



An Online Peer Education Project by Young Women for Young Women

In 2010, with support from the AIDS.gov Microgrants Program, graduates of Love Heals' Leadership Empowerment and Awareness Program (LEAP) for Girls came together to produce and promote a series of online educational videos on HIV/AIDS and related issues of concern to other young women of color. This report summarizes what we did and how you can do it too.

GET READY

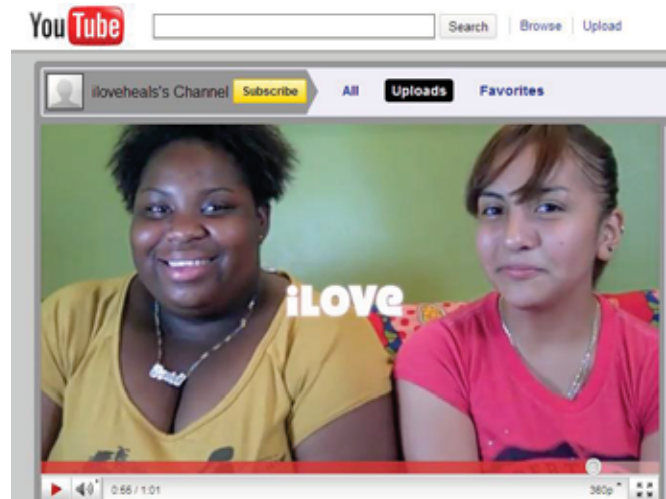
- ♥ You'll need a group of young people interested in health education and HIV prevention. With iLove, we reached out to young women who had completed LEAP for Girls.
- ♥ Recruit peer educators via word of mouth and/or by posting flyers. It might be helpful to have one person lead the recruitment effort.
- ♥ Make sure the people you recruit are comfortable being on camera and talking about personal topics such as sexuality, birth control and unprotected sex.

GET SET

- ♥ You'll want to get everyone together to do some team-building activities and drama exercises, as well as practice being in front of the camera.
- ♥ Brush up on your facts. You may want to reach out to a local group that trains teen peer educators. There are also lots of great resources online. Contact us at ilove@loveheals.org if you want help tracking these down.
- ♥ Brainstorm topics that are important to your community as well as those you feel most passionate about.
- ♥ Survey the community to see what they want to know. With iLove, we surveyed youth and people who work with youth online using www.surveymonkey.com, but you could also use a printed survey or interviews.
- ♥ Gather the supplies you will need. We used Flip Video, but you can get other digital camcorders for as little as \$50. You'll also need a way to edit the videos. We used iMovie on a laptop computer.
- ♥ Test your setup. We found we needed a little extra light, so we bought a clamp lamp, which was less than \$10.
- ♥ Choose your topics and decide on a schedule for when the videos will be made, including who is responsible.

GO!!!

- ♥ Now it's time to shoot your videos. We found that it was helpful to start by discussing the topic among ourselves and doing some online research. (One of our favorite sites is www.goaskalice.com.)
- ♥ Remember that your job as a peer educator is to give facts, not to make judgments. Keep an open mind!
- ♥ Practice. Remember you can take as long as you want. Nothing is final until you say it is and you can always edit different takes together. Many of us found that it helped to write a script that we could follow.
- ♥ Relax, breathe and—most importantly—have fun!



SPREAD THE WORD

- ♥ Once your videos are edited and ready to go, post them on social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube, MySpace and Twitter as well as any other websites or blogs that you think will reach other young people.
- ♥ Expand your social networks by encouraging your online friends to link to your page.
- ♥ Contact other organizations that work with youth and encourage them to link to you and also to promote your work to their clients.
- ♥ Take it to the streets. We made postcards and distributed them—along with safer sex kits and lollipops—in areas where young people hang out, including a shopping mall, an amusement park and the boardwalk.

As you can see, we learned a lot during the six months that we worked on iLove. Below are our responses to some of the questions we were asked along the way, as well as some of our personal reflections on our work.

What is the goal of iLove?

Our goal is to promote sexual health awareness in young women of color through the use of leading social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Facebook's popularity makes it a powerful way to educate the broader community and it ensures that a greater number of young women will have access to useful information. Young women now have access to information they would not normally receive from school or their homes, such as information like the different types of protection as well as what to do when faced with an abusive relationship. Facebook videos make it fun and convenient for young people to pass on the information without looking “uncool.” iLove seeks to be a source of information in the fight against HIV that is “by young women, for young women.”

“We wanted to help with all of the smaller issues that can affect your sexual health, such as cheating in a relationship or even drunk hook ups. We helped people know the facts and the different possible outcomes to their actions.”

"We wanted to have an open conversation about sexual responsibility and health."

What did you enjoy most about iLove?

