

# ACCESSIBLY SEXY:

Neurodivergence & Sexual Empowerment



**RIVER KRATOCHVIL**

re:con 2024

● 9:45 AM ●

**NOVEMBER 8TH, 2024**

Taverse City MI



# HI! IM

# RIVER KRATOCHVIL

He/They/She

## **Disability Advocate, Artist, & Educator**

I am currently pursuing a degree in Rehabilitation Psychology at the University of Wisconsin Madison, where I also founded a student organization called NeuroPride, with nearly five years of experience in sexual health education. This is my sixth semester as a staff member at Sex Out Loud where i am the marketing and outreach coordinator.

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# **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

**01**

Understand the intersection of disability, ableism, and sexuality, and how these factors impact sexual health and relationships for people with disabilities.

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**02**

Identify practical accommodations and strategies to support the sexual well-being of individuals with disabilities in various settings.

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**03**

Develop skills to foster inclusive and respectful environments that promote sexual autonomy and challenge ableist attitudes.

# SECTIONS

What we're learning about...

- **Understanding Neurodiversity.**

- **Social and Cultural Barriers**

- **Barriers to Sexual Health Education.**

- **Impact of Inadequate Education**

- **Bodily Autonomy**

- **How can we create a more inclusive and supportive environment?**

- **Accommodations and Sexuality**

- **Sex Toy ID**

# ACCESSIBLY SEXY:

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**UNDERSTANDING**  
**NEURODIVERSITY**



## Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a framework for understanding human brain function that recognizes the diversity of human cognition as a biological fact.



