

Sexuality Education for Students with Disabilities

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In the natural course of life, we humans can be expected to grow and change. We develop and mature over time—our brains, our bodies, the sense of who we are and who we want to be. Development is a beautiful thing, really, exciting and creative, and it makes parents, friends, and teachers look on in awe.

This resource page addresses one aspect of development that's important not to ignore with children with or without disabilities—the ***development of sexuality***. There's so much to know and consider on this subject—what sexuality is, its meaning in adolescent and adult life, and the responsibilities that go along with exploring and experiencing one's own sexuality. Use the links below to find out more about:

- [human sexuality in general](#)
- [how disabilities can affect sexuality](#)
- [the special role of the parent](#)
- [the content to be taught](#)
- [materials developed with specific disabilities in mind](#)
- [commercial products](#)

The Basics of Human Sexuality

Can't start without the basic facts. What does science, study, and experience tell us about human sexuality?

How does sexuality develop from infancy to adolescence?

Visit this Canadian site, made possible through the collaboration of a team of distinguished Canadian medical organizations and administered by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. You'll find a very useful series of articles about the development of sexuality in infancy (Birth-2), early childhood (2-5), middle childhood (5-8), and late childhood (9-12).

http://www.sexualityandu.ca/teachers/sexuality_and_childhood_development

Human sexuality: What children need to know and when.

Knowing what information is age-appropriate for children is important when you're talking to them about sex.

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/parents/human-sexuality-what-children-need-know-when-they-need-know-it-4421.htm>

Sexuality and Disability

How does disability affect sexuality? The articles below highlight many key issues, including some that may not have crossed your mind.

Disability and sexual issues.

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Disability_and_sexual_issues?OpenDocument

About sex and disability.

http://sexuality.about.com/od/sex_and_disability/Sex_and_Disability.htm

Sexuality and young people with disabilities or chronic illness.

<http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/disabsex.htm>

Sex education and students with disabilities.

<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/203/boehning%20sex%20education%20for%20students.pdf?sequence=1>

Dating and disabilities.

<http://www.thesite.org/sexandrelationships/havingsex/sexanddisability>

How sexuality is affected by different disabilities.

http://lifecenter.ric.org/index.php?tray=topic_alt_subtopic&tid=top163&cid=5053

The Special Role of the Parent

Parents or guardians are the first and primary sexual health educators of children. What parents say and do can have a powerful influence on the development of healthy sexuality in children. Yet, how many of us squirm a bit, to take on talking about the birds and the bees with our kids? These materials might help us take on the task.

Why offer sex ed?

What parents need to know about sexuality and sexuality education, myths and facts, what does your family believe?

<http://parents.teachingsexualhealth.ca/>

How to talk with your children about sex.

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/parents/how-talk-your-child-about-sex-4422.htm>

There's no place like home...for sex education.

Available in English and in Spanish, at the link below.

<http://www.noplacelikehome.org/>

The Content to Be Taught

A great deal has been invested in developing curricula and teaching tools that address the many facets of human relationships, from developing social skills and friendships to assuming responsibility for one's own body, including sexuality. Here, we list resources that are indispensable to those providing sexuality education to young people.

Guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education: K-12.

These guidelines, developed by a national task force of experts in the fields of adolescent development, health care, and education, provide a framework of the key concepts topics, and messages that all sexuality education programs would ideally include.

<http://www.siecus.org/data/global/images/guidelines.pdf>

Hey! What about younger children?

Indeed. Here are guidelines to help child care centers and preschools address age-appropriate sexuality issues. It's called Right from the Start: Guidelines for sexuality issues, Birth to 5.

<http://www.siecus.org/data/global/images/RightFromTheStart.pdf>

Find fact sheets and educator resources on the guidelines.

In addition to making the K-12 guidelines above available, SIECUS (the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States) offers numerous materials to illuminate them. Click on the link below. Then look to the left of your screen, and you'll see the types of materials you can access.

<http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=514&parentID=477>

A finely tuned library of info, including lesson plans.

SexEdLibrary is also brought to you by SIECUS and connects educators, counselors, administrators, and health professionals with the latest in human sexuality research, lesson plans, and professional development opportunities. Hundreds of lesson plans were analyzed from multiple sources to offer easy access to the very best on such topics as sexual and reproductive health, puberty, abstinence, relationships, sexual orientation, body image, self-esteem, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancy, and more.

