Dr. Kineka Hull: Welcome to Elevate Youth Programming, a podcast for adolescent pregnancy prevention programs and other youth serving agencies. In each episode, we will discuss best practices, tips, and strategies to strengthen your programming. Each episode will cover a specific topic discussed with experts in the field and will address questions submitted by youth program providers. Listen along as our guests join me to discuss these relevant topics. [00:00:30] I'm your host, Dr. Kineka [00:32:53] Hull.

In this episode, we sat down with Kelly Gainor, the training manager at ETR, to discuss Navigating the New Norm- virtual implementation. As a training manager, Kelly oversees the virtual training of educators program. Prior to her work at ETR, Kelly taught students both in person and virtually as a PREP grantee. Kelly has her master's degree in human sexuality from Widener University. [00:01:00] Hi Kelly. Welcome to the Elevate Youth Programming podcast. How are you today?

Kelly Gainor: Oh, I'm doing well. Thanks for having me, Kineka.

Dr. Kineka Hull: Thank you. So today I'm looking forward to our conversation about navigating the new norm. There has been a lot of questions among youth serving agencies on best practices for virtual implementation. And so, I'm so glad we were able to have you on today as an expert with virtual implementation to answer some [00:01:30] of our questions and give us some tips and ideas of how to make sure our programming is successful. So, let's start the conversation talking a little bit about student engagement. What should virtual engagement look like?

Kelly Gainor: When we think about virtual education, I think we've all gotten to the place where we understand that virtual education is going to look different than in person education, and it requires certain different skills. Virtual engagement [00:02:00] is also going to look different, and I think that's where sometimes folks have a little bit of a disconnect. So, you know, if you're hoping to have these robust conversations over Zoom, you're probably going to be disappointed or think that your students aren't engaging.

So instead, what I'm going to suggest that people do is to think about engagement in a different way. It's going to look different. So, is the chat blowing up? Are your students participating in activities or demos? Do you have a way to [00:02:30] collect anonymous questions, and would you say you're getting a similar amount as you would in person? It's about changing the metrics so that you can understand what engagement is going to look like in a virtual space.

Dr. Kineka Hull: So, I have a couple of questions. I know I have done some online, a virtual teaching and engagement, and sometimes as a facilitator, I find it hard to focus on the content, watching the chat, doing the breakout room. So as a facilitator, [00:03:00] what advice or tips could you give me to make sure that I'm balancing that correctly and that I'm using good strategies to keep youth engaged?

Kelly Gainor:	Yeah, absolutely. It's tough. It ends up feeling like you're doing twice as much work for half as much engagement. So, one thing, and I know not everyone's budget allows for this, but if you can co-facilitate, even if you can have someone who is not a facilitator, but can be watching the chat for you or dropping links for you and doing the tech parts, [00:03:30] that can really help a lot. Because even if the Zoom room is completely silent and you feel like you're talking to yourself, you have this one person that you know you can talk back and forth with, right? And you have someone who can help you pause and check the chat.
	I know I always start talking to myself if I have to do two things at once. So, if I am doing a training, but I'm also trying to put a link in the chat, I end up talking about the link because I can't do two things at once. So having a second person can really help you to avoid some of that.
Dr. Kineka Hull:	[00:04:00] Are there any other strategies that you would recommend to keep youth engaged?
Kelly Gainor:	You know, you want to continue to think about virtual adaptation, that it's not as simple as just taking what you do in person and putting it in an online space, and to make it engaging, remember that, right? This is also an opportunity to breathe some life into some older interventions that you've maybe used so many times that you are starting to get bored with it, right? This is your chance [00:04:30] to experiment a little bit within the guidelines of fidelity, which we'll talk about in a few minutes. But this is a chance to see what works and maybe find some strategies that will work in person as well.
Dr. Kineka Hull:	So, I know as facilitators or professionals, we all are experiencing some Zoom fatigue. And I also know that youth may be experiencing Zoom fatigue. And I know my preference is always camera off, but when working with you, [00:05:00] should cameras be on or should cameras be off?
Kelly Gainor:	Thanks for bringing that up, Kineka. There's a lot that's been said on both sides of this debate. So, on one hand, having cameras on can help to increase that feeling like you're in person. It's so difficult for facilitators to talk to a bunch of black boxes, right? You know, even having the illusion of eye contact can help you to stay more engaged and to present in a more natural sort of a way.
	But on the other hand, is that requiring cameras [00:05:30] can put a spotlight on inequities within your classrooms. Does everyone have a place that's safe to be on camera? Are there folks who are logging in from the coffee shop down the block because their internet isn't reliable or is their internet not reliable so turning the camera on means they no longer can hear or eclipse the audio. So instead of either coming down on one side or the other, a couple of suggestions, one is to encourage cameras and explain why they're important.
	[00:06:00] I think sometimes young people just hear adults telling them what to do as they always do. And they don't understand what the benefit is for them.

