Navigating Healthy Relationships in Adolescence

INSTRUCTOR
DEVELOPMENTAL PEDIATRICS

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Learning Objectives:

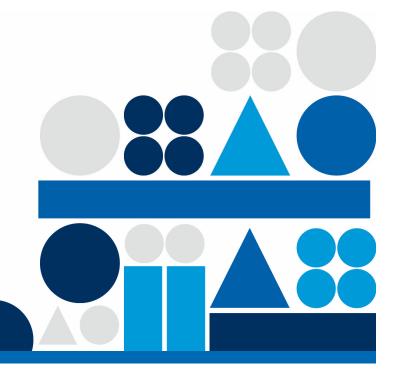
- Explore core components of relationship building for adolescents with ASD including gender identity, dating, and social safety.
- Identify challenges for adolescents with ASD in building healthy relationships with others and the particular impact of COVID-19.
- Discuss strategies for skill building and establishing safe and appropriate relationships with others.







ASD + Adolescence







What is expected in adolescence?

Peer groups matter more

Striving toward independence



(a) dreamstime.com

Gender and sexuality exploration is normal



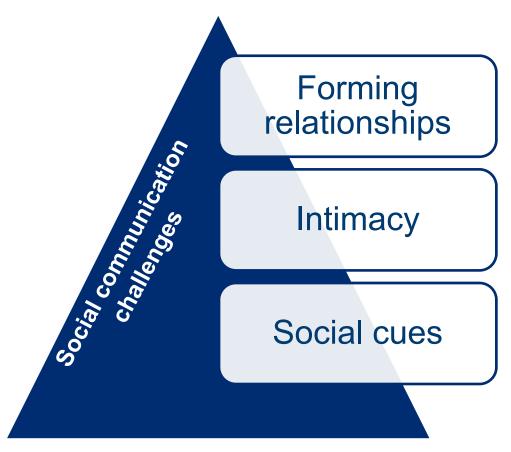
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Embarrassment & discomfort



Sensory Differences

New sensory sensations





Overwhelming activities

Desire for more independence





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RIGID THINKING CAN IMPACT:

- > GENDER ROLES
- > EXPECTATIONS
- > UNDERSTANDING CONSENT
- > INCREASED VULNERABILITY

I'm in high school so
I have to have a
boyfriend or
girlfriend

I am a boy therefore I must like girls







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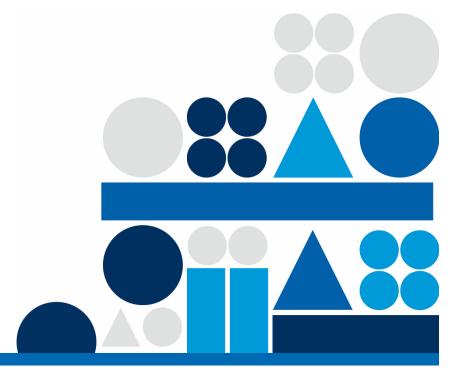
THE ROLE OF MENTAL HEALTH







And then there's COVID-19...





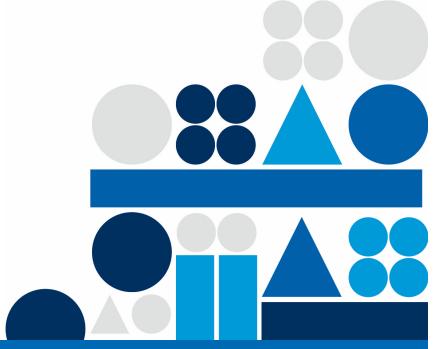


Building Relationships









What do teens need to know?



How are people in relationships?



What do people in various relationships do together? What is ok or not ok?



How do relationships change?



What is intimacy? How can a person be intimate?



What slang do they need to know?





Circle of Relationships







Supporting Relationships in Times of COVID



Utilize strengths and areas of interest to create opportunities

Consider:

- How are current relationships being maintained?
- > What opportunities are there to make new friends?
- What do you feel comfortable with as a family?
- Do the opportunities fit your child's needs at that time?

