

BRINGING SEX EDUCATION INTO THE 21ST CENTURY THROUGH STORYTELLING AND TECHNOLOGY

Marisa V. Cervantes, MA

Claudia Nunez-Eddy, MS

Healthy Teen Network Conference
October 17-19, 2022

CREATIVE WARM-UP

Person 1

Write a sentence
(pro tip: write a
sentence that
can be depicted
visually)

Person 2

Draw a picture
that
represents the
sentence

Person 3

Write a
sentence to
represent the
picture

Person 4

Draw a picture
that represents
the sentence

Person 5

Write a
sentence to
represent
the picture



SHARE OUT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Assess tradeoffs required when developing a tech-based sex education curriculum.
- Develop strategies for balancing breadth and depth when using short-form story-based content.
- Describe the power of youth-centered storytelling as a teaching tool.
- Identify strategies to incorporate trauma informed approaches to digital sexual health interventions.



PRESENTERS



Marisa V. Cervantes, MA

- Project Director
- MyHealthEd, Inc.



Claudia Nunez-Eddy, MS

- Program Manager
- Power to Decide

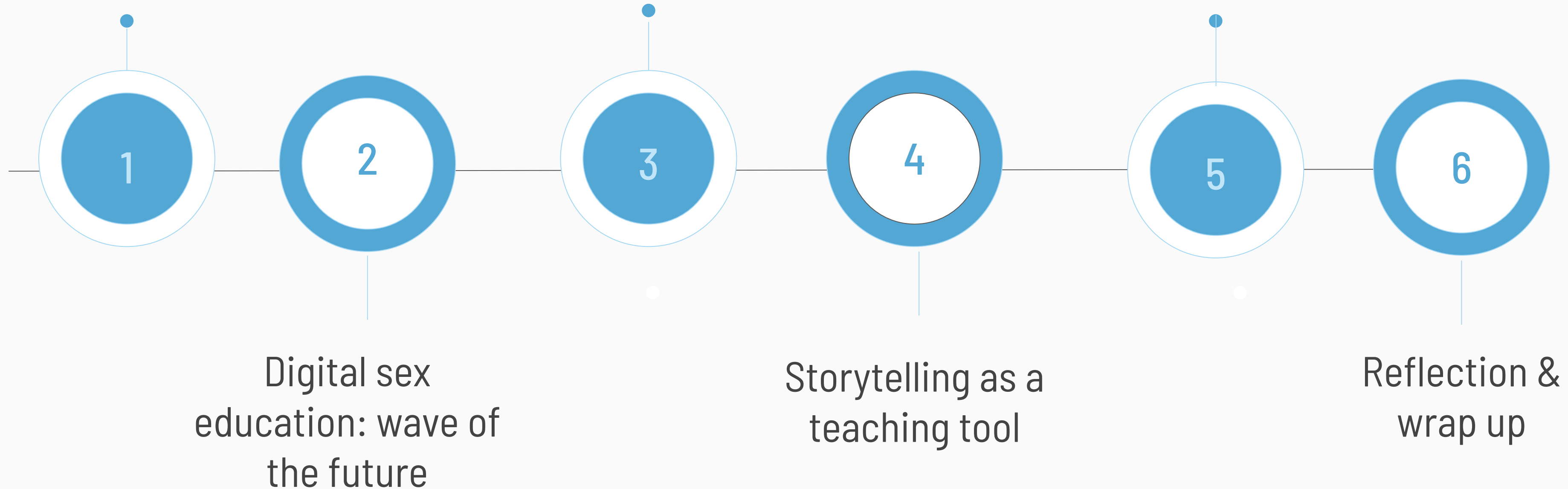


OUR LEARNING JOURNEY TODAY

Creative warm-up
& introductions

Strategies for digital
content delivery

Trauma-informed approaches
in digital interventions



**DIGITAL SEX
EDUCATION: WAVE
OF THE FUTURE**

THE DESIRE FOR DIGITAL SEX EDUCATION

THE RESEARCH TELLS US THAT TEENS...

- Get “a lot” of their health information online
- Prefer using the internet for health info (except when it’s an immediate health concern of their own)
- Turn to the internet seeking supportive, validating communities, and relevant, accurate information
 - This is especially true for LGBTQ+ youth
- Feel positively about using mobile apps and SMS texting to receive sexual health information



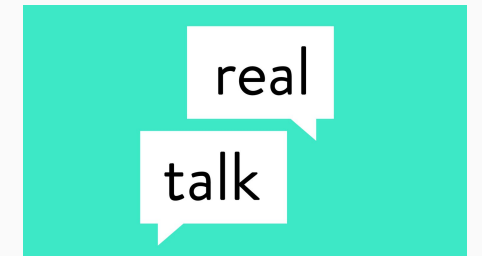
GETTING STARTED WITH DIGITAL SEX ED

How might we deliver personalized sex education to middle school students using mobile technology?

WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

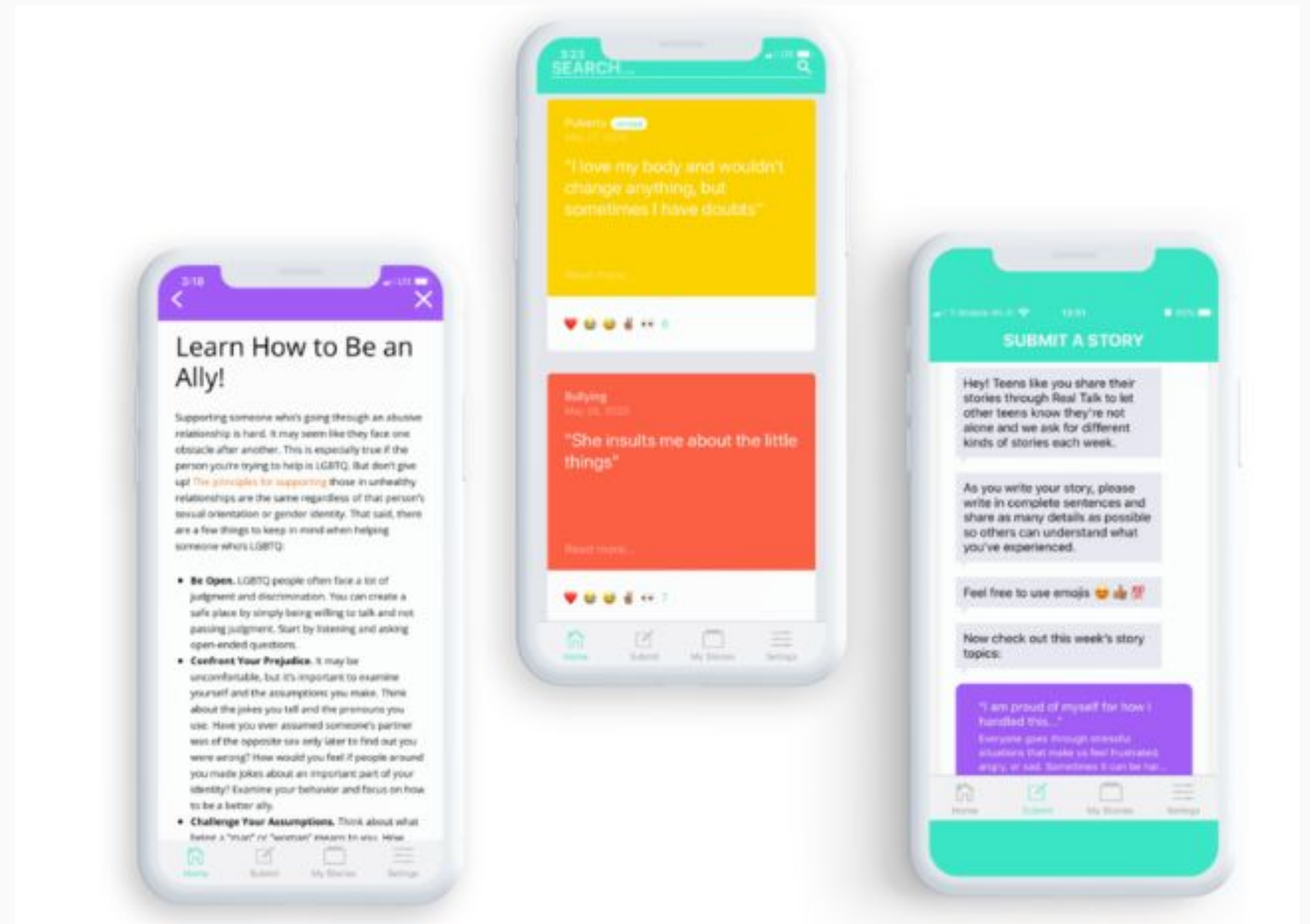
- Schools are not where teens want to learn about sex and relationships
- Concerns over privacy, safety, and credibility of information
- Mobile apps are preferred over computers/browsers

REAL TALK APP



Real Talk is a mobile app using storytelling and technology to improve teen mental, emotional, and behavioral health.

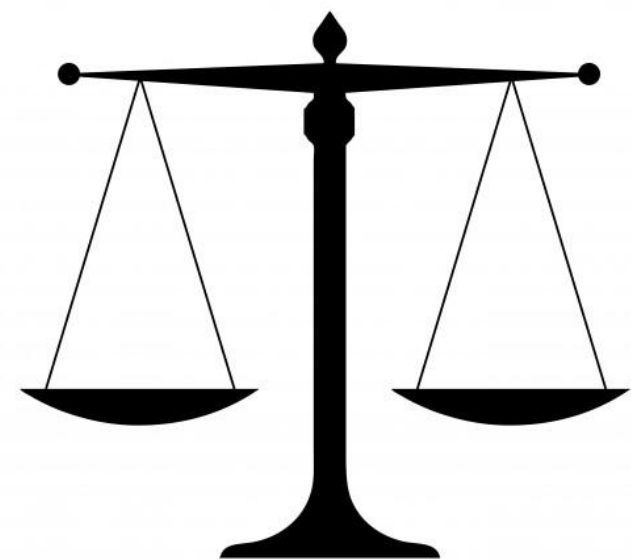
Real Talk provides a safe space for youth to share their stories and access relevant, accurate resources to support their health and wellbeing.



DIGITAL SEX EDUCATION INNOVATION

BENEFITS

- Innovative approach
- Responds to youths' needs & preferences
- Accessibility



LIMITATIONS

- No human interaction
- Recruitment and retention
- Concerns of privacy, credibility, safety

STRATEGIES FOR DIGITAL CONTENT DELIVERY

EFFECTIVE DIGITAL CONTENT

WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US

- Fuzzy trace theory: stories are easier for teen brains to recall compared to facts and stats
- Culturally relevant programs
- Skill-building based approaches

WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

- Prefer text messages over prose, videos, and images
- Don't want to feel like they're in school and being lectured at - don't want to take quizzes and read long articles
- Prefer information through stories rather than facts
- Teens like reading stories from different perspectives



**PUTTING THE
DATA INTO
PRACTICE**

LESSON DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Find a partner

1. Together, review the in-person lesson plan
2. Decide what key information should be included in a digital intervention - remember, effective digital interventions use short form content



LESSON DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

With your partner, find another pair

3. Discuss and compare how each of you adapted the content from the in-person lesson plan for a digital intervention.



LESSON DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Share out!



What other strategies could you use to cover content you didn't include in written format?

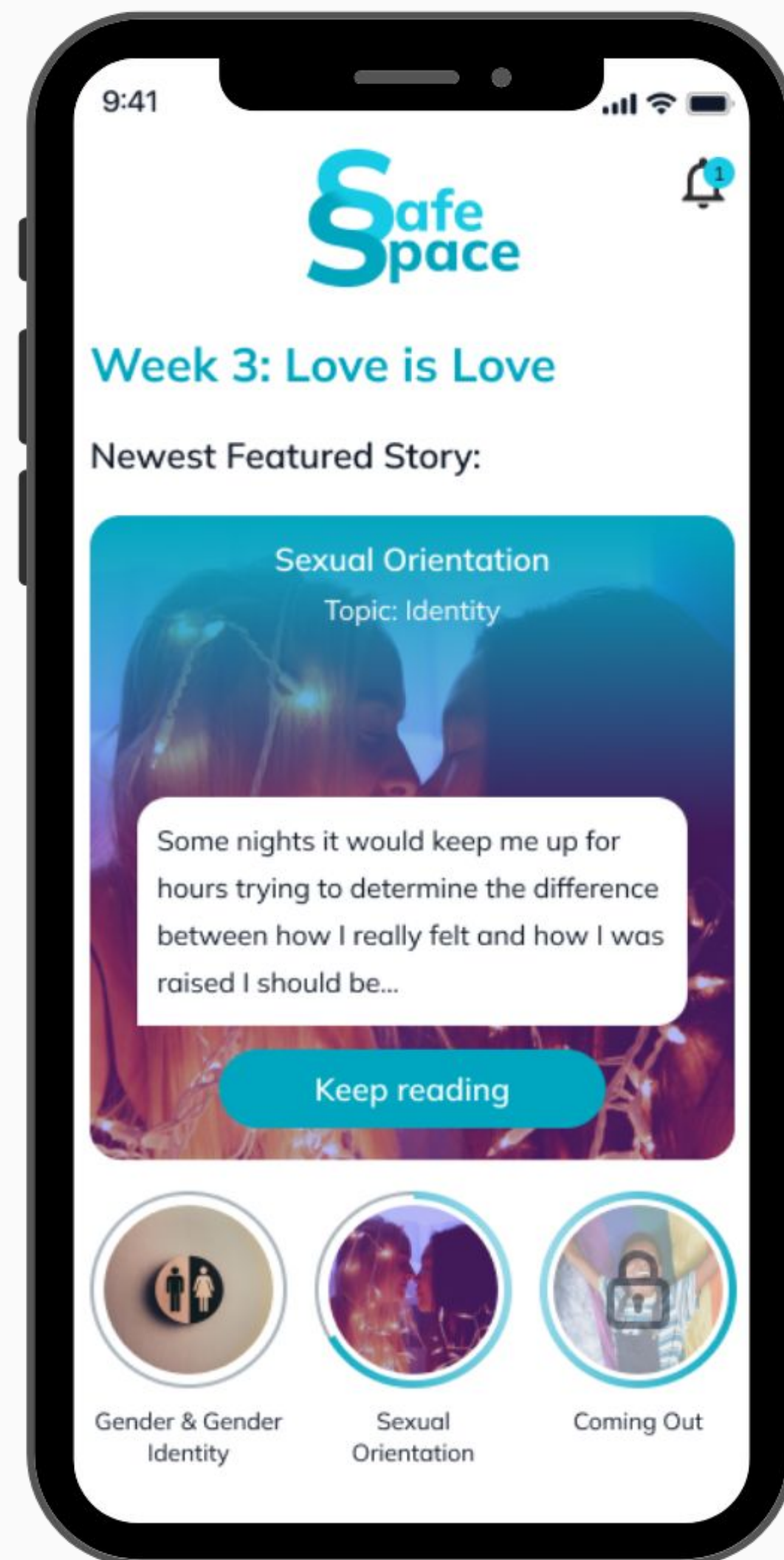
LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION