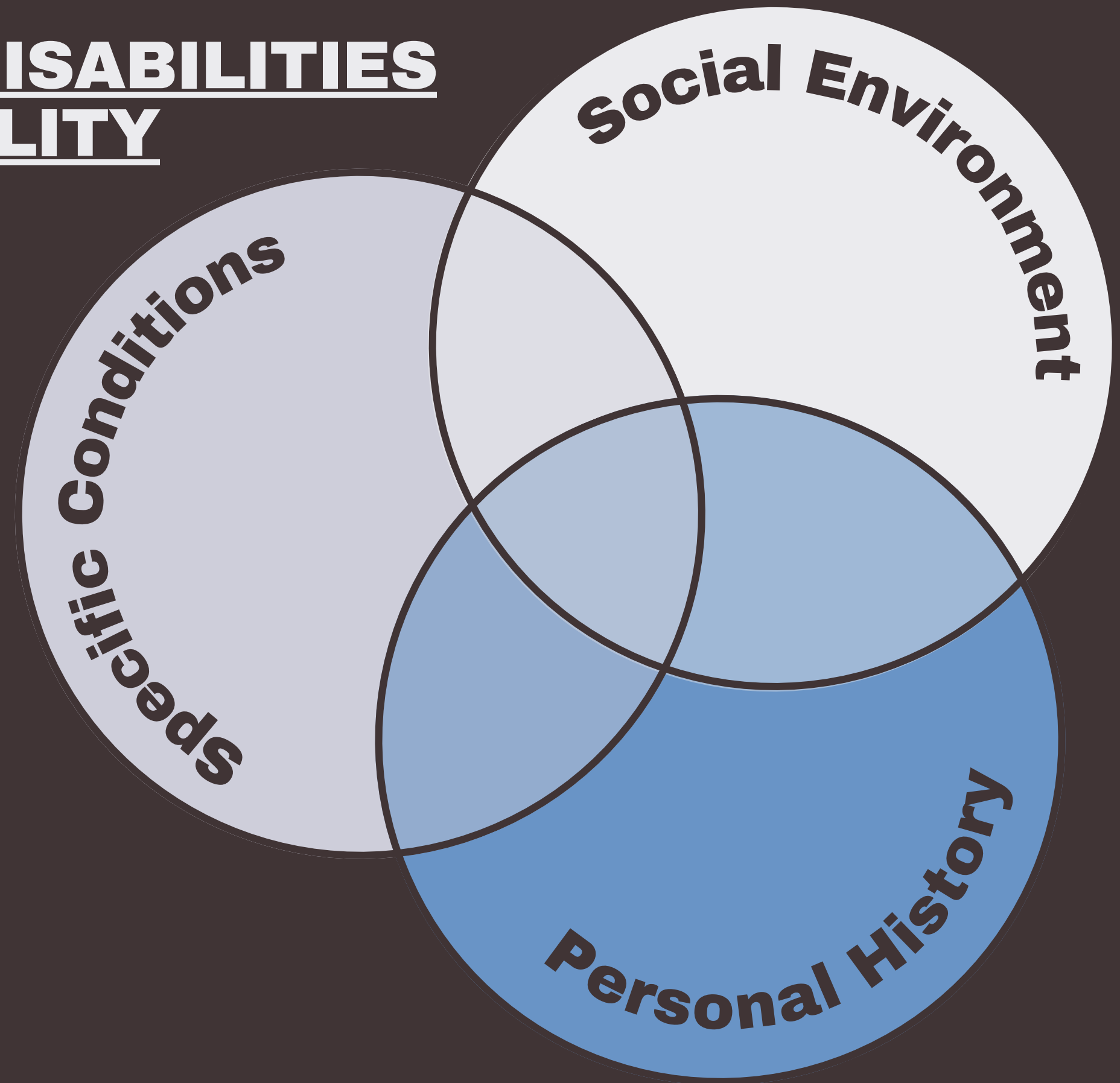
## Disability culture and identity

Feel confident with a private screen to read your notes, view a timer, and know your upcoming slides.

