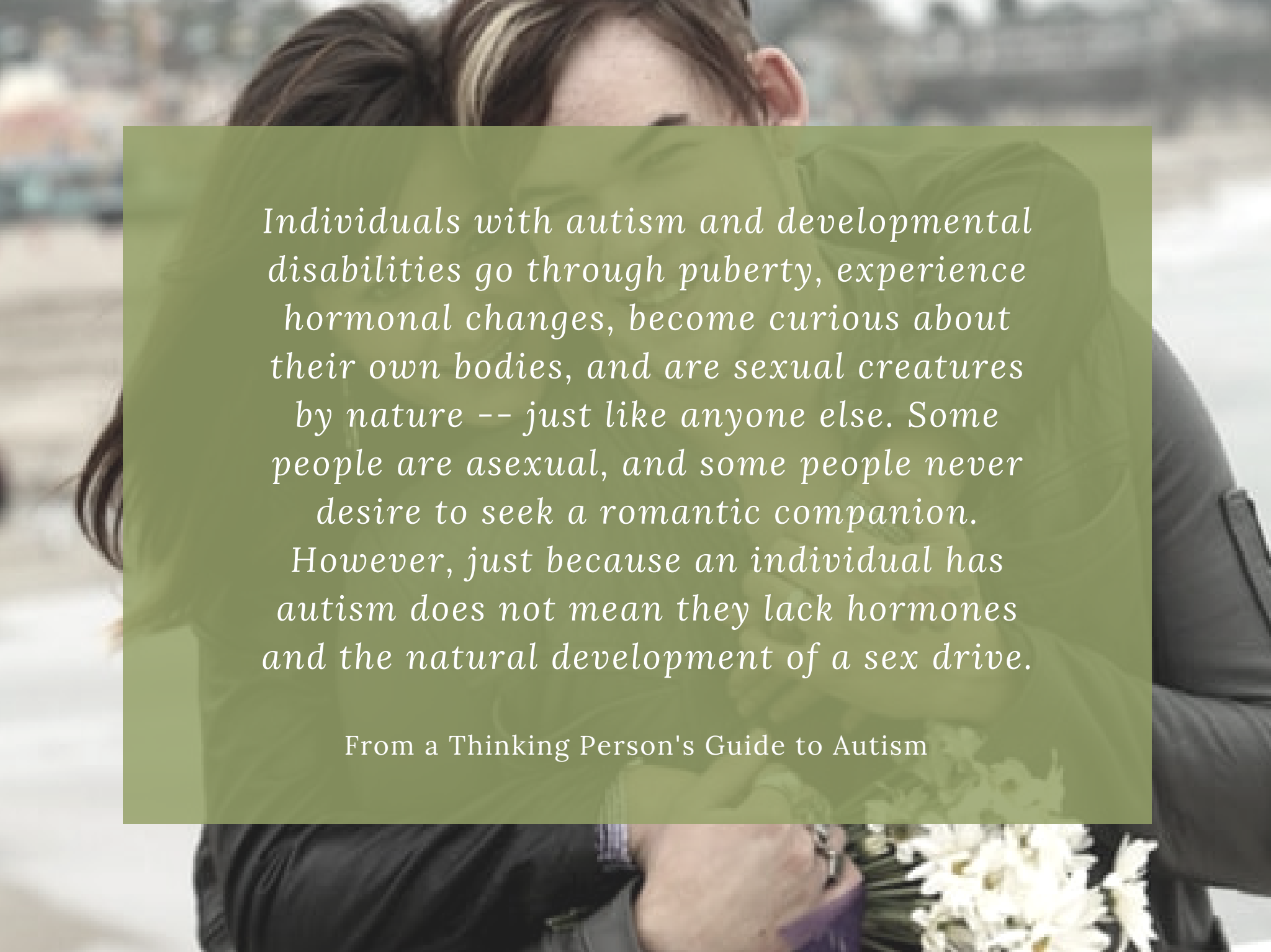


Teaching Sex Ed to Individuals with Special Needs

THE BIRDS & THE BEES

S A R A H C U R T I S S



A photograph of a couple embracing outdoors. The man is in the foreground, wearing a dark jacket, and the woman is behind him, her face partially visible. They are holding a bouquet of white flowers. A semi-transparent green rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing white text.

