

# POSITIVE SEXUALITY

A Promising Future for Sex Research,  
Education, and Practice



EDITED BY EMILY E. PRIOR  
AND D J WILLIAMS

ROUTLEDGE

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# POSITIVE SEXUALITY

This book focuses on an emerging, multidisciplinary, positive sexuality framework that guides sexuality research, education, and practice.

Using this positive sexuality framework, this book will provide helping professionals and others with current research and information on topics and populations that are often missed or misrepresented, including but not limited to: lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, and other orientations; transgender, nonbinary, and other non-cisgender identities; seniors; sex workers; racial minorities; and other marginalized peoples. This framework, based on the social and behavioral sciences, can be used in tandem with other theoretical frameworks, modalities, and methodologies to better support a growing, multifaceted, and unique human population. Chapters are authored by topic experts and utilize the most recent scholarship pertaining to positive sexuality. Readers will come to understand diverse sexuality more completely and inextricably linked to other parts of one's identity and learn to address diverse sexual topics and issues more openly and with a spirit of compassion and human connectedness.

This edited volume is a must-read for sexuality researchers, clinicians, helping professionals, policymakers, and students from diverse educational backgrounds who are interested in human sexuality.

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*Edited by Emily E. Prior and  
D J Williams*

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**This collection is dedicated to the many people across the globe who, in whatever capacity, continue to promote and support a positive sexuality approach to research, education, and practice. Indeed, many people's lives are better because of such efforts. Gratitude is particularly extended to each of the many volunteers – past, present, and future – who willingly contribute their time, energy, and talents to the Center for Positive Sexuality.**

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## **POSITIVITY SEXUALITY AS PRAXIS**

A Collaborative and Intergenerational Discussion  
on the Training and Mentoring Experiences of  
Sexuality Educators

*Bianca I. Laureano, carrie “cherry”  
kaufman, Em Thev, Laura Ramos Tomás,  
and Scotney Young*

### **Introduction**

When done well and in a culturally relevant way, divesting from all forms of oppressive supremacy, sexuality education has the potential to save lives! (Dixon et al., 2021). In the U.S. if an educator is seeking to become a certified sexuality educator (CSE) they must complete a series of requirements in education, professional development, and mentorship/supervision. This chapter focuses on if/when/and how sex positivity is present in the training of CSEs. Our approach herein is from a subjective, intersectional lens that embraces a relational approach implemented in teaching and learning as well as anti-oppressive strategies utilized in training sexuality educators.

This chapter is a collaborative, intergenerational, roundtable conversation between Bianca I. Laureano, and four of her former supervisees who

completed their requirements to become CSEs. Together they explore how and if sex positivity was a part of their training and professional development. Each of us works with, supports, and advocates for work with demographically diverse communities, schools, and individuals in the U.S. and globally that offer an abundance of opportunities to consider how sex positivity may shift, change, or be present beyond a Western, U.S.-dominant, colonial lens.

### **Author Introductions and Social Positioning**

*Bianca I. Laureano* is a queer, fat, LatiNegra, disabled, gender expansive femme sexuality educator, curriculum writer, sexologist, and AASECT CSE and CSES (certified sexuality educator supervisor). She is the foundress of the virtual freedom school ANTE UP!

*carrie "cherry" kaufman* is a queer, multiply disabled, white, Jewish artist, organizer, and kitchen witch. She is in love with supporting other disabled survivors and sought AASECT and ANTE UP! certification to continue offering sexuality education grounded in the principles of Disability Justice. Cooking, ritual, and poetry are her current tools for connection and healing. She is also a certified Death Doula. Her work explores disabled embodiment, erotics, survivorship, care, and intimacy as well as Jewish magic and spirituality. She is the creator of DisabledParts.com, a website featuring stories about disabled sexuality. She is full of fire, water, and honey.

*Em Thev*; Prior to her recent passing, *Em Thev* was an AASECT CSE Relationship and Mindfulness Educator. She lived with invisible disabilities and was a purity culture survivor. Through her organization, Honey Rose Haven, she helped thousands of people worldwide overcome sexual shame and cultivate healthy, passionate relationships through one-to-one educational sessions and workshops.