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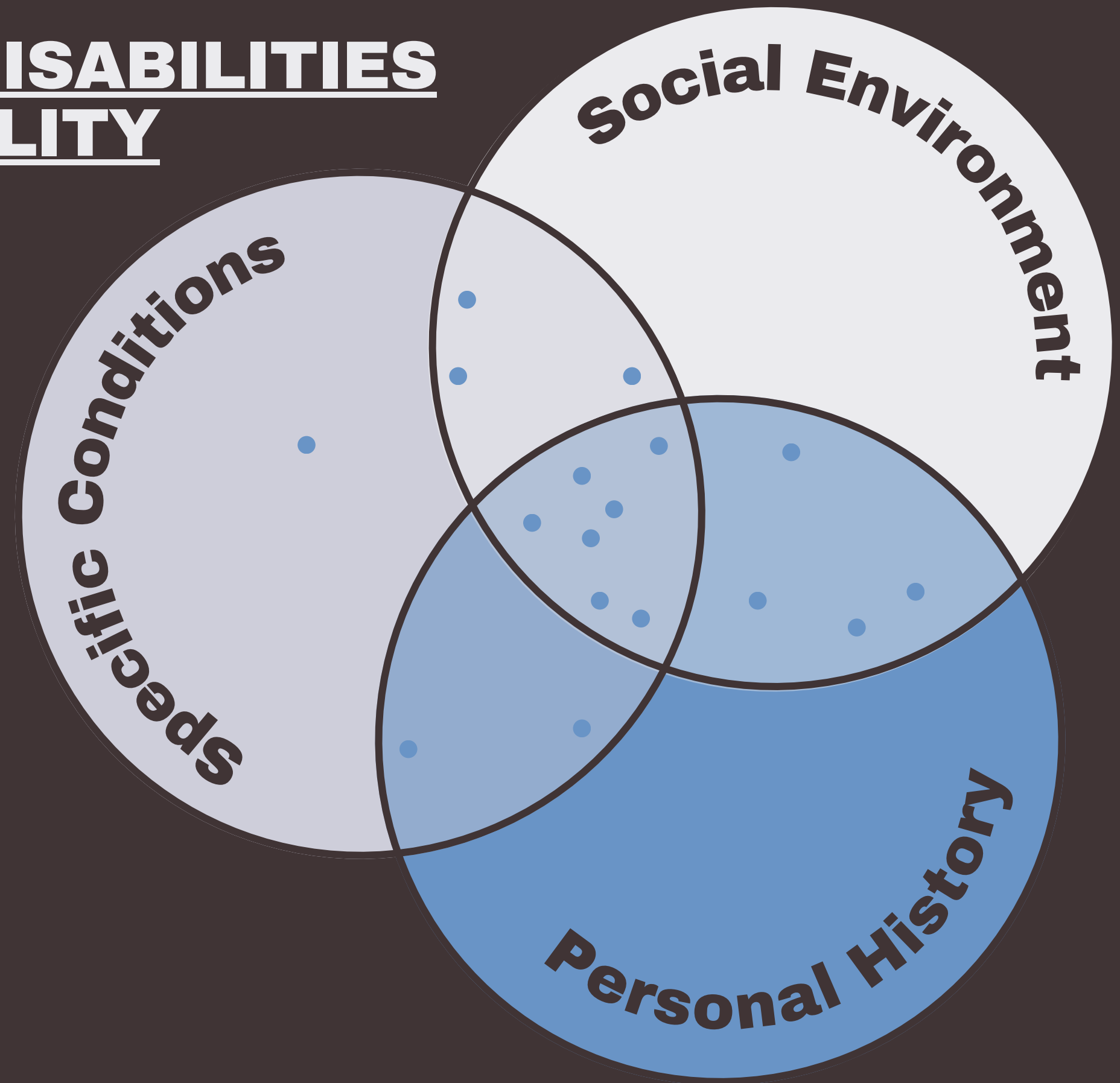
# UNDERSTANDING HOW DISABILITIES INTERSECT WITH SEXUALITY