And if saying it helps me, right, you're helping me out to be able to chat with you and it'll be more interesting, and you'll pay more attention and get more out of it. Sometimes that can help. And then instead of requiring cameras for an entire lesson, maybe pick a specific activity and say, okay, this is the activity where we're going [00:06:30] to do cameras on, so anyone who can, anyone who's able to, this is the time to turn on your camera.

So, for example, an icebreaker activity at the beginning, like maybe the check in where you say your name and how you're doing that day, maybe cameras are required or strongly recommended for that. And then maybe something like a group discussion where you really want to encourage folks to engage with each other. You could even have like a little symbol on the slides in your PowerPoint that says like, this is a camera activity, right, to give them a cue.

Dr. Kineka Hull: I like that. And thank you for highlighting the inequities. [00:07:00] I think sometimes we forget about that. Throughout the pandemic, because there were so many people online and due to inequities, a lot of providers were offering a free internet or additional hotspots on your phone. But we still take for granted a lot of times that youth and even sometimes facilitators have access to a high-speed, high-quality internet connection that's required for some of the Zoom activities.

I know I've been on several calls where I'm assuming [00:07:30] that everyone has connection and my connection is slowed down and I'm like, wait a minute, I know I have great internet. But you just never know what could be an issue, so I like the idea of highlighting or, you know, picking specific activities and then having assemble to say if you can and if you're able, please go ahead and turn that on. That's a fantastic suggestion.

Kelly Gainor: As we keep pushing for normal, even though it's hard to say what that means anymore. Some of those programs you mentioned, Kineka, are disappearing. So [00:08:00] if you do still have young people online, they may not have those same free internet or you know, here's an iPad on loan or things like that. So, it's even more important to keep that in mind now.

Dr. Kineka Hull: Absolutely. So as a facilitator, you've given us some great ideas so far. What are some resources that we can use to engage youth virtually?

Kelly Gainor: There's lots of programs and apps and things out there that you can utilize. So one of my favorites is Mentimeter [00:08:30] and they do not pay me to say that. Mentimeter is an online polling software. You can also use something like Poll Everywhere. Mentimeter has the ability to do short answer and word clouds and a lot of different things. I really like it, particularly for brainstorming activities it can work really well. It also has an anonymous question feature. There's also Padlet, which some folks may be familiar with. Padlet, you have moveable cards. They're great for activities like risk continuums, condom or card lineup, things like that. There's Mural, which is a little bit harder to get the hang of. But Mural is an online space that you can use in a lot of different ways. It can

have different little sections, so you can have your group agreements on a section of it.

You can have the particular activity for the day on it. It's very interactive. And many of you I'm sure are familiar with Kahoot. Kahoot predates the pandemic. And that can be great for some of those quizzes in the interventions. There's also a lot of resources within Zoom [00:09:30] itself. And I know we've all been on Zoom for two years. You would think we would know everything at this point, but it can be really worthwhile to take a Zoom class or just play around with different buttons and see what there is. They're also constantly updating Zoom and making it so that Zoom is compatible with other things. So, the annotation feature can be really useful for like an agree disagree activity.

Reactions have gone from just the thumbs up and a heart to pretty much every [00:10:00] emoji. So you can have people vote on things with those, or just indicate that they need help or whatever the situation might be. So really getting to know your platform, if you're not using Zoom, if you're using Google Classroom or whatever it might be, making sure you know what's within it as well.

Dr. Kineka Hull: I love Kahoot. I'm a little competitive and I know that a lot of youth are too. And so, I know that always perks up the classroom when we get to Kahoot, because you love seeing your name and your points and having some type of incentive at the [00:10:30] end. If it's the classroom, maybe a little extra credit or a little extra something. I know adults are like, we all like Kahoot.

