a men’s issue.
- Effective sexual violence prevention engages men and boys as allies in preventing sexual violence.
- In order to encourage men to recognize their role in ending sexual violence they need to believe they can contribute to its prevention.

5. Single-Gender Programs are Often the Most Effective Prevention Approaches

- Perhaps the most robust conclusion in the area of sexual violence prevention is that single-gender programs are more effective than mixed-gender ones (Schewe, 2006).
- The finding that men have a powerful influence on one another means that men can play a crucial role in sexual violence prevention efforts to change social norms.
- One study found that the strongest influence on whether men were willing to intervene to prevent violence against women, was their perception of other men’s willingness to do so. (Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark 2004).
- For men, a single gender context provides a safe environment to explore prevailing understandings of masculinity and gender stereotypes in male-only groups. They are better able to engage men in discussions that are interactive and present positive aspects of masculinity.
- Selected interventions can also be tailored for women at high risk for sexual victimization, including women who:
 - have physical, developmental, or mental disabilities
 - are homeless or in transient housing situations
 - are involved in the sex trade or are trafficked
- A best practice for sexual violence prevention involves developing targeted programs that can be tailored for specific groups (high risk groups of men– drug and/or alcohol abuse, already offending, college athletics & fraternities)

PART 3 – APPLYING SOCIAL NORMS THEORY: HOW TO CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

THE MAIN IDEAS

- Sexual violence prevention efforts have transitioned from awareness campaigns to advancing social norms that promote healthy, egalitarian gender roles, gender equality, healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.
- Gender equality can be thought of as a social norm – as a value, belief, attitude and set of behaviours which our society should embrace.
- Social norms theory is an emerging and important prevention strategy integral to effective social marketing campaigns. This approach can be used to correct misperceptions among men and women about violence related attitudes.

Social norms theory suggests that people take cues for their own actions from the behaviour of others, especially those they perceive as being similar to them or those they admire. Therefore, an individual's behaviour and attitudes are affected by his or her perception of the 'social norm' in other's actions. The theory proposes that many people inaccurately assess the attitudes and behaviours of others around them, and assume that others more frequently engage in unhealthy and negative behaviour than they actually do. When they find out that their perceptions were wrong it gives them 'permission' to act differently.

This theory has been used to successfully encourage college students to intervene as a means of them preventing or interrupting sexual violence (Berkowitz, 2004)

KEY POINTS ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

- Effective sexual violence public education campaigns require the promotion of new social norms to create positive social change.
- Gender equality must be a fundamental norm promoted by effective sexual violence prevention.
- Emotional persuasion connects the audience to the issue of sexual violence.

SOME BEST PRACTICE TIPS

1. Promoting new social norms is essential to effective sexual violence prevention

- Understanding human behaviour means understanding the social norms that influence it.
- Social norms theory relies on the idea that a great deal of people's behaviour is influenced and shaped by their perceptions of how other members of their social group behave and how they think. In other words, people's behaviours and ideas are influenced by their perceptions of how they believe their peers think and act.
- Researchers found that men are concerned about how other men will see them and treat them if they speak out against the norms of traditional masculinity.
- Effective sexual violence public education campaigns can use male peer pressure to change social norms and correct misperceptions of group norms.

Examples of New Social Norms

- Women and Men are shown as equals
- Women are shown as capable and assertive
- Women reject self-blame and seek help if they are assaulted
- Women and men are depicted in positive and respectful ways
- Men reject sexual coercion by showing masculinity in a positive and non-violent light
- Men seek clear consent before engaging in sexual behaviour with another person
- Women know it is their right to give consent before engaging in sexual behaviour.

