Dating for People with a Diagnosis

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Learning objectives

Learn how core clinical issues, such as neurodivergence or mental health, can impact learning and opportunities for developing intimate relationships.

Understand the five areas of sexual consent and how we can use this information to provide education and resources to the person we are supporting.

Understand more about Internet and social media risks and how to support safer online interactions while promoting more opportunities.

Identify and discuss “unwritten social rules” and how to support a person in learning more about these nuances and navigating social situations while “in the moment.”

What can impact dating when diagnosed?

- Core clinical issues
- Receptive language skills
- Expressive language skills
- Body/motor control
- Self-esteem
- Opportunity
- Stigma/myths/judgment

"So and so has a diagnosis of _____, so they don't need sex."

"This person is 'girl-crazy' because of their diagnosis."

"I'll never have a partner."

"Sex and intimacy are the same thing."

"People with disabilities have more important needs than dating or sex."

"People with disabilities should not be permitted to have children."

"Everyone online is dangerous," or "You'll never get a date through a dating site."

Dave Hingsburger

Social “rules”

- Hygiene/Manners
- Small talk.
- Reading and responding to body language (and messages)
- Managing your body language, words, and tone (including in writing)
- Knowing and responding to degrees of social relationships.

Hygiene/Manners

What are they? Why are they important?

Small Talk

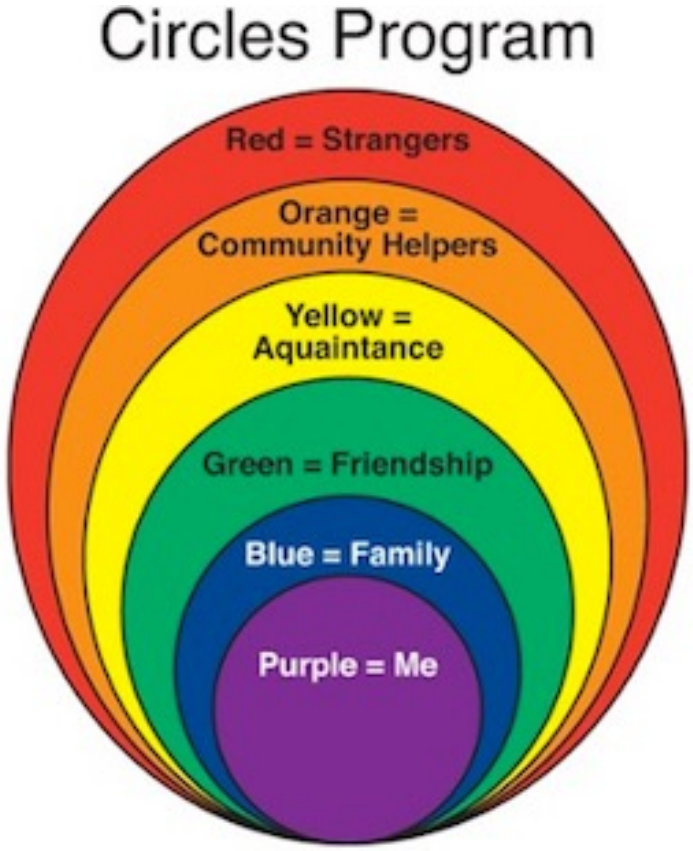
- “What is your favorite TV show?”
- “Are you an only child?”
- “What is your favorite color?”
- “Do you like sports? If so, what is your favorite team?”
- “If you could live anywhere, where would it be and why?”
- “What did you do for your last birthday?”
- “What would you do if you won the lottery?”

Advanced Skill…keeping the conversation going

Body Language

- Start with basics emotions and move to advanced.
- Review/discuss a series of pictures or role play.
- Discuss what is seen and what to do.

