

“Working The Room”: Transmission of HIV/Hep/STIs.

By Nanciellen Poulin

Needed: various kinds of candies, small (sandwich or snack sized) baggies. We’ve used Tootsie Rolls, chocolate & other flavors, atomic fireballs, Smartees, Squirrel Nuts, Mary Janes, different kinds of mints...anything that is individually wrapped. Have used mini candy bars just to grab their interest. I’ve gotten some atomic fire balls, the jelly- fruit wedges & other things. If your local market has a bulk candy section, great. If not, the el-cheapo stuff works good.

Put an equal number (but mix ‘em up), candies in each bag.

Identify for yourself which item will represent the 3 – HIV, Hep C and STI

- I don’t do much for an introduction. I tell them to just reach into the bag or basket and take 1 baggie of candy.
- They’re instructed **not to eat** anything yet.
- They’re told they have a few minutes to check out what others have and they can make swaps, if they choose to do so.
- After a few minutes they’re called back together.
- I’ll ask if anyone opted not to swap. Count hands. They are the abstainers.
- I’ll then hold up a jelly - fruit wedge . Count hands. I tell them they’ve been exposed to Hep C.
- I’ll hold up an atomic fireball. Ask who has these in their bags. Count hands. They’ve been exposed to an STI (sometimes someone will say they have more than one...we note that as multiple STIs)
- Hold up candy you’ve designated the HIV virus. Ask who has any of these. Count hands. They’re told they’ve been exposed to HIV.

- ❖ Ask them why they think we discuss these topics in substance recovery.
- ❖ Also ask them if they could tell if the person “who passed it on to them”, had something that could impact them like this.
- ❖ Then we discuss this and personal safety/relapse prevention for the remainder of the group.

Nanciellen Poulin, M.Ed, LMHC
Program Supervisor, Addiction Services
The Brien Center for Mental Health &
Substance Abuse Services