Individuals with autism and developmental disabilities go through puberty, experience hormonal changes, become curious about their own bodies, and are sexual creatures by nature -- just like anyone else. Some people are asexual, and some people never desire to seek a romantic companion.

However, just because an individual has autism does not mean they lack hormones and the natural development of a sex drive.

From a Thinking Person's Guide to Autism

GOALS FOR HEALTHY SEXUALITY

1

Infancy

Explore

2

Childhood

Understand Boundaries

3

Adolescence

Cope with Changes

4

Adulthood

Live Your Story



WHAT IS HUMAN SEXUALITY?

Human sexuality encompasses the sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of individuals. Its various dimensions involve the anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry of the sexual response system; identity, orientation, roles, and personality; and thoughts, feelings, and relationships. Sexuality is influenced by ethical, spiritual, cultural, and moral concerns.



Traditional

TOOLS FOR TEACHING SEXUALITY

Shame

Guilt

Silence

Fear

Threats

Secrets

Euphemisms

Lies

Misinformation

THE TRUTH ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is a crime perpetrated by sophisticated criminals.

Sexual predators use trust to victimize children [adults] and families.

Individuals and their families did nothing to deserve sexual abuse.





New

TOOLS FOR TEACHING SEXUALITY

Honesty

Positivity

Acceptance

Openness

Directness

Truth

Options

Love

Pleasure

how to use the NEW tools

WAYS OF TEACHING

- Socialization
- Formal Lessons
- Behavior Planning
- Advocacy





SOCIALIZATION

Making the Unintentional Intentional

We send messages about sexuality with our facial expressions and tone - with what we talk about and what we don't talk about. This is usually unintentional but we can use it purposefully.

HOW?

1

Explore

"That's your vulva. It's special"

2

Understand Boundaries

"At home in your room."

3

Cope with Changes

"When we ejaculate in our sleep we need to change our sheets."

4

Live Your Story

"Do you think that is someone you would like to go on a date with?"



A close-up photograph of a bee on a white flower with a green overlay. The bee is positioned in the center-left, facing right. The flower has five white petals and a prominent red center. The background is a soft-focus green. A semi-transparent green rectangular overlay covers the entire image, and three lines of white, bold, sans-serif text are centered over it.

NORMALIZE

VALIDATE

STAY CALM



FORMAL LESSONS

Making the Implicit Explicit

These are planned and intentional instructional experiences. The "teacher" could be almost anyone (parent, educator, social worker) and the "lessons" could take many forms (conversation, activity, videos).

HOW?

1

Explore

Reading a story about the body.

2

Understand Boundaries

Sorting privacy cards.

3

Cope with Changes

Puberty check list.

