

Social and Sexual Development for Youth with Disabilities

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Sexuality for individuals with the Disabilities is Important!

- Adolescents with disabilities indicated that sexuality is important, but they experienced difficulties developing a sexual relationship.
- It is essential for individuals to improve their participation in society, where social and sexual relationships are important.

DJHG Wiegerink et al.

Research on "Quality of Life" indicates

- ✓ Individuals with disabilities typically have as much interest in sexuality as their peers.
- ✓ They have less intimate relationships than their peers
- ✓ Most are not married

What We Can Do

1. Help youth to improve social relationships and dating experiences
---earlier!
2. Educate the individual and parents/caregivers about sexuality
--related to the disability!
3. Encourage activities to increase self-confidence
--opportunities to be with peers!

SEXUALITY & DEVELOPMENT

Developmental Stages (See Handout)

- After Birth
- Preschoolers
- School Age
- Adolescent
- Young Adult

On Male and Female Bodies

- Under your clothes and underwear are your private parts.
- Your private parts are your own business and should be kept private.
- Respect other peoples' private parts and do not look or touch without permission.

A Friend is...

- "A person whom one knows well and is fond of."
- "A close acquaintance."
- "A person on the same side in a struggle."

The key is satisfaction with the friendship

**Friendship, rather than popularity,
is the best indicator of social
sensitivity & moral understanding.**

Tips for Youth

- Offer to help friends when they need it
- Keep your word
- Say or do nice things for friends (try for 3 people a day)
- Brush your teeth!



- Remember daily bath or shower to be clean & odor free & protect skin (we like to be around people that smell good)!



Be Safe in a Friendship

Nat'l Child Abuse Hotline
Child Help: 1-800-4-A-CHILD

Relationships

Relationships can be confusing.

Sometimes you are not sure if a person wants to be a friend or a boy/girl friend.

And More...

- Friendship can develop into a healthy relationship which can lead to dating and being intimate with each other.
- Sexuality is the whole person.
- Sex is when two people are very intimate with each other and make contact.
- Love and sex are two different things.

Tips for Young Adults

- Talk to parents/providers about what you need (resources)
- Write down needs if difficult to verbalize
- Accept that this may be difficult for "us" too--we may not know *all* the answers (don't give up)!
- Communicate honestly with your peers
- Tell "us" what works & what does not.

Dating

- When you want to get to know someone better.
- Get to know each other by doing fun things
- Ask the person you like to go out with you (Examples)
- Meet in a public place (Examples)

Tips

- Plan ahead for anything that could happen—like having to go to the bathroom, or having a person to call if you need help.

Tips for Parents

- Address issues early
- Provide References or Resources (or they may find the *wrong* ones)
- Bring it up as a scientific topic or "something in the news"
- Accept different views & ways of expression (yours & your child's)

Tips for Providers

- Address issues early
- Provide References/ Resources (consider confidentiality)
- Provide for time alone with teen & give contact number
- Ask leading questions & evaluate understanding
- Get in touch with your *own* feelings on sexuality.

Trust

- Consider: Culture & Developmental Level or Learning Ability
- Sequence: Get to know the individual first. Forewarn, "next visit we will talk about sexuality."
- Transition: This is a continuous *process*. Get family involved before transition out of peds to adult needs, (i.e., do not wait until they are 18 years old)!

5 Premises of the Philosophy of Adolescent & Adult Sexuality

1. There is no positive correlation between knowledge of, & interest in sexuality
2. Adolescence is marked by curiosity/exploration; this phase of development is completely healthy
3. Ignorance breeds fear—Info allows an individual to develop their own judgment & responses
4. A behavior is less likely to be excessive if recognized, accepted, & appropriate in a given context, rather than forbidden.
5. Urges & sexual desires cannot be repressed; they must be directed towards appropriate expression.

Asperger's Syndrome & Sexuality-Isabelle He'nault

Clinical Messages

- In social, intimate and sexual relationships, young adults with disabilities may develop at a slower pace than their healthy peers
- Self-efficacy and sexual self-esteem are important for successful relationships
- Parents with an encouraging rather than an overprotective attitude can stimulate self-efficacy

DJHG Wiegerink et al.

Sexual Development Individuals with Disabilities

- May not go through *normal* sexual development;
- Do not always understand appropriate sexual behavior, dating, how to give sexual pleasure to oneself;
- Do not completely understand responsibilities & risks

Think Ahead

- It is important to get counseling to know what to expect.
- Contact your Doctor or Planned Parenthood for safe methods of birth control

Condoms

Caution using latex (rubber) condoms if your partner is allergic!



*There are male and female condoms. Check Planned Parenthood on-line for instructions.



Condoms Continued...

Options: **Avanti** makes a "polyurethane condom" for males to help prevent AIDS. Female condoms are latex free.

- ✓ www.condomave.com has good price: \$8.99 for 6 or \$44.00 pack of 36 (as of 3/05)
- ✓ www.goaskalice.columbia.edu for more Condom questions/answers.

Lubrication

- Most females with a spinal defect will have lubrication problems
- Males & females with spina bifida need to lubricate before & during sex (& always when a catheter is left in place). Use water soluble lubricants to avoid injury to vagina & genitals (K Y Jelly, Astroglide).

Erections

(Ability of penis to get hard and erect so sexual intercourse can occur)

Two Types

- 1) Psychogenic (psychological)= Occurs when male thinks about something sexual, blood rushes to penis and makes it hard and erect.
- 2) Reflex=Not controlled by brain, usually present when the bladder is full or when doing CIC

Options

- There are many options for those that can not sustain erections and males should consult their urologist for advice.



- Useful erection aides and techniques.

Options for Females

- There are many options for females with disabilities also. Females should consult their gynecologist/doctor or nurse for advice.



Attraction

- A person with a disability who wants to become romantically involved with someone else, usually has to take the *active* role & help the partner feel comfortable with that aspect of the relationship.

Attraction

- It is important for the partner to fully understand the scope of the disabled partner's physical differences from the start.
- Honest *two-way* communication is vital!

GABY...A TRUE STORY (Video)

"The mind sets limitations.
The heart surpasses them."

Sexual Pleasure

- Sex is pleasurable intimacy with oneself or another person
- Sex enjoyed if person willing to learn to have sexual pleasure in different ways with different techniques/positions
- Takes practice to find ways to enjoy sex
- Body often makes up for loss of sensation in one area by increasing sensation in another area

Sexual Pleasure Continued...

- Giving a massage can be exciting!
- Explore the whole body as an erotic zone
- Use senses (sight, smell, hearing & taste to increase sexual arousal)
- Never experienced sex? Try to enjoy the sensations of being touched & giving pleasure to your partner.



Disease Prevention

- Think carefully about who you choose as your sexual partner
- AIDS & other STD's can be passed on to a sexual partner during sexual intercourse
- To help avoid AIDS--Use Condoms or *choose sexual activities other than sexual intercourse.*

Disease Prevention Continued...

Can ask questions discretely:

AIDS HOTLINE
(1-800-232-4636)

Talk seriously about sex, *before* having sex!

Videos

- Sex, Lies & the Truth
- Doin' It: The Empowered Fe Fe's