<http://www.sexedlibrary.com/>

Teaching tools for the classroom.

Lots of great materials for teachers at the link below.

<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/teachers>

Materials on Specific Disabilities

Living with a disability, chronic illness, or chronic pain doesn't make a person fundamentally sexually different from anyone. But it can mean that those with disabilities have less access to sex information in general or to resources specific to their disability. Parents and teachers will

find the materials below useful in understanding and addressing how a specific disability may affect sexuality and sexuality education.

Autism spectrum disorders.

<http://www.autism.com/individuals/sexualityandautism.htm>

Autism spectrum disorders.

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/sexuality-instruction-autism-ASD/>

Autism spectrum disorders.

<http://www.autismuk.com/index9sub1.htm>

Autism spectrum disorders.

<http://autism.about.com/od/transitioncollegejobs/f/sexed.htm>

Autism spectrum disorders.

<http://www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/sexuality-and-autism.html>

Cerebral palsy.

http://www.sexualhealth.com/what-do-i-need-to-know-before-dating-someone-with-cerebral-palsy_question_171/

Deaf-Blindness.

<http://nationaldb.org/documents/products/sex-ed.pdf>

Developmental disabilities.

<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;118/1/398>

Intellectual disabilities.

http://www.aamr.org/content_198.cfm

Intellectual disabilities.

http://www.sexualityandu.ca/teachers/teaching_sex_ed_for_youth_with_intellectual_disabilities

Intellectual disabilities.

<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/>

Intellectual disabilities: Tips for parents.

<http://tinyurl.com/yj62nce>

Learning disabilities.

<http://hpq.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/14/4/601>

Learning disabilities.

<http://www.nursingtimes.net/nursing-practice-clinical-research/teaching-sex-education-to-children-with-learning-disabilities/299962.article>

Learning disabilities.

<http://www.outsiders.org.uk/leaflets/pld-leaflet>

Physical disabilities, emotional disabilities, and intellectual disabilities.

http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=479&Itemid=177

Physical disabilities.

<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/en/teachers/teaching-sex-ed-for-youth-with-physical-disabilities>

Spina bifida.

http://www.spinabifidaassociation.org/site/c.liKWL7PLLrF/b.2705583/k.1646/Dating_And_Sexuality_Questions_And_Answers.htm

Spina bifida.

<http://www.spinabifida-incontinence.info/sex.htm>

Spinal cord injury.

<http://www.spinalcord.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=21720>

Spinal cord injury.

<http://lifecenter.ric.org/index.php?tray=content&tid=top163&cid=2560>

Traumatic brain injury.

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Traumatic_brain_injury_and_sexual_issues

Commercial Products

There are also numerous commercial products available to address the sexuality education needs of children and youth with disabilities. We've listed several below, along with associated costs as of March 2010.

The Ultimate Guide to Sex and Disability for All of Us Who Live With Disabilities, Chronic Pain, and Illness | Under \$20.

http://about.pricegrabber.com/search_getprod.php/isbn=9781573441766/search=1573441767/st=query

James Stanfield Company

This commercial publisher offers an extensive line of multimedia products addressing sex ed and relationship issues for students with intellectual and other disabilities, including these separate curricula: Circles, Life Horizons, LifeFacts, and Date Smart. Cost | Prices vary depending on the curriculum and the components of the curriculum (which can be purchased separately), but range from as low as \$225 per component to \$500.

<http://www.stanfield.com/family-life.html>

Developmental Disabilities and Sexuality Curriculum.

Meant to be used with adults with DD, this curriculum is available from Planned Parenthood of Northern New English. The 350-page cognitively accessible curriculum includes 20 lessons with scripts, handouts, detailed pictures, and teaching tools. | Cost: \$250.

<http://tinyurl.com/yj9dl4q>

The Facts of Life...and More | Sexuality and Intimacy for People with Intellectual Disabilities | Cost: \$30

<http://products.brookespublishing.com/The-Facts-of-Lifeand-More-P183.aspx>

Teaching Children with Down Syndrome about Their Bodies, Boundaries, and Sexuality | Cost: \$25

http://www.woodbinehouse.com/main.asp_Q_product_id_E_978-1-890627-33-1_A_.asp