

T(RANSSPARENT) E(VOLVED) A(UTHENTIC) S(ELF) E(XPRESSIVE)

It's all about sex.

Morgan S. Varn
www.projecttease.com
(803) 354-2846

Project TEASE

December 1, 2015

Overview

Originally created as an assignment for a “Contemporary Issues in Sex” course at Arnold School of Public Health, Project TEASE is a website designed to empower and enable women with disabilities to create a transparent, evolved, authentic, self-expressive sexual identity. Like other sexuality and disability sites, Project TEASE provides medically accurate information that's tailored to the needs of disabled women, answers questions, and dispels the myths surrounding disability and sexuality.

Project TEASE is also designed for disabled women to communicate with each other, sharing stories and experiences, while creating a forum to add local events, news, and issues surrounding disability and sexuality for women in the South.

Goals

1. **Educate:** Women with disabilities have significantly diminished knowledge in areas of sexuality, such as sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, and contraception. This can be attributed, in part, to the lack of appropriately tailored sex education for girls and women with disabilities, but also to increased rates of victimization, isolation due to lack of mobility, and lessened access to sexual services. Current sex education curriculum uses a predominately heteronormative, orgasmacentric view of sexuality, which does not fit an atypical body in an extraordinary population. Further, women with disabilities have often had procedures that create a clinical feel



PROJECT TEASE

to their bodies, lessening self-esteem and the potential to enjoy their own sexuality. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently advocated the creation of a disability component to be added to sexual health policies in programs to decrease the likelihood for poor health, comorbid conditions, premature death, and the spread of communicable diseases.

2. **Advocate:** Current legislation does not require medically accurate information to be included in sex education curriculum in South Carolina. There has been little research conducted about disability and sexuality, making it difficult to create sexual health programs that are evidence based for this population. Women with disabilities should be given the opportunity to work with policy makers to address issues specific to their own sexual health as well as researchers to broaden the intellectual platform on which programs tailored to their needs can be produced. They should be given a voice to reorganize the bounds of independent living, and should be educated about their own bodies in order to make healthy decisions concerning relationships with others and their own, unique sexuality.
3. **Collaborate:** Project TEASE aims to connect women with disabilities to organizations on the local, state, and federal level, as well as create a forum in which ideas about their sexuality can be discussed, discretely or publicly. They should be given the opportunity to educate the public about disability and sexuality in order to combat the stigma surrounding disability, participate in social involvement, and to finally eliminate the “medical model” of care for women in this population.

Specifications

The website includes an overview of many topics, each containing pictures and diagrams, detailed descriptions, videos, and links for further information. The pages allow the reader to comment, ask questions, or begin a forum topic anonymously, if they so choose. Each of these pages contain information for a broad range of disabilities, and therefore is not the most comprehensive guide on every sexual issue for very type of disability, but can be easily edited to add or delete information, if necessary.

★ Anatomy and Physiology

- Highly detailed descriptions of female and male sex organs, as well as basic physiology of sexuality. These topics will be broadened for those with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities that include differences in tactile or neural processing.



★ Personal Hygiene

- A “how-to” guide to the vagina. Basic information on cleanliness, symptoms and signs of general vaginal infections, and information about lubrications.

★ Dating and Relationships

- Discussions about safety and trust, and building relationships with others, both disabled and non-disabled. Project TEASE would love to find a blogger for this page.

★ Losing Your Virginity

- Videos, descriptions, and models discussing both the choice to remain abstinent and to have sex. Information on the “first time” and what to expect. A brief overview of contraception methods and links to sites that provide condoms and more detailed information about protection. This may be very detailed for potential blind and loss of sight visitors.

★ STI/STD

- Pictures, descriptions, and information about signs and symptoms of STIs and methods of protection against them. Further links to sites that provide condoms and more detailed information about protection. A section including information about Hepatitis B, as the rate for this disease is high in women with disabilities.

★ Restrictive Sex (including techniques, tips, and tools)

- Discussions about positions for those who need assistance, and ways to lessen discomfort for those with chronic pain. Various tips from many different sites, as well as links to sites with toys that can be adjusted for different body types. Links and information about assistive devices. A broad discussion about alternative orgasm and non-orgasmic pleasure.

