

Supporting Healthy Sexuality & Boundaries for Young People with Disabilities

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1

Center



2

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

1. Centering and Check-in
2. Background Information
3. Curriculum Overviews
4. Tips for Meaningful and Authentic Instructional Methods
5. Resources and Support
6. Q & A - Panel

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3

Introductions



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Kate Turpen (they/them)
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4

Setting ground rules/shared agreements

5 is the ideal # of shared agreements

- Embrace 'The Awkward'
- Stories stay but lessons can leave (Confidentiality)
- Ask questions in the words you have
- You can take breaks
- Take space, make space



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5

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT



- All people have the right to comprehensive sexual education.
- Conversations about sexual health can bring up a range of emotions.
- Sexual education is a lifelong process.
- We all have different comfort levels with this topic. This is okay!
- None of us are perfect. We're all learning and growing.

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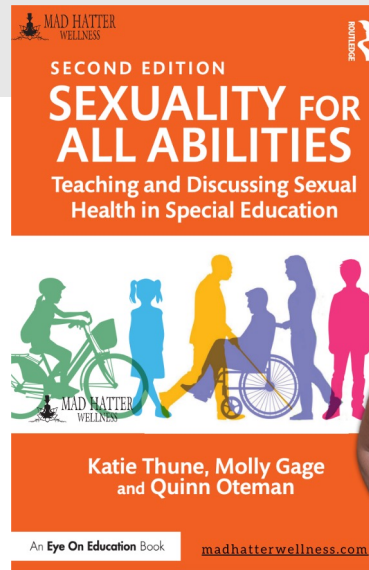
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6

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7

BACKGROUND INFO



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8

SEXUAL ASSAULT STATISTICS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

83% & 32%

83% of women and 32% of men with developmental disabilities are victims of sexual assault at some point in their lifetime (Johnson & Sigler, 2000).

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49%

49% of people with developmental disabilities who are victims of sexual violence, will experience 10 or more abusive incidents (Valenti-Heim & Schwartz, 1995).

7x

People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities (Data run for NPR by the Justice Department, 2017).

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9

WHY ARE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MORE VULNERABLE TO ASSAULT?

1. Societal attitudes and beliefs about people with disabilities
 - Infantilizing or assuming asexuality
2. Aspects of the disability
3. Lack of sexual education
4. Dependency and learned compliance
5. Isolation



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10

Sexual Rights for People with Disabilities

Not a legal list of rights - just our dream

People with disabilities have a right to:

- sexual education.
- sexual expression.
- be respected.
- be protected.
- be supported in all relationships.
- engage in consensual sexual relationships.
- acquire sexual knowledge.
- make their own decisions.
- be believed and seen.

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11

HOW HAS SEXUAL EDUCATION FAILED PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?



- Lack of education
- Stranger Danger principle
- Sex ed as abuse prevention
- Reactive education (after something happened)
- Hidden curriculum (what we're supposed to know)
- Informal curriculum (what we learn from friends)

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12

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW



13

SEXUALITY FOR ALL ABILITIES

- For use in schools - middle school, high school, post-secondary
- For use in adult programs - employment or residential settings
- Instructor manual with lesson plans
- Flash drive with all materials as pdfs
- Modified lessons for use with students with extensive needs
- Videos, social stories, sorting activities
- Boundaries flip books



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14

CONTENTS IN SFAA

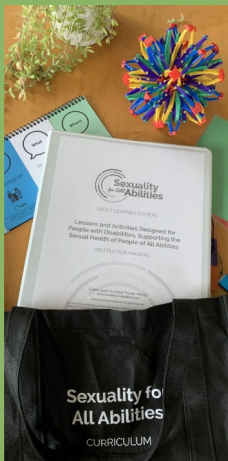
- Healthy Relationships
- Safe and Healthy Boundaries
- Private and Public
- Romantic Relationships
- Puberty/Changes in Our Body
- Human Reproduction
- Pregnancy
- Outcomes of Sexual Activity
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Consent and Body Rights
- Get Away and Tell Someone
- Social Media Literacy and Online Safety

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15

Sexuality for All Abilities Curriculum



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Order the curriculum at a discounted rate of \$375 plus free shipping!

