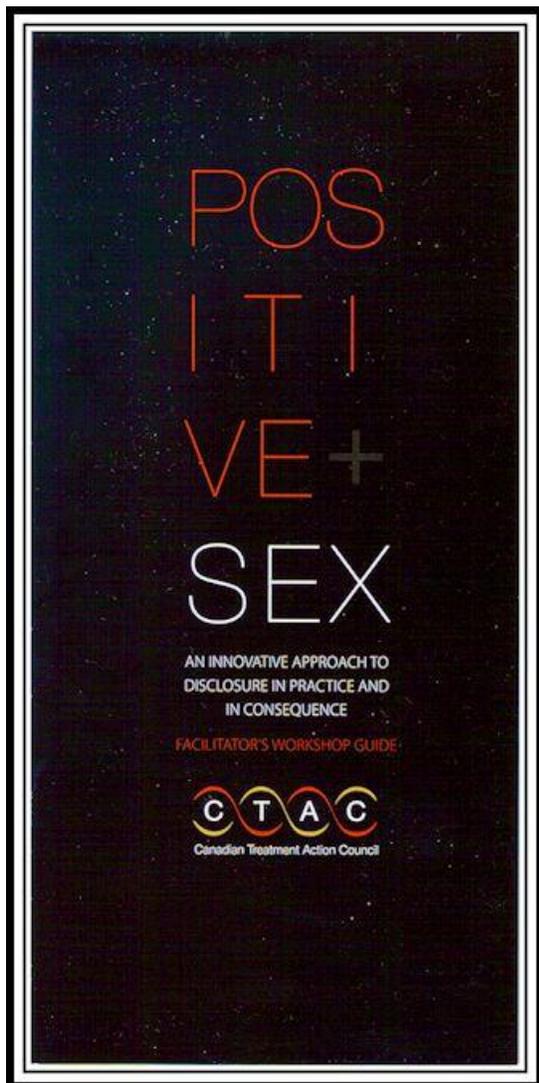


POSITIVE SEX DISCLOSURE WORKSHOP - PAYING IT FORWARD

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Wayne Bristow Says “If You Belong To An AIDS Service Organization And Plans To Do A Workshop On HIV Disclosure, This Is The One You Need To Experience - No Powerpoint Presentation Or Guest Speaker Required



“It gave me confidence and I am stronger after this workshop”

“The workshop was an eye opener, gives a different perspective on how to disclose”

“I loved all the laughing with everyone”

“The absolute honesty and sharing of personal experiences made this workshop one of the best learning experiences”

This is just part of the feedback we received from a Positive Sex HIV Disclosure workshop I co-facilitated recently in Kitchener Ontario.

I first wrote about this workshop in July 2013 after taking the training for the first time at ACCM (AIDS Community Care Montreal) in Montreal where it was developed. In September of 2013 I was invited to take it again by CTAC (Canadian Treatment Action Council) in Toronto when it became part of their programs. At the Toronto workshop I was joined by some of my peers from across Canada.

When completing the workshop I became a new facilitator and it was an expectation that I take it home and present it to my local ASO (AIDS Service Organization). I couldn't wait. Some of us have done role play at other trainings we've been involved in so it would be a natural fit, something we could do.

Prior to doing my own workshop, we did some promotional work on social media using Facebook and Twitter. Some of our followers asked us to report back on how it went. We had to explain that each workshop would never be the same as the last and if they were to do one, it might look quite different from ours. The content that is used will come from the participants, their lived experiences or what they have heard from their peers.

“Hindsight can be a valuable tool to use in this workshop.”

During the role play exercises, we gave each participant a random character profile - they would not be playing themselves - and we encouraged them to use the language and negative treatment they have experienced. Hindsight can be a valuable tool to use in this workshop. Use all those things you thought you should have said, could have said.

There is no one way to run this workshop; the manual is a guide, it can be used to tackle other challenges or barriers we face living with HIV. It allowed us to change things up but we were asked to share what we did so others could try them.

For example, we did the “Speed Dating” exercise. In this exercise the “discloser” will interview up to five potential dates and from what they learn, they will decide whether it is safe to disclose their HIV

status to each of them. At the conclusion we discussed how the interviews went, whether they were able to disclose, and why or why not.

We set the stage by decorating the table with black tablecloths, tea lights, and then dimmed the lights in the room. Then we gave the participants on each side of the table their profiles, but there were a few surprises on the “disclosee” (the ones who were not disclosing) side of the table. Some of them learned they were portraying a person who has been on the dating scene a while and may not know their own status. We don't always meet the Sunday school teacher or the fitness nut, the dating scene is very different today, for everyone. By changing it up, we had taken the workshop in a different direction, very different than the other two I participated in.

When we were planning the workshop, it was our hope to invite someone from another ASO to take part and train to do a workshop in their area. This was the way to “pay it forward”. That person was unable to make it so now we are looking to do another workshop here in Guelph and try again. When another ASO is ready to do their workshop one or two of us would go and train them to facilitate it, then they would do the same.

The workshops don't require a lot of money as it works best with 8 to 12 participants including facilitators. If it's done through CTAC there is some funding to assist in some of the costs.

I have taken many trainings in the last four years; all have been very important in my journey, but this one was the most powerful. Disclosure is a part of our lives and we are the best teachers, peer led workshops work.

Workshops have being held in several parts of the country, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia. If you think you would like to have one yourself the contact is CTAC: www.ctac.ca/positive-sex.