**LET'S LOOK AT
AN EXAMPLE**

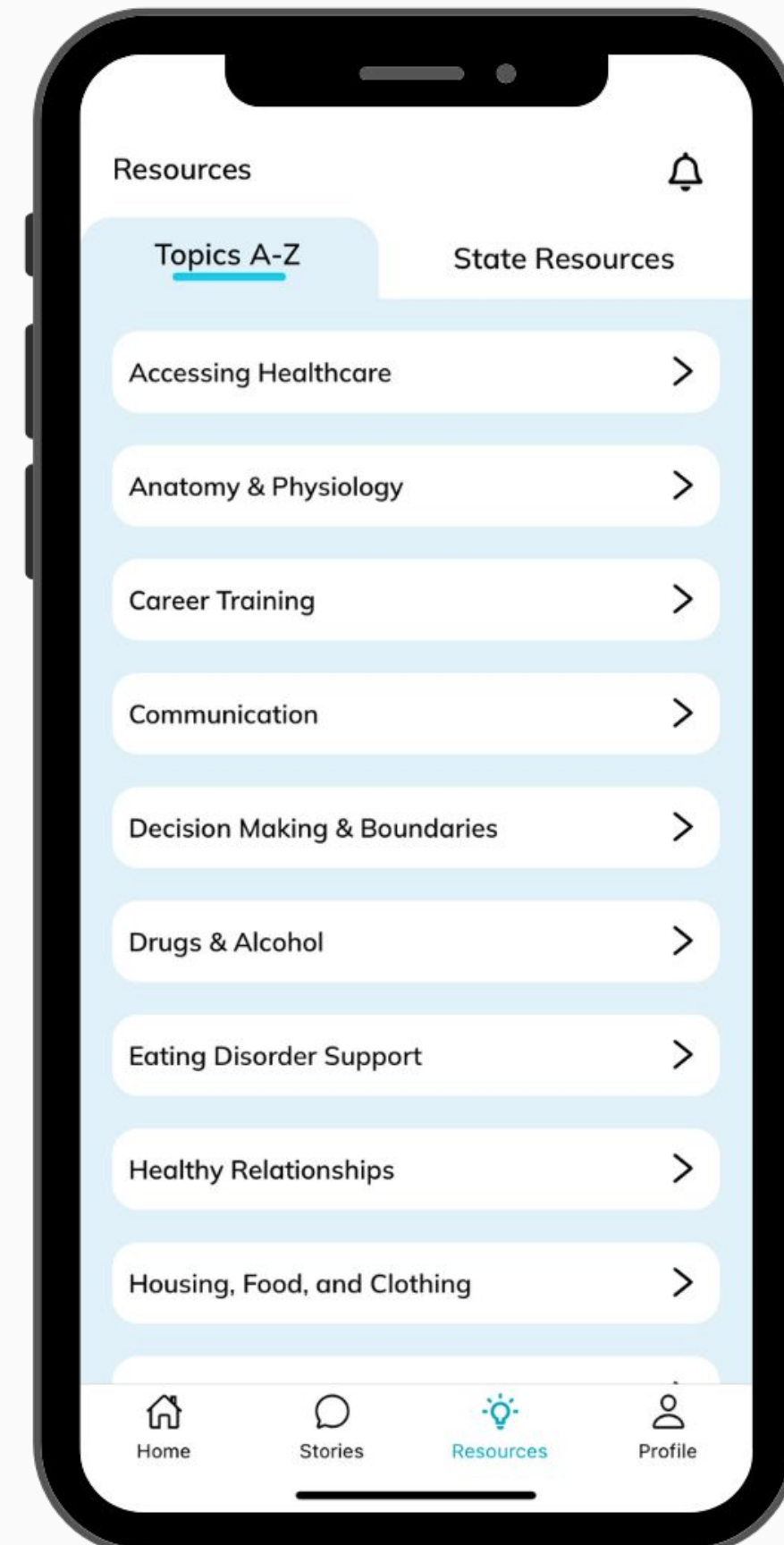
SAFESPACE

An adaptation of Real Talk



PROGRAM TOPICS AND RESOURCES

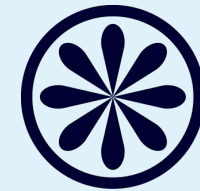
- Week 1: Healthy Relationships
- Week 2: Identity
- Week 3: Adolescent Development
- Week 4: Sex & Anatomy
- Week 5: Preventing STIs/HIV
- Week 6: Pregnancy Prevention
- Week 7: Decision Making & Boundaries
- Week 8: Personal Safety
- Week 9: Communication Skills
- Week 10: Accessing Healthcare Services