Each individual's experience is unique



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Each individual's experience is unique





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# **Sexuality and Gender Identity**

Neurodiverse individuals experience a wide range of sexual orientations and gender identities.

## **Neuroqueer Theory**

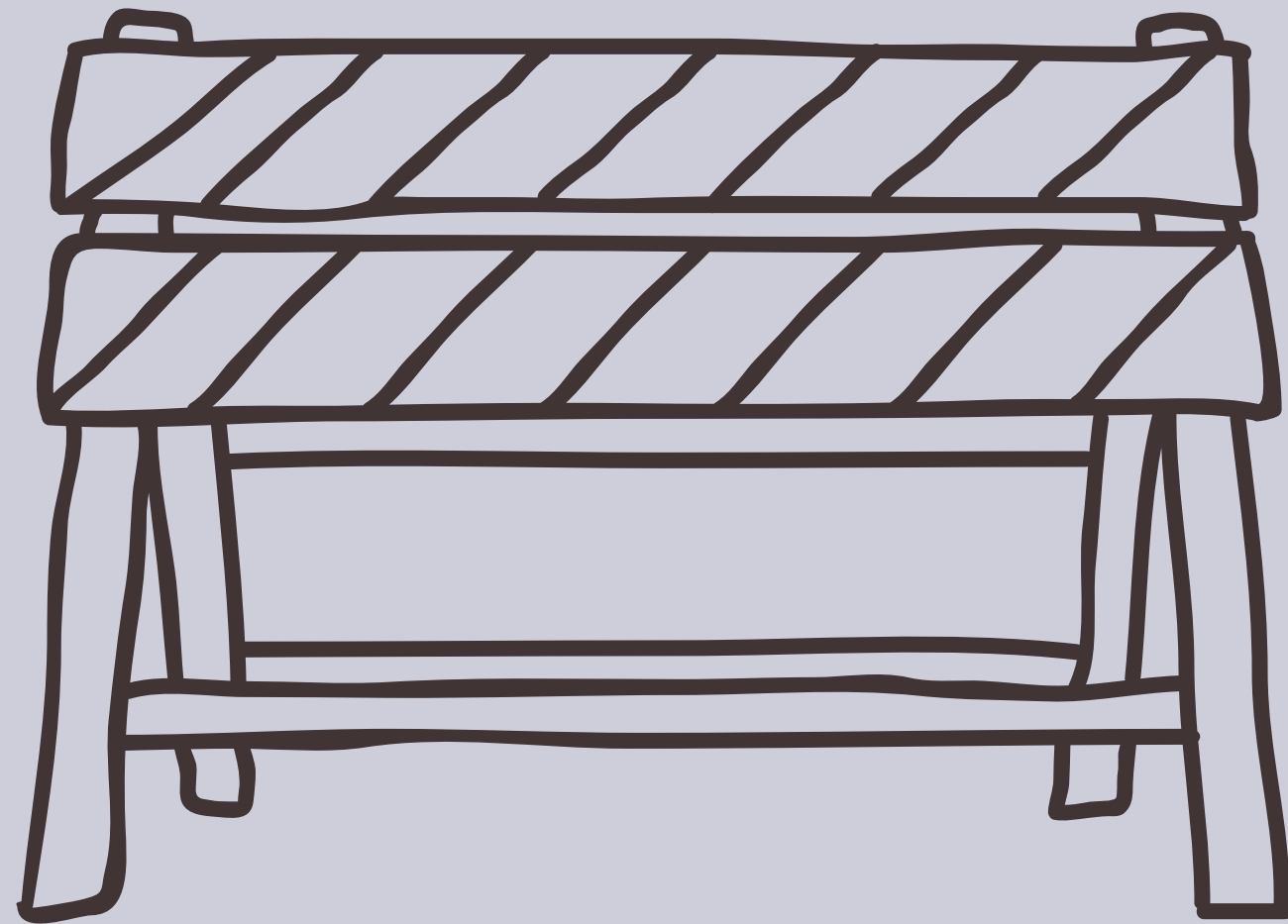
Neuroqueer, Neuroqueering, and being Neuroqueer is fundamentally being both neurodivergent and queer, with conscious awareness and/or exploration of how these aspects entwine and interact and the practices that result from that awareness and exploration.