And Zoom, I know my Zoom was just upgraded to a whiteboard feature, which I think is great. I felt like a lot of times as we talked about earlier, when you're multitasking, you're not always able to do that smoothly. So, the more things that are in app or in platform, the better, at least I know for me. So, can you talk a bit [00:11:00] about the importance of encouraging a connection with the student? So, you talked earlier about eye contact, how important that is when it comes to engagement in the virtual space.

Kelly Gainor: There are some things that you can do as a facilitator to try and encourage that connection, making sure of course that your camera is on, and making sure that you're looking at the camera as much as you can instead of at the screen or at your own face. I don't know about all of you, but I look at my own face a lot when I'm on Zoom. But when you look at the camera, you [00:11:30] are making eye contact with folks. And it's tricky to remember to do that.

I have had colleagues who would put a little post-it note with a smiley face above their camera so it would remind them to look at it. So that's something small. Take advantage of the time when people are kind of filing into the class at the beginning, just like you would in person. I can't tell you how many Zoom meetings I've been to, where everyone is just silent, waiting for it to start. That's so unnatural.

Come off mute and say, "Hey, So and So, how was the [00:12:00] softball game yesterday?", right? Have that chit chat or play a little music or have a question in the chat that has nothing to do with anything, just to get people kind of talking to each other. You know, we want to create that relationship, even if you can't do it in person, and those little things, they really do make a difference.

Dr. Kineka Hull: I think that's something that we all have been struggling with, especially since the pandemic. You missed that soft skill or that soft connection. So that's a great [00:12:30] tip. Use that time, because most people are going to tune in early. So that's a good time to connect. Thank you for that. Earlier you mentioned that as a facilitator, we should remember that virtual implementation is just not taking what you do in person and putting it online. So how can agencies balance the fidelity of the adaptation process when it comes to virtual implementation?

Kelly Gainor: In my work with ETR, we see a lot of folks who are struggling [00:13:00] with this. What I tell people in my trainings, and when folks call and have questions about adaptations, is that adaptations and fidelity go hand in hand. They're connected, and I think we often think of them as being these very separate things. You want to try to stay with fidelity as much as possible, but really, it's critical to the success of these programs that they meet your young people where they are.

When you're thinking about adaptations just sort of in general, focus on [00:13:30] what the activity is supposed to do, the goals and objectives and just make sure that those come out on the other side, right? That's the most important thing. You want to make sure that the content is there, but these programs were written before Zoom existed, in almost every case, right? So, to not adapt them would actually be worse than to make those adaptations.

Now I'll do my quick disclaimer here and remind folks that you should always check with your funder to make sure that those adaptations will work and are [00:14:00] accepted by them. But in general, you know, we encourage people to make adaptations so that they're giving the youth the education that they really need.

Dr. Kineka Hull: When facilitators or agencies are making these adaptations, what are some that they should consider when they're doing virtual delivery?

Kelly Gainor: Shortening lesson times is one that I see a lot, so breaking the curriculum up into smaller pieces because of Zoom fatigue, which you mentioned earlier. So, if you are doing an [00:14:30] hour long Zoom, it feels like two hours to you as the facilitator, right? It feels like that to the young people too, often. So, if you can do more lessons in a shorter amount of time, or if you can take some pieces asynchronous, so that there's less time on Zoom.

So, for example, a true false activity could be an activity that's assigned as homework and put into a learning management system and graded or people comment on [00:15:00] each other's responses or something like that, let you save a little bit of time when you are in the virtual classroom. So those are a couple of ideas. Making things more engaging is always encouraged, either in person or virtually, but especially virtually, an activity that otherwise maybe would just be the young people talking to you, and that's not going to happen on Zoom. Finding a way to make it interactive through Mentimeter or one of those other programs that we've talked about. Some of those things can help.

[00:15:30] Then one other thing that I want to mention is that a lot of these programs use videos, including a lot of the ETR programs. So, making proud choices and be properly responsible and others. And so on ETR's website, there's an alternative video guidance document that has some suggested videos to use instead or in place of the original videos. And again, check with your funder about doing that.

