Healthy Relationship Education for Young Adults with ASD

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

a developmental disability

affects
► social communication
► social interaction

presence
► restricted interests
► repetitive body movements
► repetitive behaviors
► detail oriented
► activities that may persist throughout life (Weiss & Fardella, 2018)

One of the largest minority groups in the world
Commonly occurs with other non-ASD diagnoses
- Developmental
- Psychiatric
- Neurologic
- Chromosomal
- Genetic

Gastrointestinal (GI) problems, Epilepsy, Feeding issues, Disrupted sleep, Anxiety, Depression, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Attention-deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

(CDC, 2018)

One child in every 59 is somewhere on the spectrum of autism.

(CDC, 2018)

4 to 1 ratio boys to girls
Researchers are beginning to acknowledge ASD presents differently in boys and girls (and in non-binary or transgender individuals)

→ Analyzed thousands of vocal voice samples from boys and girls, with and without ASD

► girls with ASD
  • used cognitive processing words (think, know) much more frequently than boys with ASD
  • used filler words “um”, “uh” nearly as much as female peers without ASD

► boys with ASD
  • use filler words far less frequently than male peers without ASD
  • (CHOP Center for Autism Research, 2019)

Many small linguistic differences can result in how girls are perceived

► girls with ASD
  • make more typical first impressions than boys during a naturalistic conversation with a non-expert
  • (CHOP Center for Autism Research, 2019)

“Camouflaging Effect” may lead to delayed or missed diagnosis

(Ratto et al., 2018)
Girls with ASD may perceive the world differently

- girls with ASD
  - spent more time focused on faces that
  - boys with ASD
    → but less than typically developing girls and about
    the same as typically developing boys

“To understand autism in girls, the behaviors of girls
with ASD should be compared with other girls; not
a mixed group of non-ASD girls and boys.”

(Dr. Clare Harrop, 2018)

Almost half (44%) of children identified with ASD have
average to above average intellectual ability.

CDC’s Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network
Adults on the autism spectrum may be at considerable risk for interpersonal violence victimization, including:

► bullying
► child maltreatment
► adolescent dating violence
► intimate partner violence

(Weiss & Fardella, 2018)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serious violent crime</th>
<th>Single disability type</th>
<th>Multiple disability types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape/sexual assault</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of violent crime against persons with disabilities, by type of crime and number of disability types, 2010-2014

https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0914st.pdf

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim-offender relationship</th>
<th>Persons with disabilities</th>
<th>Personas without disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimate partner</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well known/casual acquaintances</td>
<td><strong>40.3%</strong></td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangers</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Taught compliance

Lack of understanding
- What is abuse
- Abusive occurrences
- Nuances of social relationships
- Sexuality
  - Anatomy
  - Sexual Acts
  - Relationships
  - Safety
  - Laws

**Truthful without knowing**
Building an environment that encourages well-being and healthy choices for young adults with ASD

Primary Prevention

Perspective

Interpersonal concerns and challenges
• Perspective taking
• Sexual health information

**Drexel University research suggests**
► 40% or more of young people with ASD may not receive sexuality education in their school or community

**National survey of physicians who regularly provide care to youth with autism**
► 44% said they do not provide information about sexuality to families
► only 7% said their training left them prepared to provide care

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**Navigating this world**
The Unexpected Consequences of Good Intentions

Social norms
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Close the Door
Lock the Door
Leave a buffer

SHARE © Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA) 2019
The Unexpected Consequences of Good Intentions

Social vulnerability

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When getting off the bus, Fred asked George to carry his backpack into the building. Fred told George “don’t look in the bag!” George thought this was a strange request.

**Did Fred Cross the Line of Safety?**

Joe overheard the conversation. Joe told George that this does not sound safe. Joe suggested that they go to tell Security.

**Is Joe being an advocate for Fred?**

**ACT IT OUT**

Internet does not require
- Social functioning
- Eye contact
- Social response

**Technology Safety**
5 Stages of Internet Grooming

- **Friendship**: Flattering a person into talking in private chat room where they will be isolated.
- **Forming a relationship**: Asking what problems they have to create the illusion of being their friend.
- **Risk Assessment**: Who else has access to their computer/device? Location? In order to assess the risk of being detected.
- **Exclusivity**: Building up sense of mutual love and trust, suggesting they can discuss “anything”.
- **Sex Talk**: Engaging in explicit conversation and requesting sexually explicit pictures (trying to arrange a meeting).

On your Instagram account, someone you do not know has sent you a message.

They give you lots of compliments. They say you’re good looking.

Then they ask for your number.

→ What would you do?
Program participants with ASD
- Prompt, dependent
- Given the opportunity to stop and think, he will get there
- Does not see herself comparative to others in the program
- Could be taken advantage of in many ways
- Still gets lost in the building
- Cognitively ready, behaviorally not
- Mild mannered, loves his mother, extremely naïve
- If someone would take advantage, not know what to do
- No understanding about sexuality/intimacy
- Perseverates
- Important to be accepted
- Attention seeking
- No lapse time understanding

Interpersonal concerns and challenges
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Relationships
Curiosity about Relationships and Stereotypes

1. What makes a good friend?
2. How do you decide to be in a relationship?
3. What if you are attracted to someone’s looks but when you get to know them, their personality is not so great.
4. If you are male or female, do you have to stay that way?
5. Do real men cry?
6. Does someone have to give gifts to get someone’s attention?
7. How to tell if someone is flirting with me?
8. If I am attracted to someone, how do I get them attracted to me?
9. How do you say no to someone who wants more than a friendship?
10. How do you know when you only want to date one person at a time?

