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# Supporting Healthy Sexuality for Individuals with Down Syndrome

March 28, 2026

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# Adult Down Syndrome Center

Park Ridge, IL

*Our mission is to enhance the well-being of people with Down syndrome who are 12 and older by using a team approach to provide comprehensive, holistic, community-based health care services.*



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# My "Why"



# Today's agenda

- In supporting individuals with sexuality education, you will learn...
  - Why it is important.
  - What needs to be learned.
  - How best to teach it.
- We will go over case studies and practice scenarios.
- Resources will be shared.



# The Why

# Benefits of sexuality education

- More responsible sexual behavior.
- Learn essential skills in social etiquette and self-care.
- Reduces inappropriate sexual expression.
- Increases pride, confidence and self-acceptance.
- Aids in the development of a personal sexual identity. Facilitates healthy sexual development.
- Helps recognize inappropriate sexual advances and be able to report incidents of suspected sexual abuse.

(Ballan, 2001; Couwenhoven, 2007; Gomez, 2012)

# Benefits of parents as the primary sexuality educators

- **Decreases sexual risk behavior** as well as improved the parent-child relationship (Klein et al., 2005).
- Facilitates **healthy** sexual development (Bundy & White, 1990).
- Adolescents who have repeated communication about sex, sexuality, and development with their parents are more likely to have an **open and closer relationship** with them, in addition to being more likely to talk with their parents in the future about sexual issues (Martino et al., 2008).
- Parents can **individualize** what they teach based on their family life, their values, their child's needs at the time, and modify the content so their child understands. They can model appropriate behavior and supervise their child's comprehension (Jaccard et al., 2002).

# Sexuality education and people with Down syndrome

- 73% of parents reported their child received sexuality education in the classroom setting, primarily a mainstream health class.
- 85% of parents reported previously initiating home-based sexuality education, however not with adapted materials.
- Parents understand the importance of sexuality education but lack the comfort and confidence in talking about it.
- Parents reported being more hesitant talking to their child with Down syndrome about sexuality topics compared to their other children.

# Barriers

## Parent-reported

- Unsure of how to approach the topic.
- Uncomfortable with their own sexuality or sexuality of their loved one.
- Fear of exploitation.
- Fear of arrest/legal problems.
- Social appropriateness.
- What the future holds.

## Staff-reported

- Negative attitudes about sexuality and people with disabilities.
- Lack of training.
- Lack of support/resources from employer or parents.
- Lack of consent to teach from parents/guardians of constituents.
- Lack of policies about sexuality and sexuality education by employment agency.