(this definition is directly adapted from the work of Dr.Nick Walker)

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## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

## **Social and cultural barriers impact the way disabled individuals experience and express their sexuality.**

These barriers are rooted in broader societal attitudes and systemic practices that marginalize and exclude disabled people.

A few examples:

- Restricted access to sex education
- pervasive stereotypes
- institutional discrimination



# Barriers to Bodily Autonomy



People with disabilities are frequently told how to live, what interventions we “need” for our body minds

Bodily autonomy is especially important for BIPOC communities, who have historically faced racism, discrimination, violence, and trauma.

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# **SEXUALITY AND** **EXPRESSION**

Disabled individuals often face challenges expressing their sexuality

People with disabilities often have to prove their ability to consent to sexual activities to the state. "Consent assessments" vary across the nation but generally focus on an individual's understanding of the physical and emotional consequences of sex, their capacity for rational decision-making, and their grasp of choice.

Lack of knowledge, often due to insufficient sex education, can lead to individuals with disabilities being deemed unable to consent.

Disabled people have the right to be seen as sexual beings.

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## BARRIERS TO SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION





# **Lack of Inclusive Policies & Trained Educators**

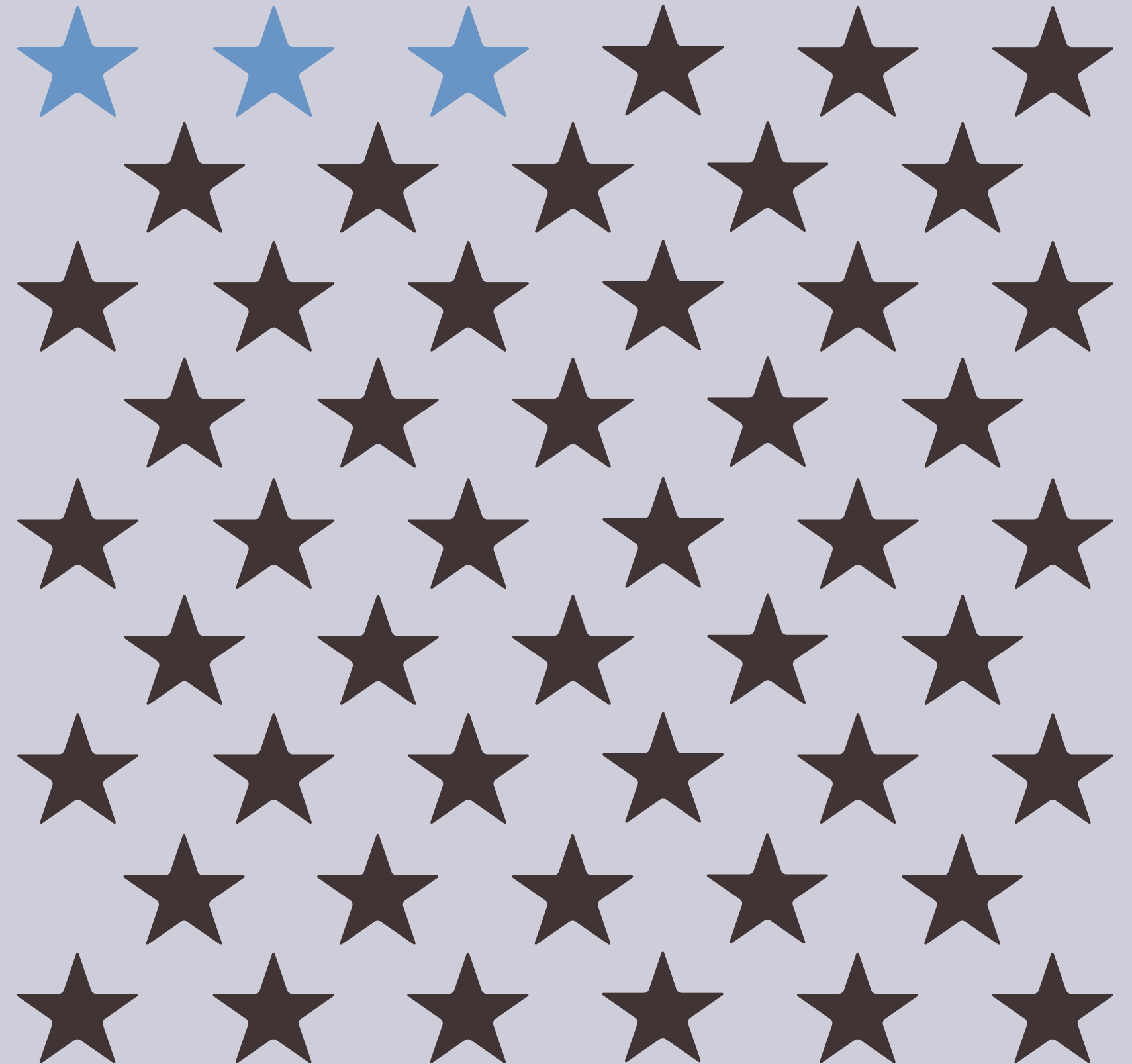


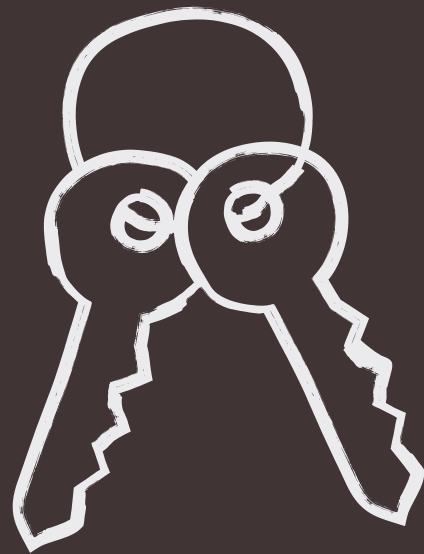
As a result, people with disabilities may receive incomplete or inadequate education about sexual health.

This lack of inclusivity means that many students with disabilities miss out on critical information about consent, relationships, and sexual health.