But these videos are first of all, more modern, they are more inclusive, [00:16:00] and they're in basically every case shorter. Which again we're talking online, Zoom fatigue, a shorter video that still has similar content, or even in a lot of cases updated newer information. That can be really helpful to shave down the time and to be able to utilize it better and to be more engaging, to have videos that young people aren't spending the entire time making fun of their wardrobe and instead are, kind of getting the message from the content.

Dr. Kineka Hull: Perfect. So, you've given us [00:16:30] a lot of recommendations for resources to assist with adaptation, especially checking with your curricula developer, to make sure that you are up to date on any new virtual or adaptation resources that they may be able to provide. Are there any other resources that you would like to mention?

Kelly Gainor: Sure, yes. So, in addition to the alternative video guidance, at least where ETR is concerned, for folks who use Making Proud [00:17:00] Choices, Reducing the Risk and Draw the Line/Respect the line, there are virtual adaptation documents available on our website and we'll include a link for those or send out a link for where you can find those. So, those go activity by activity and give suggestions for synchronous and asynchronous ways to deliver each activity.

So, they're really great resources and they can be useful even if you don't use those curricula because so many of these programs have similar, [00:17:30] every curriculum has a refusal skills, right? Everyone has a risk continuum, so you can kind of pull different things out. If you're using a curriculum by another developer, reach out to them, see what resources they have. I'm certain that most at this point have some kind of document that you can refer to. Or connect with each other, so if you know another grantee who's using the same curriculum, checkout and see what they're doing. Y'all end up being each other's best resources, ultimately. So, keep that in mind as well.

Dr. Kineka Hull: Thank you. That was some [00:18:00] great information and background knowledge on adaptations, fidelities that are key for all agencies and facilitators. So, let's transition that into how we can focus on working directly with the youth and making sure that we are meeting program requirements and giving the youth what they need to thrive.

So, you talked about shortening the lessons, but making sure that they stay in order and you're not losing content [00:18:30] so that we are meeting those with fidelity, but a lot of schools as we're going back you know, hybrid, or we're trying to make sure that we maximize our time that we have with youth. How else can we maximize this time in a virtual setting?

Kelly Gainor: So, It's interesting, because virtually there are a lot of ways that it might feel like you don't have as much time and there are some activities that might take a lot longer, but there's also the reverse of that is sometimes true. So, there are certain time wasters that are gone now. [00:19:00] So if class starts at a particular time, for the most part people log in to Zoom at that time, and there's not as much you know, passing in the halls and things like that. So, it's tricky, because some things take a lot longer and some things are actually shorter. So, the biggest piece of advice that I could give anybody is to plan ahead, right? Leave space, count out your minutes, do some math, and try to really figure out how you can utilize that space, [00:19:30] and make sure that you are leaving room even if you feel like I have half as much time as I normally do.

Leave space for ice breakers, for chit chat, because if you skip those things, you're going to end up having behavioral issues that will end up taking a lot more of your time. So just trying to plan ahead, practice if you're not used to delivering virtually. And when we were talking about adaptations earlier, I didn't mention that one step of adaptation that people often miss is tracking. So [00:20:00] once you figure out the adaptation, make sure that you check and see if it actually works.

Sometimes we have these really great ideas, right, and then it turns out that they fall flat. And that's okay, it just means you have to come up with something else. So, when we're talking about how to maximize time, is your adaptation taking longer instead of shorter, are people connecting with it the way that you want them to, or is it just wasting your time thinking about those things as well?

Dr. Kineka Hull: So, one of my favorite things as a facilitator is that a lot of the curricular come with a pacing guide. And so, I like [00:20:30] the idea of tracking, seeing if your adaptation is actually working, cutting out some of the fillers, sticking with what you actually need from that guide. Do you have any other recommendations as facilitators are scheduling or planning out their sessions?

Kelly Gainor: I think that the challenge as we're moving forward now is really about hybrid learning environments, because they mean so many different things [00:21:00] and they pose so many new challenges. I think, you know, by and large people are back in person at least partially, but virtual education is here to stay,

whether it's for snow days or increase in numbers and it's a temporary thing, there's always going to be some environments, some situations where you need to be thinking about hybrid and that's really challenging, and all of the guides and all of the materials are basically for either, if you have everyone in person. [00:21:26].