Email us at info@madhatterwellness.com for more information or to purchase. Purchase Orders welcome.

16

Empowered Together

- Lessons designed for people with I/DD to support healthy relationships and communicate about sexual health
- Co-facilitated by a trained Staff/Professional and a trained Self-Advocate (Peer Educator)
- Lessons taught virtually or in-person
- Scripted Instructor Manual
- Slide Deck for all lessons
- Participant Workbook



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17

Lesson Topics

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Healthy Relationships | 6. Gender & Sexual Orientation |
| 2. Consent | 7. Reproductive Body Parts & Health |
| 3. What is Love? What is Friendship? | 8. Body Changes and Image |
| 4. My Body Belongs to Me | 9. Sexual Activity, Consent, & Emotions |
| 5. Pathway to Help | 10. Physical Outcomes of Sexual Activity |

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18

What is Love? What is Friendship?



19

Friendship: a strong bond or connection (sexual/romantic elements can develop); does not have a communicated romantic commitment

Romantic Relationship: a connection between people including romantic feelings and both people feel the

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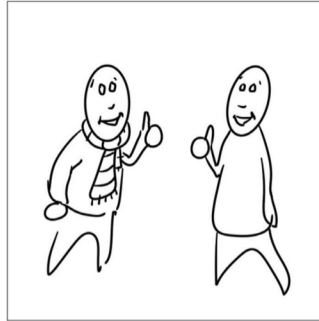
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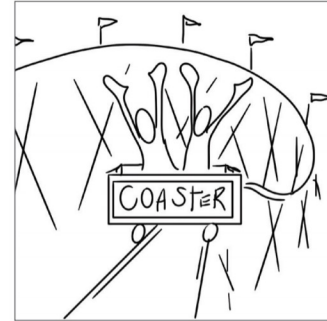
Thoughts about Dating (1/2)



Dating is when you spend time with someone to get to know them better.



Both people need to agree that you are dating.



When you go on a date, you do something fun together.

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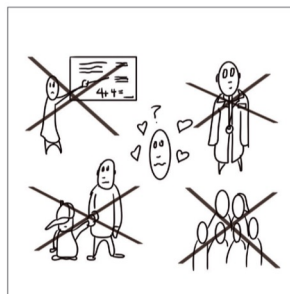
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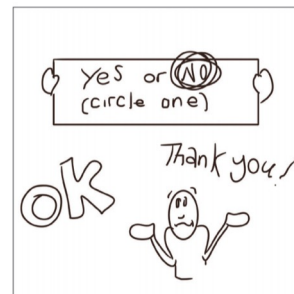
Thoughts about Dating (2/2)



Make sure you know the rules for dating at your workplace if you are interested in dating a co-worker.



You can't date family members, staff and caregivers, or children.



You can ask a person if they would like to go on a date. They might say yes or no, and you need to respect their answer.

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SLIDE 22

22

Where would you like to go on a date?

How do you decide who pays/is going to pay?

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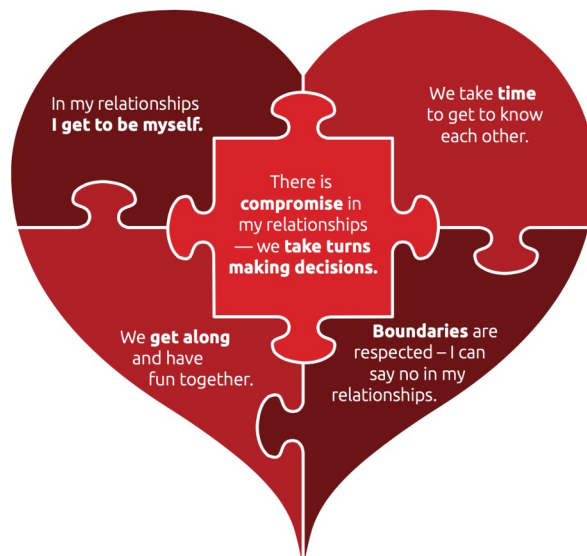
23

What makes a healthy relationship?