*Laura Ramos Tomás* is an AASECT CSE of European origin, working in non-formal education spaces in Latin America through her organization TabuTabu. She co-creates programs on sexual wellbeing and justice with communities of the global majority who usually haven't had access to affirming and pleasure-based sexuality education.

*ScotneyYoung* is a Black American and Chicana AASECT CSE committed to offering practical tools and information to help people better understand

and enjoy their bodies and relationships. As an ANTE UP! certified sexuality professional, her work is rooted in community collaboration and justice with a special focus on elevating youth voices and experiences. She has worked in five countries across three continents implementing culturally relevant sexual and reproductive health and justice initiatives.

### **Discussion Narratives: Becoming Sex Educators, Conceptualizations, and Training**

Our discussion herein is comprised of brief personal narratives how and why we became sexuality educators, our personal definitions of sex positivity, tensions and challenges to incorporating sex positivity in our communities and globally, then we discuss our training as sexuality educators, the impact of erasure, projects we have been a part of that utilize the sex positivity we envision in the world, lessons learned in doing our work, and joys of offering sexuality education across the globe!

**Bianca:** I learned about certification in 2008. I thought I'd become a CSE and decided to attend a conference in Arizona in 2009 and was one of 19 people of the global majority at the conference of over 400 people in a state that is indigenous land with a thriving Mexican community! The other 18 women of color present, mostly Black women, we chose to support one another. We created the Women of Color Sexual Health Network (WOCSHN). I left that conference knowing I did not fit in, was not welcome, and my Black, Caribbean, and immigrant communities were not valued. Five years later I reconsidered certification where I could bypass supervision. I did not want to spend money on supervision with a white person who was non-disabled, did not understand or work with my communities, and I worried I would be teaching my supervisor rather than learning from them. This was the same reason many WOCSHN members delayed completing their certification. For this reason I chose to become a supervisor with the goal to offer support to those choosing certification.

**Scotney:** I pursued certification because you, Bianca, let me know it was safe to do so. "Safe" in that I would not have to navigate challenges, discrimination, or obstacles from white-led organizations alone and unprotected. I had gone through a marginalizing experience at a Sexual Health Certificate Program (SHCP) in the Midwest. I felt emotionally

and financially burned. I wasn't eager to engage with another organization where I would have to hide my authentic self, prove my experience, and pay for professional development that would not be applicable to the populations I work with. I knew certification would give me the validity and legitimacy to access certain work opportunities. I looked for more inclusive and relevant training and found you and began taking some courses through ANTE UP! Sharing your experiences let me know you could help me through the process and navigate the obstacles. It is not an exaggeration to say I would not have pursued certification without you. I do not say this to flatter you, Bianca, but to highlight the importance of mentorship, allyship, solidarity, representation, and support that is essential to making the professional sexuality world inclusive and expansive.

**Em:** I grew up neurodivergent in a conservative, religious environment where I had to navigate purity culture. Two decades ago I received a diagnosis of a rare disease which gives me the same quality of life as someone on kidney dialysis. Recognizing the need for inclusive sex education within these intersecting spheres of my life, I embarked on a journey to provide comprehensive sex ed to my community in a culturally relevant manner. My work was received so well, I started my own organization where I teach workshops and provide personalized educational interventions. Several years ago, a colleague shared with me the profound impact certification had on her professional life. I was interested in being part of an organization upholding high standards of practice.

Due to my chronic illness, travel is a significant challenge for me, so I had to wait many years to pursue certification until the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) prompted more online training, making the process accessible to me. I was also thrilled to find the safe space Bianca creates, so I could pursue certification authentically and not feel isolated. Becoming credentialed with such a prestigious organization is a wonderful achievement, and within Bianca's inclusive supervision I felt valued and my support needs were always met.