LESSON STRUCTURE



1 authentic youth story
on aligned topics



3 key facts written by
sexual health experts



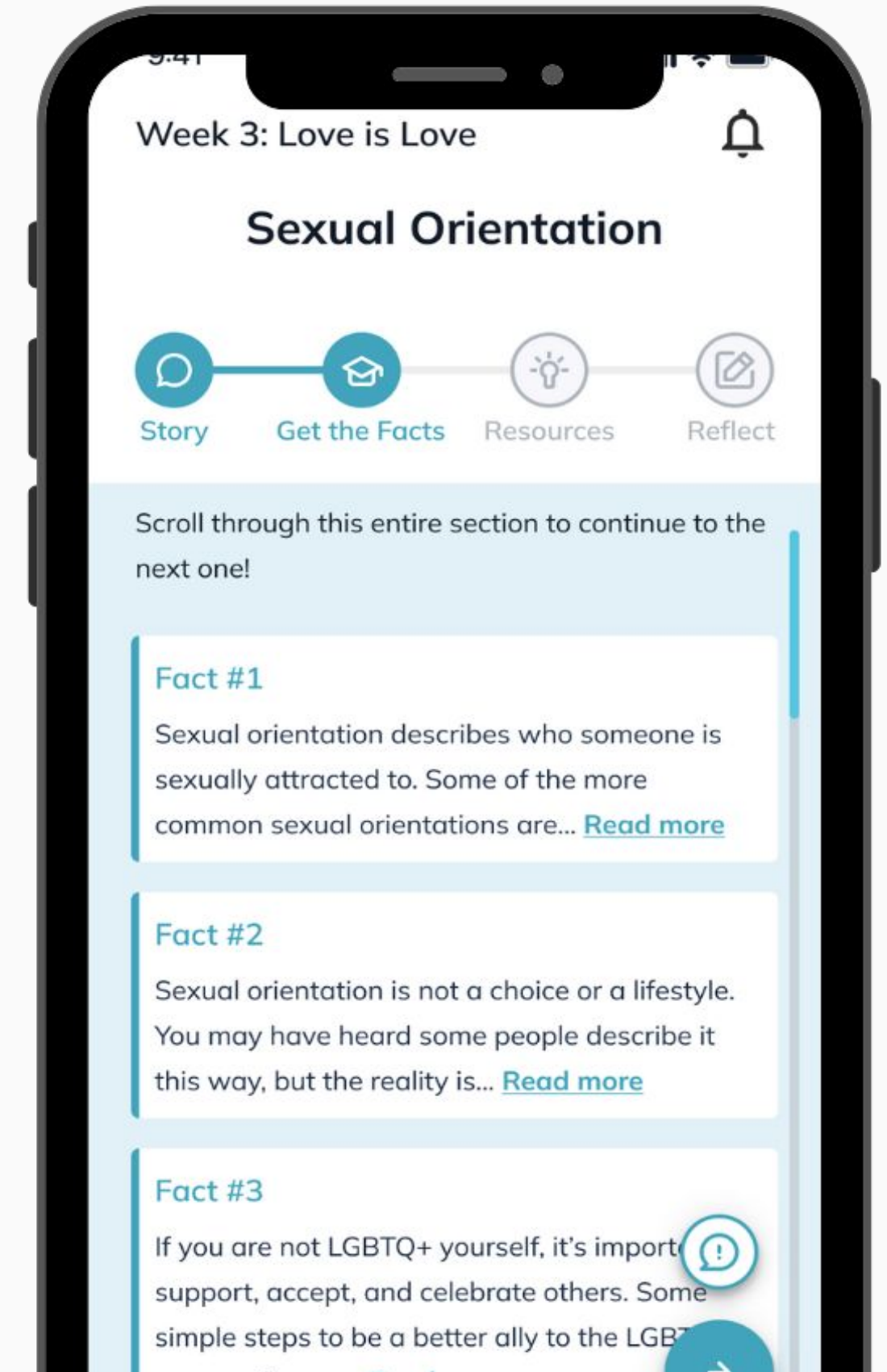
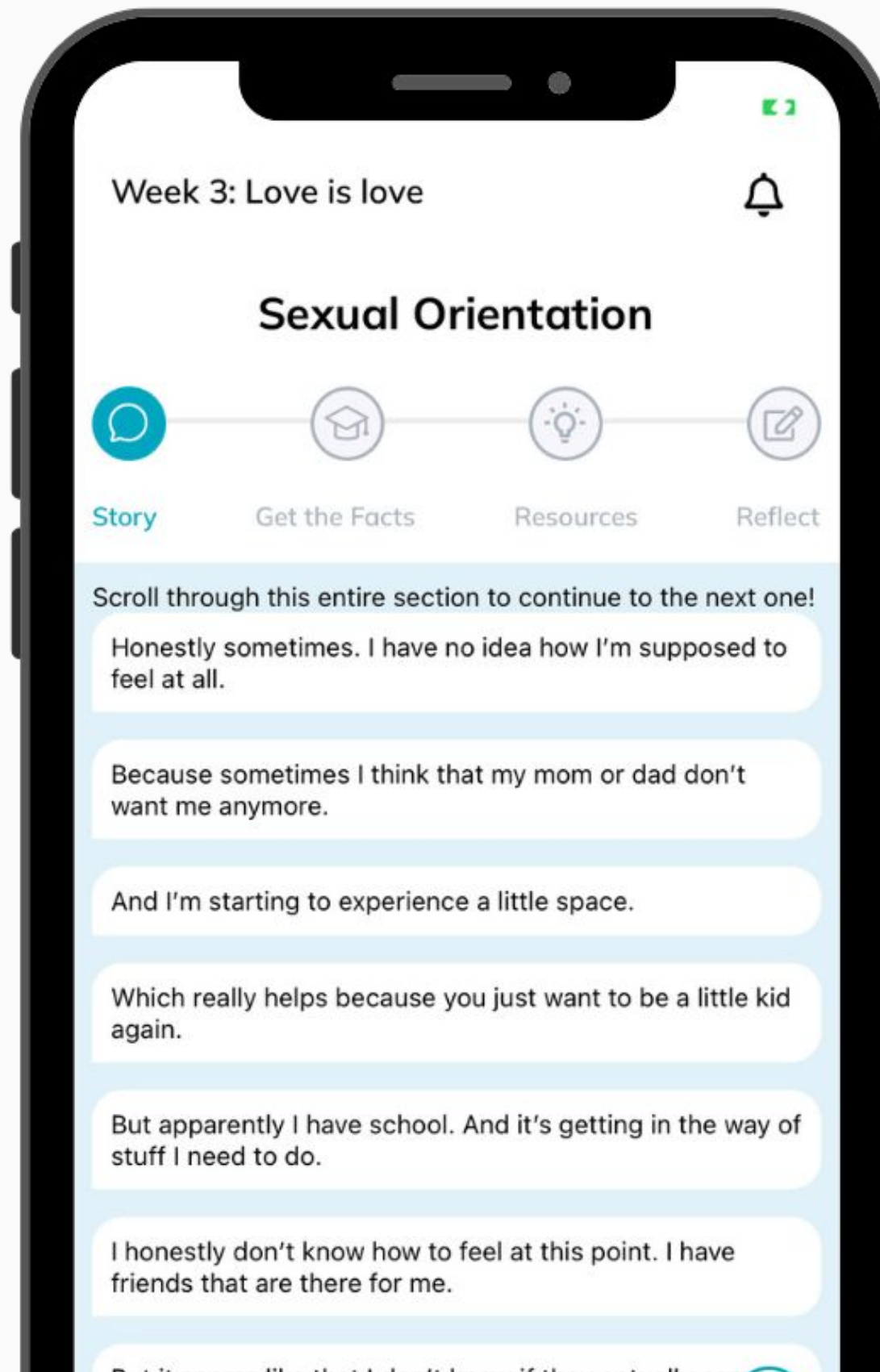
3 high quality online
resources to learn more