# Family reported topics of concern



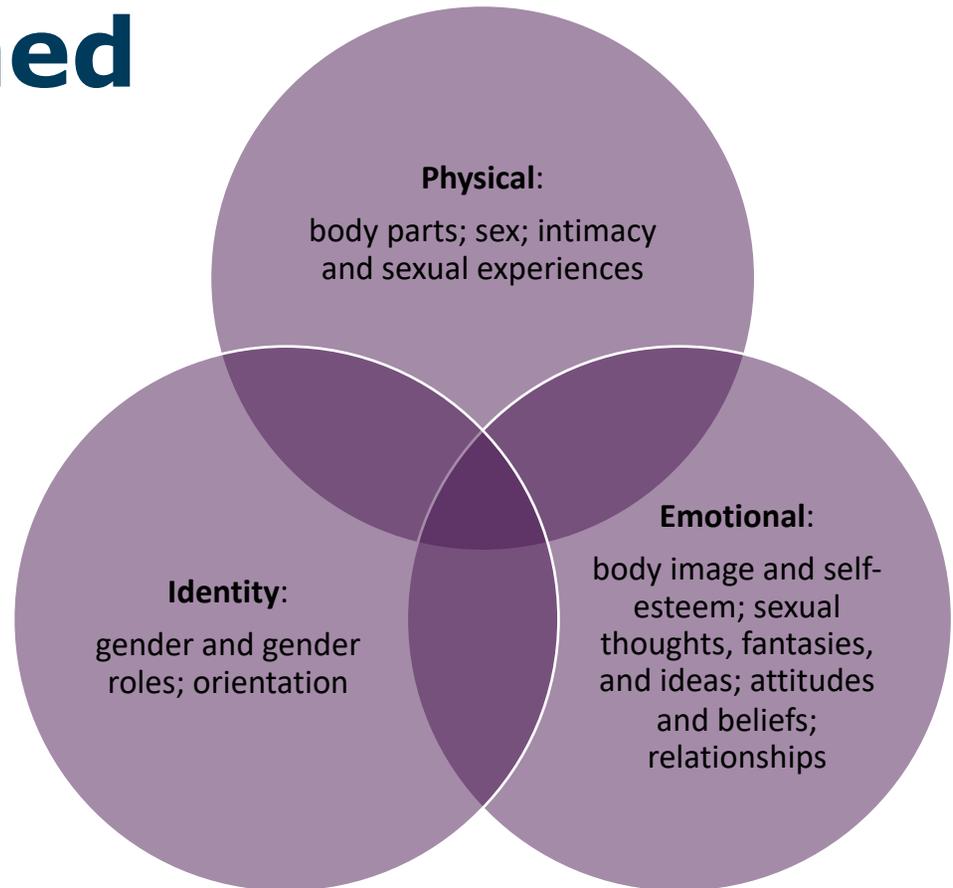
Frank & Sandman, 2021



# The What

# Sexuality defined

Sexuality is an integral part of who we are, what we believe, what we feel, and how we respond to others.



# Sexuality topics to consider

Human  
development

Dating and  
relationships

Sexual activity

Sexual health

Pregnancy

Rights and  
responsibilities

# Sexuality topics to consider

- Identification of sexual body parts
- Puberty
- Physical differences between males and females
- Privacy of the body
- Feelings of arousal
- Grooming/hygiene
- Self-esteem
- Body changes as one ages

# Sexuality topics to consider

- Types of relationships
- Crushes
- Alternate sexual identities
- Boundaries
- Who to date
- Planning a date
- Handling rejection
- Healthy vs. Unhealthy relationships
- Breaking up
- Consent
- Marriage
- Socially appropriate behavior

# Sexuality topics to consider

- Kissing
- Touching
- Foreplay
- Intercourse
- Safety
- Consent

# Sexuality topics to consider

- Use of contraception
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Menstruation
- Masturbation
- Wet dreams
- Erections
- Sexual health exams
- Menopause

# Sexuality topics to consider

- How it happens
- Body changes
- Giving birth
- Raising a child

# Sexuality topics to consider

- Laws and consequences
- Consent
- Exploitation and abuse
- Responsibilities of marriage
- Responsibilities of parenting

# Specific topics for healthy relationships

Social skills

Social boundaries

Conflict resolution

Handling rejection

Understanding emotions

Dating skills

Consent

Abuse

Intimacy



# The How

# Role of parents / staff

1. Acknowledge your attitudes about sexuality and disability.
2. Communicate your values. (parents only)
3. Recognize sexuality as a healthy and positive aspect of being human.
4. Share information.
  - Teach how the individual learns best.
  - Provide opportunities to practice new skills.
  - Use teachable moments.
  - Be a role model.

# Ways to approach sexuality education

## Planful approach

When a situation involving sexuality or sexual behavior arises, **the parent/disability service provider takes the initiative and uses the opportunity to teach** instead of punish or scold. Being planful creates a learning experience for everyone involved, leading to improved communication and knowledge.

## Reactive approach

When a situation involving sexuality or sexual behavior arises, **the parent/disability service provider responds to the situation by restricting, punishing or limiting the behavior or communication.** This response contributes to a negative message about sexuality and sexuality education.

# Example of a reactive approach

Mike is caught masturbating by a service provider in the hallway at his day program.

## **Staff at the day program are mortified and...**

- Yell at him to stop touching his penis.
- Everyone else in the hallway stops, stares, and laughs at him.
- You shame him and send him to talk to the building administrator and say he is going to get in trouble.
- You also tell him his parents/staff are going to be so mad and disappointed in him when they find out.

## **At home...**

- You ground him when he comes home, or staff restricts his community outings and takes away his phone.
- He feels shamed for doing something that is natural.
- He does not understand why what he did was wrong.

# Example of a planful approach

Mike is caught masturbating by a service provider in the hallway at his day program.

## **Staff at the day program can...**

- Talk with Mike about the concepts of private and public.
- Mention touching your penis is something that should be done in private.
- Confirm everything at workshop is considered a public space, even the bathrooms.
- Say he can talk with his parents/staff at group home about where he can masturbate at home.
- Send home visual supports on the topics discussed

## **At home...**

- Review content sent home by the workshop and review public and private.
- Tell him that he can masturbate/touch his penis at home in his bedroom or bathroom because those are private areas.
- If he has questions, he can talk with you, group home staff, or another trusted adult about them.

# Learning styles

- Visual
  - These learners need to “see” the information or material in one form or another.
- Auditory
  - These learners are likely to learn best when hearing the information.
- Motor
  - These learners need to do an activity, practice a skill or manipulate material physically in order to learn most effectively.

# Learning strategies

VISUAL	AUDITORY	MOTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visual supports like pictures or schedules</li><li>• Social stories</li><li>• Demonstration</li><li>• Movies/videos</li><li>• Written materials with lots of graphics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verbal praise</li><li>• Verbal prompts</li><li>• Listen to a social story</li><li>• Reading out loud</li><li>• Group discussion</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice/Experiment</li><li>• Role play</li><li>• Model behavior</li><li>• Write</li><li>• Play a game</li></ul>

# Case study

At work, the boss is concerned that your young adult with DS is having trouble with personal boundaries and has been touching peers “inappropriately.” Basically, hugging co-workers and customers. The boss does not want your child to be fired for this behavior. You have recently noticed similar behaviors when you are with your child in public.

