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Sex Education and Autism Across the Lifespan

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SEX/HEALTH EDUCATION BASICS



Comprehensive Sex/Health Education

- Recurring instruction in:
 - Human development
 - Reproduction
- Instruction must be:
 - Medically/scientifically accurate
 - Age appropriate
 - Appropriate for all students



Sex/Health Education in WA

K- 3rd Grade

- Social/emotional learning

4th – 5th Grade

- Personal boundaries
- Health friendships
- Human development

6th – 12th Grade

- Physiological, psychological, sociological development
- Social skills/Relationships
- Health care resources
- Affirmative consent
- Bystander training



Myths/Misperceptions I/DD

- No need for sex/health education
- There are “more important” things to teach
- Autistics don’t care about sex/sexuality/relationships/marriage
- Asexuality
- If they don’t ask, their not thinking about it
- Sexually innocent/sexually deviant



Sex/Health Education for I/DD

- It's a team effort
- Sex education is a human right
- It's more than body parts
- Include social/emotional skills
- Creative communication
- Decision making
- Boundaries – communicate limits, respect others



Why is This Important?

- Teaching “no”
- Prevention is the best medicine
- Physical development/maturity simultaneous with peers
- Communication challenges
- Media Messages/Social learning



TEACHING TIPS AND STRATEGIES



How Do We Talk About This?

- Cultivate respect
- Acknowledge the awkward and uncomfortable
- Set boundaries
- Appropriate sharing
- Use inclusive language
- Teach responsibility



Teaching Tips

Start early and
talk often

Keep it simple

Be “askable”

Use correct
terms

Try multiple
teaching
techniques



Teaching Tips

Find
“teachable
moments”

It’s okay to
not have the
answer

Discuss values
and
expectations

Teach social
skills

See the whole
individual



Teaching Tips

Encourage
independence

Provide
opportunities for
new experiences

Teach consent
and the power of
“no”

Guide to
resources and
support



ASD AND SEX/HEALTH EDUCATION



Common Mistakes

- Changing diapers in public
- Urinating in public
- Allowing strangers to hug/touch
- Forcing hugs/affection with family members
- Opting out of sex education at school
- Bathroom behavior
 - Open doors
 - Waiting in the bathroom
 - Opposite gender bathroom use



Sensory Considerations

- Hypersensitivity
 - Extra sensitive to sensory experiences
- Hyposensitivity
 - Less aware of sensory experiences that average



Sensory Considerations