Reflection activity to apply
knowledge and skills

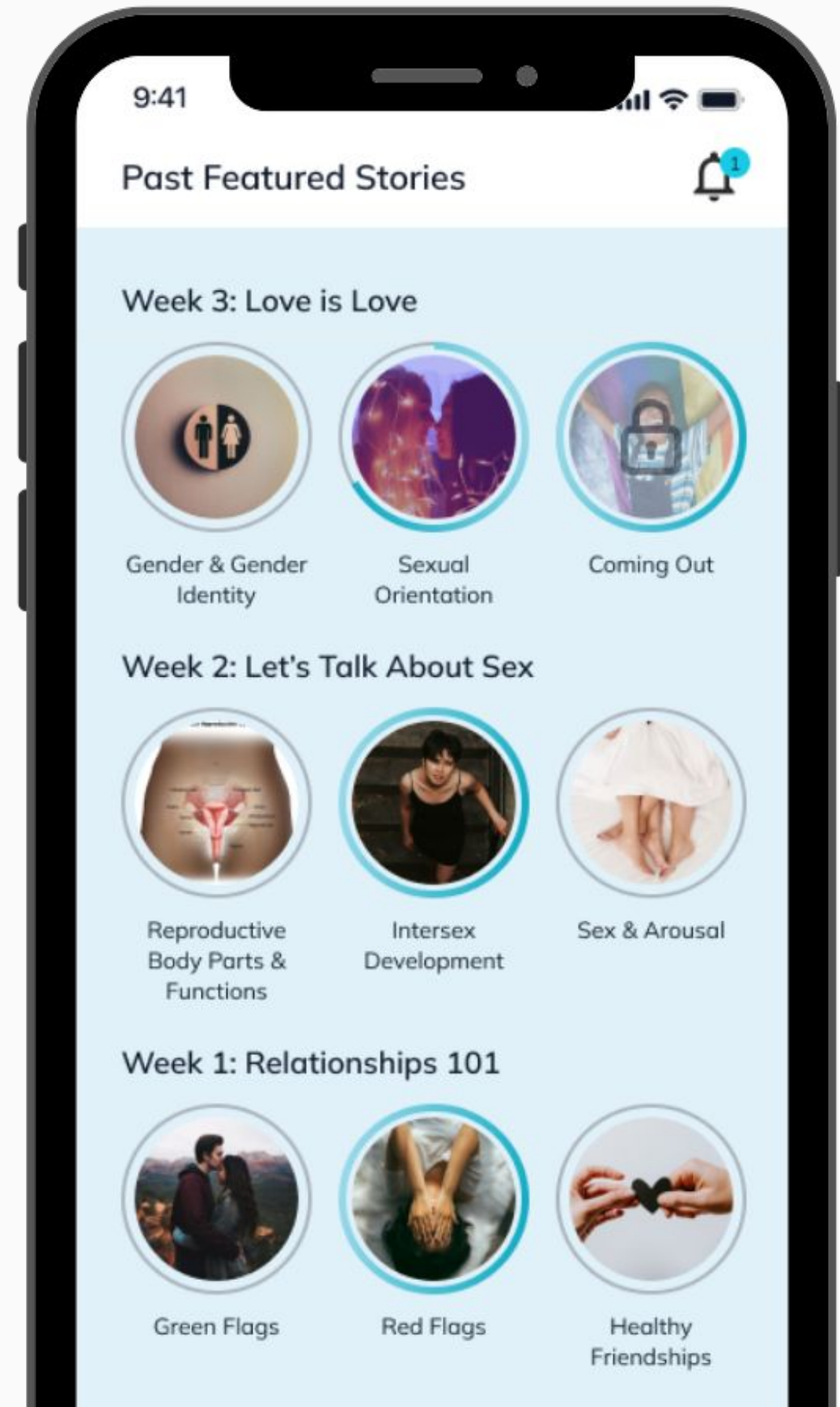
SHORT-FORM CONTENT STRATEGIES

- Storytelling
- Text message style
- Key takeaways
- Drop downs
- Additional resources



DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Rolling start vs. batched start
- Gamification
- Social media style progress bars
- Reflection opportunities
- Reminders & in-app notifications



STORYTELLING AS A TEACHING TOOL

THINKING BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE A TEEN, RAISE YOUR HAND IF...

- You remember hearing a story about sex/relationships
- You shared stories about your own experiences with your peers



REFLECTING ON STORIES

We're going to continue to think about the stories we heard when we were younger...

1. Individually, write down your top 1-3 answers for each of the following questions (one per post-it note)

REFLECTING ON STORIES

1. Individually, write down your top 1-3 answers for the following questions (one per post-it note)

1. From whom did you most often hear stories about sex or relationships? **(yellow)**
2. Whose stories did you seek out? **(pink)**
3. Where did you go to hear them? **(blue)**
4. Whose stories did you want to hear? **(green)**
5. Whose stories stayed with you? **(purple)**

REFLECTING ON STORIES

2. As a table, have each person share their top 1-3 out loud
3. Once everyone has shared, look at all your post-it notes and cluster similar ideas or themes
4. Be prepared to share with the group

1. From whom did you most often hear stories about sex or relationships? **(yellow)**
2. Whose stories did you seek out? **(pink)**
3. Where did you go to hear them? **(blue)**
4. Whose stories did you want to hear? **(green)**
5. Whose stories stayed with you? **(purple)**

REFLECTING ON STORIES

Share Out!

1. From whom did you most often hear stories about sex or relationships? **(yellow)**
2. Whose stories did you seek out? **(pink)**
3. Where did you go to hear them? **(blue)**
4. Whose stories did you want to hear? **(green)**
5. Whose stories stayed with you? **(purple)**

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

- Stories are powerful, long lasting, and effective!
- Storytelling is a method that has been used throughout history and continues to be used today
 - Stories are told in interviews, narratives, memoirs, and more
 - We learn from the experiences of others

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

- The power to storytelling was confirmed with end users for Real Talk
 - Youth preferred stories over facts, images, and videos
 - Youth wanted to learn about others, especially those different from them
- Stories can be used in combination with other materials to provide an inclusive, comprehensive understanding of sexual health topics



"I felt that real stories from real teenagers can be more effective in helping than articles made by adults who haven't lived the experience."