Five pieces to a healthy friendship and/or romantic relationship.

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HEART OF RELATIONSHIPS



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SLIDE 24

24

Healthy or Unhealthy?

Mike gets mad at their romantic partner for talking to other people at work.

Healthy

Unhealthy

Jessie spends time with his friends at a party while his girlfriend spends time with her friends. They are apart most of the night.

Healthy

Unhealthy

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SLIDE 25

25

Best Practices for Meaningful and Authentic Lessons



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26

Tips for meaningful & authentic lessons

- Assume ability
- Make connections to students' lives
 - Using photos of people/places in their life
 - Connect to movies, media that students enjoy
- Use teachable moments
- Shared language among all supports (staff, family, etc)
- Communicate with families often, parent information night
- Revisit lessons often
- Bring focus of every lesson back to self-advocacy and self-determination skills

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27

Image Examples for Healthy/Unhealthy Activity



28

Use What's Happening in the Room



Divorce yourself from the idea of getting to a specific end point, conversations and questions can bring invaluable depth but take time. Those detours are important!

A lesson with 1 class will rarely look the same in another class - even if it's the same content.

How do you use the giggles/general nervousness to signal folks need a break?

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29



Reframing

to Take Judgement Out



Facilitator Beliefs

When we talk about sex and relationships, facilitators can unintentionally use judgemental language.

This language sends a message to learners about what is normal, when the only constant is that **every body** is different.

There is no normal.

Words like 'ALL' or 'SHOULD' connect to 'GOOD/BAD'

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30

What would you say?

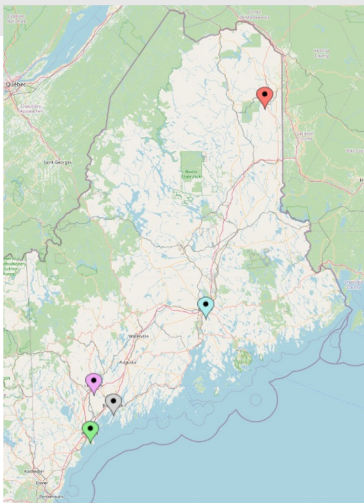
- Mid-way through a lesson, a student blurts out "This is inappropriate. We can't talk about this in school."
- Following the condom demonstration lesson, a student is looking at a packaged condom. His BHP takes it out of his hand and says "That's not for you"
- During the reproductive body parts lesson, a student exclaims 'I HAVE A VAGINA.' The other students giggle

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31

Asset Map of Self Advocates



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Rose Belanger

Regina Bowie

Kile Pelletier (Trained Spring 2025)

Avery Olmstead

Eric McVey

Marco Orlando

Brian Harnish

Aydan Rudolph

Jaheim Franklyn

Lynn Feely

Abbot Philson

Athena Brown

Bryan Spaulding (Trained Spring 2025)

Nio DiPietrantonio (Trained Spring 2025)

Rook Buttons (Trained Spring 2025)