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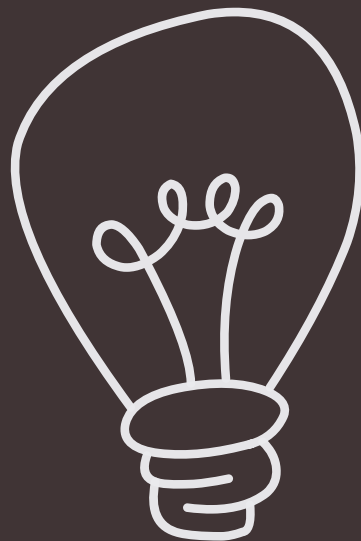
**Only three states mandate disabled people's inclusion in sex education requirements.**





## **Accessibility of Educational Materials**

Traditional sex education resources are often not designed with the needs of disabled individuals in mind.



## **Lack of Training**

Many educators and sexual health professionals are not adequately trained to work with individuals with disabilities. This lack of training can result in educators feeling unprepared or unwilling to address the sexual health needs of disabled individuals.

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**WHAT ARE**  
**SOLUTIONS THAT**  
**PROVIDE TRULY**  
**ACCESSIBLE SEX**  
**EDUCATION?**

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Brainstorm possible solutions to ensure everyone receives adequate sexual health information



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**ENSURING THAT SEX ED IS ACCESSIBLE FOR  
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES...**

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- 
- **SCHOOL SYSTEMS MUST PROACTIVELY FACILITATE ACCESS TO SEX ED FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.**
    - People with disabilities should never have to choose between special education and sex education services.
    - Schools must modify sex education curricula and materials to meet the needs of students with disabilities
    - These curricula should recognize that students with disabilities may also be survivors of sexual violence, English language learners, LGBTQ, and/or BIPOC.
    - Post-secondary students with disabilities should have access to activities that focus on sexuality and consent, such as sexual harassment and consent training mandated by Title IX.
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- **STANDARDS AND EDUCATOR TRAINING MUST ENSURE THAT EDUCATORS ARE RESPONSIVE, KNOWLEDGEABLE, AND ATTENTIVE TO THE SPECIFIC CONCERNS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WHEN IT COMES TO LEARNING ABOUT AND HAVING SEX.**
    - Educators, school personnel, and others in charge of planning and executing sex education programming must have access to training to incorporate persons with disabilities into their sex education curricula.
    - All educators should be aware of current eugenics concerns as well as the historical context.
- 
- **BUILD TRUST AND A SHARED COMMITMENT TO DISABILITY JUSTICE.**
    - Sexuality educators must reach out to and build trust with the disability community and demonstrate they're providing culturally appropriate, equitable education, along with comprehensive sex education.
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# **SOLUTIONS WITHIN THE** **LEGISLATION**



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- State legislators should prioritize comprehensive sex education programs over abstinence-only programs and laws that stigmatize sexuality.

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- Federal lawmakers need to pass bills that enhance access to sex education and improve healthcare services for people with disabilities.

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- The Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA) aims to provide evidence-based, medically accurate, and culturally responsive sex education to young people, including those with disabilities.

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- National Sexuality Education Standards should be implemented to ensure age-appropriate sex education for students in grades K-12.

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- Funding for abstinence-only programs should be redirected to programs that offer medically accurate information, such as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program and the Title X Family Planning Program.
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- Religious refusal laws allowing organizations that run/staff group homes or caregiver services to refuse to provide access to reproductive health services, including sex education, should be repealed.

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- Federal agencies should collect data to identify barriers to sex education, especially in communities where race and disability intersect.

- 
- Supported decision-making should be recognized as an alternative to guardianship.

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- Legislation should protect individuals' rights to reproductive health information and privacy. Services responding to abuse cases should prioritize the individual's capacity to consent.

