

Self Advocacy Training for Right to Sexual Reproductive Health

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BACKGROUND

- There are 300 million women with physical or mental disability globally, or 10% of all women world wide are wwds..
- Disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty and the negative perceptions are widely believed. Eg. that wwds are neither sexually active nor capable for bearing children.
- Women with disabilities encountered numerous barriers due to insensitivity and lack of knowledge about disabilities, limited information as well as accessing services.
- Disability is not an illness, although some disabilities are caused by illnesses.
- Self advocacy training helps wwds become more knowledgeable partners in advocating for their own health care is necessary.
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What is Self Advocacy?

- Self advocacy does not mean that one has to wave a banner, give speeches or take to the ramparts. From a personal perspective, it means that you arm yourself with tools and skills necessary to feel comfortable about asserting yourself and communicating clearly about your Needs. It ultimately means that you are taking responsibility and assuming some control of your circumstances.
- Knowing as much as possible about your diseases, body, its treatment and its potential effects on your body can empower you to take charge of your health and help you make the most of your survivorship and experienced. (Dr. Patricia Ganz, Oncologist)

What is Sexuality and Reproductive Health?

- Sexuality and reproductive health is a right and fundamental freedom.
- Right to equality and non-discrimination-have access on the equal basis as other women
- Right to marry and have a family- choose relationship

Why is Self Advocacy Important?

- By being proactive, educated and vocal on sexual reproductive health, you can impact the quality of your life and the health care you need to receive. Here are some vital reasons for self advocacy:
- Advocacy gives you some stability and a feeling of regaining some control in your life
- Advocacy is confidence building in the way it helps you face challenges that seem insurmountable
- Advocacy can improve your quality of life.
- Advocacy may be the difference that turns feelings hopeless and helpless into feeling hopeful.
- Stated in another way, self advocacy is a synonym for what some might otherwise call control or empowerment. It implies strength, both physical and mental. Self advocacy requires participation in the decision making process.
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Reproductive Health Care

- Wwds share the same health, sexual and reproductive needs and concerns as other women. Eg. Preventive and general health care.
- Family planning
- Maternal health services
- Education and Information
- To be free from sexual abuse and exploitation

What are the Challenges?

- Health practitioners assumptions that these problems are related to disability
- Disability makes treatment impossible or unnecessary.
- Physical barriers- inaccessible facilities, lack of communication, information & high examination tables
- Attitudinal- negative societal beliefs about the sexual needs of women

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- Policy barriers- policies and services to address the reproductive needs of women often lack the concerns of wwds.
- Combating maternal, mortality
- Wwds fear of not being loved by non disabled men.
- Suffer incidences of violence, abuse and neglect.
- They are raped but have no redress
- Failure of disability rights movement and feminist movement to recognize these as essential rights

Live stories

- “Who even give you belly”
- “I will never go to the hospital for treatment”
- “Does your wife grows when you have sex?”
- “ Story of having no choice due to poverty.

Can we Address the challenges?

- Conduct awareness raising trainings for practitioners
- Hold meetings on self esteem and negotiating safe sex
- Empower women to live independently (technical, financial, assertiveness trainings, self defense etc.
- Conduct trainings/workshops on the rape law
- Use the media to discuss social problems
- Work with relevant stakeholders to include wwds in policies and plans.
- Use health workers to conduct trainings

CONCLUSION

- self advocacy skills when acquired are essential: information-seeking, communication, problems-solvings and negotiation.
- Information Seeking skills are developed by educating yourself as thoroughly as possible about your problem. Your treatment options, possible side effects and available support services.
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- Communication skills development is designed to help you organized your thoughts before you speak. Your communication skills can be applied to thoughtful interactions with your family, friend and caregiver thereby increasing your knowledge and avoiding unnecessary misunderstandings.
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- Problem Solving skills can be also thought of as decision-making skills and are essential to the process of becoming an active, rather than passive, survivor. It is important to identify the problem and know how to articulate it-whether or not to have treatment and, if so, what type of treatment, considering a clinical trial. Do not feel that you have to make decisions alone. The team approach often serves as the best way to tackle a problem.
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- Negotiation skills are necessary in every aspect of life. Whether dealing with sexual reproductive or any other challenging life circumstances. Some of us are better at negotiation than others, but all of us can achieve some degree os skills in this area. negotiation in order to get your needs met may require you to step out of your normal comfort zone. This does not mean that you become confrontational, but rather that you negotiate about issues that are of personal importance.
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THANK YOU!