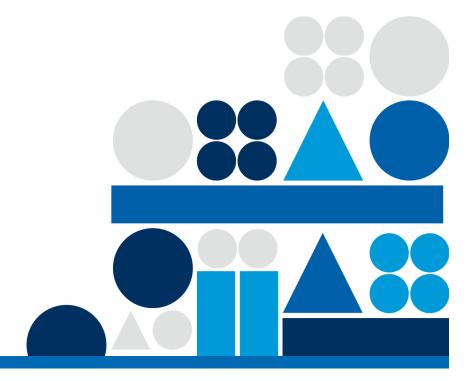




Teaching Social Safety

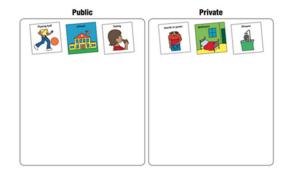






Foundational Skills: Public vs. Private

- Private place: where no one can see you or just walk in
- Public place: anyone can go
- Areas where it can be applied
 - Hygiene and Daily Living Activities
 - Touching
 - Social behaviors
 - Conversations (including internet)











Consent & Decision Making

CONSENT

- Consent is not just about sex!
- Legally who can and cannot consent?
- Consent is not stagnant

Freely Given
Reversible
Informed
Enthusiastic
Specific

Planned Parenthood®

Accepting "no" and increasing flexible thinking

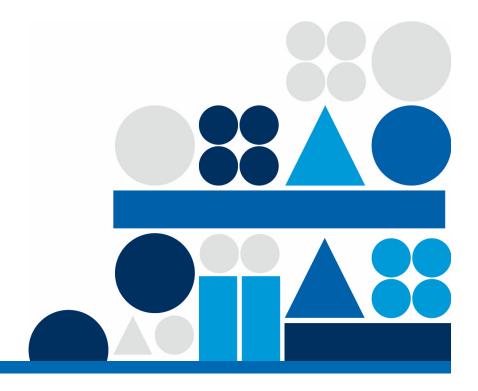




Dating







What to Consider

- ➤ Is the teen ready and how would you know when they are ready?
- > Individual interest
- Family and cultural norms
- Social missteps vs. serious errors







What to Teach

(But first...take inventory of skills and what still needs to be taught)

- ✓ Hygiene
- ✓ Daily living skills
- ✓ Communication skills
- ✓ Ability to advocate for themselves





SpectrumSingles

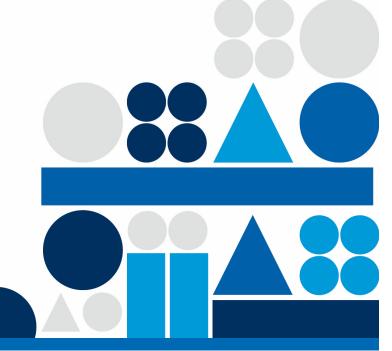
The Go-To Dating Site for People On the Autism Spectrum

Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity







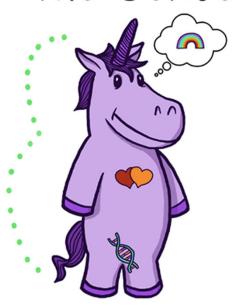


The Gender Unicorn



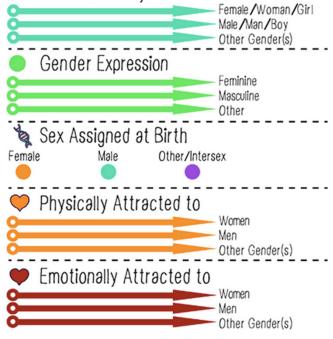
Gender variance more common in individuals with ASD

(Van Der Miesen et al., 2016)



To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



Children's Hospital Colorado

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Gender Identity

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Correct and Redirect

Interventions aimed at gender conformity or attempting to change gender identity or gender expression, are coercive, can be harmful, and should not be part of behavioral health treatment.

