
Supporting Healthy Relationships and Sexuality for Teens with Disabilities

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OVERVIEW


- Understand why sex education for students with disabilities is important, but lacking
- Identify risk factors of sexual assault of teens with disabilities
- Learn how parents and caregivers can better support healthy relationships and sexuality
- Learn how to address uncomfortable topics around sexuality

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About the Presenters



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What If?

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Attitudes about Sex

What influences our views on sex, porn, and masturbation?

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Attitudes about Sex

How does your religion influence your views on sex?
How does your culture influence your views on sex?
How does your gender/gender identity influence your views on sex?
How does the media influence your views on sex?
What are your views on porn and masturbation?

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Attitudes about Sex and Disability

Are they the same? How are they different?
Have you used your role in someone's life to influence their views on sex, dating, porn, and/or masturbation?

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Attitudes Toward Disability and Sex: Myths

- People with disabilities are not interested in sex
- People with disabilities should not have sex
- People with disabilities are not capable of having sex
- Men and women with disabilities are not sexually attractive
- People with disabilities have more important things to worry about than having sex
- Teens with disabilities do not need sex education

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Attitudes Toward Disability and Sex: Facts

- People with disabilities have the same sexual needs and desires as anyone else
- All humans have the right to explore sexuality in a safe and consensual way
- Even with mobility challenges, there are many tools, adaptations, and modifications making it easier for people with physical disabilities to engage in safe sex
- All people are beautiful
- What's more important than sex? :)
- Teens with disabilities need sex education, possibly more so than their peers, due to an increased risk of exploitation

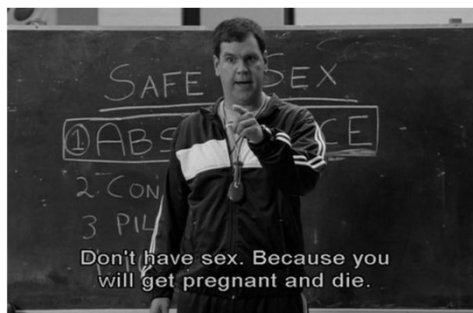
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Wait, you want me to talk about sex?!?

- Our attitudes about sex can stop us from having important conversations
- People with disabilities are often left out of important conversations
- AND women with developmental disabilities are seven times more likely than the general population to be sexually assaulted....

EVERYONE should be educated on sex, consent, and their rights. How can we expect anyone to make safe decisions for themselves if they don't have the information and resources to do so?

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Disability and Sex Education

At School

- Often taken out of health class for therapies
- Teachers reporting they are not allowed to talk about sex with their students
- Not always at the right level for people with DD

At Home

- Parents uncomfortable with conversations
- Home staff have restrictions on what they can talk about and buying birth control/condoms
- Not allowing sex at home due to staff or roommates' discomfort

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Opportunities for Sexual Exploration

- Lack of privacy
- Lack of social opportunities to meet new people safely
- Low self-esteem affects sexuality

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Where do I begin?

It's hard to know where to start when talking to a teen or young adult about sex. After first reflecting on your own views and how they might influence what you are comfortable discussing, let's start with the basics and work our way through.....

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Consent

- Start this conversation EARLY!
- Talk about consent not just for sexual touch, but deciding if you want a hug, borrowing someone else's things, asking to take a photo.
- Model asking for consent, and model how to be respectful if someone says no

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Consent: It's as amazing as FRIES!

- Freely Given
- Reversible
- Informed
- Enthusiastic
- Specific



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Relationships and Respect

- Define different types of relationships and what kind of touch is okay in each
- Help people to set relationship goals. Are they looking for a committed relationship? Do they want to get married one day? Are they looking for a sexual relationship?
- Help to define boundaries...what are you comfortable with in a relationship? What are your "deal breakers"?
- The more someone is aware of their own boundaries, they better they are going to be able to communicate their boundaries to a partner

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Teaching Assertiveness

- Cooperative vs. Compliant
- After figuring out your boundaries, HOW do you communicate them?
- Assertiveness is standing up for yourself while still being respectful
 - It is NOT pressuring someone into doing what you want to get your way
- I Statements
- Modeling assertiveness and consent

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Human Anatomy

- Use correct anatomical terms and visual aids
- Distinguish between slang terms and medical terms
- Define what those body parts are for
- Although these are the sexual body parts, it is okay to say no to other touch that makes you uncomfortable too
- What happens when someone does not know the proper vocabulary and needs to report a problem or assault?