# Learning strategies

VISUAL	AUDITORY	MOTOR

# Learning strategies

VISUAL	AUDITORY	MOTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A social story on hugging/appropriate touch.</li><li>• Demonstrating appropriate touch (both the type of touch as well as where to touch) for different people.</li><li>• Have a picture of people they can hug and/or pictures of “Strangers” with an X through them.</li><li>• Circles Curriculum.</li></ul>		

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## Examples to teach

# Appropriate touch



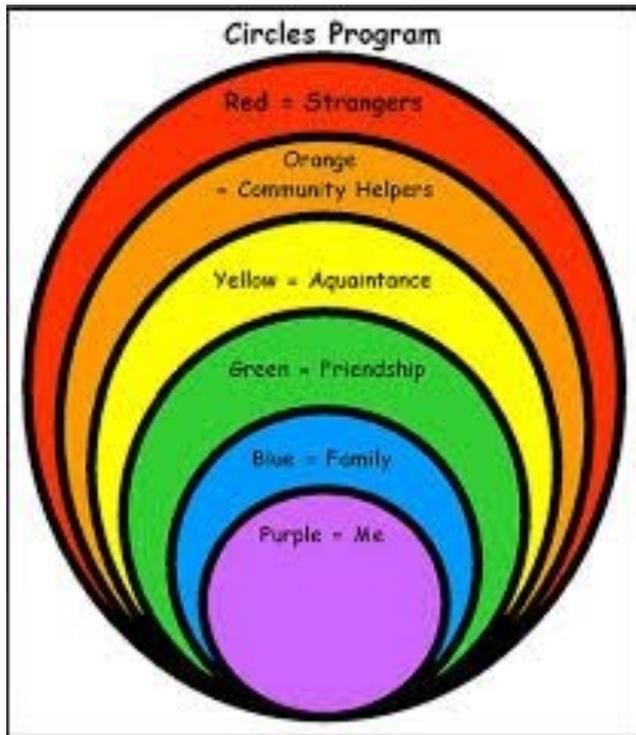
### Appropriate Touch for People in My Life

<b>FAMILY</b> HUG HOLD HANDS KISS	<b>FRIENDS</b> SIDE HUG SHAKE HANDS HIGH FIVE WAVE FOOT BUMP
<b>BOYFRIENDS and GIRLFRIENDS</b> HUG KISS PUT THEIR ARMS AROUND EACH OTHER HOLD HANDS	
<b>PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW WELL</b> SHAKE HANDS FIST BUMP HIGH FIVE WAVE	<b>CHILDREN NOT IN MY FAMILY</b> WAVE
<b>SAFE STRANGERS</b> DOCTORS POLICE FIREMEN	<b>OTHER STRANGERS</b>

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# Circles curriculum<sup>©</sup>



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**The ME Circle**

I can touch all of my body parts.

I can touch my private body parts in private spaces (like my bedroom and my bathroom at home).

**The FAMILY Circle**

I can kiss, hug, and hold hands with my family including my parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

I do NOT touch my family's private parts and they do NOT touch mine without my permission.

**The FRIENDS Circle**

I can side hug, fist bump, far away hug, high five, shake hands, and wave to my friends.

I do NOT kiss my friends or hug them closely.

I do NOT touch my friends' private parts and they do NOT touch mine.

Adapted from the Circles Curriculum<sup>®</sup>

Published by Stanfield Publishing and created by Leslie Walker- Hirsch

# Consent

Story About Consent

<p>Consent means to give permission for something to happen.</p>	<p>It is ok for me to change my mind after I give consent.</p>	<p>That means I can say yes one time and say no another time.</p>	<p>I will NOT get in trouble if I change my mind.</p>	<p>My consent is important to decide who will touch my body.</p>
<p>My consent is important to decide who will see the private parts of my body.</p>	<p>My consent is important to decide if I will see or touch another person's body.</p>	<p>Other people can give consent too.</p>	<p>The other person gets to choose if I can see or touch his or her body.</p>	<p>For intimate behavior to happen both people need to give permission.</p>
<p>The law says children can NOT give consent for intimate behavior.</p>	<p>Intimate behavior without consent is against the law.</p>	<p>If this happens you or your parents can report it to the police.</p>	<p>It is NOT consent if someone asks you to keep a secret about intimate behavior.</p>	<p>It is NOT consent when someone gives you gifts, money, or treats to get you to do something sexual you do not want to do.</p>
<p>It is NOT consent when someone threatens or forces you to do something sexual you do not want to do.</p>	<p>If I have questions about consent I can ask my parents.</p>			

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- Give permission
  - It is ok to change our mind. We can give permission and take it away.
- In a relationship **both** people must give permission
  - To be boyfriend/girlfriend
  - Touching our body and how they may touch it
    - Hold hands, put arm around, hug, kiss, etc.
  - Seeing our body
- If someone touches you without your permission, talk to a trusted adult.