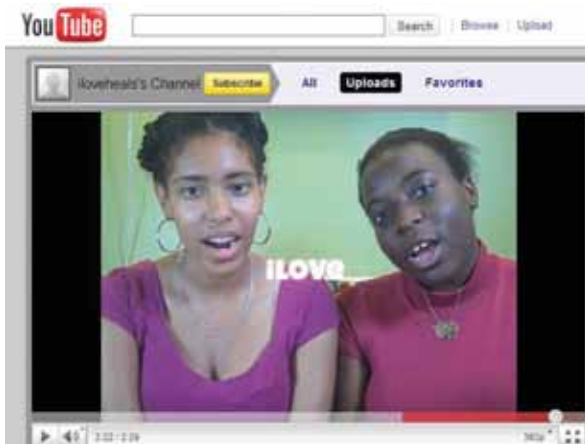
"Teens don't want to hear that same old speech as to why not to do this or that and why it's bad. Now if it's other teens that are going through the same things and giving their experience along with the facts, they might listen more."

"I am outspoken, but reserved. It was fun being unreserved. I enjoyed knowing that someone out in the world was going to see it and that it would hopefully help. The satisfaction in knowing I am helping people made me more enthusiastic in the videos."

"I loved helping with street outreach because it forced me to challenge my comfort level. I learned to be more confident while speaking to random strangers on the street about a taboo topic."

"Making the videos helped and can continue to help those with certain issues and people that are faced with certain choices that can affect their sexual health. It can also help those who are just curious and want to know the facts before doing anything."

What changes did you see in yourself and/or your community as a result of iLove?



iLove effectively creates awareness for not only AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases but also for general relationship and pregnancy issues. It forces people to not ignore what is happening around them like the effects of teen pregnancy not just to the teen but to the family as well. The process of creating the videos and doing street outreach helps build confidence as well as helps teens test their boundaries because these are activities that young people would not normally take part in.

"I am more open when approaching people about AIDS or other health problems in general. I no longer hesitate to offer my opinion/information about this topic."

"I have impacted my community by forcing them to see that AIDS is an issue that we cannot overlook and dispelling a lot of the negative perceptions they might have had about sex in general."

"I noticed that it isn't that bad opening up to new people and just trying new things."

"I do feel that I have impacted the community. Mine might need more work. I plan to continue spreading the word."

"iLove changed my state of mind. I changed things that I used to do to become safer."

"I do not speak in paragraph form. I tend to speak in circles and there is barely some form of organization. It helped me speak better."

What challenges did you face and what resources were critical to iLove's success?

It takes a lot of teamwork, patience and dedication to run a program like iLove. It is important to have the ability to work independently as well as to work well with others. It is also important to understand how to recruit young women and how to work with them while being respectful of their individual comfort levels. The technical aspect requires knowledge of video recording, software training for film editing and general knowledge of how various social networking sites work. Strong ties to national and local community organization make doing this easier because they become helpful resources in providing support, getting the word out and answering health-related questions. One challenge was the time commitment on the part of iLove team members. Other factors included those who were not comfortable appearing on Facebook talking about sex education topics and/or who felt uncomfortable in front of the camera. A lesson learned: during the recruitment process, emphasize what is expected of team members and what they should expect from the program.

"Teens don't want to hear that same old speech as to why not to do this or that and why it's bad. Now if it's other teens that are going through the same things and giving their experience along with the facts, they might listen more."

"Language was very important for making a video that was understandable. It was a challenge to be very detailed and use my words wisely."

"As the youngest one in the group, I was worried that I wouldn't be able to connect with the other teens, but it turns out that we're all the same in our special ways."

"I found creating the videos to be the toughest challenge for me personally. I tend to be more self conscience when I am in front of the camera."

Any other advice for people that want to do something similar to iLove?

"One of the main things is to have people who are open to talking about these types of subjects. People's emotions can be read really easily."

"Think how they think. They don't want that normal lecture where all parents and some educators go wrong. They just need someone to talk to, give advice and even some facts."

"Make sure you aren't demanding or preaching to someone about what they should do because, at the end of the day, it's their body and their decision to do whatever they please. But it's important to be open-minded and respectful of peoples' decisions."

"Any one person can make a change but it has to start somewhere. Just like we did, it can also start with you. We will continue to educate and wish you the best with doing the same. "



iLove is a program of **Love Heals, the Alison Gertz Foundation for AIDS Education**. Love Heals empowers young people in the fight against HIV. Our HIV-positive speakers are putting a face to the epidemic and our youth empowerment programs are training a new generation of community educators and activists in those areas of New York City that have felt the greatest impact from the HIV epidemic.

www.loveheals.org ♥ www.facebook.com/iloveheals ♥ www.youtube.com/iloveheals