


REACHOUT ASC  
Lynn McCann  
Autism Specialist, Teacher and Consultant

## Puberty, Sex and Relationships for CYP with Autism



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### Question 1

How did you find out about puberty, sex and relationships?

### Question 2

What do you fear most for your child?


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Face your fears...

Are they likely?

Unlikely?

What's most important?



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Common issues you may have to be prepared for

- Fear of the unknown / not being able to imagine growing up
- ANXIETY
- Comparing with typical others
- Vulnerability
- Later maturity / confusion about self
- Social media - You tube
- Teasing / name calling
- Being LITERAL

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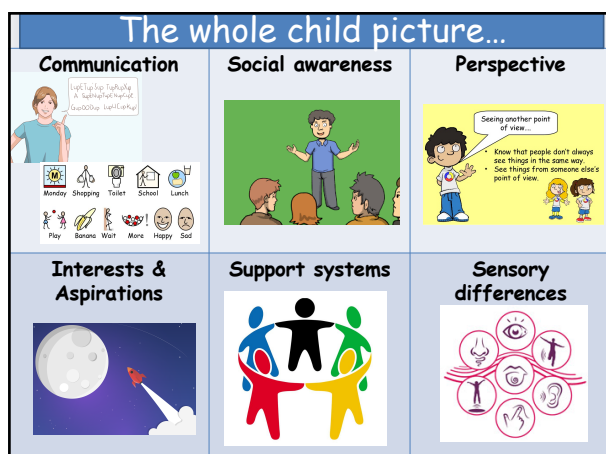
Sex education should be proactive

Griffiths, (1999) notes that most learners with a developmental disability receive sexuality education only after having engaged in sexual behavior that is considered inappropriate, offensive or potentially dangerous..

BUT...



**DON'T PANIC**



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"Sex education is acquired through a systematic process, just like any other concept or skill. For people with ASC this means a highly structured, individualised way using concrete strategies wherever possible."

TEACCH Report

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A developmental approach suits people with ASD and means that each skill or behaviour is thought of as consisting of a series of developmental sequences.

TEACCH Report

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5 Stage programme of support for children with ASC

1. Discrimination Skills.
2. Personal Hygiene.
3. Body parts and their functions.
4. Relationships.
5. Sex education programme.

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**1. Discrimination skills.** Includes:

- A sense of self and others.
- feelings and emotions
- differences between self and others, others and others - gender, age, appearance, characteristics, likes and dislikes etc.
- Appropriate social interaction - touch, respect, behaviour, skills, recognising this in others, kindness, public, private etc.

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**2. Personal Hygiene.** Includes:

- Toileting, appropriate places, washing hands.
- Cleaning themselves in bath or shower, using deodorant, washing / cutting hair, cleaning teeth.
- Changing clothes, getting clothes cleaned.
- Food related hygiene. Healthy eating.
- Girls menstrual cycle hygiene. Boys private area hygiene.

### 3. Body Parts and their functions. Includes:

- Limbs and visible features. AND THE BACK!
- Internal organs including sexual organs. Use proper names as well as help pupils be aware of common terms.
- How the body changes through puberty - including menstruation and how to wear sanitary products for girls.
- Feelings and emotions.

### 4. Relationships Includes:

- friendship, peers, adult roles and responsibilities, wider community.
- stranger and danger awareness.
- feelings and emotions.
- groups, clubs, social life.
- who can they trust, where you can get help.
- decoding other's behaviour (Social detectives)

- difference between friends / special relationships, intimacy, respect, etc.
- appropriate touch, staying safe, respecting others.
- small talk, conversations, asking someone on a date, etc.
- understanding, respecting and saying 'no'. (importance of consent)
- morals and values held by others.

### 5. Sex Education. Includes:

- Finding some good resources that are structured and at the right communication level.
- Small chunks and regular chats.
- Read or watch everything yourself first!
- Get school involved if you can.



- Be aware of misinterpretation / literal understanding.
- Support your child to look at the views and opinions and motives of others.
- Mapping things out so they can 'see' the connections and consequences.
- Keep a note of what has been covered and issues raised.
- Lots of checking understanding.

Thank you



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