# Public and private

## PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC

FEMAL

<p>Privacy means no one should see my body without my permission.</p>	<p>My body is private.</p>	<p>My body parts that can be covered by a bathing suit are private.</p>	<p>My penis, scrotum, and bottom are private body parts.</p>	<p>My parents can see my private body parts with my permission.</p>
<p>My doctor can see my private parts during a medical exam with my permission.</p>	<p>No one else should see my private parts without my permission.</p>	<p>Some behaviors are private.</p>	<p>No one can enter my space without my permission.</p>	<p>Getting dressed is a private behavior.</p>
<p>Going to the bathroom is a private behavior.</p>	<p>Some places are private.</p>	<p>My bathroom at home is private.</p>	<p>The bathroom at school or work is not private. It is public.</p>	<p>My bedroom is a private place.</p>
<p>When I want privacy in my room, I can close the door.</p>	<p>I can talk about private things with my parents at home.</p>	<p>I should not talk about private things when I am in public.</p>	<p>If I have questions I can talk to my parents.</p>	<p>Privacy means my body is special.</p>

Story about Privacy for Boys

<p>Public means lots of other people are around.</p>	<p>School is a public place.</p>	<p>My classroom at school is a public place.</p>	<p>Work is a public place.</p>	<p>The bathroom at school or work is a public place.</p>
<p>The bathroom stall at school or work is a private space.</p>	<p>I can change clothes at school or work in a bathroom stall because it is private. The door closes and locks.</p>	<p>I can use the toilet in a bathroom stall because it is private. The door closes and locks.</p>	<p>Stores are public places.</p>	<p>Restaurants are public places.</p>
<p>I can do lots of things in public!</p>	<p>I can eat in public.</p>	<p>I can play with my toys and my friends in public.</p>	<p>I can talk to my parents and friends in public.</p>	<p>There are things I can NOT do in public.</p>
<p>When I am in public I should NOT show the private parts of my body.</p>	<p>When I am in public I should NOT show private behaviors.</p>	<p>When I am in public I should NOT talk about private things.</p>	<p>If I have questions about public and private, I can talk to my parents.</p>	

Story about Public

# Body changes

<p>I am growing up.</p>	<p>I used to be a small girl.</p>	<p>Now I am a young woman.</p>	<p>My body is changing.</p>	<p>This is a good thing!</p>
<p>I am getting taller</p>	<p>Soon I will have more hair on my legs.</p>	<p>Hair will grow under my arms.</p>	<p>I will have hair near my vagina.</p>	<p>I may want to shave my legs and underarms.</p>
<p>I can ask my mom or another female to show me how to shave.</p>	<p>My breasts will begin to grow. I will need to wear a bra.</p>	<p>I will start my period. I will see blood coming from my vagina.</p>	<p>The blood I see is a sign my body is healthy and working as it should!</p>	<p>These changes happen to all girls.</p>
<p>Sometimes I might feel embarrassed about these changes.</p>	<p>Sometimes I might feel proud.</p>	<p>If I have questions, I can ask my parents.</p>	<p>My parents love me and they understand.</p>	

Story about Body Changes for Girls

<p>I am growing up.</p>	<p>I used to be a small boy.</p>	<p>Now I am a young man.</p>	<p>My body is changing.</p>	<p>This is a good thing!</p>
<p>I am getting taller.</p>	<p>Soon I will have more hair on my legs.</p>	<p>Hair will grow under my arms.</p>	<p>I might grow hair on my chest.</p>	<p>I will have hair near my penis and my penis may grow.</p>
<p>Hair will also grow on my face.</p>	<p>My voice may change. It may get lower.</p>	<p>My penis may also go up. This is called an erection.</p>	<p>I may have an erection during the day or at night.</p>	<p>I will need to find somewhere private until my penis gets soft again.</p>
<p>These changes happen to all boys.</p>	<p>Sometimes I might feel embarrassed about these changes.</p>	<p>Sometimes I might feel proud.</p>	<p>If I have questions, I can ask my parents.</p>	<p>My parents love me and they understand.</p>

