Talking About Sexuality
Tips for Parents

➢ The Parent’s role in Sexuality Education
  o Sexuality education is much more than just “sex ed”: it is about relationships along a continuum, learning about one’s body, self-esteem, and setting boundaries.
  o Youth with intellectual disabilities (ID) receive very little information about sexuality in school. Often, the information they learn comes from other sources, such as from TV, movies, music, or from misinformed peers.
  o Parents play an important role in “normalizing” information about sexuality to clear up misunderstandings about sexuality and to use teachable moments in social settings to provide a context for the information.

➢ The first step – Educate Yourself
  o Be proactive instead of reactive. Anticipate conversations that may arise with your son or daughter and take the time to educate yourself so that you will be prepared when those conversations happen.
  o Be prepared to have some very specific discussions about some aspects of sexuality, to set boundaries and social expectations. Some topics we have encountered that may necessitate discussion include things like hugging, appropriate touch, what to do (and not to do) with strangers, and social media.
  o Do some self-reflection so that you are aware of your own feelings and values related to these issues. Some helpful questions to ask yourself might include:
    ▪ What are my own values around sexuality?
    ▪ How did I learn about sexuality when I was younger? What worked and what didn’t? What was helpful and what was not?
    ▪ Am I comfortable discussing sexuality in general? Am I comfortable discussing sexuality with my son or daughter?

➢ Talking to your son or daughter about sexuality:
  o Use teachable moments (examples and instances in everyday life) to discuss sexuality. Long conversations about sexuality may be uncomfortable and overwhelming for both of you, but finding ways to have short conversations about sexuality within your everyday lives may be a more successful way of communicating important information. For example, when watching TV or a movie with your child, or spending informal time together.
  o Create a safe and welcoming environment to discuss and develop social skills pertaining to sexuality by becoming an “askable” person. If your child feels comfortable approaching you with questions about sexuality, they are more likely to get accurate, appropriate information than if they were to go to friends, books, websites, or the media.


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