**cherry:** I'm pursuing certification because I want to learn as much as I can about reproductive justice and sexuality education. My goal is to provide community space and support for disabled people, especially disabled survivors, to explore, heal, and connect to their sexuality, bodies, and partners. The more I can learn about sex, sexuality, kink, pleasure,

and reproductive justice, the more competent I will be at holding space for people with many different disabilities, identities, and experiences. I'm already doing the work I seek to do in terms of writing and education; Bianca advised me to consider certification because the credentials provide me with credibility as well as protection from people who might seek to discredit or refute the work I put out into the world.

**Laura:** Working in Brazil and Honduras, comprehensive sexuality education is not a part of curricula and often faces opposition. I knew training with well-established institutions would offer credibility and ground my work. I had been unsuccessful in finding more regionally relevant accrediting bodies training sexuality educators. My first formal experience in the field was at a (SHCP) in the Midwest U.S., which covers a large part of the certification requirements. After completing this program, I reached out to Bianca, who had been recommended as the only supervisor who would be able to authentically support my work in Latin America with cultural sensitivity and awareness. Supervision guided my work, specifically as a white European educator working with Latin American communities of color. I later pursued certification for the original purpose of added credibility and formalizing the work I was already doing.

### **Sex-Positivity Conceptualizations and Important General Issues**

**Bianca:** When I was first introduced to sex positivity as a concept, framework, and movement, it was very much from a U.S., non-disabled white feminist lens. I had to seek out Black feminists who introduced me to Indigenous, Latina, and Caribbean experiences and those definitions did not neatly fit or align with what white US feminists were stating. My definition of and framing for sex positivity today is constantly shifting shape.

**Scotney:** Sex educator Goody Howard says sex positivity is about creating space for people to explore and express their sexuality without shame and judgment. I like this and what stands out to me is the word "space" because it is never one thing, place, or time. As someone who works in multicultural and international settings, sex positivity must be flexible, adaptable, and unique to the individuals or communities. The way sex positivity is restricted by different systems of oppression impacts my approach. Sex positivity is connected to liberation which is inherent to

our being; I cannot give or create it, we must define it for ourselves. I integrate sex positivity into my work by creating spaces to enhance critical understanding of the systems and power dynamics that are responsible for imposing shame and judgment on our ability to explore and express our sexuality and gender freely. Deconstructing the impact of those imposing forces allows sex positivity to fit our lives and realities.

**Em:** I advocate that sex positivity isn't the "anything goes" approach – which, in my mind, suggests a less thoughtful approach to sex, and it's not the repressed notion of sex many of us were raised with. The sex positive education I provide is a connected, informed, and accepting approach that empowers individuals to make wise choices regarding their sexual lives. It embraces inclusivity and celebrates the rich tapestry of human sexuality, addressing topics like consent, pleasure, diversity, effective communication, attachment, sexual health, and supporting informed decision-making.

**cherry:** I think sex positivity is a response to sex historically being taboo, stigmatized, oversimplified, weaponized, and steeped in heteronormativity. It asserts sex is something to be enjoyed by everyone, and something we should all be free to talk about and express. It is a framework seeking to remove shame from the conversations around sex, and give people room to exist in the fullness of their humanity. It requires a culture of consent and self-awareness. From this place it can allow for conversations about sex to be free of shame, fear, and hierarchy.

I think sex positivity has often been a buzzword giving blanket permission for people to speak openly about sex whenever it pleases them, or even for people to address and touch others in unwelcomed ways, because the assumptions are: everyone loves sex, talks about it all the time, and wants to be sexy and sexualized uncritically.

**Laura:** I agree, sex-positivity is an ever-evolving concept that changes – and rightly so, as people learn about sexuality and connection in the spaces they move in. To me, sex-positivity seeks to tackle very common, oppressive, and limiting "death and disease" narratives, especially found in the so-called "Global North". Sex-positivity is inherently linked to a pleasure-based approach, which advocates for people being able to choose if and how to feel pleasure in a way that acknowledges their individuality, desires, and rights.

**Em:** Sex positivity is meant to be inclusive, yet I often find myself and my clients excluded from the movement. For example, the movement

lacks representation and resources for my clients recovering from purity culture, navigating neurodiversity, and living with in/visible disabilities. It also presents a steep learning curve for many in my community who had no prior exposure to its concepts and terminology. Sadly, there is a notable absence of bridge-building and offering resources for purity culture survivors or people experiencing sexual shame. The movement's neglect to address the deep-seated shame experienced by so many survivors of purity culture speaks to the significance of the work I do with that community.