(SAMHSA, 2015)







Gender Affirmative Model

Create space to explore and express gender

Observe and support the teen's developing gender identity

Follow the teen's lead

Teach and instill healthy messages about gender







Affirm and Move Forward

May be time to take transition steps

Refer to gender competent therapist or multidisciplinary team for gender diverse children







When to Seek Help

- Behavioral changes
- Increased concern about mental health
- Concern for safety
- Causing problems in daily life
- Parents need support in navigating adolescence

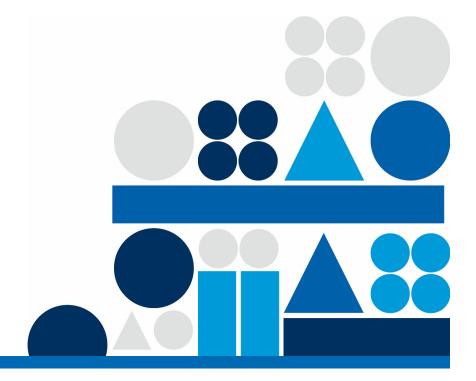


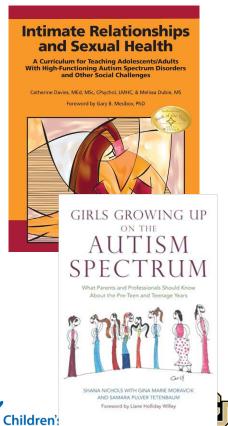


Resources

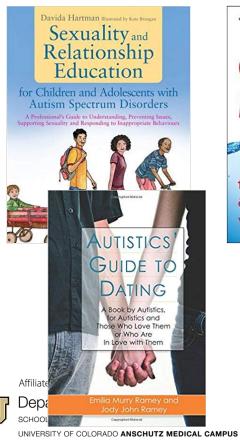


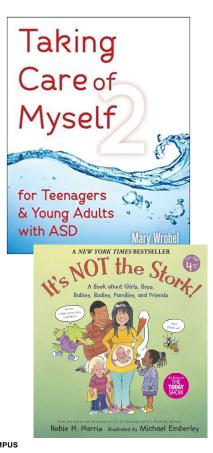


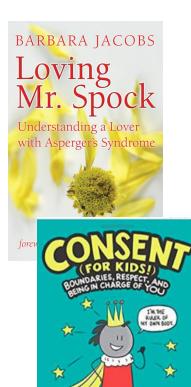




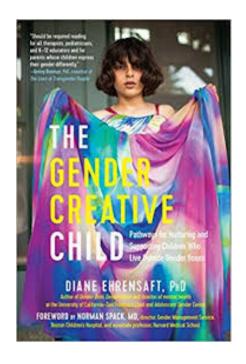
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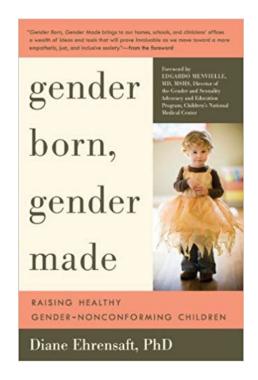


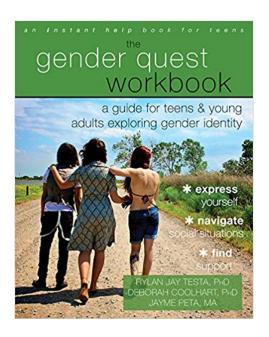




RACHEL BRIAN











Websites

- ✓ OHSU Disability & Sexual Health Guide: https://www.ohsu.edu/university-center-excellence-development disability/sexual-health-resources
- ✓ Vanderbilt Healthy Bodies Toolkit: https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/healthybodies/
- ✓ NCIL Video Library: https://ncil.org/sex-ed-for-individuals-with-i-dd/
- ✓ MA 2014 Resource Guide: http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/prevention/hrhs-sexuality-and-disability-resource-guide.pdf





Additional Resources

- ✓ Young Adult PEERS curriculum (no sex education component): https://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources/role-play-videos
- ✓ TRUE Center for Gender Diversity at CHCO Gender Identity
- ✓ SOAR Clinic at CHCO Sex Development Disorders
- ✓ ONE Colorado: http://www.one-colorado.org/
- ✓ Gay and Lesbian Medical Association: http://www.glma.org/
- ✓ Trans-Youth Education and Support of Colorado (TYES): http://www.tyes-colorado.org/
- ✓ Rainbow Alley: https://lgbtqcolorado.org/programs/rainbow-alley/
- ✓ See flyer for Birds and Bees group in Developmental Pediatrics





QUESTIONS?





