Sexuality and Autism

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WHO ARE WE?
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Agenda

❖ Overview of today’s session
❖ Pre-survey about sexuality education
❖ Why we need sexuality education
❖ Strategies to use to talk to your child
❖ Questions you still have
❖ Post-survey about sexuality education
Overview of Today’s Session

- To talk about current beliefs and attitudes about sexuality education.
- To learn more about the importance of sexuality education.
- To provide strategies that can be used to advocate for and participate in sexuality education decisions for family members with autism.
Survey says!

What do you think about sexuality education?

There are no right or wrong answers!
Sexuality and Individuals with Disabilities

- Normal to have sexual interest
- Sexual preferences/identity
- Sensory Issues
- Concrete educational information
When to start the conversations - young children?

- Young children
  - Naming parts of the body with real words
  - Identifying specific body parts
  - Toilet training
  - Sex play (e.g. doctor, peeking, checking out pets)
  - Hygiene
  - Good and bad touching (and the right to say no)
When to start the conversations - puberty?

- Children as they enter puberty
  - Bodily functions (e.g., menstruation, ejaculation)
  - Feelings
  - Changes in body and body image
  - Self pleasure (and the importance of privacy)
  - Friendships
  - Early relationships (e.g., dating, dances)
  - Circles and relationships
When to start the conversations- teens and adults?

- Teenagers
  - Circles and relationships
  - Self-exams
  - Safe sex
- Young adults
  - All of the above
Why are the conversations important?

- Misinterpretation of Unusual Behavior
  - Stalking
  - Masturbation
  - Rape
- Health & Hygiene
  - Pregnancy
  - STDs
  - Rape avoidance
  - Preventing Sexual Abuse (Appropriate/ Inappropriate touch)
What else do you talk about?

- Consent
  - Consent can change
- Respecting “No” as answer
  - Not adding extra pressure
- Boundaries
  - Physical and emotional
- Discussing body language
- Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behavior
Do they need to know about these?

- Family planning
  - Cultural
  - Religious
  - Personal

- Preventing pregnancy
  - Contraception
  - Condoms
  - Abstinence

- STDs
  - Prevention
  - Screening
  - Signs
What about consensual relationships?

- Monica & David
- Dating etiquette
- Communication
- Childcare
- Responsibilities
What about my child’s rights?

- **Sexuality is a major life function**
  - relating to others
  - Building self-esteem
  - Building social relationships (tash.org)

- **Parents with disabilities:**
  - Increased risk of losing custody (40-60%)
  - Parent effectively when given adequate support through behavioral interventions rather than books and lessons (Wilson, McKenzie, Quayle & Murray, 2014).
Who teaches sexuality skills?

- Parents
- Educators
- Peers?

Let’s listen to the Story of Luke.
How do we teach this?

- Include education about social norms and subtle nuances
- Strategies that work:
  - Visual approaches
  - Social Stories
  - Quizzes
  - Interactive and group games
  - Social activities
  - Putting information into context
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Physical Cues</th>
<th>Body Language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>[It's probably best to use real situations from your teenager's life.]</td>
<td>Racing heart, sweaty palms, loud voice, etc. [Point out to your teenager that when they start to notice themselves experiencing these physical cues, this is their body's way of telling them that they are experiencing intense feelings. The goal for your teenager is to recognize these signs early on before the anger gets out of control.]</td>
<td>Clenched fists, angry face, folded arms, etc. [Point out to your teenager that when they see these “clues” in another person, that person may be angry. This helps your teenager to start to identify angry feelings in others, whether the feelings are verbalized or not.]</td>
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Social Narratives and Visual Supports

He has, she has body parts

Sometimes I get curious about other boys or girls. I know that boys have a penis and girls have a vagina. I know that both girls and boys have breasts, but girls breast can get bigger when they hit puberty. I see the difference in boys and girls at home, at school, on television and in the community. Sometimes though, I get curious about what other people's private parts are like. I may touch someone's private parts or ask to see their private parts. I do this because I want to see or feel what they are like. When I do this, it can make them feel uncomfortable and angry. I must remember not to touch other people's body parts. I want people to feel good and comfortable around me. It's ok to be curious about the other boys and girls body parts. I need to remember to make a positive choice and keep my hands to myself.

Safe and Unsafe Touching

My body is my own. I should decide who touches me and who does not. Safe touches are touches that make me feel comfortable and feel good. This touch is when a friend pats you on your shoulder, or your parents give you a hug or a kiss. It could also be when a doctor touches you at a check-up if you are sick. Sometimes people touch you and it is unsafe. Unsafe touches make me feel bad and uncomfortable. This could be someone touching me when I say “no”, giving me hugs or kisses and I do not want them. When this happens, I feel bad and it makes me mad. When someone touches me unsafely, I will make a positive choice and let a trusted adult know what happened.

I am having my period (menstruating). Can you help me change my pad, please?

I think I am ready to have sex. Can you help me please?

I am curious about girl's body parts. Can you tell me about them please?

I am curious about boy's body parts. Can you tell me about them please?
Recognizing Emotions

- Identify and label emotions in photos.
- Identify and label nonverbal clues using photos.
- Use role-playing to identify and label emotions and nonverbal clues.
- Use video to identify and label emotions and nonverbal clues.
Circles and Relationships

Use photos and visuals - discuss the kind of feeling and the kind of touch that goes with each relationship.

1. Family members and close friends
2. Casual friends, classmates, teammates
3. Doctors, teachers, social workers, police officers, store clerks, firefighters
4. Strangers
Private vs Public

Red: bedroom, closed doors, invitation required

Yellow: public places with privacy, dressing room, changing room

Green: no invitation required, rooms in our home with no doors, strangers

- Red stands for things that are private.
- Yellow stands for Be Careful.
- Green stands for things that are public.
Question Starters

(May need to preface with “when you are older…”)

- Do you want to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend?
- Do you want to hold hands with that person?
- Do you want to kiss another person?
- Do you want to get married?
- Do you want to have children of your own?
- Do you touch your body in private?
- Is it ok to touch your body in public?  (or other topics such as “masturbate” or “get undressed”)
Sometimes we all need a little help!

These websites were designed for teens and provide a safe environment to seek answers - even for parents and caregivers.

[Scarleteen](https://www.scarleteen.com)

[Sex,etc.](https://www.sexetc.org)
Survey says!
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