



THE BIRDS AND THE BEES' TIPS FOR FAMILIES SERIES

Sexual Orientation

KEY CONCEPTS FOR SUPPORTING ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS



WHAT IS SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

Sexual Orientation is the emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings that a person feels towards another person. Many people begin to recognize their orientation during adolescence, but it can change throughout someone's life. Autistic people can have any sexual orientation.

Parenting styles, early childhood experiences, or how someone is raised does not affect sexual orientation. No one chooses their sexual orientation.

WHAT TYPES OF SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS ARE THERE?

The acronym LGBTQ+ can help. L & G for *lesbian or gay* meaning someone who is attracted to a member of the same gender. B for *bisexual*: when someone is attracted to those identifying as men and women. T for *transgender*: when someone's gender identity is different from what was assumed at birth (cisgender refers to those who identity is the same as assumed at birth). Q for *queer*: an umbrella term to identify as something other than cisgender-heterosexual and embrace the community holistically. The plus stands for the many more sexual orientations and gender identities!



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ASEXUAL?

Asexuality is the lack of erotic attraction to any gender. They are not drawn to people erotically and usually have a low/absence of desire for erotic activity. Every asexual person is different, and some may still have romantic/aesthetic attraction towards others, as well as different approaches to intimacy. Despite their identity, it is best to still provide people asexual people with sex education.

You can learn more at asexuality.org

HOW TO BEST SUPPORT MY AUTISTIC CHILD WITH SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

- Talk to them about different types of sexual orientation and learn about how they feel.
- Allow them to express their romantic interests and create an environment that allows them to explore and change their sexuality as they please.
- Learn more—connect with other parents and autistic adults.



RELATIONSHIP SAFETY

When it comes to relationship safety and autism, it's important to educate your child how a healthy relationship feels, what it means to be "ready" for a relationship, and on the signs of an unhealthy relationship. Opening the door to these conversations can increase the chances of them coming to you if things become unsafe and, unfortunately, they may be more susceptible to relationship abuse.

Loveisrespect.org is a great resource.