2. Using emotional persuasion engages the audiences

- This approach acknowledges that we do not change complex behaviours simply by someone telling us a fact or giving us information.
- Because of the way the brain learns, messages have a better chance of being retained when our emotional centres are engaged.
- This is sometimes described as finding an “emotional hook,” to create emotional resonance.
- The emotional hook needs to appeal to the audience’s hopes or fears, their view of themselves or their desires for others.
- When individuals experience a positive emotional resonance with the person trying to change their minds, they are more easily persuaded. This speaks to the importance of messengers (discussed Section 6).
- An effective sexual violence public education campaign that relies on emotional persuasion:
 - Expresses a clear understanding of areas of resistance.
 - Promotes victim/survivor empathy and creates an emotional resonance.
 - Gives people opportunities for ongoing support and dialogue.

Examples of sexual violence public education campaigns that use a social norms approach:

- MyStrength Campaign, <http://www.mystrength.org/>
- Men of Strength Clubs (Lee, 2007), [www.mencanstoprape.org/info-url2696/info-url_list.htm?section=Men%20of%20Strength%20\(MOST\)%20Clubs](http://www.mencanstoprape.org/info-url2696/info-url_list.htm?section=Men%20of%20Strength%20(MOST)%20Clubs)
- Mentors in Violence Prevention(Katz, 1995)
<http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/leadership/mentors/index.html>

These programs help young men identify and explore the pressure they experience to adopt traditional (and often violent) ideas about masculinity, and help them learn to resist these pressures and redefine their masculinity to a more positive one.

These initiatives also demonstrate how to build their skills as peer leaders so they can help shift the behaviours of their peers.

It also teaches them how to resist these pressures and find positive identities, and build their skills as peer leaders. These interventions empower young men to shift the behaviours of their peers, thereby engaging a bystander approach.

PART 4 - ENGAGING BYSTANDERS: AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY

THE MAIN IDEAS

One of the more promising directions in sexual violence prevention is to focus on men and women as bystanders to change social norms.

Who is a bystander? For purposes of sexual violence prevention, a bystander is anyone who is not either a victim or an offender, but who could potentially get involved to make a difference. It means *anyone who is in a position to intervene before, during or after the act.*

Conceptualized this way, virtually everyone is a bystander. The critical question for a sexual violence public education campaign is: are you an empowered/active bystander or an inactive/passive bystander?

KEY POINTS ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

The overarching goal of engaging bystanders is to have a lasting effect on changing social norms.

The “bystander” approach encourages men and women to get involved as bystanders by learning to detect risky situations in social contexts, challenge sexist attitudes and behaviours, and intervene and provide support to a woman at risk or in danger of experiencing sexual violence.

Bystander public education campaigns provide opportunities to build skills for helping directly or indirectly without placing bystanders’ safety in jeopardy by focusing on practicing intervention strategies.

Bystander Education:

- Represents a recent paradigm shift in sexual violence prevention.
- Enhances responsibility of both men and women to intervene proactively in order to deter an instance of sexual assault.

SOME BEST PRACTICE TIPS

1. Gender specific messaging is important for bystander campaigns

- Successful face-to-face programs usually include single-sex groups led by peer or professional educators using active learning methods that involve participants in discussions rather than lecturing to them.
- Bystander campaigns can also be effectively implemented with mixed-sex audiences but are more effectively done in single gender groups.

2. Bystanders should be provided with examples of interventions

- The central concern most bystanders report having is not knowing how to respond.
- Bystander campaigns should model how to respond appropriately, so that involvement is more likely.
- Bystanders are instructed how to intervene proactively (e.g. when hearing sexist comments) and reactively (when hearing of a sexual assault).

3. Bystander education involves everyone

Bystander approaches:

- Are premised on the idea that all community members need to be educated and involved for effective change.
- Shift the focus from victims and perpetrators toward the community as having responsibility to prevent violence.
- Offer men a role to act as empowered bystanders who can confront or intervene with their peers to prevent sexual violence.

Some Best Practice Examples of Bystander public education campaigns

“Bringing in the Bystander,” from the University of New Hampshire, teaches students appropriate and safe ways to intervene before, during and after a sexual assault.

