

Sexuality & Autism Spectrum Disorder: When Autism and the Criminal Justice System Intersect

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Sexuality & Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Overview

- Rationale and need
 - Sexuality in ASD versus typically developing
 - Core features of ASD can contribute
 - Associated features of ASD
- Approach
- Teaching

Sexuality in ASD

- Limited research
- Problems with studies
 - Diagnostic categories
 - Sources
 - Sample severity
 - Sample placement
 - Deviant focus

ASD & Typical Development

- Maturation v. Development
- Age of interest
- Historical focus on abuse prevention
- Eugenics and reproduction prevention
- Possibly, but not clear
 - Sexual orientation
 - Gender identification
 - Sexual interests

Sexual Behavior, Desire, Identity

- Most people with ASD desire relationships (Koegel et al, 2014)
- Asexuality may be more common but not clear
 - General population estimates
 - Exists in non-human animals
 - 5-10% (Poston & Baumle, 2010)
 - 5% to 33% may overestimate
- Only 10% of adults had a sexual relationship
- Some studies find high rates of bisexuality and homosexuality

Sexual Behavior

- Estimated 10% of adults with ASD have had sexual relationship(s)
 - *89 - 92% of general sample has by early 20s (NSSHB, 2010)*
- General population
 - 4 – 6% males report same-sex contact
 - 4 – 12% females report same-sex sexual contact (Chandra, Mosher, Copen, and Sionean 2011)

Sexual Desire

- In ASD, questionable differences. Exposure to testosterone or androgen in utero?
- In typical people
 - Consensus that fantasy is healthy and common (Leitenberg, 1995).
 - In typical people 54% of men daily or more, 19% of women daily or more (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, Michaels, 1994).

Sexual Identity

- Homosexuality 2% to 8% of males, 1% to 7% of females.
- Bisexuality 1% and 3% of males, 2% to 5% of females.

(NSSHB, 2010; Chandra, Mosher, Copen, and Sionean 2011)

- Identity < Behavior (NSSHB, 2010)
- Some studies find high rates of bisexuality and homosexuality in ASD

Orientation & Desire

- If there is a difference, why?
 - Selectivity theory
 - Autoeroticism
- Non-human interests: animate and inanimate
- Development of fetishes & interests=related to ASD?
 - Furry examples
- Preoccupations
- Examples from special interests





Example:

Pedophilia in General Sample

- In a general sample, 4.1% of men reported sexual interest in prepubescent children
 - 3.2% reported sexual offending
 - 0.1% reported pedophilic preference
- (Dombert et al., 2015)