Sample Story



"Occasionally with my significant other there have been situations where one of us wanted to have sex and the other one wasn't interested. I'm really glad we can openly communicate about the fact that we might not want to at a certain point in time and that nothing needs to change or be weird because of that. You're not always going to have the same desires as the other person, which is why it's so important to get consent before anything happens. I was accepting of the rejection and we kept hanging out."

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

- Alignment with the CDC's National Health Education Standards (NHES)
- Developmentally appropriate content for high quality health education programming
- Engagement & impact
 - Real Talk improves socio-emotional competencies, knowledge, skills, and other positive health behaviors.

73%

of all Real Talk stories reviewed aligned to at least one knowledge standard

Percentage of Knowledge Standards with Aligned Real Talk Stories



of all knowledge standards had at least 1 aligned story



of SH knowledge standards had at least 1 aligned story



of MH knowledge standards had at least 1 aligned story

64%

of all knowledge standards with aligned Real Talk stories had 5 or more aligned stories per standard

real
talk

**TRAUMA-INFORMED
APPROACHES IN DIGITAL
INTERVENTIONS**

TABLE BRAINSTORM

Using the paper at your table..

1. Draw a line down the middle of your paper
2. Label the left side "in-person sex education"
3. Together, list trauma-informed approaches used in in-person sex education

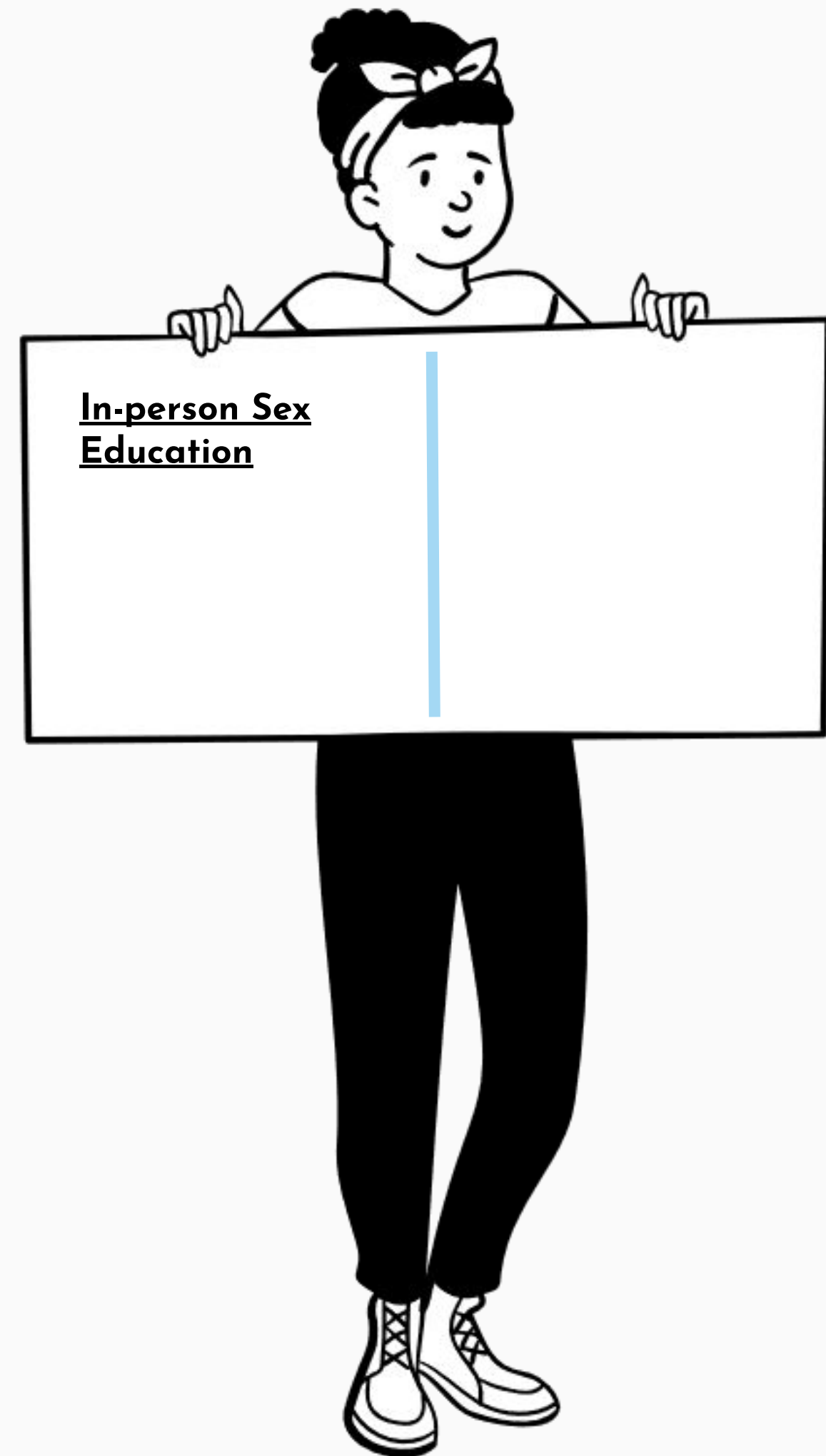


TABLE BRAINSTORM

Using the paper at your table..

4. Together, discuss whether these trauma-informed approaches and strategies could be used in digital interventions. What are the challenges?