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- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
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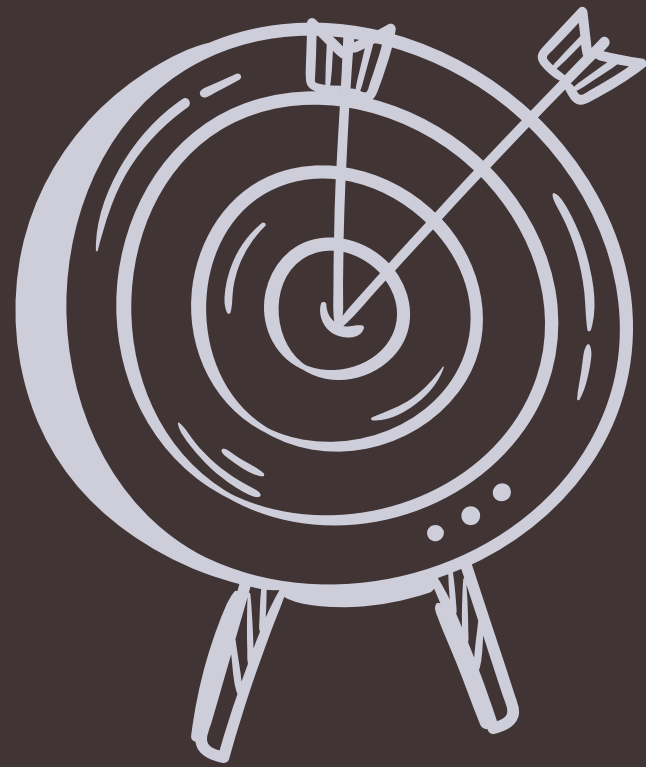
# QUESTIONS?



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IMPACT OF  
INADEQUATE EDUCATION

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# **CONTENT** **WARNING**

References to Sexual Assault and abuse



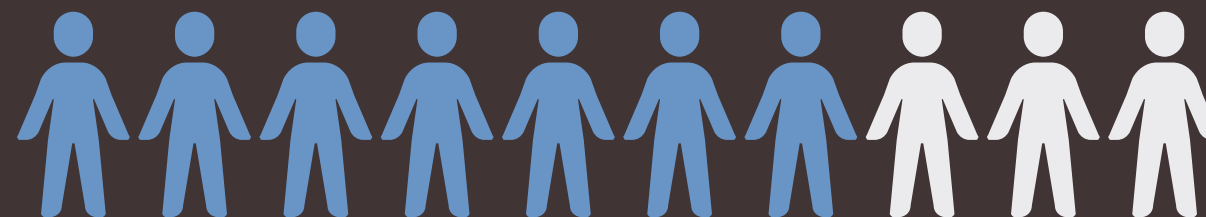
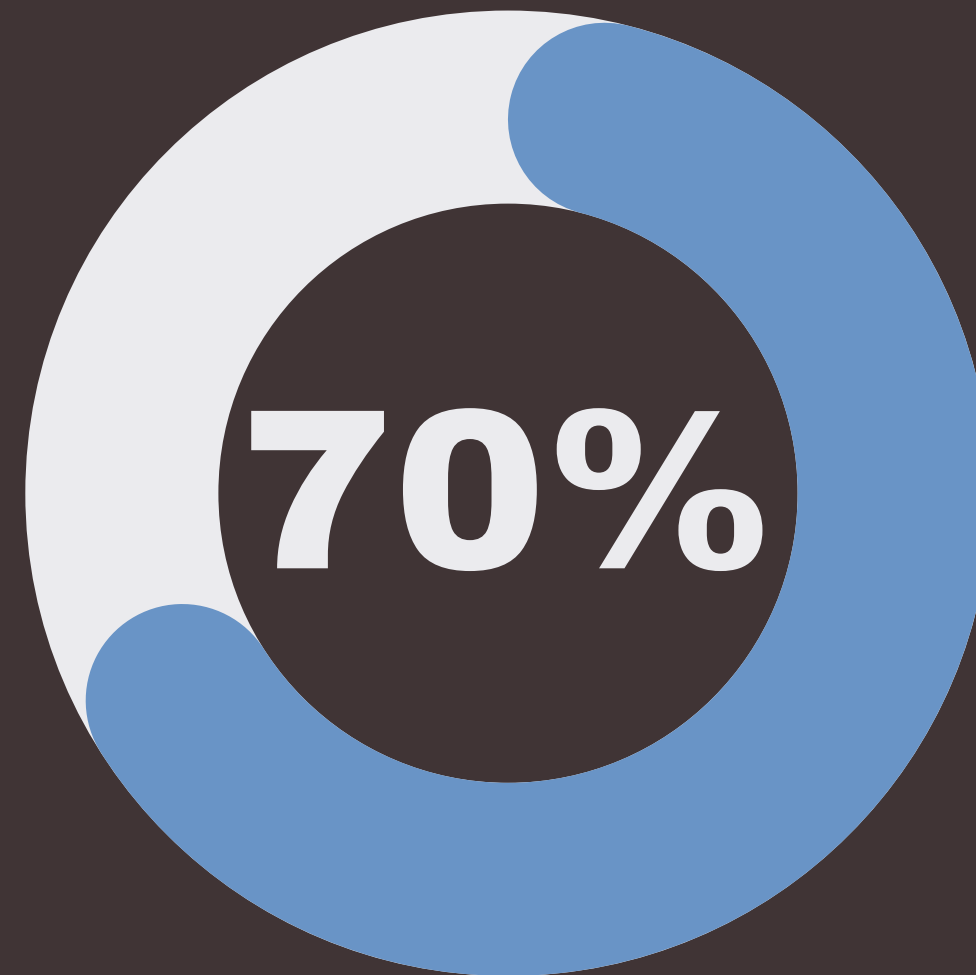
# A MATTER OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