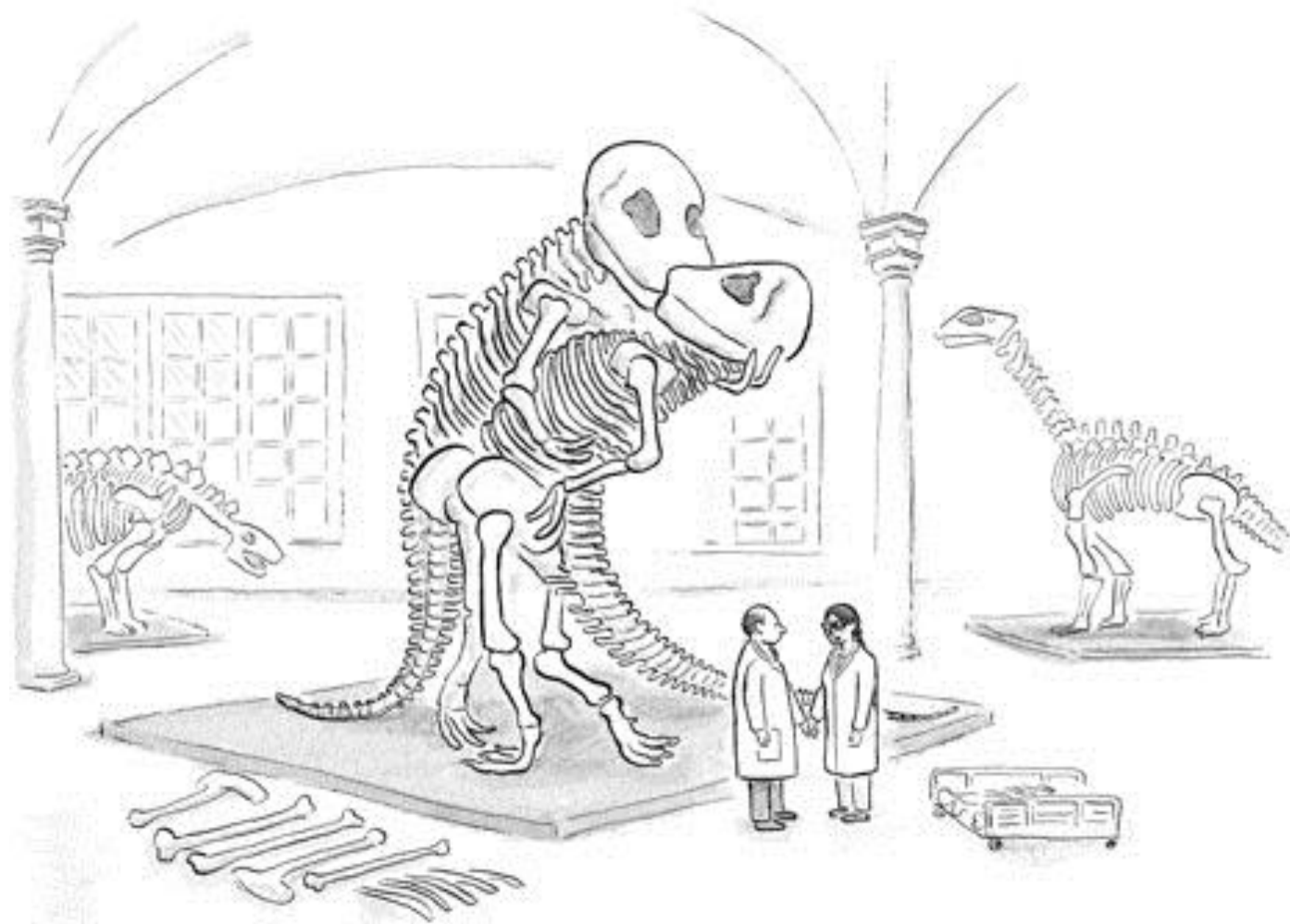
Neurotypical Sexuality

- *Men with this interest typically reported a high level of distress & need for therapy*
- **That is, they perceived it as a problem.**
- Only 24 % who reported interest also acted on it.
- Men who reported use of illegal sexual images of children exclusively were a distinct subgroup from those who reported both use of images and contact offenses.

(Dombert et al., 2015)

Desire for Relationships

- Most people with ASD desire relationships
- Asexuality may be more common but not clear
 - 5% to 33% may overestimate
- Only 10% of adults had a sexual relationship
- Timing is often later than for neurotypical people



PAUL
NOTH

"I just worry that it's affecting our work."

Desire for Relationships

- Some studies find high rates of bisexuality and homosexuality
- If there is a difference, why?
 - Selectivity theory
 - Autoeroticism may explain some perceived asexuality

Impacts of ASD on Interests?

- Non-human interests: animate and inanimate
- Development of fetishes & interests=related to ASD?
- Preoccupations
- Examples from special interests
- Sensory experience

