

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (IDD)

A resource for parents, guardians, and caregivers, informed by people with IDD.

Why do People with Disabilities Want to Have Romantic Relationships?

Just like a lot of people, many people with disabilities want to connect with others, engage in physical intimacy, or be in romantic relationships. With support from parents, caregivers, or guardians, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can have successful, loving, fulfilling, and healthy romantic and sexual relationships.

Self-advocates say they want romantic relationships for many of the same reasons people without disabilities want them:

- To have children/start a family.
- To get married.
- To fit in with other people their age.
- To have someone to hang out with.
- For love and appreciation.
- To not be alone/prevent isolation.
- To have someone to share sad/stressful/not good things with.
- To have someone to solve problems with.
- To improve self-esteem.
- To have someone to share life with.
- To share happy things with someone.
- To increase confidence.
- To engage in a loving sexual relationship.



The Need for Education

Self-advocates report that it is important for them to learn about healthy relationships and have supportive caregivers because:

- It is okay to need help!
- Communication is important, and can be really hard. Caregivers can help with communication in a relationship.
- Help setting healthy boundaries will support a healthy relationship.
- Friends and family should support their loved ones being in healthy relationships.
- Knowledge about healthy relationships can help protect people with IDD from unhealthy relationships and abuse.

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HOW CAN PARENTS, GUARDIANS, AND CAREGIVERS SUPPORT THE PEOPLE WITH IDD THEY CARE FOR TO HAVE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?

According to Self-Advocates, Here is the Kind of Support They Want:

- Be open to the idea of them being in a relationship. Seek out support groups and education for yourself if you need to.
- Believe your child or adult when they express their gender identity, sexual orientation, correct pronouns or chosen name. People with IDD, just like people without these diagnoses, will assert and express their gender identity and sexual orientation as they age.
- Meet their partners! Help make sure someone is kind and will be a good fit.
- Help them access education about healthy relationships, sexuality, and social skills to encourage healthy relationships.
- Help them care for children or create childcare plans for parents with IDD.
- Help them explore birth control options and ways to protect themselves from STDs.
- Help them problem solve and get along with their romantic partners.
- Help meeting potential partners, connecting with peers, or engaging safely in online dating if interested.
- Support with transportation barriers--give a ride, help plan out bus routes, or teach them how to use ride share apps.

Ultimately, people with IDD just want support to learn, grow, and find healthy relationships. Parents, guardians, and caregivers play a vital role in providing that support!

Thank you to members of the IDD community and participants and staff of the following organizations for their important contributions to this flyer:



Tavon Learning Center
Issaquah, WA



The Arc of King County
Seattle, WA



Seattle Children's Alyssa Burnett Adult Life Center
Bothell, WA

To contact the Harborview Abuse & Trauma Center:

(206) 744-1600
www.uwhatc.org

Washington Relay Service:
1 (800) 833-6388
Llamar:
(206) 520-5222