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Pregnancy, STD's, and Protection

- These are all important to cover, but don't make it just about sex is "scary and risky"
- Not all STD's will have symptoms
- Talking about the realities of having children (costs, responsibilities...be honest about what to expect)
- Everyone has sexual desires, and everyone needs to know how to explore and navigate these desires in safe and healthy ways

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Sexting

- What teens need to know:
 - You have the right to say no
 - Laws regarding sexual images
 - Is it consensual?
 - Potential risks



i promise

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Porn and Masturbation

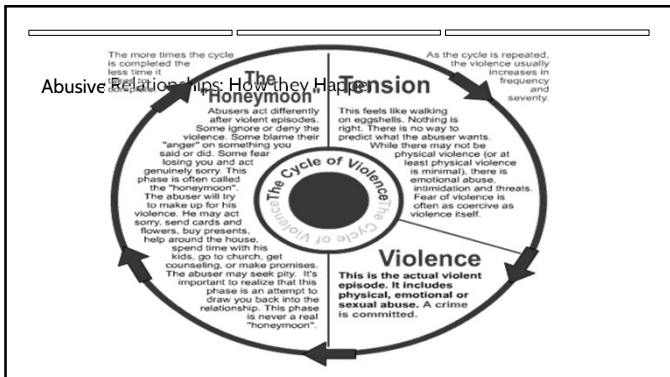
- Again, think about your own views and how they might influence your discussion of this topic
- If someone is not able to get their sexual needs fulfilled, they may turn to porn and masturbation
- Consider the frequency, location, and environment in thinking about whether or not it's becoming "inappropriate"
- Understanding that porn is often unrealistic scenarios. If this is the only exposure to sex someone has, they may have unrealistic expectations in the future
- Help to find healthy and safe ways to fulfill needs. For example, for someone who has many sex partners that are not safe, maybe it is better to find healthy ways to fulfill needs by themselves while they work on skills to find better, more respectful partners.

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Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and Abuse

- Define these terms and give examples
- Sexual assault and abuse are most often perpetrated by someone the victim knows (family, staff, teachers, friends, significant others)
- There are different types of abuse, it's not always physical
 - Emotional/Psychological: Manipulation, putting someone down, decreasing self-esteem, intimidation
 - Financial: controlling money, getting someone fired so they have no income, opening credit cards
 - Sexual: Forcing sexual acts on another person
 - Physical: Hitting, kicking, shoving, use of weapons

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What if you suspect your son/daughter is in an abusive relationship?

- Be supportive
- Telling someone to leave a partner often backfires
- Listen
- Share resources
- Consider if contacting Child Protective Services is needed if under age 18

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Recommended Reading

- Just Say Know! and Sexuality: Your Sons and Daughters with Intellectual Disabilities By David Hingsburger
- Boyfriends and Girlfriends and Teaching Children with Downs Syndrome about their Bodies, Boundaries, and Sexuality by Terri Couwenhoven
- No Means No! By Jayneen Sanders (children's book about consent)
- I Am Enough by Grace Byers (children's book about loving and respecting yourself and others)
- What you Really Really Want: The Smart Girl's Guide to Sex and Safety by Jaclyn Friedman
- Sexting Panic: Rethinking Criminalization, Privacy, and Consent by Amy Adele Hasinoff

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Questions



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- 1:1 Education Around Safe Relationships
- 1:1 Counseling and Advocacy
- Group Educational workshops
- Support Groups for Survivors
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- Collaboration with Local Agencies

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