Potential Relationship Barriers

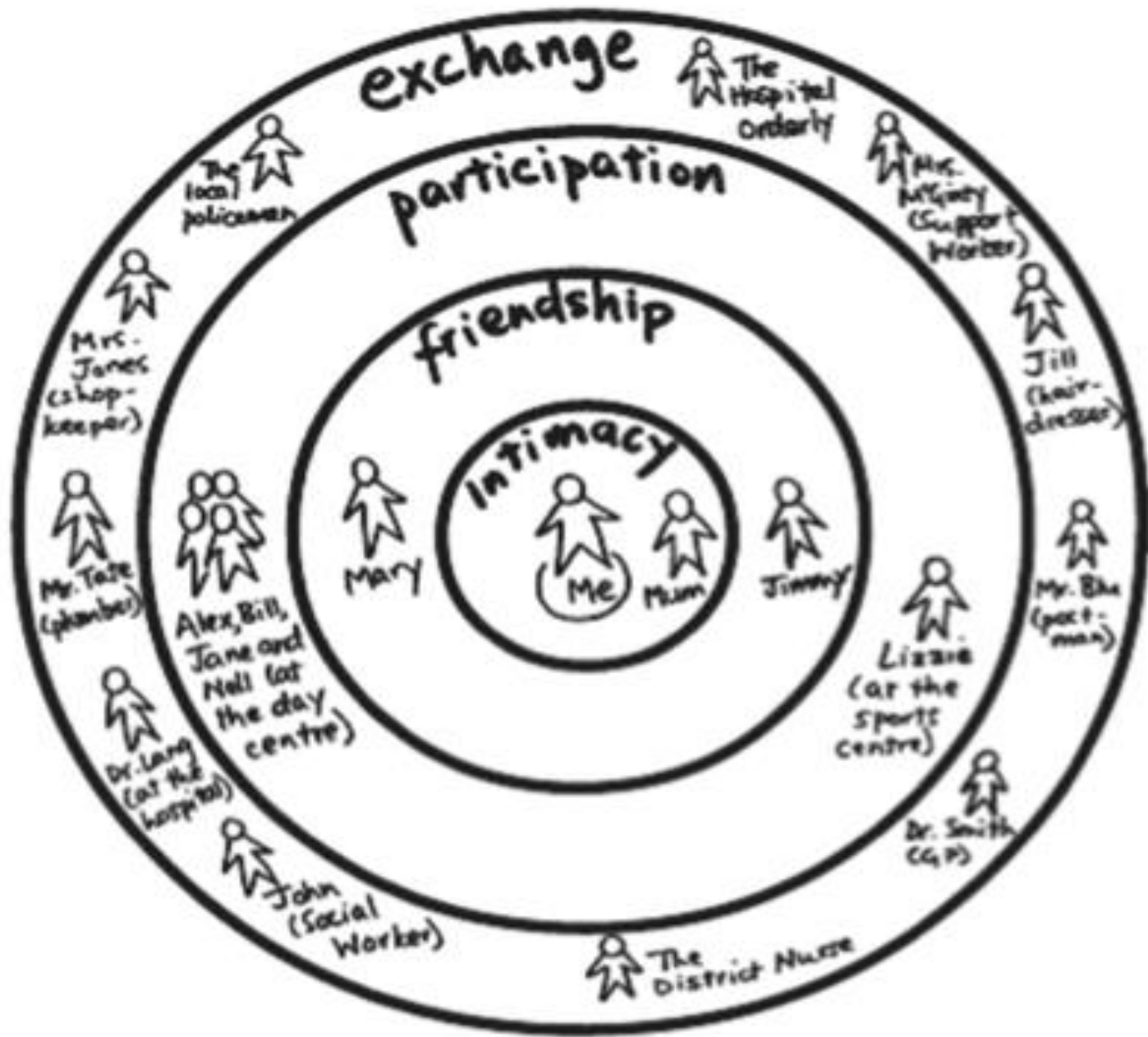
- Social- Communication
- Social Cognitive Deficits
- Insistence On Sameness
- Sensory Experience (Ex: Mouth Noises)
- Social Motivation
- Interest
- Secondary Traits (Anxiety)

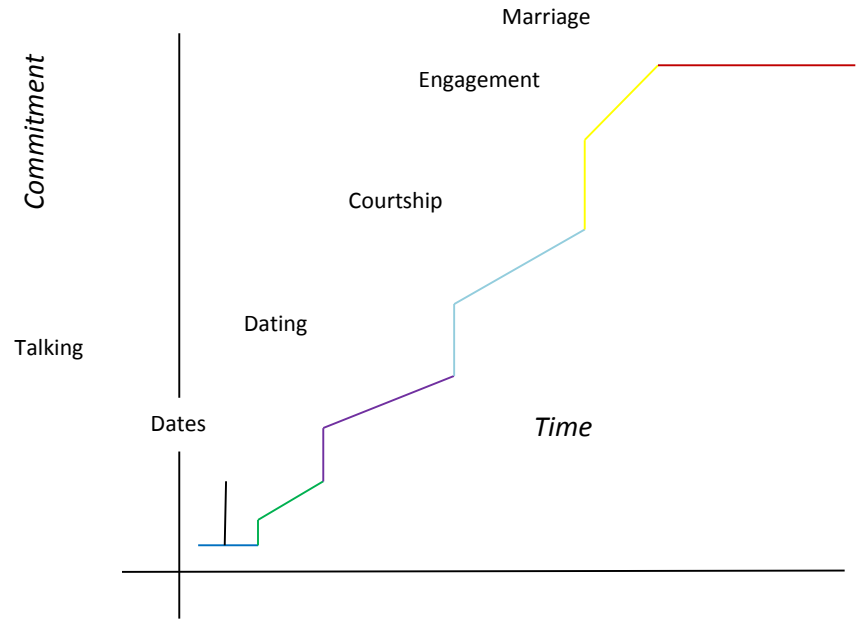
What to Teach

- Personal boundaries
- Levels of intimacy
- Typical timelines for relationships
- Avoiding danger and abuse
- Dating skills
- Personal responsibilities and values
- Clarification of relationship goals

How to Teach

- Explicit
- Task analytic approach
- Incremental
- Examples and nonexamples from real life
- Visual supports
- Return to topics repeatedly
- Check for comprehension





PORN MOVIES AND DISNEY ARE
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MOST FRUSTRATED
HUMAN BEINGS I KNOW





Dream
The Leader in Contemporary

Sources of Information

Pornography

Film, television, youtube

Social media and communication

- Facebook
- Snapchat, sexting

Missing sources: peers, often parents or older sibs



"We really need to have our rugs vacuumed professionally one of these days."