**Scotney:** I struggle with the way sex positivity as a concept is sometimes presented within the sexuality field in two different ways. The first is there can be an emphasis on destigmatizing sex and sexuality through exposing individuals to all things sexual without being intentional about relationship building and understanding participants personally, culturally, or socio-economically. Second is the white-washing, oversimplification, and monetization of cultural- and ethnic-based sexual practices.

Some colleagues believe exclusively multi-gender conversations with youth to be sex positive. However, working with newly arrived immigrants to the U.S. made conversations about sexuality extremely challenging. The "new" experiences were so compounded for them as they tried to heal from significant trauma during their journey to the U.S. Understandably, they did not want to engage with the material. We may have retraumatized some participants. I learned a lot about considerations to have when trying to create sex positive spaces.

There can be a tendency for western sexuality professionals to pick things from different cultures, strip them of their deeper cultural meanings, repackage them without any cultural context or credit given, and sell them under their own brand of sex positivity. Highlighting a diverse array of sex positive practices from around the world must be done in a culturally humble and ethical way to avoid further perpetuation of oppressive systems. Providing broader cultural context, giving credit/attribution, as well as compensating and uplifting the voices of people from the respective cultures are some places to begin. These are the things I am intentional about incorporating into my work and why having a diverse professional network is helpful because I have people who can check me when I make a mistake.

**cherry:** I struggle with the concept because sex is not something that always feels inherently positive to me. Sometimes the framework asks us

to celebrate sex in a way that might not leave room for a complicated or nuanced experience of sex and sexuality. Sexuality has often felt complex and burdensome due to my visible disability, I feel I've often been in the position of proving or asserting to others – especially healthcare providers and peers in the queer community – my sexuality exists. It has felt exhausting at best and dehumanizing at worst.

I'm a survivor of sexual abuse, and due to this trauma, sex is often not something I desire. It can be hard for those of us who don't want to celebrate or have sex to feel comfortable. Sex positivity conjures a very body-centered focus, on physical attractiveness and sexiness, and on what we are doing/able to do with our bodies. For those of us with complicated relationships to our bodies, sex positivity can be a very alienating culture. Sex positive conversations have focused on the mechanics of sex and of undoing stigma and shame. I lament this focus takes away from many other aspects of pleasure and sexuality, including kink, erotics, and communication/connection.

**Laura:** Sex-positivity isn't quite as universal as it must be. It is usually reserved for certain people, whether it be white, cisgender, non-disabled, more wealthy, and more educated people. Working with groups I often don't belong to, I find it crucial to take a human rights- and pleasure-based approach. It resonates organically with participants because sexuality and the choice to experience pleasure are integral aspects of being human! When I talk about my work in spaces with people who, like me, haven't faced as much erasure and exclusion, my work gets elevated for the mere fact of prioritizing these approaches. The correlation between sex-positivity and privilege persists. Agency over one's sexuality is a universal human right, and historically the mainstream sex-positivity movement hasn't elevated *all* voices. This won't change until we all acknowledge our biases and the importance of comprehensive sexuality education as a tool for social justice.

### **Sexuality Education Training Programs**

**Bianca:** My sexuality education journey began through peer education in 1996 when I went to the University of Maryland. Through the University Health Center I was trained as a peer educator to offer substance and sexuality education to campus communities. I changed my major three

times until my junior year when I created my own: a mashup of public health, gender, and Latin American studies. Putting my unique major together taught me how to fill in gaps, this helped for my graduate work in the sexuality program at NYU where every single professor I had was a white person over 50 years old. I was one of two people of the global majority in my cohort of about 20 students. I didn't claim disability as an identity then and there was one disabled student in my cohort. This student was the only person who brought in a disability perspective in classes and readings and it was specific to their disability.