MyStrength –teaches men and boys as well as student leaders and athletes about men’s roles in gender violence prevention, and provides a place where they can explore ways to prevent sexual violence.
www.mystrength.org

MyStrength /MyDuty – teaches officers and military workers what to do if they see or hear about a sexual assault. <http://myduty.mil/>

PART 5 – CAMPAIGN MESSAGE CONSIDERATIONS

THE MAIN IDEAS

- Considerable care should be taken in developing the “message”.
- It is necessary to consider what will generate responsiveness among the target audience the campaign is trying to address and influence.
- A critical part of designing good messages is anticipating the audience’s reaction or resistance.
- Messages must engage the audience and must also have personal relevancy if the messages are to be heard.

KEY POINTS ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

In the development stages of the campaign, it is important to address these key questions about the campaign message:

- Is it clear what we want young men or young women to do, how they can do it, and what the result of their doing it will be?
- Does the message show consequences or solutions?

Effective sexual violence public education campaigns take gender specific approaches, tailoring some messages specifically for men and boys, some specifically for women and girls.

If we don’t believe in our message, others most likely won’t either.

SOME BEST PRACTICE TIPS

1. Clearly communicate the values of the campaign:

- Messages should be personally relevant to bystanders (people need to care about the problem).
- Messages should be positive and reinforce positive behaviour rather than condemn negative behaviour.
- The message must clearly inform the audience about what to do and how they can do it.

2. The Message should offer consequences and solutions

- The message should explain to the audience what the result or benefit will be if they make the desired behavioural shift.
- Offer a solutions-based approach.
- Connect people to communities. Create messages that promote a collective and individual response.

3. Campaign messages should speak positively:

- Address men as allies in efforts to prevent sexual violence who can positively influence their peers.
- Reflect the language and concerns of the intended audience.
- Assist boys and men in understanding that they have a direct stake in sexual violence prevention.
- Place the responsibility on men to understand the legal requirements of consent in sexual interactions.
- Encourage resiliency in women and girls.

PART 6 – CAMPAIGN MESSENGER: WHO SHOULD DELIVER THE MESSAGE

THE MAIN IDEAS

- While having the right message is a key step, equally important is having the right messenger. The message is reinforced or undermined by the choice of messenger.
- A fundamental question to answer in constructing an effective sexual violence public education campaign is: Who will your audience listen to most?

KEY POINTS ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

In selecting a messenger for a particular campaign, it is necessary to consider: Who do people want to hear from on issues of violence against women? The answer depends on the audience being addressed.

Knowledge and trustworthiness are critical to public acceptance, not likeability or familiarity.

Contrary to popular wisdom, “you do not necessarily learn more from people who are like you, nor do you learn more from people you like.”

Messengers are the people who become the symbol of the issue.

Skill is required in matching the message to the messenger, and in anticipating the impact of particular messengers on the intended audiences thinking.

Some messengers are not credible on certain issues because we assume they are biased toward a perspective.

Unlikely allies can prompt public reconsideration of an issue.

SOME BEST PRACTICE TIPS

1. The right messenger is as important as the right message in a sexual violence public education campaign.
2. The most effective messengers are people who are trusted by the intended audience and those who are seen by the intended audience to be knowledgeable.

APPENDIX A: SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION

LEVEL OF SPECTRUM	DEFINITION OF LEVEL
1. Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills	Enhancing an individual's capability of preventing injury or illness and promoting safety
2. Promoting Community Education	Reaching groups of people with information and resources to promote health and safety
3. Educating Providers	Informing providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others and model positive norms
4. Fostering Coalitions and Networks	Bringing together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact
5. Changing Organizational Practices	Adopting regulations and shaping norms to prevent violence and improve safety
6. Influencing Policy and Legislation	Enacting laws and policies that support healthy community norms and violence-free society

Source: www.preventioninstitute.org