ART.
COM

Features of ASD impacting learning

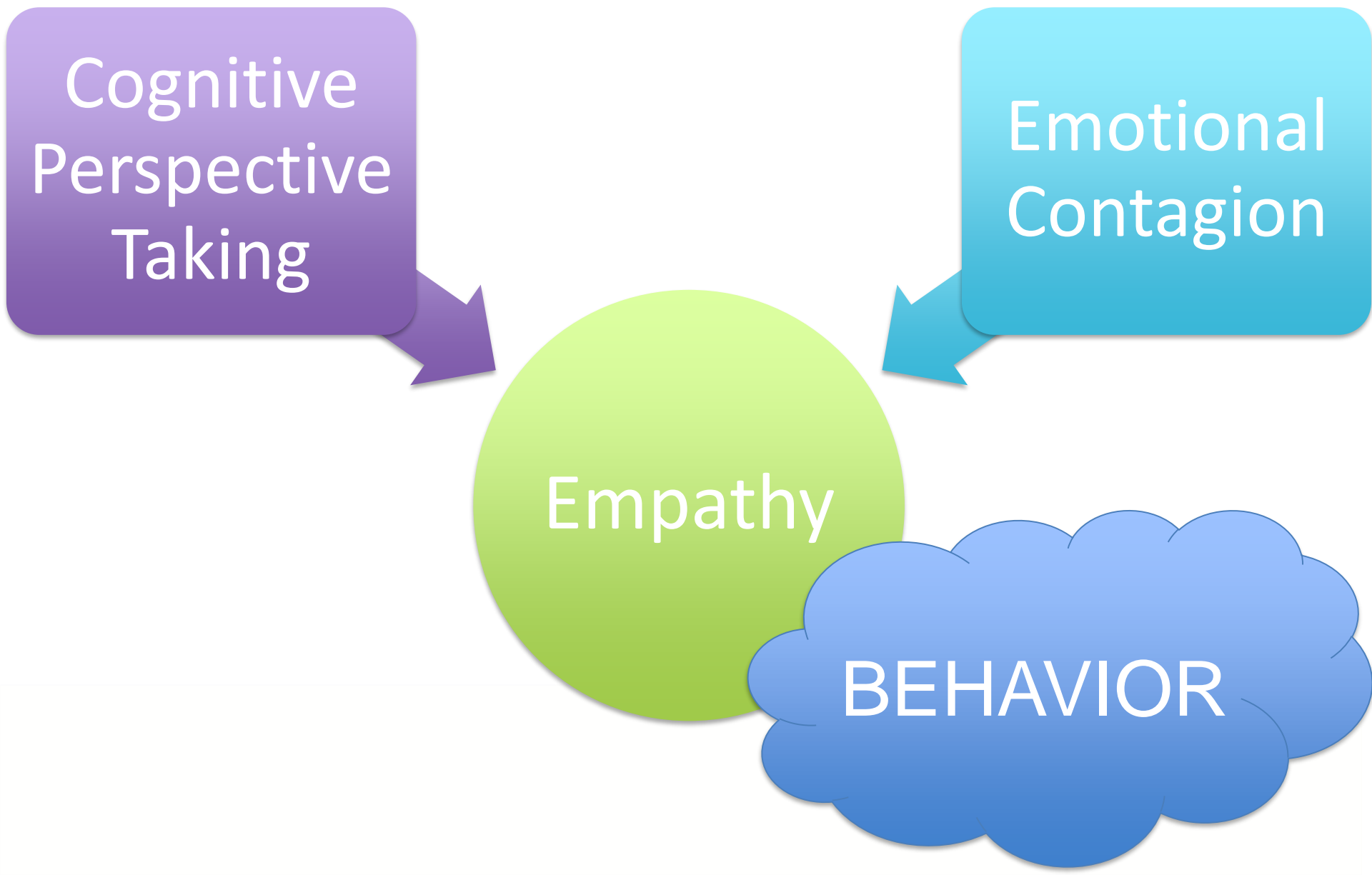
- The core diagnostic features
 - Social-communication
 - Social interaction
 - Atypical behaviors