You have everybody [00:21:30] at home or everybody in the classroom. So what you want to try to do is make sure that your students, no matter where they are, are getting the same experience or as close to the same experience as you can. So, if there is small group work in the in-person space, there should be small group work in the virtual space. You just have to figure out how to do that.

And so, that might look like making some activities asynchronous, that everyone can have the same experience doing that, breakout rooms for your virtual students while the in-person students work in small groups, [00:22:00] and finding ways for both to interact. We don't want it to be like the in person versus the virtual, right? We want to figure out ways to cross that.

Dr. Kineka Hull: So, are there any resources that you would recommend for maximizing time in a virtual or a hybrid environment?

Kelly Gainor: Yeah. So, those adaptation guides that I mentioned earlier have suggestions again, for both synchronous and asynchronous adaptations so that you can figure out how to maximize your time. And they will mention which activities [00:22:30] are really best in person or best live, right? So make sure you have time for those and then figure out what are some things that yeah, all right, this activity. You know, they'll get the same knowledge, skills or attitudes from doing this activity online on their own time versus during the class period.

And again, I mentioned this already, but co-facilitate if it's at all possible and if you can't, but you're going into someone else's classroom, lean on them. Lean on that [00:23:00] teacher. They don't get a free period just because you're coming in and delivering, Making Proud Choices that day. They can be monitoring the chat, they can be helping you practice the role play for the group, make sure that you're thinking about ways that they can reduce time that's getting wasted, by putting things in the chat and being the person to speak when you're desperately staring at the black boxes hoping someone will talk.

Dr. Kineka Hull: I know as a grantee; teachers were my best friend. A pack of paper and markers [00:23:30] or some type of classroom supplies goes a long way whenever you need an extra hand. So, we have a couple of submitted questions that I want to see if we can get some answers for that may be helpful to our listeners. So, the first one is, I'm trying to prevent student burnout and I'm finding that 45-to-60-minute lessons are making the burnout worse, especially online. Are there any evidence-based curriculums that have 15-minute lessons?

Kelly Gainor: [00:24:00] You know, unfortunately I can't think of any interventions that are that short. I think there may be some in the pipeline that may be coming in the future, but there's nothing that I know of right now that is evidence based that's that short. But, you know, with that having been said, as long as you keep the activities in order, as we've been saying, taking an intervention and cutting it up into smaller sessions is usually doable. That's usually considered within the guidelines of fidelity.

You know That's how we have school editions [00:24:30] of the same curricula that also have a community edition and they're shorter. All that's really done there is some reorganizing to make sure that you can stop activities at a time that makes sense for the program. So thinking about how you can cut it up into smaller sessions, or again, figuring out what activities don't have to be synchronous. If there's not a need for it to happen with everyone in the same Zoom room, then don't have it in the same Zoom room. The more that you can make asynchronous, [00:25:00] the more that you'll be able to focus and avoid burnout in those sessions that you do have.

Dr. Kineka Hull: Perfect. I like those suggestions. So, our second question is, how can we be more student-focused and provide education that incorporates topics that aren't just about prevention or overcoming the negative consequences of sex, and instead is more sex-positive, relationship-based, and incorporates more conversations around consent, not just refusal skills.

Kelly Gainor: That's a great question, and that's one [00:25:30] that's near and dear to my heart. I really believe strongly in evidence-based interventions. I think they are really great resources and so much better than a lot of the other resources and a lot of the other sex education that's happening in this country, and there's so much more that we could be doing.

So, within the confines of your funding and of these programs, there are still some ways that you can be more youth-focused and cover a little bit [00:26:00] more of what we might call healthy sexuality, not just avoiding risk, but becoming a sexually healthy person. So, the first suggestion that I have is to lean more on the adult preparation topics. So, as a former grantee myself, sometimes the adult preparation topics are this, you grumble that you have to cover more than just what your curriculum has and you already have precious little time with your students.

But this is a place where you can [00:26:30] usually create the materials that you use yourself. That means it's an opportunity to bring in some more content around consent, if that's an area that you want to focus on. Healthy relationships is one of the adult preparation topics, so bringing consent into that conversation, that's a place you can do that. Talking about different sexual orientations and gender identities could be done as part of the adult preparation topics, right? That's my first suggestion, right? You have these lessons that you're probably [00:27:00] making yourself or that you're pulling from other resources. They usually happen either before or after the

intervention, which means that it's not going to affect fidelity. This is your chance to try to set some groundwork.