Dealing with Pressure

1. Why does it seem every person I date only wants one thing?
2. How do you tell someone that you do not want them to touch you?
3. Why does someone you date ask you how far you have gone with another person?
4. If you are in a situation when someone wants to kiss you or something else, what do you do?
5. How do you handle a situation if a person says “take off my clothes and touch me”?
6. Why does someone try to manipulate another person?
7. You plan a date and before you even go out, that person asks you if you want to have sex.
Abuse and the Law

1. What can be the consequence of acting inappropriately?
2. How do you tell your partner you don’t want to be forced into something? Especially when they say “You will be fine. I will be gentle.” You say “no.”
3. What if they sexually assault you? Why do victims blame themselves?
4. What if you are 21 and drink and have sex with someone? What would happen?
5. What if you are with someone and they want to do something...you don’t want to do it. They hit you.

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SHARE Smart Healthy Appropriate Relationship Education © NOVA 2019

► multisession program
► mid to high functioning teens and young adults with ASD
► parents as integral partners

Each participant should be able to:
- recall information from prior lessons, in a facilitator led review
- follow multiple step direction
- understand and differentiate:
  - real vs. imagined
  - same vs. different
- acknowledge and distinguish behaviors that are appropriate in public vs. private setting
Smart Healthy Appropriate Relationship Education

Topics
- personal boundaries
- technology safety
- friendships
- bullying/harassment
- dating
- serious relationships
- consent
- responsible personal behavior
- sexual harassment

Strategies for Participant Learning

► PowerPoint guided

1. Social stories
2. Movement activities/voting
3. Video
4. Group discussion
5. Questions
6. Resources
One day at school, Dave asked Jeremy if they could Facetime later that day. Jeremy said “sure.”
While they were Facetiming, Dave acted really weird. Dave asked Jeremy to show him all the rooms inside Jeremy’s house. When Jeremy hesitated, Dave told Jeremy that was what friends do.

If you feel uncomfortable…

1 Stop  ➔  2 Think  ➔  3 Decide  ➔  4 ACT

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2. ACT It Out • learning to improvise

- Improves recognition of facial expression
- Understand different perspectives
- Regulates anxiety
- Increases flexibility in thinking

3. Movement activities & voting

- Informational interaction
- Gets participants moving
- Share viewpoints
- Creates individuality
- Opportunity for discussion
- Opportunity for clarification
- Involves all participants
Video

• Connects visual clues, memory, and sounds
• Reinforces learning
• Engages participants
• Demonstrates appropriate/non-appropriate behaviors

Consent

Consent/Permission

• your body belongs to you
• if someone sexually touches you and you do not want it, it is against the law

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XiMIPFJlgc
If you are in a situation when someone wants to kiss you or something else, what do you do?

I am not ready!
Group discussion

- Share information
- Talking points
- Provides feedback
- Tests their ideas and opinions
- Promotes future preparation
- Encourages dialogue
- Develops speaking skills

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What would you do?

Your friend has just broken up with her boyfriend.

A boy she does not know messages her a flow of compliments.

She is so excited she tells you about him.

→ What would you do?
Group discussion

**Friendships:**
- How do friends meet?
- How to say no to someone who wants more than a friendship.
- What is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in relationships?

**Attraction and Dating:**
- How do you know you are ready to date?
- What are some clues that someone likes you?
- What is it like to date someone?
- When is kissing appropriate?
- How do you start getting into a dating relationship?
- How do you say no to advances?

**Serious relationships:**
- How do you know you are ready for a physical relationship?
- What is the progression from kissing to intercourse?
- How do you know you are ready for marriage?
- Knowing about the different kinds of touching.

**Reproduction/Health:**
- How do you have a baby?
- What are some myths about women’s health?
- How do women take care of their health?

**The Law:**
- What can be the consequences of acting inappropriately?

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**Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

Sometimes Jamie makes kissing sounds when a co-worker walks into the room.

**Making kissing sounds, howling, smacking lips**
Sexual Harassment

1. Stop
2. Say "NO"
3. Leave
4. Report

Sexual Harassment
Q&A

- Allow time
- Sense of ownership
- Explore topic at a deeper level
- Clarification
- Reinforcement
- Resources

Resources

- Share information
- Short and concise
- Visual
- Concrete
- Descriptive
The Autism Response Team (ART)

- an information line for the autism community
- team members are specially trained to provide personalized information and resources to people with autism and their families

How to contact ART
Call our toll-free number or send us an email – we’re available between 9am and 5pm in all time zones.
Live chat is also available between 9am and 2pm ET.
Your call will be routed to the team member for your region.
We also have a dedicated Spanish language toll-free number.
1-888-AUTISM2 (1-888-288-4762)
En Español: 1-888-772-9050
familyservices@autismspeaks.org

Who can call?
We are happy to talk with people with autism, parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, social workers, and everyone in between.
Even if you have no connection to autism but have a question, please feel free to reach out. We assist people of all ages, including children, teens, and adults with autism.

As we better understand ASD and what it looks like in many different children and youth, we can better identify and develop specific supports

- Establish a relationship
- Be aware of social vulnerability
- Consider communication
- Think about possible anxiety
- Provide positive directions
Questions???

Thank you!

APA Citations