Cognitive
Perspective
Taking

Emotional
Contagion

Empathy

BEHAVIOR



Porn For Women



Associated Features

- Also important to consider
 - Executive function
 - Learning style
 - Anxiety

- Planning
- Abstract Problem Solving
- Multi-tasking
- Cognitive flexibility
- Visual working memory
- Inhibition
- Interference control

Executive Processes

- Judgment and planning
- Sequencing and organization
- Attention – including shifting
- Motivation
- **Comprehension**

Learning Style

- Process world in a narrow, intense, detailed manner
- Unique learning profiles/disorders may exist
- Generalization
- **Novel Problem Solving**

Learning Style

- Distress about sensitive information
- Social anxiety
- Interference with listening & learning
- Insistence on sameness

Anxiety



Hey! My eyes are up here!

- Conceptual Development
 - Overarching themes and concepts that make learning meaningful and transferable to new situations
 - Big picture
 - Meaning
 - Main ideas
 - There are a lot of BIG IDEAS in sexuality

What to teach: General Content

- Facts
- Social Aspects
 - What to do
 - What not to do
 - and...

WHY (BIG IDEAS)

Sexuality Education for Typical Kids

- 96% female and 97% male teens receive sex ed before 18 (CDC, 2010)
- More students report learning about “how to say no” than about birth control
- Quite common for students receiving special education to “skip” sex ed

What to Teach: Facts

- Hygiene and Self-Care
 - How-to
 - Schedules
- Terms for Anatomy
 - Proper
 - Slang
- Terms for Acts
 - Proper
 - Slang

What to Teach: How-To's

- Masturbation
 - Physical safety concerns
- Mechanics of Partnered Sex Acts
 - Homosexual and heterosexual
 - Safer sex practices

What to Teach: Social Pieces

- Personal boundaries
- Public versus private behavior
- Good touch versus bad touch
- Levels of intimacy
- Relationship building
- Avoiding danger and abuse
- Dating skills
- Personal responsibilities and values
- Social perception of sexual content

What to Teach: Social Pieces

- Hygiene: the *why*
- Terms: which to use with whom, settings
- Acts: when, where appropriate, how, and with whom to initiate; partners' experience
- Masturbation: where

What to Teach: Consent

- This is a tricky concept, even for typically developing people.





EXAMPLE: Teaching about porn

(adapted from NYT)

- Legality/ Illegality
- One “shadowy and loveless corner”
- Bodies respond differently than minds (women example)
- Exploitation

EXAMPLE: Teaching about porn

- Social perception
- How to discuss
- “Kabuki theater”
- Porn is fake
 - Using as a model can be quite harmful
- Body image
- Acts

EXAMPLE:

What to teach about how to use porn

- Location
- Use of electronics
- Browser Histories
- Privacy
- Search Terms
- Pop ups

- Clean up

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When Autism and the Criminal Justice System Intersect

Young people on the spectrum can and do get arrested.



Autism is not a free pass



- Child Pornography
- Stalking
- Sexting or inappropriate internet activity
- Sexual interaction with younger individuals
- Inappropriate/unwelcome overtures to others of a sexual nature

Education of Parents and Individuals with autism of the risks

- The risk of committing sexual offenses is not higher in this group.
- Counterfeit deviance-because of their lack of common sense in social situations and weird demeanor, behavior may be labeled as deviant or criminal.
- The laws related to child pornography and sexual offenses in general are particularly harsh in the imposition of penalties. (e.g. life long registration as a sex offender, long prison sentences).

Asperger's Syndrome is not
associated with sexual perversion

Emphasis on internet and personal safety must be explicitly taught.



Examples:

- Client with autism and ID masturbating in an area where he believed he wouldn't be seen. It was across the street from a daycare center.
- Legal response was burdensome to the parent and not helpful to this young man.
- Once it was explained what he did wrong it did not occur.
- We raised a fitness motion. Evaluator claimed he could be restored to fitness.
- One year later, the case was finally dismissed.

Child pornography

- Complex
- Crimes at both the state and federal level often charge by the number of images as well as the ages of the victims.
- AD individuals can be lured into chat rooms and not appreciate that what they are doing is against the law.
- Prosecutors don't care whether the person has AD.
- Strict penalties and sentences including lifelong registration as a sexual offender.

Teens should also be educated on how to interact with police



Guidelines:

- Don't run
- Keep your hands out of your pockets
- Don't raise your voice
- Ask to call your parent
- Don't touch the police in any way
- Decline to answer questions without an attorney present
- Schools should not be an investigative arm of the police



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