4

Live Your Story

YAI Relationship Series

skin & hair get more oily



hands & feet get bigger



facial bones change



hair grows underarms



grows very quickly



sweat more



SHORT LIST OF RESOURCES

TAP

The Birds and the Bees: asdsexed.org

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States

Teaching Sexual Health

The Arc's Autism Now





my favorite

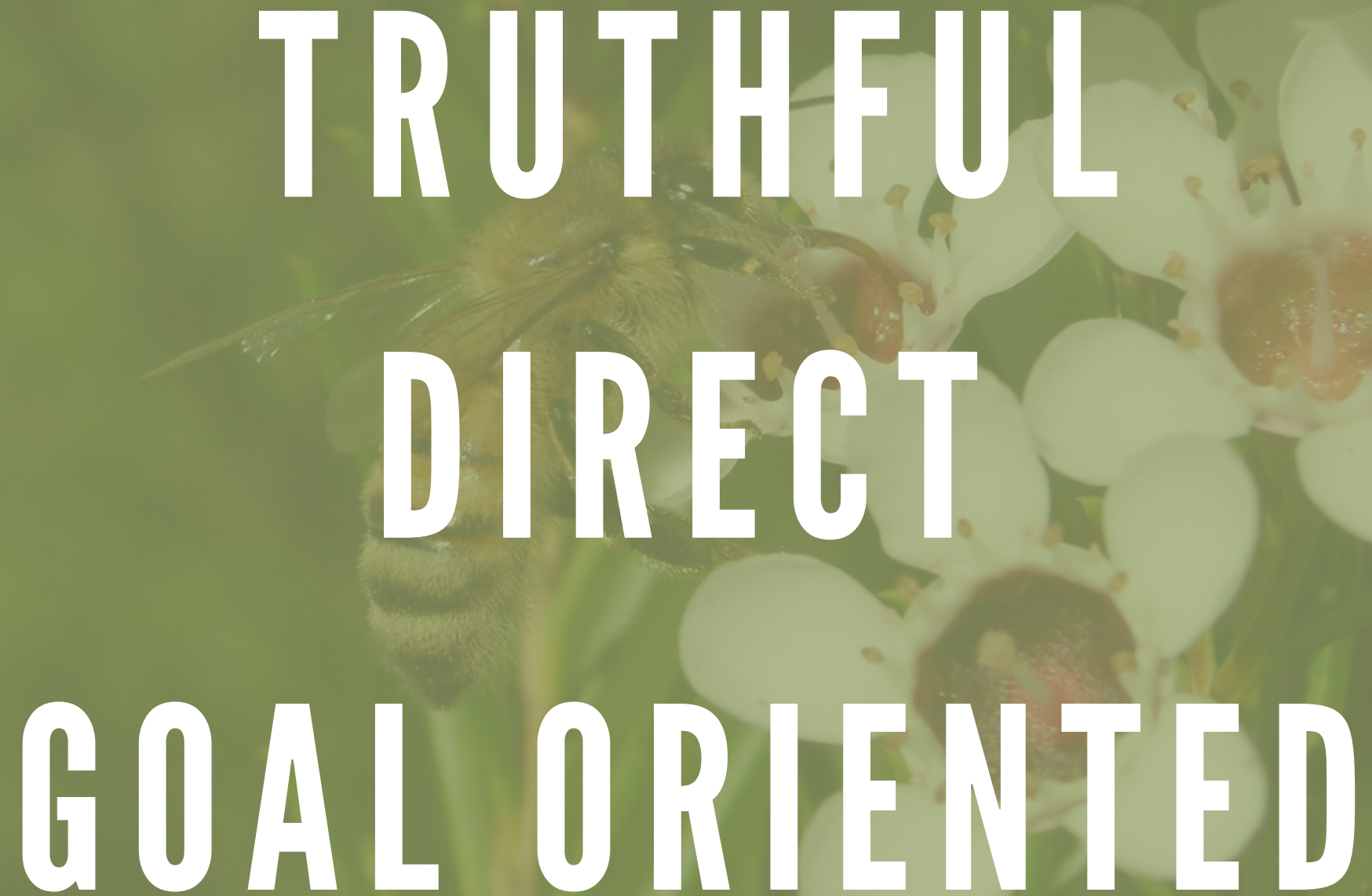
TOPICS

Middle School

- Anatomy
- Puberty
- Reproduction
- Crushes
- Body Image
- Hygiene

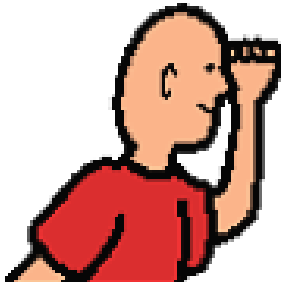
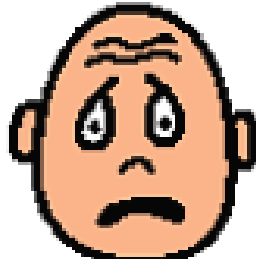
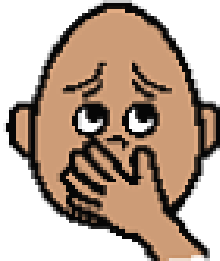

