

Knowledge is Power: How Relationship & Sexuality Education Can Help Keep Students with IDD Safe

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Oak Hill

Empowering People With Disabilities

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Prevalence of Sexual Abuse

People with intellectual disabilities are *sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities.*

People with *intellectual disabilities are at heightened risk* at all moments of their daily lives. They are *more likely to be assaulted by someone they know and during daytime hours.*

A person is holding a large white sign with a black border. The sign features the text "#SevenTimes" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The person's hands are visible at the corners of the sign, and they are wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt with a blue stripe at the bottom. The background is plain white.

#SevenTimes

Areas of Concern

- Isolation, few reciprocal relationships, and limited socialization skills
- Vulnerability to exploitation and abuse due to compliance, eagerness to please, and being dependent on others for assistance
- Difficulty recognizing social cues/non-verbal cues/body language cues
- Diminished awareness of boundaries and personal space, both their own and others
- Easily influenced

**What makes you less vulnerable
to abuse than a person with IDD?**

A Culture of Compliance

- Children and adults with disabilities are denied the right to say no to a variety of everyday choices.
- They are taught to acquiesce and are rewarded for it.
 - “Be a good girl.” or “Be a good boy.”



Lack of knowledge about own body

- Many school systems do not have a formal curriculum or students with disabilities are excluded
- Limited - *and often incorrect* - information about their bodies, including names of body parts, or how a woman gets pregnant.
 - *It's “in the water”*

Lack of understanding of what is private and what is public

- When someone is dependent on others for assistance with ADL's it is difficult for them to understand the concept of privacy.

Is the individual considered vulnerable to exploitation and/or sexual abuse? YES NO

(If yes, please describe why)

_____ doesn't understand the difference between
_____ medical treatment and sexual touching

- Multiple caregivers are usually involved. The person must adjust to whoever arrives at the door.

People can be easily influenced and often have not been taught assertiveness skills.

- Some cannot speak
- Others are difficult to understand
- Many need to learn to speak up for themselves and that it is OK to say “NO”



Sexual messages are everywhere

- Many have confused expectations about what is adult sexual behavior, yet want to be seen as mature and capable
- The internet is often where children and teens go for information on sex



There is difficulty applying the appropriate degrees of trust to relationships.

- If everyone they meet is a “friend”, they are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.
- There is confusion about the difference between acquaintances, friends, and helpers.
- Poor judgement is often ever-present.

Family
Friend
Acquaintance
Helper
Stranger

Limited insight into their own sexual behavior and the effect on others.

- They may try to be what they see on TV and in movies. Scripting from movies and TV shows provides dialog that is used in real life.
- Some think they need to do sexual touching to get or keep a girlfriend or boyfriend.

**What is the single most important skill
you can teach a person with a
developmental disability about
relationships and sexuality?**



- Respect, privacy, personal space, and boundaries
- Reading social cues and body language
- Types and degrees of trust in relationships
- Identification and expression of feelings
- Self-esteem and speaking up for self
- Qualities of a healthy relationship

The ultimate goal:

**To increase critical judgment about
safe, healthy relationships**

Resources

The Secret Rules of Social Networking By: Barbara Klipper and Rhonda Shapiro-Rieser (2015). AAPC Publishing.

There's No place like Home...for Sexual Education

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/589?task=view>

Videos showing what consent looks like in real life:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3xP1jlf1jgJRkChwVOlwQcV0-UqcWiFV>

Gender, sex, and sexual orientation explained simply:

<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/>

Great information that talks about sex as it relates to a variety of disabilities:

<http://www.scarleteen.com/tags/disability>

Great videos on a variety of topics: www.plannedparenthood.org/teens/sex

Fantastic videos on a wide variety of topics: amaze.org

Relationship basics, quizzes, and information about abuse prevention,

www.loveisrespect.org

Free materials for teaching sexual health for people with differing abilities

<http://teachingsexualhealth.ca/teachers/grade/differing-abilities/>

Explanations about gender identity and sexual orientation:

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/gender-gender-identity>

Positive Choices

A Program on Healthy Relationships, Sexuality, and Safe Boundaries for Secondary Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

- ✓ Sold in 32 states and 4 Provinces of Canada
- ✓ Research published by team at GMU | LIFE program
- ✓ Used in high school, transition, college, and adult services

Curriculum Outline

Chapter 1 RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-AWARENESS

- Unit 1 – Responsible Behavior
- Unit 2 – Types of Relationships
- Unit 3 – Trust in Relationships
- Unit 4 – Privacy and Personal Boundaries
- Unit 5 – Identifying and Managing Feelings
- Unit 6 – Self-Esteem and Empathy
- Unit 7 – The Concept of Consent
- Unit 8 – Right and Wrong Touch