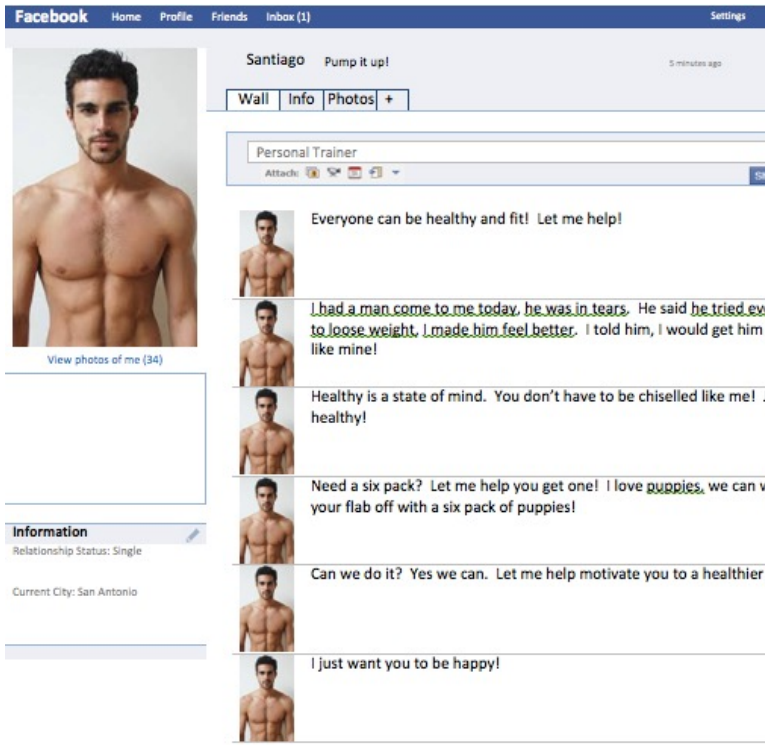
Degrees of Social Relationships



Internet/Social Media

Review the following tips:

- Possible deceptions “cat fishing”
- Public/private viewing
- Tips for safety
- Recommendations for “friends”
- Privacy settings
- Blocking



Internet/Social Media

- Create, discuss, and review scenarios.

You have been talking to an online 'friend' for some time. They seem really nice and have loads in common with you.
They have sent you a photo of themselves and you like the look of them.
It's the holiday and they ask to meet you in the park.

What should you do?

You they have been 'talking' to a 'friend' on webchat and they ask you to go on webcam. After a while, they ask you to do things that you don't feel comfortable with.

What should you do?

Five Areas of Sexual Consent

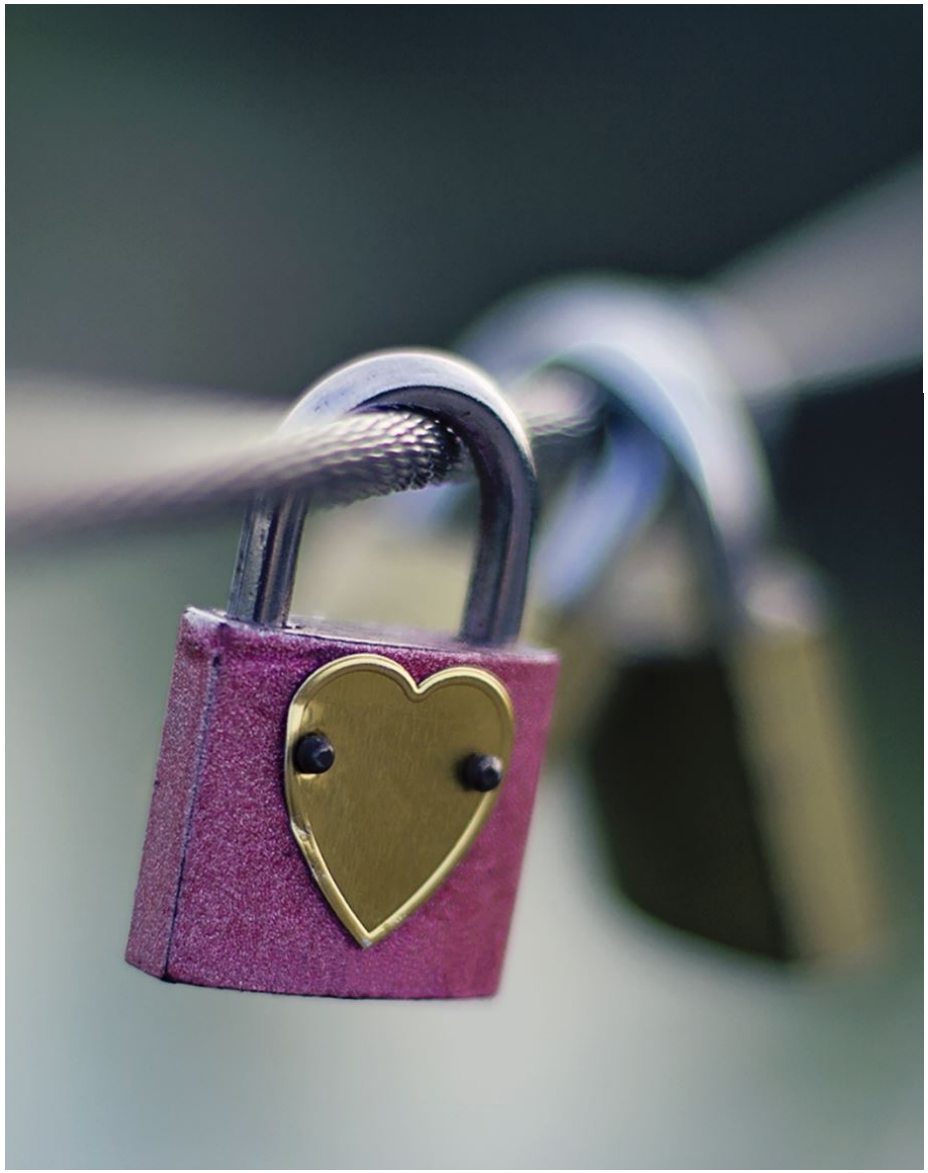
1 – knowledge of sex acts, preferences, and discomforts.

