

# primary prevention

VERSUS

# risk reduction

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

### primary prevention

**DEFINITION:** Preventing the **perpetration** of sexual violence; stopping violence before it even begins to occur

#### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

**Changes the social norms** that allow sexual violence to happen

Addresses **all forms** of sexual violence

Educates on **creating safe spaces**

Focuses on **changing the root causes** of sexual violence

Places the responsibility on everyone in the community to eradicate the root causes of sexual violence

Addresses **multiple risk factors\*** of sexual violence perpetration

\*A **risk factor** is a characteristic that increases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence

### risk reduction

**DEFINITION:** Reducing or minimizing the risk of someone becoming a victim

#### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Places the responsibility on the **potential victim** to prevent violence against themselves

Educates a **potential victim** how to stop an attack in progress

Focuses on **some forms** of sexual violence

Educates on navigating through **existing harmful spaces**

Focuses on **individual acts of sexual violence**, but not the roots causes

**Does not address risk factors** of sexual violence perpetration

# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

## primary prevention

## risk reduction

### ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

A **comprehensive, multi-session** educational program implemented in a school with faculty and students that addresses gender inequity

**Ongoing education** and support to parents on boundaries and building empathy

### ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

Self-defense classes for the purpose of **fending off a potential attacker**

Drug detection materials (color-changing coasters, straws, glasses, nail polish, etc.)

Mace or pepper spray; rape whistles

### KEEP IN MIND

One risk factor alone does not create sexual violence, but rather a combination of risk factors.

There is not one specific primary prevention strategy that addresses all risk factors.

While working to decrease risk factors, we can work to increase protective factors\* against violence.

Primary prevention requires a change in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors across all layers of our society in order to see a shift in the culture.

\*A **protective factor** is a characteristic that decreases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence because it provides a buffer against risk.

### KEEP IN MIND

Risk reduction strategies do not acknowledge the reality of most sexual violence incidents:

- The majority of survivors know and trust the person who hurt them – It's not a stranger.
- When the fight, flight, or freeze survival modes are activated, survivors may experience the freeze reaction (not by choice).

Some strategies, like self-defense, can be empowering for some, but should not be relied on to prevent violence.

Risk reduction strategies can inadvertently increase victim blaming attitudes and behaviors by placing the responsibility on the victim rather than the perpetrator.

#### REFERENCES:

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