Chapter 2 MATURATION

- Unit 9 – A Definition of Sexuality
- Unit 10 – A Definition of Puberty
- Unit 11 – The Female Body and Changes of Puberty
- Unit 12 – The Male Body and Changes of Puberty
- Unit 13 – The Sexually Mature Female
- Unit 14 – The Sexually Mature Male
- Unit 15 – Attractions and Dating

Chapter 3 THE LIFE CYCLE

- Unit 16 – Sexual Commitment and Responsibility
- Unit 17 – Conception
- Unit 18 – Pregnancy
- Unit 19 – Childbirth
- Unit 20 – The Life Cycle

Chapter 4 SEXUAL HEALTH

- Unit 21 – Sexual Behavior and Abstinence
- Unit 22 – Birth Control
- Unit 23 – For Females Only - Breast Health
- Unit 24 – For Females Only - Pelvic Examination
- Unit 25 – For Males Only - Testicular and Prostate Health
- Unit 26 – Sexually Transmitted Infections

Chapter 5 BEING STRONG, STAYING SAFE

- Unit 27 – Recognizing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Unit 28 – Abuse Prevention Strategies
- Unit 29 – Sexual Behavior Mistakes
- Unit 30 – Sexual Acts that Are Against the Law
- Unit 31 – My Personal Goals and Positive Choices

Workbooks for Adults

- **Say No! To Sex Abuse And Sexual Mistakes:** Covers different types of relationships and boundaries red flags in relationships, different types of abuse, and sex acts that are against the law
- **Ten Tips For Healthy Relationships:** Covers personal space, feeling good about oneself, friendships, dating (and how to date), and a general overview of sexual feelings
- **All About Attractions And Safe Dating:** Romantic and sexual attractions, LGBT+ and coming out, consent, right touch/wrong touch, dating

Workbooks for Adults

- **Men and Women: The Awesome Facts of Life:** Covers puberty and the mechanics of where babies come from
- **I Can Protect Myself:** Protection from STIs and pregnancy
- **Take 3 Steps to Men's Health!:** Covers men's health, going for an annual appointment, and testicle self-exams
- **Take 3 Steps To Women's Health!:** Covers women's health including breast exams and going for an annual appointment

Workbook news...

- ✓ Revised/updated
- ✓ Digitized
- ✓ Translated into Spanish
- ✓ Free access online



Remember:
It is NEVER too late to
start!

Important

People who are struggling with their own sexuality, who have been victimized, or who demonstrate problematic sexual behavior, need counseling beyond the scope of these resources.



Any Questions?

Thank you!

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Need to Know

- The difference between public and private
- Their whole body is private
- Each person has the absolute right to say who does and does not touch their body

Need to Know

- What is RIGHT touch
- What is WRONG touch
- Encourage them to trust their gut!

- If it feels wrong, it is wrong.
- Don't keep secrets --Always tell, even if you are told not to.



Need to Know

- (Real!) Names of body parts
- Puberty education
- How a baby is made
- How to prevent pregnancy
 - “I had a condom in my purse.”
- What STIs are and how to stay safe



Need to Know

- Components of a healthy relationship – ALL relationships
- Warning signs in a relationship
- Friendship is a relationship too!
You must be a friend to have a friend.
- “If a relationship does not make you feel good about yourself it is not healthy.”

Family
Friend
Acquaintance
Helper
Stranger

Need to Know

- What sexual abuse is
- Abuse happens.
- People you know and trust could hurt you! -- Abuse is often perpetrated by someone known and trusted.

Need to Know



- Sexual mistakes
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual acts that are against the law
- What Sexting is and what to do if you receive one

Teaching Strategies

slower pace, repetition, modeling, visual and auditory input, dynamic skill rehearsal, and opportunities to feel empowered.

- Use simple words or phrases and be concrete
- Do not assume: many students have limited knowledge or misinformation about anatomy, sexual health and safe relationships
- Continually assess for understanding by asking direct questions, such as **“tell me what that word means”**, or **“what is the important message for you”**, etc.

- Use real life scenarios and act out situations asking, *“what would you do if...”*
 - Ever since she started her new job Gloria feels terrible. Her boss is always telling her she is dumb and can’t do anything right.
- Grab teachable moments

- Use pictures if possible
- Repeat, Repeat
- Start with the easiest students - until you are more comfortable with the material and know how to access additional resources



- Enlist a colleague to co-facilitate, ideally someone with a different role and qualifications from yours
- Initially you may need to pair the slang word with the correct vocabulary, to ensure understanding
- Do not rush to complete the material

- Pay attention to process as well as content. Use incidental opportunities to enhance learning about healthy relationships
 - *“I haven’t had my snack yet!”*
- Have a plan in place for how you will address potential disclosures of abuse

- Create a safe learning environment. Ensure safe boundaries and respect for all participants
- Maintain focus on increasing critical thinking. Encourage the participants to formulate their own thoughts and opinions and assist them to rehearse the skills that are essential to making safe relationship decisions