

Love and Sex: Fostering
Connectedness in Life Long
Living Communities

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What is Sexuality?

- *According to Breuss and Greenberg (1984), sexuality is characterized by a set of behaviors, which include physical, emotional, and social interactions*

Human Rights of Individuals with IDD

- ✿ *According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the presence of IDD does not, in itself, justify the loss of rights related to sexuality*
- ✿ *Every person has the right to exercise their choice regarding sexual expression and social relationships*
- ✿ *The human and civil rights of all people with IDD must be acknowledged and protected*

Barriers to Sexuality for Individuals with IDD

- ✿ *Individuals with IDD have historically been discriminated against and have been denied the opportunity to embrace their sexuality and engage in intimate relationships*
- ✿ *Harmful labels such as, sexual aggressors, promiscuous, asexual, victims, and “eternal children,” is the stigma that continues to challenge individuals with IDD in achieving sexual freedom*

IDD and Common Ways of Thinking

1. *“Individuals with IDD are asexual”*
2. *“If individuals with IDD express an interest in their sexuality their behaviors are more likely to be disturbed and abnormal”*
3. *“Individuals with IDD lack the ability to make their own decisions”*

Services, Caregivers, and IDD Sexuality

- ✿ *For so long the needs of individuals with IDD have been under-represented*
- ✿ *It is important that service providers do not violate the human rights of people with IDD to relationships and expression of sexuality*
- ✿ *Service providers should use the least restrictive method when providing services to individuals with IDD*
- ✿ *Service providers should be encouraged to decrease restrictions placed on the opportunity for socialization*

Sexual Education for People with IDD

- ✿ *Providing education to individuals with IDD during the onset of new feelings of attraction and desires to be intimate is critical to the development of prudent sexual engagements*
- ✿ *Sexual education for individuals with IDD should be customized to the specific learning needs of each individual*
- ✿ *Topics should be all-inclusive*
- ✿ *Education has the potential of empowering individuals with IDD to act on their own informed decisions rather than the decisions of others who may be trying to take advantage of them*

Sexual Education and Service Providers

- ✿ *Because caregivers can have a significant impact on the relationships and development of sexuality in individuals with IDD, it is important that they are well informed on how to manage the situation delicately*
- ✿ *Caregivers and support professionals ought to undergo training that educates them against the harmful effects of allowing bias to intimidate people with IDD about their sexuality*
- ✿ *Service providers should use sexual education to inform and guide individuals with IDD towards appropriate relationships and sexual behaviors*

Non-Disabled Individuals vs. Individuals with IDD

- ✿ *Compared to their non-disabled peers, individuals with IDD possess a much weaker understanding of sexuality and lack experience with intimacy*
- ✿ *As a result of the limited opportunities presented to individuals with IDD to expand their social networks they fail to have informal sexual conversation with their peers that may increase their knowledge on the prevailing sexual norms*
- ✿ *Discussions about sex that occur between friends allow individuals with IDD to discuss topics that sexual education classes can not replicate*

Advocacy for Individuals with IDD

- ✿ *An important part of raising awareness and advocating is changing the attitudes of service providers and guardians that dismiss the sexual rights of individuals with IDD*
- ✿ *Because many service providers fear the legal ramifications of fostering intimacy it is important to communicate the importance of sexuality to the parents and guardians of individuals with IDD*
- ✿ *A multi-level approach that ensures that sexuality expression and sexual education occur across federal, state, residential, classroom, and individual levels is necessary for full inclusion*

Quality of Life and Individuals with IDD

- ✦ *According to Stein and Dillenburger (2017), Supporting Quality of Life means enhancing people's wellbeing and striving for inclusion in all areas of life*
- ✦ *Expressions of sexuality are thought to enhance the QOL of individuals with IDD*
- ✦ *Recognizing that individuals with IDD are sexual beings allows them to embrace control over their bodies, feelings, relationships, experiences, and develop their identities as full members of society*

Resources

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