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32

Resources & Support

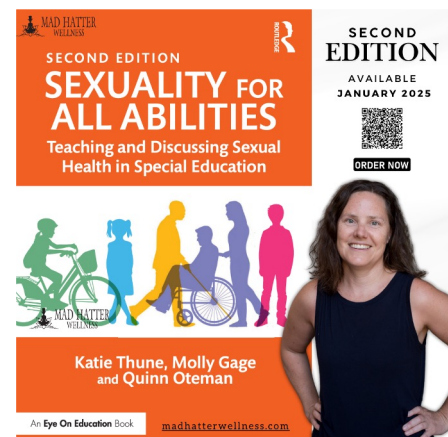


33

Sexuality for All Abilities Book Second Edition

- Guides readers on how to deliver comprehensive sex ed in the context of special education
- Practical tips & tools of implementing a successful program
- Troubleshoots tricky situations that may come up with students
- Tips for building parent-school partnerships
- Suggestions for supporting gender, sexual identity & orientation
- Stories about the impact of sex ed classes in special education

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34

SEXUALITY

FOR ALL ABILITIES

TRAINING

TRAINING INCLUDES:

- How to approach equitable sex education for people with disabilities
- Recognizing, responding, and reacting to sexual situations/student disclosure
- How to use the Sexuality for All Abilities curriculum (content accessibility, co-teaching model extension)
- Think through steps on answering difficult questions and trauma informed conversations (with admin, parents/families)
- Discuss supporting LGBTQ students with disabilities
- Identifying assets across Maine to champion and continue this work

APRIL 17, 2025 | 9AM-3PM
EQUALITY COMMUNITY CENTER
VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE OPTIONAL

REGISTER HERE

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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GSMITH@NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG





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35

Q & A Panel



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36

5 TALKING POINTS FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING SEX ED

Why it's important

01

People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities. And 49% of people with developmental disabilities who are victims of sexual violence, will experience 10 or more abusive incidents.



My child won't understand



The Empowered Together curriculum is designed for people with disabilities and co taught by people with disabilities. It is designed with flexible lessons that can match the pace a student is learning.

02

My child doesn't have those feelings

03

It is assumed that people with disabilities do not experience romantic or sexual feelings. And while identities like asexuality and aromantic do exist, unless your child has explicitly communicated with you otherwise, they probably do want to experience these things. Even then, educated about topics are still a good resource to have.



Inappropriate for my child to learn



Comprehensive sexual education is not only a right but imperative for students to learn so that they can protect themselves. If they are not going to learn it at school where else can they learn.

04

10 Lessons won't be enough for my child to learn

05

For some students 10 lessons may not be enough to fully grasp contents which is why continued discussion about these topics are important. It is also important to reinforce education and bring up lessons from time to time.



Supporting Health Sexuality & Boundaries for Young People with Disabilities

Resources and Support



Contact Kate Turpen to set up co-teaching opportunities: kturpen@drme.org
[Supported Decision Making Resources](#)

Mad Hatter Wellness offers training, self-paced courses, and educational tools.
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Video Resources

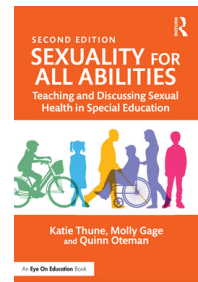
[Mad Hatter Wellness YouTube Channel](#) short videos to support healthy relationships and more

[NCIL Videos](#) - sex ed videos created by and for adults with disabilities

[Amaze](#) - great videos on sexual health and relationships

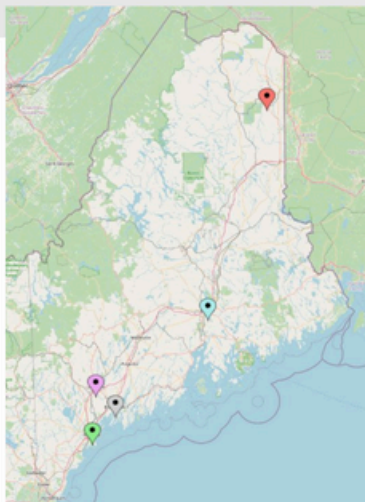
[Healthy Relationships Video Series](#) with Special Olympics Virginia

[Understanding Me Video Series](#) with Special Olympics Arizona



The second edition of [Sexuality for All Abilities](#) is [available](#) now.

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