Story about Body Changes for Boys

# Menstruation

## Story About Getting My Period

<p>I am growing up.</p>	<p>My body is changing.</p>	<p>I will start my period soon.</p>	<p>I am not able to start or stop my period. My body is in control. This can be frustrating.</p>	<p>Sometimes it may surprise me.</p>
<p>It will happen one time a month for many years.</p>	<p>It may last 4 to 7 days each time I have it.</p>	<p>My mom can help me keep track of my menstrual cycle.</p>	<p>When I get my period I will see blood in my underpants.</p>	<p>When this happens I will need a hygiene product like a sanitary pad, tampon, or period panties.</p>
<p>Using a hygiene product will stop the blood from getting on my clothes.</p>	<p>Menstruation is private.</p>	<p>I can ask my mom questions about menstruation, she can help me decide which hygiene product is best for me to use.</p>	<p>My mom can help me choose a safe person at school or work to help me if I have my period.</p>	<p>During my period I may notice other changes in my body.</p>
<p>I may notice breast tenderness or stomach pain.</p>	<p>I can still do most of my usual activities when I have my period.</p>			

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## Story About When to Change My Menstrual Hygiene Product

<p>I have my period.</p>	<p>I use hygiene products like a sanitary pad in my underwear, a tampon, or period panties when I have my period.</p>	<p>I need to change my hygiene product every few hours when I have my period.</p>	<p>There are some times when I will need to change my hygiene product.</p>
<p>When I wake up in the morning I will use a new hygiene product.</p>	<p>I will change my hygiene product at lunchtime.</p>	<p>I will change my hygiene product before dinner.</p>	<p>Finally, I will change my hygiene product when I get ready for bed.</p>
<p>Sometimes blood may get on my underwear by accident if I use a pad or tampon. If that happens I will need to change my underwear too!</p>	<p>I will let my mom know if there is blood in my underwear so she can help me wash it out. I will also need to tell her about my used period panties.</p>	<p>If I have questions, I can talk to a parent.</p>	

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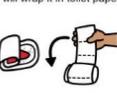
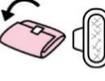
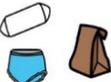
# Menstrual hygiene products

## Story About

<p>This is how I will change my period panties.</p> 	<p>I will go to the bathroom for privacy.</p> 
<p>I will take off my pants and my dirty period panties.</p> 	<p>I will put my dirty period panties in the small bag.</p> 
<p>I will stand up and pull up my clean period panties and pants.</p> 	<p>I will flush the toilet.</p> 

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## Story About How to Change My Pad

<p>This is how I will change my sanitary pad.</p> 	<p>I will go to the bathroom for privacy.</p> 	<p>I can keep clean pads and underwear in a bag so I can bring the supplies to the bathroom with me.</p> 	<p>When I go to the bathroom, I will pull down my pants and my underwear. I will sit on the toilet.</p> 	<p>I will take the dirty pad out of my underwear.</p> 
<p>I will fold it in half so I do NOT see the blood. Then I will wrap it in toilet paper.</p> 	<p>I will throw the pad and toilet paper in the garbage can.</p> 	<p>I will NOT throw it into the toilet.</p> 	<p>I will make sure there is no blood on my underwear. If there is, I will need to put on clean underwear.</p> 	<p>I will get a new, clean sanitary pad out of my bag.</p> 
<p>I will open the wrapper and take the pad out.</p> 	<p>I will remove the paper so I can see the sticky tape.</p> 	<p>I will put the clean pad in my underwear with the sticky side touching my underwear.</p> 	<p>I will make sure the pad sticks to my underwear.</p> 	<p>I can throw the paper away in the garbage can.</p> 
<p>I should also use the toilet and wipe to make sure I am clean.</p> 	<p>I will pull up my underwear and pants.</p> 	<p>I will take my bag of supplies with me when I leave the bathroom.</p> 	<p>I will wash my hands.</p> 	<p>If I have questions or need help, I can ask a parent.</p> 

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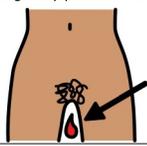
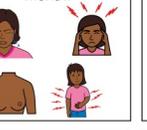
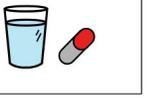
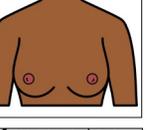
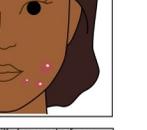
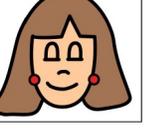
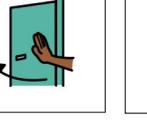
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## to Change My Tampon

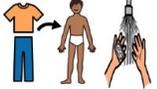
<p>I will take my tampons and underwear in a bag and bring them to the bathroom.</p> 	<p>When I go to the bathroom, I will pull down my pants and my underwear.</p> 	<p>I will sit on the toilet.</p> 
<p>I will take the new tampon out of the wrapper.</p> 	<p>I will put the applicator in my vagina and push the plastic to insert the tampon in my vagina.</p> 	<p>I may need to stand up to make it easier to insert.</p> 
<p>I should also use the toilet and wipe to make sure I am clean.</p> 	<p>I will pull up my underwear and pants.</p> 	<p>I will flush the toilet.</p> 
<p>If I have questions or need help, I can ask a parent.</p> 		