**Scotney:** My sexuality training is always on-going and I am intentional about seeking opportunities that fill gaps in my knowledge. My formal learning era at a SHCP was in 2017. I expected information and training on strategies for working with people from different backgrounds. However, much of the content and materials were about and taught by upper class white non-disabled individuals. It was frustrating and invalidating because it did not represent the communities I work with and was not reflective of my own identities and experiences. When I and the other four Black students in a cohort of over 100, highlighted these gaps we were repeatedly shut down and ostracized by faculty and students. I learned academic and medical concepts and vocabulary which are passwords to get past gatekeepers who attempt to restrict access to sexual health information. When I searched for opportunities to fill the gaps that remained from the first training program, I found you, Bianca, and your ANTE UP! certificate program and began my "formal unlearning era." The courses gave me concrete tools to remove the lens of white supremacy, colonization, ableism, and oppression and consider ways to work with and for the diverse communities I serve. These courses gave me strategies, critical frameworks, and the historical context I needed to think intentionally about who is in my class and who is not, what cultural and historical experiences are brought to the space, and how to create inclusive and relevant sex education. I continue to seek training that expands the critical and anti-oppression frameworks I use.

**Laura:** My sexuality education training has evolved in three streams – the formal, non-formal, and informal training. I sought formal training offering various perspectives and the staff and peers had different lenses from my own. I completed courses at a university in Colombia before completing my SHCP in 2021, and have most recently enrolled in a

Master's in Public Health in London. Non-formal learning opportunities included supervision with you, Bianca, and my Fellowship and collaboration with The Pleasure Project, which offered training in pleasure-based sexual health. Most importantly is the knowledge, perspective, and skills I have gained from collaborating with communities in Latin America. Through working *with* – rather than *in* or *for* – these communities, perspectives shift in ways only possible outside of academic, theoretical frameworks, and models. Through collaboration, I continue to learn to listen deeply and confront my own biases with more clarity.

**Scotney:** The most important part of sex positivity, especially in training, is allowing individuals to find or create a space to explore all the aspects of sexuality without shame and judgment, while remembering the process may be different for others. At times, there's a compulsory sexuality approach, and as cherry shared, a lack of acceptance or acknowledgement some people might not want to engage in sex. Some may identify with the spectrum of asexuality or aromanticism, some live where it is difficult or illegal to find space without shame and judgment, and others may need more time and healing.

The traditional sexual attitude reassessment (SAR) tries to promote a sex positive perspective, yet does not consider the context participants may be coming from or working within. My SAR experience was several hours of watching pornography to “desensitize” and “familiarize” us to different sexual practices, expressions, and experiences. It felt voyeuristic and superficial because it lacked contextualizing personal perspectives of what it means to actually be a part of particular communities or hold sexual identities. Assuming everyone participating in the training is in a place to be able to learn effectively in this way, does not fully take into account cultural or religious background, neurodivergence, or past trauma.

### **Insights on Potential Damage from Erasure of Experience in Sex Education Training**

**Scotney:** The erasure and othering of experiences that are not considered “mainstream” and the impact of that exclusion is harmful. As someone who is currently non-disabled, if I am not seeking and centering sex positive disabled voices, I miss out on ensuring my version of sex positivity is inclusive and affirming of disabled folks. We each have to do the work of

finding out who is not a part of the conversation, uplifting those voices, and learning from each other.

**Bianca:** I felt gaslit throughout my education and training. Representation is powerful, but it is not power. When we don't even have representation embedded in the curricula, the power is only offered to one group and it is not shared. This erases the ways communities of the global majority have always already been collaborative and interdependent. It perpetuates a western settler colonial view of sexuality that is dangerous and upholds rape culture.

### **Cultural Responsivity: Learning from New or Different Communities and Populations**

**Bianca:** I value "leadership by those most impacted" which I interpret as not thinking I have all the answers or I am the "expert" in the room. This is where sex positivity may show up as a new form of western colonization when we are not moving within a culturally relativistic way that recognizes how the U.S./or the West is perceived or understood by those who have been impacted by U.S.-supported wars, sanctions, bans, and blockades. Listening with our whole bodies is essential to these opportunities, as is building relationships which is a central part of an intersectional approach.