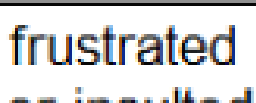
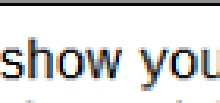
Adult

- Dating
- Intimacy
- Power
- Sexual Response
- Reproduction
- Sexuality & Law

A close-up photograph of a bee on a white flower with a green overlay. The bee is positioned in the center-left, facing right. The flower has five white petals and a prominent reddish-brown center. The background is a soft-focus green. A semi-transparent green rectangular overlay covers the entire image, and the text is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center.

TRUTHFUL
DIRECT
GOAL ORIENTED

My Looking Guide

Rating	Looks Like	How They Feel	What I Can Do
5	stare or use a gesture 	scared or offended 	apologize 
	look for a few 	frustrated or insulted 	show you 

BEHAVIOR PLANNING

Thinking Constructively and Acting Accordingly

This is how we use routines, intervention strategies, reinforcement, practice, and environmental changes to promote healthy behavior and reduce problematic behavior.

embarrassed

STAGES OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

1

Pre-Contemplation

Unaware of the change.

AWARENESS

- Pro/Con List
- Social Story

2

Contemplation

Aware but no commitment to changing yet.

PLAN

- Choose Your Own Adventure
- 5-Point Scale
- Action Plan

3

Preperation

Learning how to take action to make the change happen.

PRACTICE

- Role-Play
- Control Environment
- Targeted Reinforcement
- Prompt

4

Action

5

Maintenance

Sustaining change or new skill.

INDEPENDENCE*

- Continue preparation strategies as needed

Boys and girls are mostly the same. Both boys and girls have hair, eyes, and legs. They both have arms, ears, and feet. Most of their body parts are the same.

There are some parts of their bodies that are different. Boys have a penis and girls have a vulva and breasts.

The penis, vulva, and breast are all private body parts. Private means we keep them covered with clothing. Private means we are the boss of who can see them.

It is normal to want to see private body parts. It is normal to be excited about them, but you can hurt feelings. You can make people feel unsafe. We have to be careful.

There are some parts of their bodies that are different.

It is normal to notice the differences, but you can hurt feelings. You can make people feel unsafe and uncomfortable.

YES

NO

What can hurt feelings? Looking at people up and down hurts feelings. Staring at a part of the body hurts feelings.

What makes people feel unsafe? Trying to look under clothing makes people feel unsafe. Grabbing people makes them feel unsafe.

You can be safe.

YES

You can look quickly and then look away. You can look at pictures of bodies in your room. You can look at bodies when you watch television.

It is normal to be curious the body. It is important to be safe too.

NO

You can look quickly and then look away.

It is normal to be curious about the body. It is important to be safe too.

A close-up photograph of a bee on a white flower with yellow stamens. The background is a soft-focus green. The text is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.


BIG PICTURE
STAY CALM
BE SYSTEMATIC
ACT EARLY



ADVOCACY #SEXAND DISABILITY

Creating Spaces for Safe Sexual Expression

In order for individuals with autism to be able to safely express their sexuality, the systems that support them need to change. It can include educating yourself, raising awareness, and changing policies.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a beige long-sleeved top and a black skirt, is standing outdoors and talking to a man. She is gesturing with her hands as she speaks. The man is wearing a blue shirt and is looking at her. They are standing in front of a large, dark, textured log or piece of driftwood. The background is a green lawn with trees and a white building in the distance.

*Everyone has a right
to information about
health and sexuality
provided in an
accessible manner.
Be part of making
that a reality.*

The Birds and the Bees
asdsexed.org
[@asdsexed](https://twitter.com/asdsexed)
curtiss5@illinois.edu

