AIDS Fundamentals IEG Week 8 Lesson Plan 6: Giving Up

OBJECTIVE: For students to make changes in attitudes about persons living with HIV/AIDS, becoming more understanding and less judgmental. In addition, students should engage in frank discussions about HIV/AIDS and issues that are emotionally charged.

GOALS:
1. To understand how the progression of HIV impacts people with AIDS (PWA’s), in terms of some of the losses faced.
2. To experience some of the feelings of loss experienced by PWA’s.

MATERIALS NEEDED:
Each participant will need one sheet of 8½ x 11 paper, torn or cut into 16 pieces. You will also need a trashcan.

PROCESS:
You and your co-facilitator should enter the classroom with a serious demeanor. Your behavior will set the mood for everyone else. If you are joking around, the students will think that today’s activity is just a game and may not sincerely try to imagine how their lives would change if they had HIV/AIDS.

Set-up: Arrange the chairs in the room to form a semi-circle. Then, make sure all students have 16 small pieces of paper.

Phase 1: Ask students to write down the four people, four objects, four roles, and four activities that mean the most to them; each one should be written on a separate slip of paper. Ask them to be specific. (e.g., “Mom,” “Dad.”). When everyone has finished, ask the students to each “give up” one item from each category. In other words, each person should give up a total of four things, one from each category. Have them hand their papers to you. You may want to put a trashcan in the middle of the room, and take the papers from one student at a time. Read each piece of paper as you either rip it up and throw it away, or crumple it up, and say something like “You just gave up ______ because you have AIDS and you can no longer ______.” Make it clear that it was THEIR choice to decide what to give up given their newly limited energy, resources, etc. Process what you’ve just done by asking students how that felt. Either go around the circle, or ask for volunteers to talk about what they gave up, and how it felt. Was it easy or hard to pick something?

Phase 2: Now ask students to turn each of the remaining pieces of paper upside down, so that they can’t see what is written on each one, but be sure to keep them in the 4 categories. Ask students to give up four more things, one from each category. After each student has selected the four (s)he will give up without knowing what they are, (s)he should look to see what they are just before giving them to you. Once again, tell them “AIDS just took your ______” or “Your mother will no longer support you because you have AIDS.” Discuss their reactions to losing four more important aspects of their lives. Ask if it was harder to give things up this time because they did not know what they were losing. On the other hand, was it easier for some people to pick when they didn’t know what they’d be losing? What was the effect of giving things up without knowing what would be lost? How does it feel to be without the eight things they have now given up?

Phase 3: The students should keep their slips of paper face down but mix them all up. Facilitators should stand up and go around the circle to each student, one at a time, taking 4 more papers from each student, without looking to see what you are taking, and without giving the person any choice in the matter. Simply rip them, or crumple them and throw them away, without reading them. Say “You no longer have any control in your life because AIDS has taken control.” Ask students if their reactions were different when someone else had control over what they were losing. How/why were they different? Discuss the impact of loss of control over one’s life. How does it affect one’s sense of self-competency? well-being? confidence? trust?

JOURNAL/FREE-WRITE:
How would their lives be different if they had really lost the twelve things? How would their lives change if all they had left in the world was actually the things they had left in the activity? What adjustments would they have to make? How would they feel?