**Scotney:** I agree with Bianca and view my role as an "expert" as someone who is willing to find out what you want to know about sexual health education and make sure it is accurate information relevant to you. Sometimes that takes place through a survey, an information session, or a community assessment. I never provide sex education programming for a community I have not first engaged with and I never do this without bringing some sort of food. I think bringing culturally specific food is important because it shows you care about your participants as whole people. Hunger is not conducive to learning. Additionally, "breaking bread together" is a great way to demonstrate we educators are also a whole people who need sustenance.

**Em:** Living with the disabilities I have allows me to bring a unique and empathetic perspective to my work. For many of my LGBTQIA+ clients, I am the first professional to validate their identity. Many move outside of the insular sexual-shaming cultures, and abandon prejudicial perspectives about sex.

Studying mindfulness has taught me to perceive without prejudice – to enter conversations with openness, curiosity, deep listening, and less judgment. I teach these principles to help build awareness, reflectiveness, openness, and curiosity towards sexuality. I put incredible effort into speaking to a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles while creating community. I’ve never learned well with lectures or slides with lists of information. I benefit most from experiential learning, using all of my senses, practicing, and connecting with others. My approach is multimodal, combining movement, mindfulness, conversation, and creativity which helps reach a diverse audience, and participants leave having gained new information, embodied learning, and forged meaningful connections with others. Validation occurs in hearing from peers and sharing experiences of oppression and marginalization in conservative cultures. My strength is creating nurturing safe spaces to share experiences, and not be judged. When people feel understood and respected, they are much more likely to learn and to grow.

**Laura:** When I work in communities with different lived experiences than my own, I acknowledge this (to myself and the group) and I highlight that, because of our different experiences, I too will be learning in the space we create together. This includes presenting myself as a “facilitator,” aiming to make it easier for people to learn, explore, shift, and tackle taboos around sexuality. I cannot assume the role of “teacher,” because I do not have all the answers – and the pretense of having them would impose my lens on everyone else. Acknowledging this early creates a more equitable space and helps me connect with the community in an authentic and constructive way.

### **Sex-Positive Successes: Our Projects Promoting Diverse and Inclusive Sex Education**

**Scotney:** One of my proudest achievements was creating You + Me = We: A Queer Sex Ed Program where we worked with LGBTQIA+ teens to create a queer sex education series. This was in direct response to Virginia state efforts to invalidate queer and trans youth. We intentionally created an inclusive, affirming curriculum that offered students critical frameworks to explore and understand diverse sexualities and genders in their own contexts. We’ve had many neurodivergent students over the last two

years and we worked to make our content and teaching style accessible such as offering different options for activities, explaining metaphors or analogies, providing discussion questions or activities in advance to allow time for processing, and asking what else we can do to meet student needs. It's a constant learning process.

**cherry:** Disabled Parts is a website I created, in hopes of addressing the lack of sexuality education resources that feature and represent disability. In the tradition of *Sins Invalid*, Disabled Parts also uses storytelling such as poetry, creative nonfiction, and erotica, by queer and disabled community members, to illustrate and archive our experiences of sex, intimacy, and survival. Disabled Parts also has a growing library of resources, including videos, articles, and links, on disabled sexuality. Everyone is invited to submit resources to be featured. In partnership with several sex toy shops the site includes an initiative to consult and distribute free sex toys to disabled people who cannot afford them. Talking with individuals to understand what kind of toy can help change their sex life has been such a great learning and community building opportunity. I'm always humbled and affirmed in my work whenever people express gratitude for this space that they have never been offered.

**Bianca:** I've filled in gaps in an interdisciplinary way by reading and taking classes outside of sexuality focused offerings. I created my own offerings that merged sexuality and disability topics. I'm proud my offerings divest from a medical model of disability and embraces a justice model that welcomes us in without defining our disability, and our access needs can be met by divesting in surveillance common in education, such as turning cameras off, communicating in the chat, collaborating with live captioners or BSL (Black Sign Language) interpreters, and valuing disabled people showing up as they can with integrity.

