



Hi, I'm Lily and I'm currently a junior at Bozeman High School and a Peer Educator with Bridgercare! This is my first year being in Peer Ed, but I have always admired the purpose and impact that Peer Ed has on the community. I could go on forever about how awesome Peer Ed is, but first here's a little bit about myself. In some ways, I'm your stereotypical Montanan who loves to ski, hike, and take advantage of the natural beauty of our state.

In addition to my love for the outdoors, I'm also always reading a book and constantly curious about what I can learn next. I especially like to learn about current events and how I can help make my community a better place. I found my voice through participating in my school newspaper, interning with Forward Montana, competing in speech and debate, and, of course, becoming a Peer Educator!

Throughout my time in public school, I've realized that sex ed curriculums don't usually cover everything students' need to know about their sexual and reproductive health and often end up treating the subject with judgement, rather than making it more comfortable to talk about. In my seventh grade sex ed class, sex was compared to dirt on a piece of tape, and condoms were compared to a faulty shark cage.

Also, there was no discussion of queer relationships or gender identity. This only left me and my peers more confused than before, and certainly did not give us a safe space to ask questions. All I could think was "There must be a better way to do this." In high school I discovered, Peer Ed is that way!

I love Peer Ed because it provides a safe, accepting, and non judgemental space to not only provide fact based sex ed, but also discuss the issues that are on peoples' minds about anything from healthy relationships to how to use a condom correctly! Being able to discuss and demystify safe sex, reproductive health, and healthy relationships lead to a healthier community that is free of shame.

Being a part of Peer Ed has been an amazing experience, even during a pandemic. Not only are my fellow Peer Educators amazing, brave, and caring people, but Cami from Bridgercare and Abbie from Haven have created a wonderful environment to learn about and discuss these issues. I look forward to every meeting because I know that I will learn something new and be able to share it with my friends and family.

Besides learning about issues related to reproductive and sexual health and healthy relationships, I have also been able to teach about these topics in a classroom! I walked into a gym full of freshmen at Lone Peak High in Big Sky, a little afraid, but also determined to teach them about consent and contraception, whether they liked it or not! To my surprise, and relief, the students were really engaged with the lesson! They listened and asked questions and even reluctantly laughed at my corny jokes. I realized that they wanted to learn about these things and Peer Ed had finally provided a space where they felt comfortable to engage with the subjects of consent and contraception. It felt great to know that some of those freshmen who maybe didn't know what consent sounded like before, now had a clear idea of how to ask for and give consent.

Becoming a Peer Educator has taught me not only a lot about healthy relationships and sexual and reproductive health, but about how to empathize with people who have different experiences than me and create a safe space where everyone can feel accepted. I can use the skills and knowledge I have gained from Peer Ed to help make the everyday world around me a little bit less judgemental and a little more kind.

PEER ED 