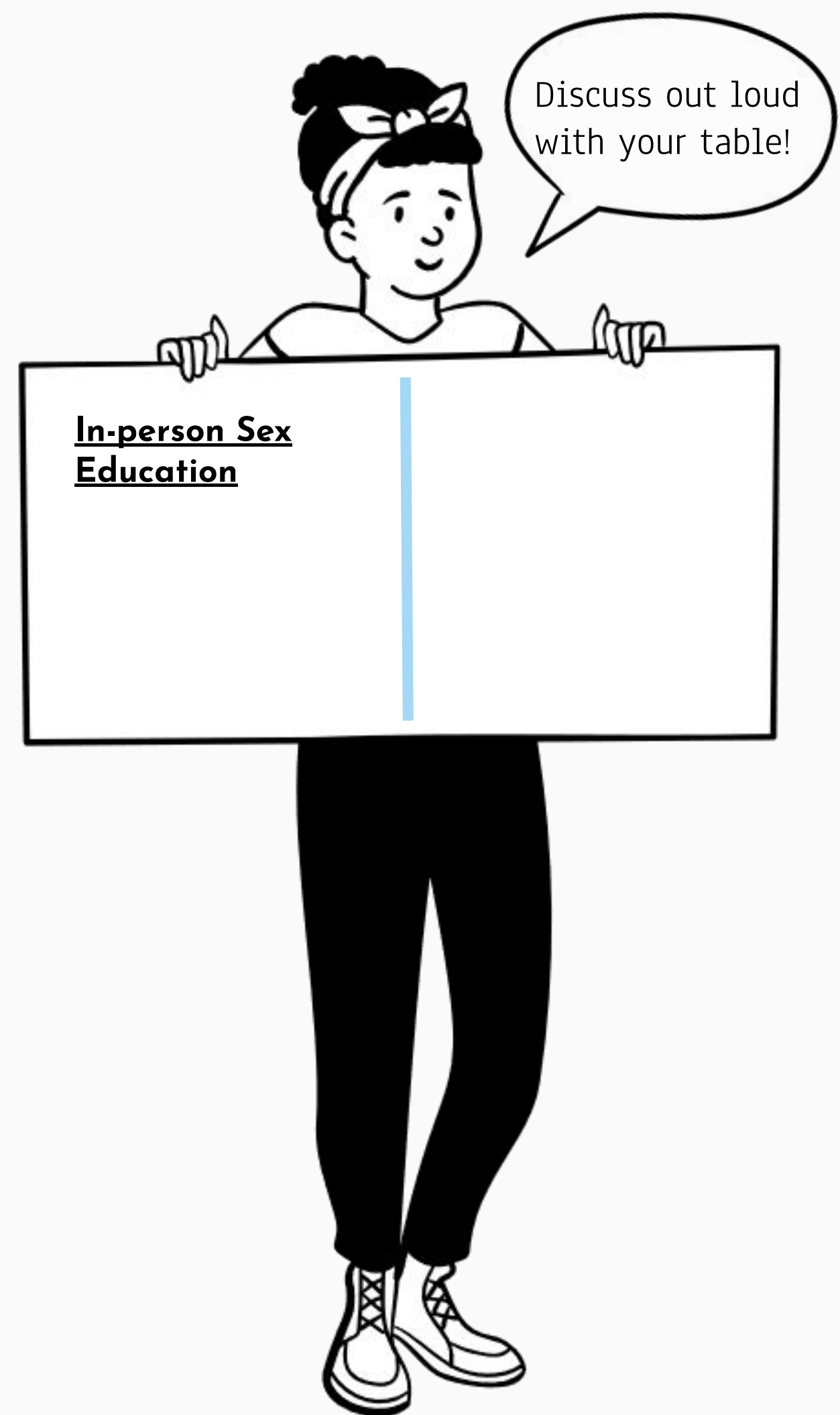
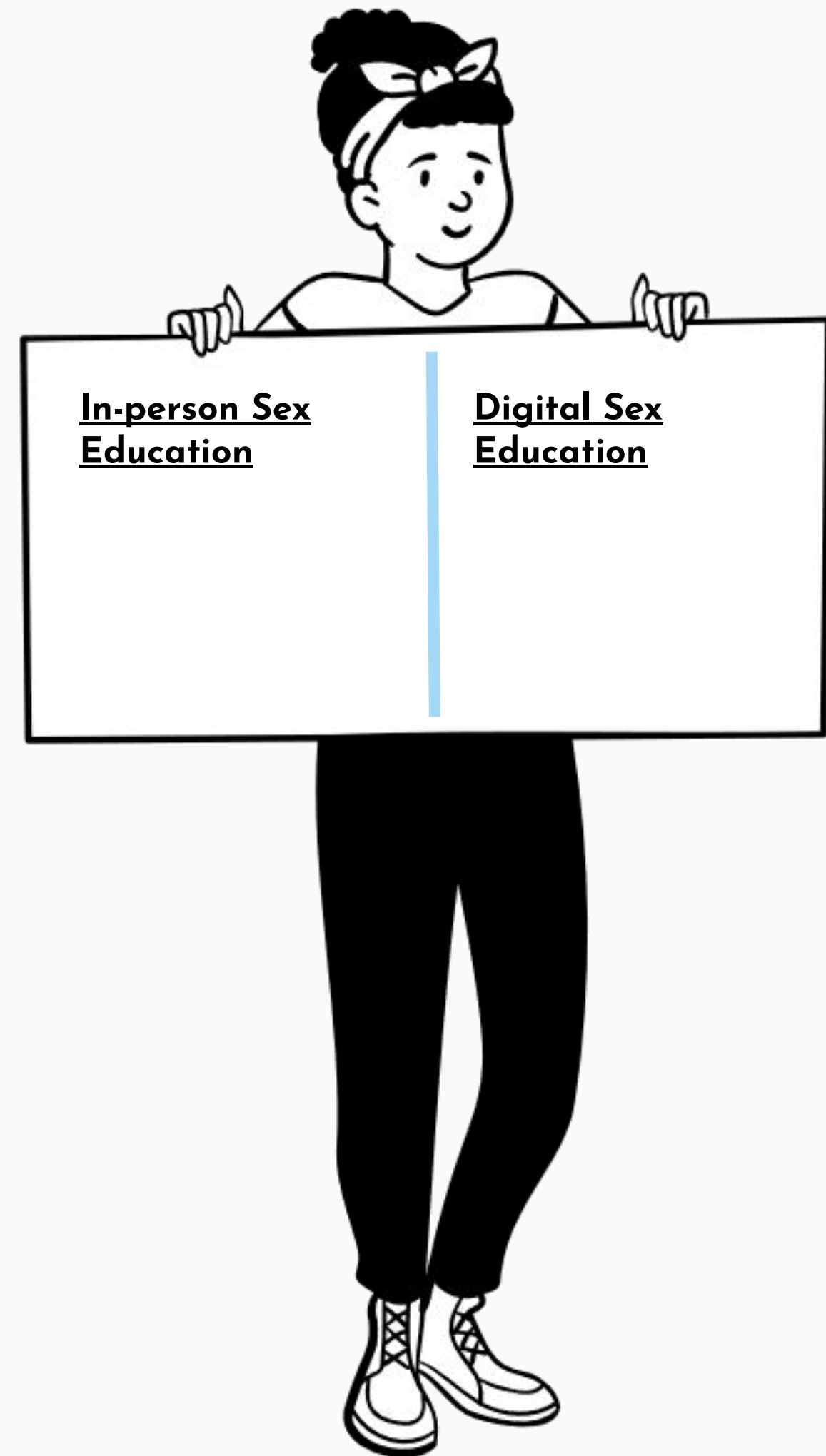


TABLE BRAINSTORM

Using the paper at your table..

