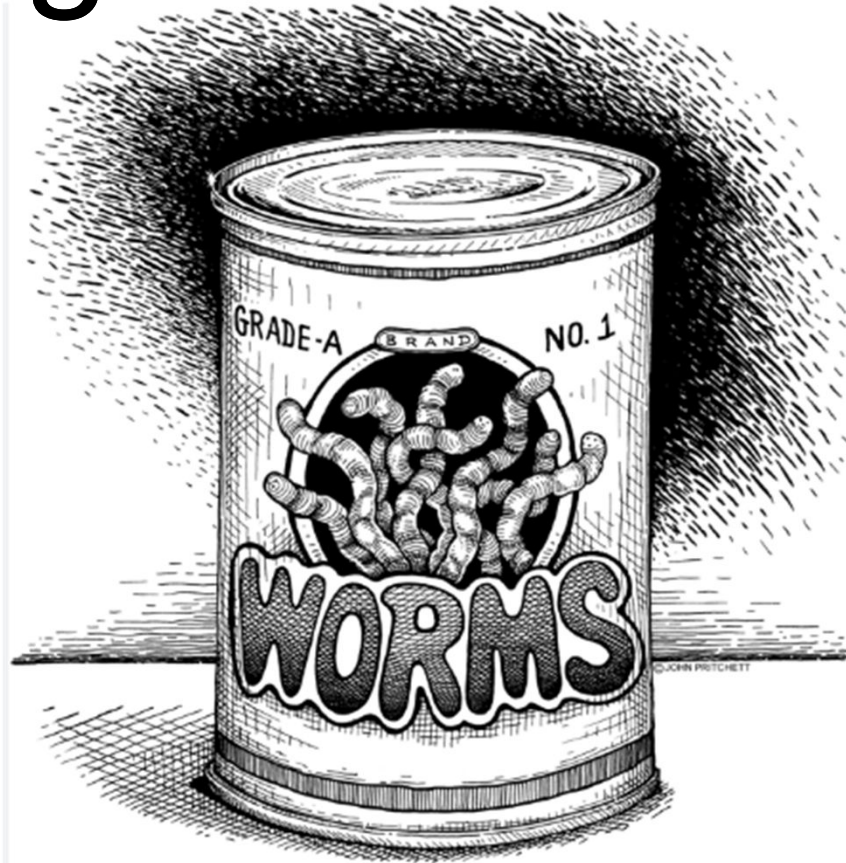


# opening the can of worms



Emma Wynne Hill, LCSW

# Why Sex Ed for folks with I/DD and Autism?

- ❖ Love and intimacy is for everybody, and healthy sexuality is a natural part of the human experience
- ❖ Healthy emotionally intimate relationships, whether they include sexual intimacy or not, have the power to foster joy, creativity, and companionship
- ❖ Without a basic understanding of anatomy, romantic feelings, relationships, and self-advocacy skills, adults with I/DD are often left without guidance through these complicated waters



# Why Sex Ed for folks with I/DD and Autism?

- ❖ If we don't know how to talk about our bodies and experiences, then we won't
- ❖ One 2018 study found that “People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities” (1)
- ❖ 49% of people with intellectual disabilities will experience 10 or more sexually abusive incidents in their lifetime (2)
- ❖ If we don't know about consensual human sexuality, then we have no way to know when we are being exploited or hurt

# When people are removed from sex ed, or not provided accessible sex ed, the message is clear

It's all too complicated for you to understand

Your body isn't yours to make decisions about

Sex isn't for people like you

Romantic love is for other people

Everyone else will have relationships, but not you

You'll never really grow up



The world is dangerous so people with IDD need to be protected from it

People with IDD are *part of the world* and should to be allowed the opportunity for joy and safety!



WE CAN CHANGE THE CONVERSATION!



# SEX ED

for people with IDD

[Narrator] Sex Ed for People with IDD.

0:02 / 1:28

[Sex Ed for People with Disabilities: Introduction](#)



## Practice Group #1: The Power of Myths

1. People with IDD don't want to have sex.
2. People with IDD don't have the self control necessary to safely be taught about sex.
3. People with IDD can't be good parents and don't need to know about reproduction.
4. People with IDD can't consent to sex.
5. People with IDD don't understand complex adult relationships.

They are framed as definites, they are broad, and they are conversation stoppers.

# Practice Group #1: The Power of Myths

**Lets process...**

What is the effect of this myth? What would the effect of it disappearing be?

What felt like the natural place to start?

What is the underlying sentiment of this statement?

How did you approach breaking it down?



# Communicating Need to Guardians and Gatekeepers

- ❖ What is their concern? Don't assume the answer
- ❖ Don't start with stats, but have them on hand to take home along with other resources
- ❖ Assume they want love and joy for their child or loved one
- ❖ Join over the desire to protect their child- "You can't be with them 24/7, this is a way that you can keep them safe"
- ❖ A focus on healthy communication (having words to describe their experiences) and self-advocacy



# But... how do we actually make sex ed accessible for people with IDD?

The same way we make any information accessible!

- Provide information in a variety of formats- written, visual, role plays, etc.
- Allow for plenty of time to process and ask questions
- Create opportunities for consent to be practiced in class
- Having shared group norms that we all agree to
- Listen as much as you teach to gauge where people are at and what is important to them to know
- Be conscious about the ways that people with IDD have often been socialized to be polite and trust others over their own gut instincts
- Empower people to ask questions by making it safe to do so



## **PRACTICE GROUPS #2: Let's crack that can open**

On your table there is a question.

It is an uncomfortable question.

Answer that question.

Pay attention to: How do we approach it? What do we assume that this person knows? What can't we assume they know? What kind of teaching tools might be helpful?

## **PRACTICE GROUPS #2: Let's crack that can open**

**Lets process...**

What felt like the natural place to start?

What worked?

What did it feel like to talk about a “taboo” topic with a “protected” population?

Did you leave pieces out?

What was surprising?

Do you regret how you phrased or approached anything?



## Takeaways:

YOU CAN DO IT! Right now! Today! You don't have to be specialized, you just need to be a safe person to ask

Be mindful of socialized politeness

Modeling not knowing is important "it's completely normal to have questions"

Empowerment > information "I don't know, let me show you where we can look to find out"

It's about more than being "safe"- it's all about being happy and embodied

In advocacy, assume that resistance is based in care, concern, and love and approach from there.

Questions?



Thank you!

Please find a resource list along with my contact information on your table.