



Romantic Relationships

We are all sexual beings. This is true for people with and without disabilities. Developing a romantic attachment to someone is normal, but it can also be confusing. It's important that your child with a disability learns about romantic relationships and sexual feelings.

WHAT MY CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW

1. All relationships are about respect and communication.
2. Some relationships start as a crush on another person. A crush can be one-sided or two-sided. For a relationship to become romantic, both people need to have romantic and/or sexual feelings toward each other and they must both say YES to a relationship, especially if it involves touching or sexual activity.
3. Sometimes people are friends for a while and then start developing romantic feelings toward each other later. Friendship can be a good basis for a relationship.
4. Some relationships are not appropriate. If an adult is romantically/sexually interested in a child and



TIPS FOR TEACHING YOUR CHILD ABOUT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

1. Practice scenarios in which your child is romantically interested in someone else. Role play how they would let that person know they are interested and how they would respond if the person is or is not interested.
2. Develop social stories about romantic relationships and boundaries within romantic relationships.
3. Explore with your child ways to date, such as group dating which might be easier and more comfortable to start with. Talk to them about online dating and how to be safe on online dating websites. Remind them that if someone appears to be too good to be true, they probably are.
4. Develop scenarios in which your child is approached about a romantic relationship and practice how they would respond, especially if they are not interested in that person. Practice different ways for your child to say NO.

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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Sexual
Health!



Romantic Relationships



What my child needs to know continued...

does anything to act on it, that is a crime. If this happens, you should tell a trusted adult.

5. Dating is a way to learn if someone may be a good match. Be careful of online relationships where people can easily lie or exaggerate about who they are.
6. You will experience new feelings when you are attracted to someone else. These may include “butterflies,” nervous feelings, sweating, and a fast heart rate or breathing. All of this is normal.
7. Everyone experiences rejection. Not everyone you like in a romantic way will like you back in that same way. Feeling hurt, angry, or sad is normal. If someone does say NO, don't try to change their mind.

Tips for teaching your child about romantic relationships continued...

5. Consider using videos like this one from amaze.org to help your child understand more about romantic relationships. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZV38ah3wc8>
6. You can also help your child practice how to ask for a date, what to do during a date, and how to end a relationship they no longer want. If you have a spouse or partner, you can demonstrate a bad date and a good date to your child. Make it fun!
7. If your child is ready to date, establish dating rules like curfews and acceptable activities.
8. If your child is rejected, they will be sad. Before this happens teach them coping mechanisms like listening to music, engaging in a hobby, or talking. Tell them about a time (or two) that you were rejected and what you did.