5. Label the right side digital sex education
6. First, list approaches that can carry over from in-person to digital
7. Together, brainstorm additional trauma-informed approaches that could be used in digital sex education



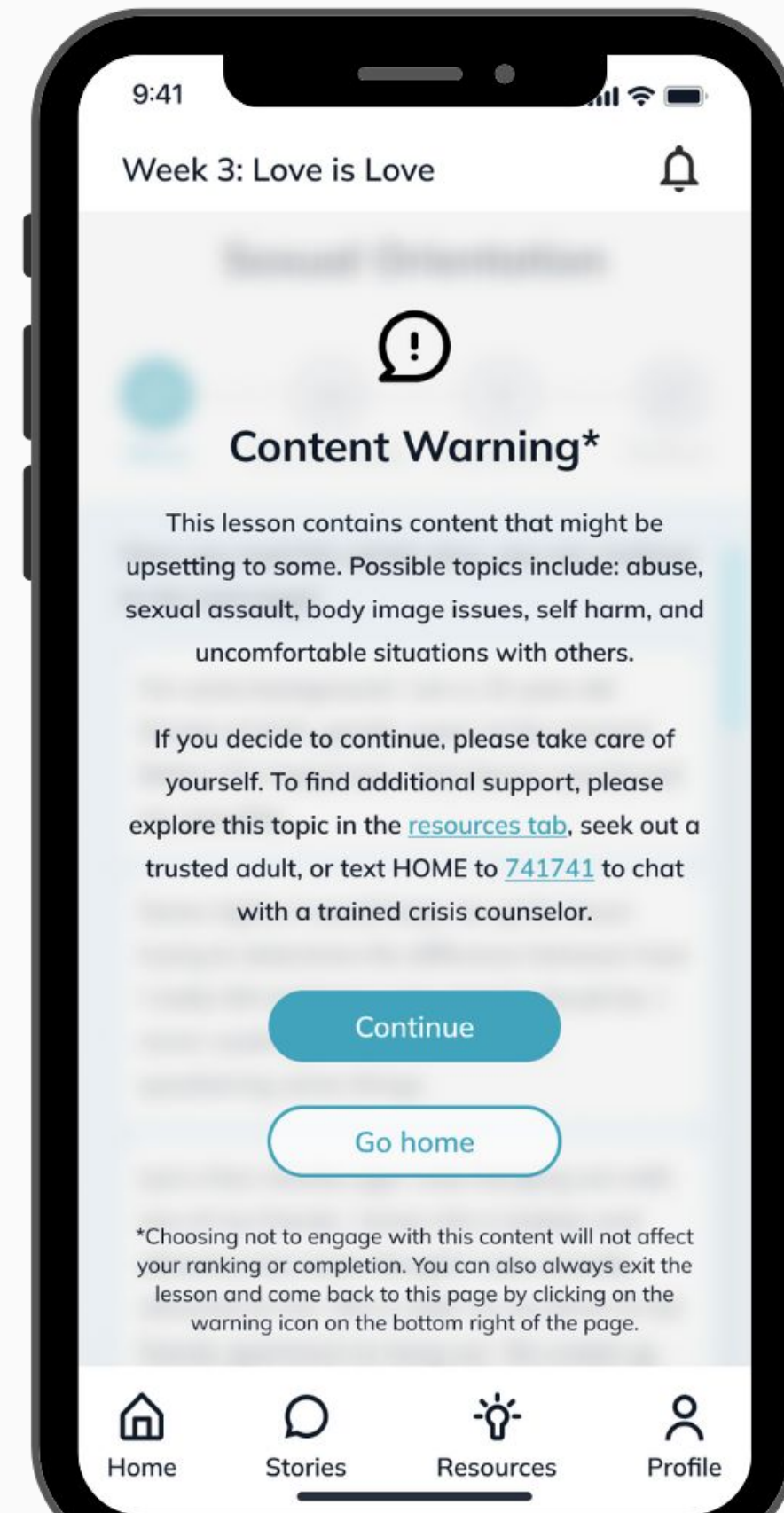
TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Mutual collaboration
- Peer support
- Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Cultural, historical, gender issues

SAFESPACE TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

SAFETY

- Content warnings
- Escape button
- Response to reflection prompts



SAFESPACE TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRANSPARENCY

- App designation (health or education)
- Notifications
- Information about mandatory reporting
- Preview of what's coming next
- Description of specific topics
- Crisis hotline information & other resources

SAFESPACE TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

PEER SUPPORT

COLLABORATION AND MUTUALITY

- Youth storytelling
- Normalizing feelings
- Providing relevant resources and support specific to the content

SAFESPACE TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

EMPOWERMENT, VOICE, CHOICE

CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, GENDER ISSUES

- Language around consent and choice
- Language and stories from youth of diverse gender and sexual orientations
- Opportunities for reflection



BREATHING EXERCISE TO CLOSE

REFLECTION

**On separate post-it
notes, please
write...**

- 3 things you learned about storytelling and digital sexual health interventions
- 2 things you will do to integrate youth stories into your work
- 1 thing you still wonder about with regards to digital interventions

CITATIONS

1. Wartella, E., Rideout, V., Montague, H., Beaudoin-Ryan, L., & Lauricella, A. (2016). Teens, health and technology: A national survey. *Media and communication, 4*(3), 13-23.
2. Okoniewski, A. E., Lee, Y. J., Rodriguez, M., Schnall, R., & Low, A. F. (2014). Health information seeking behaviors of ethnically diverse adolescents. *Journal of immigrant and minority health, 16*(4), 652-660.
3. Steinke, J., Root-Bowman, M., Estabrook, S., Levine, D. S., & Kantor, L. M. (2017). Meeting the needs of sexual and gender minority youth: formative research on potential digital health interventions. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 60*(5), 541-548.
4. Perry, R. C., Kayekjian, K. C., Braun, R. A., Cantu, M., Sheoran, B., & Chung, P. J. (2012). Adolescents' perspectives on the use of a text messaging service for preventive sexual health promotion. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 51*(3), 220-225.
5. Selkie, E. M., Benson, M., & Moreno, M. (2011). Adolescents' views regarding uses of social networking websites and text messaging for adolescent sexual health education. *American Journal of Health Education, 42*(4), 205-212.
6. Chen, E., & Mangone, E. R. (2016). A systematic review of apps using mobile criteria for adolescent pregnancy

**THANK
YOU!!**

Marisa V. Cervantes, MA

Project Director, MyHealthEd, Inc.

marisa@myhealthed.org

<https://myhealthed.org>

Claudia Nunez-Eddy, MS

Program Manager, Power to Decide

cnunezeddy@powertodecide.org

<https://powertodecide.org>

What Did You Think?

Please remember to fill out this session's survey!

1. Go to the Schedule
2. Find & open this session.
3. Scroll down.
4. Select *Session Survey*.
5. Complete & submit!