**Scotney:** As someone who relocates to different countries and works with different immigrant communities often, one tool I have found to be invaluable is Drs. Sara Nasserzadeh and Pejman Azarmina's "Sexuality Education Wheel of Context" (2017). It provides questions for understanding the historical, socio-political, and cultural context of communities to encourage an approach that is culturally relevant and humble. Training that provides strategies to create more accessible and relevant programming for disabled and neurodivergent people has expanded my work.

**Laura:** In the Pleasure Project's Fellowship, I found a community of professionals who, like me, felt they were working in a field that hyper-medicalizes information and omits or barricades it behind a curtain of shame. Through the Pleasure Principles, I believe accessible, sex-positive, and pleasure-based sexual health information is possible. The Pleasure Project's 2021 systematic review in collaboration with the World Health Organization is a significant milestone to de-stigmatizing and normalizing culturally sensitive, pleasure-based conversations in a range of settings.

### **Promoting Positive Sexuality in Sexuality Education: Rewarding Moments!**

**Scotney:** There are so many! Students staying after a workshop to ask me their more personal questions confirms the space created together established trust. I smile and get a warm fuzzy feeling reading anonymous evaluations saying how much they appreciated the content, materials, or my teaching style. I got an email from a parent whose student had gone home and said "Mom, I learned more in one of those classes than I have in 4 years of health classes at school!" These experiences remind me that comprehensive sexual health education matters when it is inclusive and relevant.

**Em:** I led an intergenerational workshop focusing on pleasure which had about 50 participants. Attendees represented an impressive range of cultures, belief systems, lifestyles, and perspectives. I used engaging, accessible resources, paintings of different vulvas, facilitated a mindfulness exercise, discussed the importance of pleasure, and used a large vulva-shaped pillow to teach sexological anatomy. The evaluations affirmed these approaches created a supportive and safe environment.

**Laura:** After a sexuality education session for adolescents that I co-facilitated in a favela in Brazil, we were approached by a woman who had witnessed part of the workshop. She shared her pleasure in knowing the youth had this space to receive crucial information openly while exploring different topics safely. She shared she would have benefitted from such spaces, and still would today, because she hadn't had her questions answered. She was pregnant with her sixth child, recently learned how to correctly use a condom, and proudly stated this would be her last pregnancy. This exchange was pivotal for my work – it was rewarding receiving

local support, and her feedback demonstrated a further need. This conversation was fundamental for what would later become TabuTabu's largest community co-created initiative for women, Ana Autoestima.

**cherry:** I've been grateful to be on both the organizer and participant side of panels featuring people with disabilities talking about our experiences of sex and sexuality. Working with and learning from other disabled people has continued to be the single most important and enlightening part of my sexuality education. It's always affirming to hear from other disabled people because it illuminates our shared experience of undesirability. There is a universal disabled experience of feeling like we have less and different access to sex and dating because of ableism and misconceptions others and society put upon us. It's hard not to feel overwhelmed by frustration, envy, and inadequacy when trying to navigate sex and dating. It's always both grounding and difficult to hear from others about the importance of self-knowledge and finding the ways to be confident and assertive. It always highlights the need for us to lovingly remind ourselves and each other of our inherent worth. There's always a hopefulness I gain as well, hearing about the ways that others navigate sexuality, love, and romance. I rarely find places in popular media and mainstream sex ed discourse where my identities and experiences are reflected, so I'm grateful to hear from other disabled people directly, and it informs my desire to be a disabled for disabled sex educator.

## Conclusion

The current need for expanding and implementing sex positivity in ways that honor individual and cultural experiences across the globe is being filled by emergent sexuality professionals who are committed to supporting their own learning and growth before serving community members. An improved awareness, incorporation, and honoring individuals' unique identities and social positionings into sexuality educator training continues to be needed at the macro level. Practicing interdependence offers a new movement for sex positivity especially in western areas where independence is the goal and isolation is normalized. The authors invite readers to consider where they, too, can learn more from those most impacted, strategically use their personal power to reduce oppression, and find joy in the relationships they intentionally create and nurture.

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