



7 Things to Know About ASD and Sexuality Education

Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of being human. All humans have the right to their sexuality and to express their sexuality in a safe and comfortable way. Sexuality is a multidimensional construct, of which sexual well-being is one component.

According to the World Health Organization, sexual well-being is defined as “not only the absence of sexual problems and inappropriate sexual behavior, but also a positive orientation to the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of sexuality”.

1. Autistic individuals are not inherently asexual, which is an umbrella term referring to lack of sexual attraction. Autistic individuals vary across the sexuality spectrum.
2. Studies indicate that autistic individuals report higher rates of gender variance and non-heterosexuality than non-autistic individuals.
 - a. Studies also indicate that autistic individuals who are non-heterosexual and/or gender non-conforming have increased health disparities.
3. Children and adults with ASD experience disproportionately high rates of victimization, including sexual assault, in comparison to non-autistic peers.
4. A lack of sexual knowledge has been shown to be one factor related to increased risk of victimization.
 - a. The most common perpetrators against individuals with developmental disabilities are service providers, acquaintances and neighbors, family members, and peers with disabilities.
 - b. Autistic individuals are less likely to receive information related to sexuality education from caregivers, school, and peers. This impedes access to sexuality education and restricts sexual well-being.
5. Sexuality education is important regardless of a person’s interest in gender expression, romantic relationships, or sexual activity.
6. Sexuality education promotes independence, safety, self-awareness and self-determination for autistic individuals.
7. Sexuality education curricula should be adapted to account for the challenges and strengths of autistic individuals, incorporate the use of evidence-based practices, and be delivered proactively.



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