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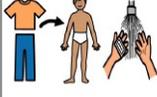
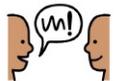
# PMS symptoms

<p>I get my period now.</p> 	<p>I may notice changes in my body up to 1 week before my period starts.</p> 	<p>These changes are premenstrual symptoms or PMS.</p> 	<p>I may have some of these symptoms each month.</p> 	<p>Or I may not have any symptoms at all.</p> 	<p>I get my period now.</p> 	<p>I may notice changes in my body up to 1 week before my period starts.</p> 	<p>These changes are premenstrual symptoms or PMS.</p> 	<p>I may have some of these symptoms each month.</p> 	<p>Or I may not have any symptoms at all.</p> 
<p>When I have symptoms, I can do things to help me feel better.</p> 	<p>I can take medicine if I am in pain.</p> 	<p>I can use a heating pad if I have cramps.</p> 	<p>I want to make sure I get good sleep.</p> 	<p>Exercise can also help me feel better.</p> 	<p>My breasts might be painful to touch.</p> 	<p>My stomach might hurt or feel crampy. I may have diarrhea or feel constipated.</p> 	<p>I may feel more tired during the day.</p> 	<p>My head might hurt.</p> 	<p>I may see pimples on my face.</p> 
<p>Eating healthy foods can also help me feel better.</p> 	<p>Calming activities can help with my mood.</p> 	<p>Calming activities might by doing yoga, reading, listening to music, or going for a walk.</p> 	<p>I can ask my mom to help me with my PMS and how to feel better.</p> 	<p>I can still do most of my usual activities when I have PMS.</p> 	<p>I may cry or have trouble managing my emotions.</p> 	<p>PMS is a private topic.</p> 	<p>I can ask my mom questions about how I am feeling and she can help me.</p> 	<p>My mom can help me choose a safe person at school or work to help me if I have PMS.</p> 	<p>I can still do most of my usual activities when I have my period.</p> 

# Masturbation

<p>My special private time.</p> 	<p>My body is mine.</p> 	<p>I can touch myself.</p> 	<p>Some touches feel very good.</p> 	<p>I like to touch my private parts.</p> 
<p>NO ONE should see me touch my private parts.</p> 	<p>My bedroom is a private place.</p> 	<p>My bathroom at home is a private place.</p> 	<p>I will close the door so I can have privacy.</p> 	<p>Touching my private parts is something I do when I am alone.</p> 
<p>If Mom or Dad knocks on my door, I can say, "I'm busy."</p> 	<p>It is ok for ME to touch MY OWN penis and testicles.</p> 	<p>If my penis feels sticky, I can clean it off with a towel or washcloth.</p> 	<p>I put my clothes on and wash my hands when I am done.</p> 	<p>If I have questions, I can talk to my Mom and Dad about my special private time.</p> 
<p>Touching myself is one way I can make myself feel good. And that is ok!</p> 				

A Story about Male Masturbation

<p>My special private time.</p> 	<p>It is ok for ME to touch MY OWN penis and testicles.</p> 	<p>NO ONE should see me touch my private parts.</p> 	<p>It is NOT ok to rub or touch my private parts in front of others even if I have my clothes on</p> 	<p>My bedroom is a private place.</p> 
<p>My bathroom at home is a private place.</p> 	<p>I will close the door so I can have privacy.</p> 	<p>Touching my private parts is something I do when I am alone.</p> 	<p>If Mom or Dad knocks on my door, I can say, "I'm busy."</p> 	<p>My penis may get big and firm. This is called an erection. It is ok. It will get soft again!</p> 
<p>When I have an erection, I can touch my penis.</p> 	<p>I take off my clothes when I want to masturbate.</p> 	<p>I hold my penis and move my hand up and down the shaft.</p> 	<p>I can use a lubricant to help if it hurts to touch my penis.</p> 	<p>I can look at pictures or a movie to help me think sexy thoughts.</p> 
<p>I can touch my penis while it feels good. It may take a few minutes.</p> 	<p>A little sticky liquid might squirt out of my penis. This is ok. It is not pee. It is semen.</p> 	<p>I will wipe my penis when I am done.</p> 	<p>I put my clothes on and wash my hands.</p> 	<p>If I have questions, I can talk to my Mom or Dad about my special private time.</p> 