2 – knowledge of safe sex practices.

3 – understanding of private vs. public sex acts.

4 – knowledge of legal vs. illegal sexual behaviors.

5 – understanding of abuse prevention & safety



1 – Sex Acts

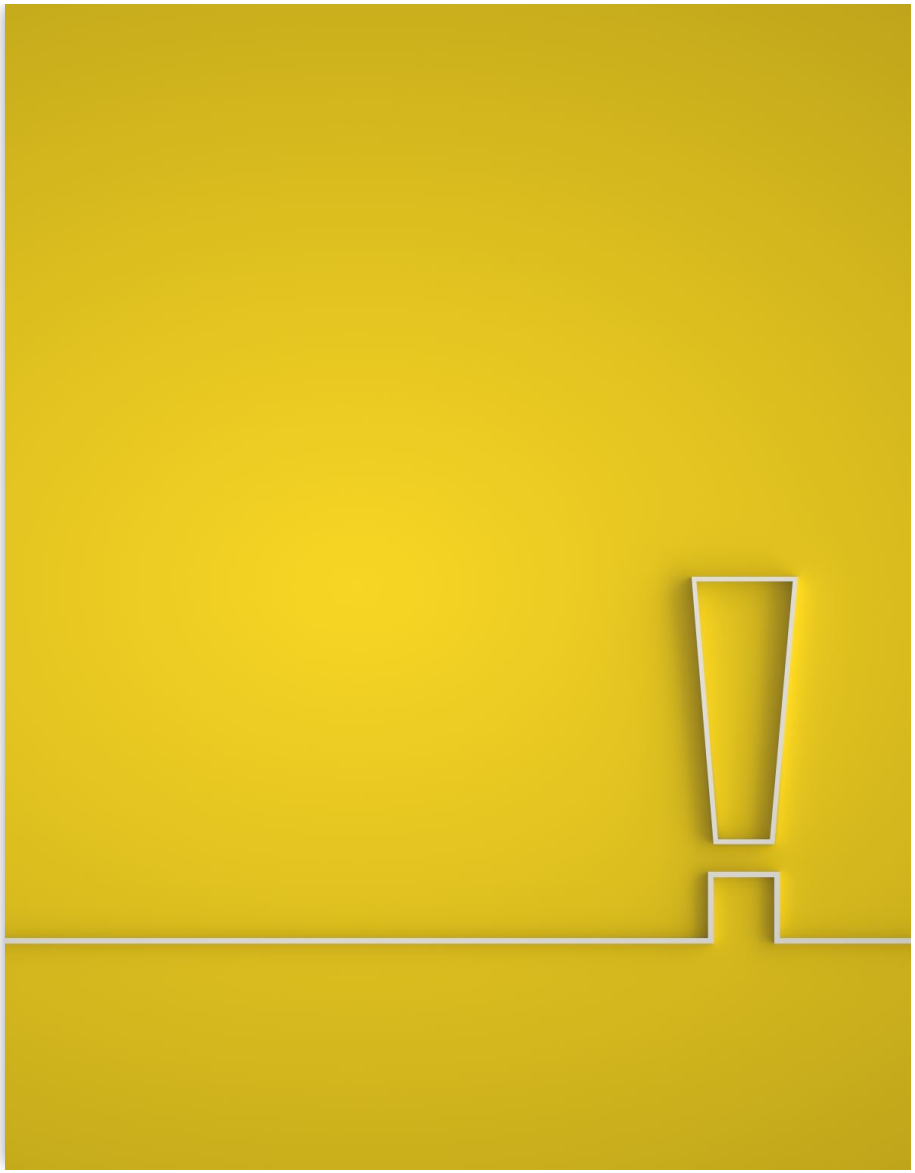
Do you know about different sexual acts?