★ Vanilla Or Kink?

- Topics including paraphilias and alternative sex, with heavy emphasis on SSC (safe, sane, and consensual) practice. Differential considerations for those with neural disorders. Those with chronic pain issues find that they can control the pain using this technique. Links to sites made by disabled women for those interested in kink and alternative sex.

★ Abuse and Neglect

- Criteria for healthy, happy relationships. A discussion concerning the “novelty factor” (this is a term loosely used to describe sex by a non-disabled person with a disabled



person purely for the vicissitude of the act). Links for assistance in cases concerning neglect or abuse.

★ **Gradient of Sexualities**

- Due to current time constraints, Project TEASE is not all inclusive of the LGBTQIAMSMSM population, but basic definitions and descriptions of the “gradient of sexualities” will be discussed. Links for women with disabilities who fall into these categories will be added.

Terminology for acts of sexuality, anatomy, and physiology should include both medical and informal (but frequently used) language. Additional links include pages for family members, medical health professionals, and personal care aides. Areas for posting questions or sharing stories are included, as well as links to literature, books, other sites, and support tips.

Accessibility

Currently, Project TEASE is collaborating with special services and technology gurus to make the page accessible to users with assistive technology. The page is being tested in a number of ways, including NVDA, WAVE (Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool), iPad technology, and ChromeVox. Also, text is simple with contrasting color, images are labeled, and the number of links per page are limited and include simple titles. The website platform used is Weebly, primarily because html/css code is relatively easy to adjust by the builder. Youtube videos are reviewed for closed captioning and auto captioning accuracy.

After the “go-live” date, it will take time for Google’s “spiders” to catch the site. However, Project TEASE is committed to blogging regularly, searching for local and web events, and promoting the site, even if it must be accomplished manually. Accessibility is still a “work-in-progress.”

Evaluation Plan

1. Basic Page Layout and Graphic Design Completion (November 15, 2015)

At this time, the basic pages should be finished with working links. The text will not be available at this time, as it is still a work in progress. The chat boards will not be accessible, and the videos



will not yet be linked. The site is password protected at this time to block users from creating visiting data that will be used later for evaluation.

2. Academic Review and Tentative Go-Live Date (December 1, 2015)

The website and all graphics, pictures, and videos will be accessible to the public. The chat boards should be live, and viewing data will be tracked at this time. The website will be reviewed in class. After the presentation, password protection will be reinstated until the official go-live date.

3. Official Go-Live Date (January 1, 2017)

The week prior, the web address will be sent to a group of academics, sexual health professionals, and clinicians with an attached survey. They will review the site for accuracy, completeness, and basic form and function. Their surveys will be used for the final editing before the official go-live date.

The site will be available at this time for public use. It should be accessible to those with assistive technology. Data about site visitors, repeat site visitors, and members will be monitored. Project TEASE intends to find bloggers to assist in discussions and basic site maintenance. At this time, it would be most useful to collaborate with other online resources and focus groups before promoting the site to ensure accessibility and usability, as well as general appeal. This should be completed by March 2, 2017.

Current Limitations and Future Endeavors

1. Project TEASE is not designed for young girls with intellectual disabilities (ID). A daughter site should be created with their specific needs in mind. (see Pioneer)
2. Although the site may be used either by women without disabilities or men, a brother site for men with disabilities should be created.
3. There is a growing population of LGBTQIAMS within the disabled community. This creates the opportunity for yet another site with information tailored to their needs. A website such as this would require a much larger team and more time to complete.



4. Some cultural and religious views were neglected in the creation of Project TEASE. Further research may assist in creating additional information on this site in a more culturally diverse manner.
5. People without disabilities should have a hand in working towards the completion of the site. Through the basic classwork promotion of the site, many non-disabled people have learned much about the subject of “sexuality and disabilities.” Many have stated that their work, either in the area of sexuality or public health will now be more inclusive to those with disabilities.