Then the second suggestion is that there's also lots of ways that you can reframe activities that are within your curriculum to make them more youth-focused, to make them more up to speed. So, an example that comes to my mind is refusal skills, because the refusal skills, probably [00:27:30] in any of the interventions that y'all are using, are very much about teaching one person how to say no and not teaching the other person how to listen. Right, Kineka?

Dr. Kineka Hull: That's right.

Kelly Gainor: I'll use the example of SWOT, which you find in all the Jamaat curricula, because that's just what I'm familiar with, but I'm sure that it's similar in lots of other interventions as well. When I train folks on this activity, there's really some easy ways to bring affirmative consent into the conversation [00:28:00] by framing this SWAT technique, saying no, explain why, provide alternatives and talk it out, as a conversation, not as saying no to something sexually that's happening in that moment, right?

So, you can talk about it as a boundary setting activity versus a refusal skills activity, right? Saying no should be enough to get someone to stop doing whatever they're doing, and they should really be waiting for a yes before they do it in the first place. [00:28:30] And having the conversation about why you're not comfortable about what else you could do instead about your feelings and talking about it. This is how you and a partner connect and you can help them to understand your boundaries. You can understand their boundaries, right?

So, hopefully the conversation about what outcomes sexual health programs should be looking for will continue to evolve. And maybe the focus on some of these risk prevention will shift and maybe [00:29:00] it'll be about accessing clinic services. Maybe it'll be about some other measure of being healthy versus the absence of disease. But for now, these are some examples of working with what we have and working within these programs. And something as simple as just changing the language, maybe it's an adaptation, maybe it's not even an adaptation, right? Sometimes just changing a word or two really makes all the difference.

Dr. Kineka Hull: Wow. Kelly, thank you so much. This has been invaluable [00:29:30] information. I'm sure that it will be something that all of our listeners can find useful based on our discussion. So, as we wrap up this episode on navigating a new norm, what are your key takeaways that you would like for everyone to walk away with?

Kelly Gainor: Thank you again, Kineka, for having me on. I really enjoy getting to talk about this, as a former grantee myself and a virtual implementer and a virtual trainer now in my role with ETR. The [00:30:00] first thing, not a particularly sexy

answer, but planning is the key to successful implementation and virtual or hybrid environments, taking a little bit of time beforehand. I know many of us have been using these canned curricula for years and years to the point where we know where every comma and period is in the entire book, but taking it with fresh eyes is so important right now and saying, "Okay, I know this is how I've always done it, but this is a new world and there may be some changes that can help." [00:30:30] So taking the time to do that and to track how it works.

Also, the new norm, it's not just about how you are expected to facilitate, but it's also about how you're defining program success. Program success virtually is a little bit different, right? If we've redefined what classroom looks like to incorporate being on camera and using the thumbs up, then we need to incorporate what success looks like, getting those thumbs up, you know, having people [00:31:00] talk more on chat. I've seen it happen, where things that people were embarrassed to say out loud in a classroom, they're actually much more likely to be comfortable typing into a chat box instead.

So, in some cases, the participation is actually better virtually. It's just that it looks different, and I think sometimes that is hard for educators, for facilitators to really see. Then finally, there's lots of resources and lessons learned to take into account, this isn't two years ago, right, we've [00:31:30] been doing this for a while now.

So, reach out to your curriculum developer, reach out to your funder, reach out to your colleagues, other folks who are implementing similar interventions and see what they're doing, because some people have had some really amazing ideas and some really great innovation. Again, y'all are your own best resource. Talk to each other and try to find some of those great ways to reinvigorate your young people and your programming.

Dr. Kineka Hull: [00:32:00] Thanks, Kelly. This has been a fantastic discussion. Thank you for sharing all of your experience and expertise to help our facilitators and youth-serving agencies navigate this new norm.

Kelly Gainor: Thanks, Kineka. I've really enjoyed being here.

Dr. Kineka Hull: If you enjoyed today's conversation, be sure to like and follow Elevate Youth Programming on your podcast platform of choice. For information on today's topic and resources on adolescent pregnancy prevention, visit The Exchange [00:32:30] at teenpregnancy.acf.hhs.gov.

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