Can you choose as to whether or not to do the sexual act?

Will you speak up and say “no” if you are uncomfortable with something?

2- Safe Sex

- Do you know how to prevent unwanted pregnancy?
- Do you know about sexually transmitted diseases?



3 – Private vs. Public Sex Acts

4 – Sex & the Law

5 – Abuse Prevention & Safety

Do you know what a harmful or abusive situation is?

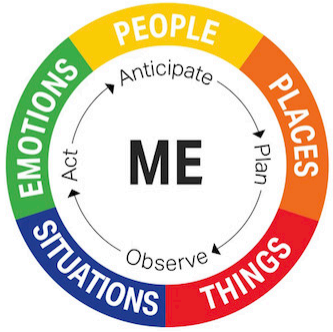
Do you know what a sexually abusive situation is?

Do you know how to report abuse?

Treatment Strategies

- Use the photo as a guide to label and categorize children, teens, and adults.
- Gather different photographs. You can use Google images, magazines or other pictures. Look through them and categorize the images you see as being a child, teenager or adult.
- Go to the mall or into the community. Sit down and "people watch". Again, categorize what you see.
- Be sure to talk about and teach nuances related to age discrimination because this is a tough for all people. Point out characteristics that could signify a person is a child, a teenager, or an adult. See the table below but remember this is a guide, there is no rule.

Child	Teenager	Adult
• Are they wearing specific character clothing? • Are they carrying a toy? • How tall are they against other people? • How do they wear their hair?	• Are they in middle school or high school? How might you know? How old is a middle and high schooler? • Do they drive? How might you know? How old do you have to be to drive? • Has their body changed (puberty)? How might you know? • Do they have tattoos or piercings? Do you know how old you have to be for these?	• Do they have a job or are they working? If so, what kind of job? How might you know? • Are they in college? How might you know? How old is someone in college? • Who do they live with? How might you know?