Story about How to Masturbate-Male

# Menopause

## MENOPAUSE

<p>I am getting older. I am in my 40s.</p>	<p>My body is preparing for menopause.</p>	<p>Menopause is when I will stop having my period.</p>	<p>This may take some time.</p>	<p>My body will change.</p>
<p>These changes can happen to all women as they get older.</p>	<p>I will have days when I feel good!</p>	<p>I will also have days when I do not feel so good.</p>	<p>I may have some of the symptoms.</p>	<p>Or I may not have symptoms at all.</p>
<p>I may get hot during the day. This is called a hot flash.</p>	<p>I may get hot when I sleep. This is called night sweats.</p>	<p>My emotions may change throughout the day.</p>	<p>I may feel tired during the day.</p>	<p>I may not sleep well at night.</p>
<p>I may gain weight.</p>	<p>I may feel embarrassed by these body changes.</p>	<p>I may get frustrated at times.</p>	<p>I know I can get through it!</p>	<p>If I have questions I can talk to a trusted adult.</p>

## MENOPAUSE AND HOT FLASHES

<p>I may get hot during the day. This is called a hot flash.</p>	<p>I may get hot when I sleep. This is called night sweats.</p>	<p>When I get hot, I may sweat.</p>	<p>My face may turn red.</p>	<p>Hot flashes can happen during the day.</p>
<p>Hot flashes can also happen at night.</p>	<p>Hot flashes can occur when it is hot out.</p>	<p>Hot flashes can occur even when it is cold out.</p>	<p>Hot flashes may only last a few minutes.</p>	<p>Hot flashes can happen several times a day.</p>
<p>I can wear thin layers of clothes to help when I get hot.</p>	<p>I can drink plenty of water.</p>	<p>I can use a fan to cool off.</p>	<p>I should NOT take a hot shower.</p>	<p>I should NOT drink too much coffee.</p>
<p>I should NOT eat too much spicy food.</p>	<p>Hot flashes can happen to all women as they go through menopause.</p>	<p>If I have questions, I can talk with a trusted adult like my family, staff, or doctor.</p>		

# Orientation vs. Identity

## Sexual orientation

Attraction to other people

- Straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- Pansexual

## Sexual/Gender identity

How individuals perceive themselves and what they may call themselves. It may be the same or different from the sex assigned at birth.

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary

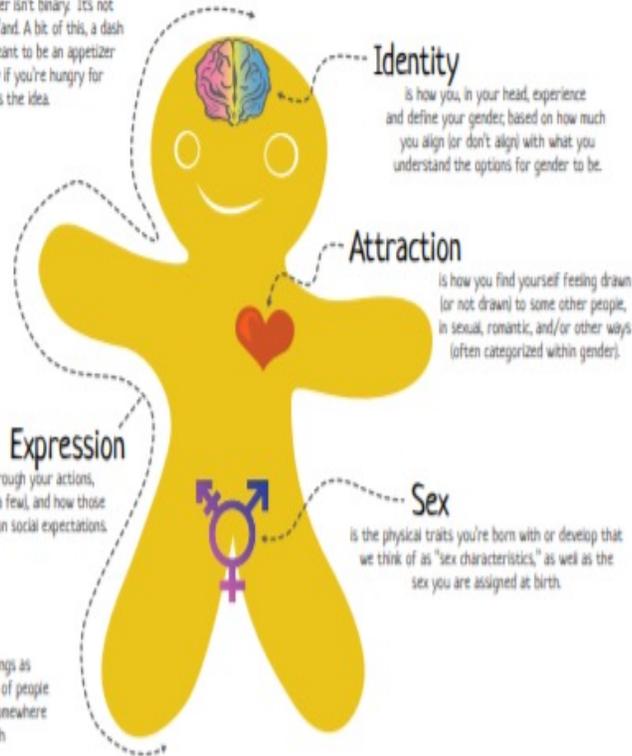
Use pronouns to help with identity

- she/her
- he/him
- they/them

# The Genderbread Person

by its pronounced **METROsexual** com

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for gender understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more after reading it. In fact, that's the idea.



We can think about all these things as existing on continuums, where a lot of people might see themselves as existing somewhere between 0 and 100 on each

⊖ means a lack of what's on the right side

## Gender Identity

- ⊖ → Woman-ness
- ⊖ → Man-ness

personality traits, jobs, hobbies, likes, dislikes, roles, expectations  
common GENDER IDENTITY things

## Gender Expression

- ⊖ → Femininity
- ⊖ → Masculinity

style, grooming, clothing, mannerisms, affect, appearance, hair, make-up  
common GENDER EXPRESSION things

## Anatomical Sex

- ⊖ → Female-ness
- ⊖ → Male-ness

body hair, chest, hips, shoulders, hormones, penis, vulva, chromosomes, voice pitch  
common ANATOMICAL SEX things

Identity ≠ Expression ≠ Sex  
Gender ≠ Sexual Orientation

## Sex Assigned At Birth

Female  Intersex  Male  
Typically based solely on external genitalia present at birth (ignoring internal anatomy, biology, and change throughout life). Sex Assigned At Birth (SAAB) is key for distinguishing between the terms "cisgender" (where SAAB aligns with gender identity) and "transgender" (where it doesn't).

## Sexually Attracted to...

- ⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
- ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

## Romantically Attracted to...

- ⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
- ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

Genderbread Person Version 4 created and uncopyrighted 2017 by Sam Kilkermann

For a bigger bite, read more at [www.genderbread.org](http://www.genderbread.org)

<https://www.genderbread.org/>

# Social skills

Why are conversation skills important in romantic relationships?

They help us communicate!

- Get to know someone.
- Help to plan a date.
- Help to have conversations when we are on a date.
- Help us share our feelings.
- Help us say what we want and do not want in the relationship.

## My Rules for Conversation

I will look at the person talking and smile.



I will listen to what others are saying.



I will maintain good personal space.



I will speak in a loud and clear voice.



I will wait my turn to speak.



I will talk about what everyone else is talking about.



I will ask questions when I am confused.



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## COMPROMISE

### What does it mean?

- **Not** always getting your way.
- Doing something that is **not** your idea.

### Compromise...

- Requires flexible thinking.
- Is a skill that helps us develop & maintain healthy relationships.

Let's get burgers and see a movie.

Let's get pizza and go bowling.

Jacob

Cristina

### WHAT SHOULD JACOB & CRISTINA DO?

#### Compromise 1

Do one thing that they both want to do.



Jacob



Cristina

#### Compromise 2

Do one of their choices this time and the other person's choice the other time.

Time 1



Jacob



Time 2



Cristina

#### Compromise 3

Decide together to do something that is not either of their first choices.



Jacob AND Cristina



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# Social skills

## Sharing touch and affection

### Types of touch and affection

- Hugging



- Holding hands



- Kissing



### Rules for sharing touch and affection

- Know your boundaries.
  - What types of touch and affection are you comfortable sharing?
- Talk with your partner about their boundaries.
  - What types of touch and affection are they comfortable sharing?
- Respect each other's boundaries.
- Avoid public displays of affection (PDA)!
  - PDA is demonstrating a private behavior in a public space.

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## HANDLING REJECTION

### What is rejection?

- You do not get something that you want
- Someone tells you "No"

### Examples of rejection:



Your boyfriend or girlfriend breaks up with you



You do not get the job you want



Your family tells you you cannot have something



Your friend does not want to hang out



Your crush does not like you back

### Is rejection OK?

- Yes. We do not always get what we want
- It is OK for someone to tell me "No"
- It is OK for me to say "No"

### How to handle rejection:



it is OK to be sad



take some deep breaths



use an "I" statement



talk to friends or family



remember that it will get better

Page 1 of 1  
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# Social skills

## How to Plan a Date



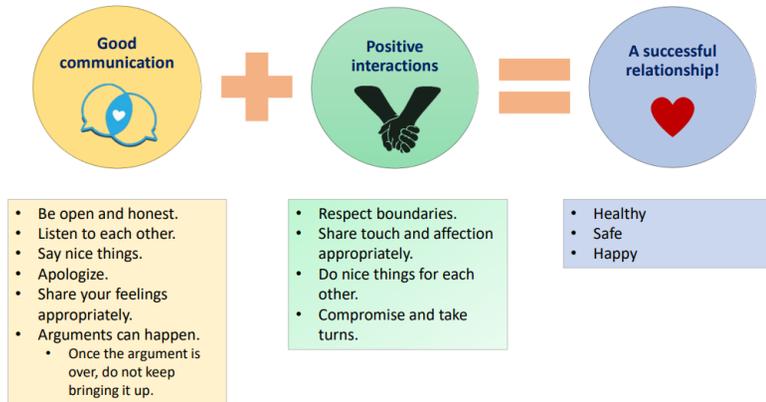
Cristina



Jacob

In this booklet, Cristina and Jacob help us learn what we need to think about when planning a date.

## Ingredients for a successful relationship



## BREAKING UP



### What is breaking up?

Ending your relationship with your boyfriend or girlfriend



### People break up when...

- They do not want to spend time together anymore
- They no longer have romantic feelings



### How to break up

- Meet up or call the person
- Say "I am breaking up with you because..."
- Tell them why



### How to feel better

 it is OK to be sad	 write your feelings	 time with family	 talk to friends
 listen to music	 do your hobbies	 remember that it will get better	 stick to your decision

# Things to remember

- Sexuality is a right.
- Sexuality is a very broad topic.
- Parents play an important role in the sexuality education of their children, especially those with DS.
- Be playful!
- Teach the way the person learns best!
- It is ok to ask for help!



## Additional resources



# References

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Questions?

**Resources:**

**[adscresources.advocatehealth.com](https://adscresources.advocatehealth.com)**

**Facebook:**

**[facebook.com/adultdownsyndromecenter](https://facebook.com/adultdownsyndromecenter)**

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resources



email newsletter

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