PEOPLE
Who affect me

PLACES
Where I go

THINGS
What I'm near

SITUATIONS
What I do

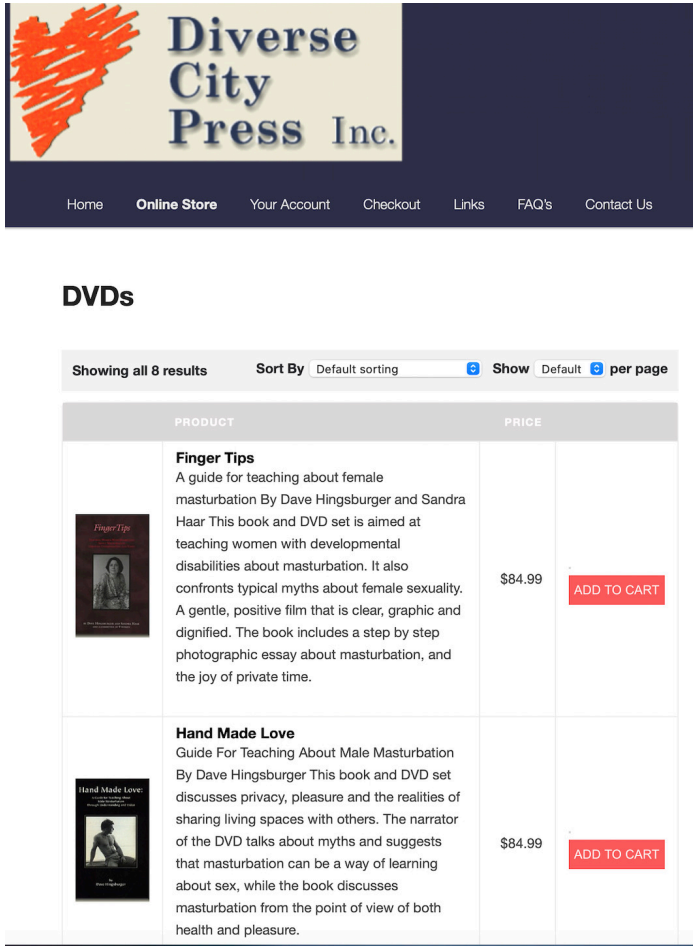
EMOTIONS
How I feel

Girl Shows Interest	Girl Shows She's NOT Interested
• Smiles at him • Finds a reason to get physically close to him • Finds a reason to talk to him • Asks him to call her • Asks him if he would like to go on a date or spend time together	• "Closes" off her body; turning away, getting tense • Tries to get further away from him • Finds reasons to get away from him or avoid him • Does not share any personal information • Is direct in asking him to leave her alone • Says she has a boyfriend

"Wishes"	"Real"
• She is my girlfriend • She wants to be my girlfriend	• She works with me • She is only being nice to me

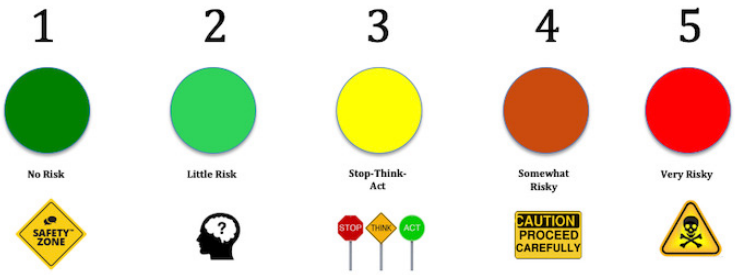
Treatment Strategies

Teach about body parts, sex education, and masturbation.

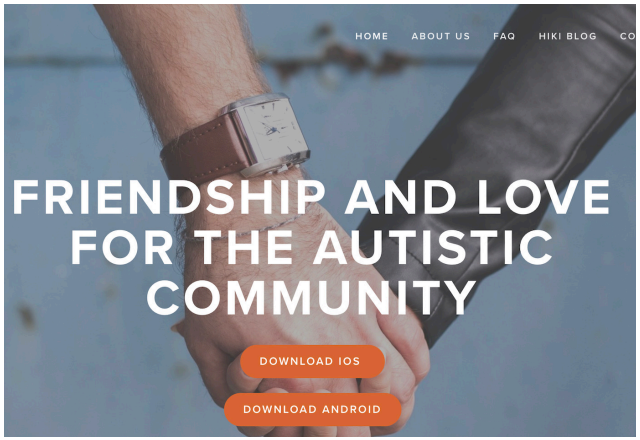


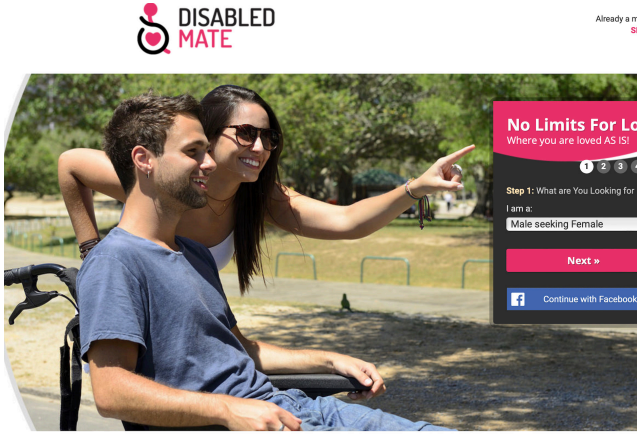
Treatment Strategies

- ***Problem-Solving*** – Teach how to work through problems, not give up, maintain ownership of decisions, and manage natural consequences.
- ***Risk Management***– Begin by teaching "Danger Zones". Then, move to Escape Strategies. Don't just focus on avoidance.



Dating Sites





QUESTIONS?
Shawn McGill: smcgill@shawnmcgillmsw.com
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Professional/Staff Training & Development

Individual/Group Educational Classes

Behavior Support/Contracted/Private Pay Services

Consultation: risk screenings for problematic sexual behaviors, FBAs, behavior support plans, restrictive procedure plans, transgender evaluations, and sexual consent screenings.

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