it is critical that people with disabilities have the opportunity to learn about principles such as informed consent, bodily autonomy, and self-advocacy.



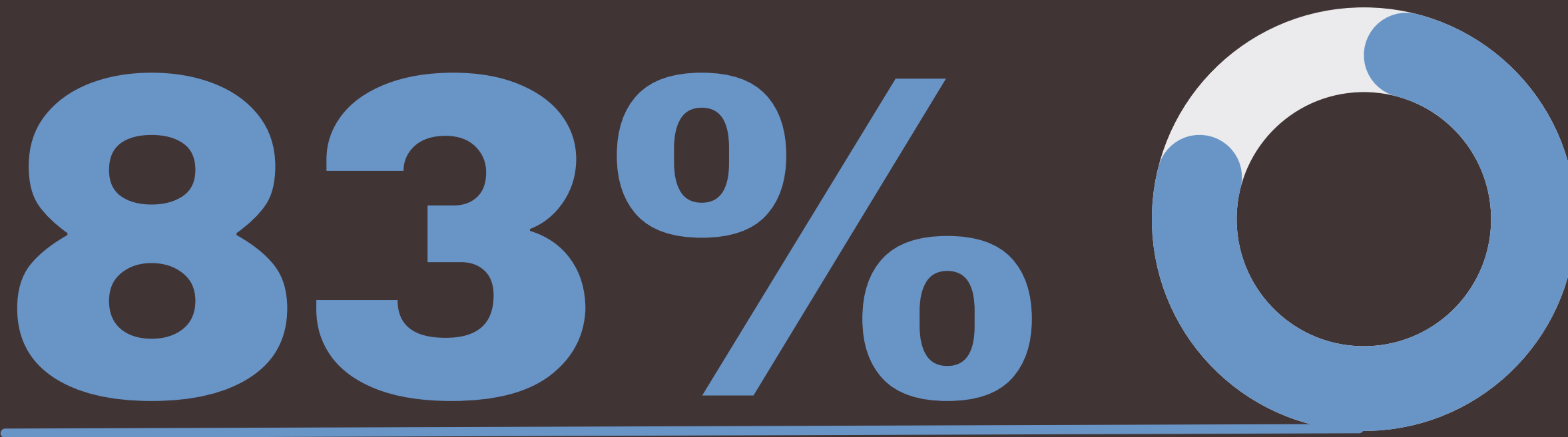
To truly break the cycle of violence and abuse, comprehensive sex education must actively address the needs of people with disabilities, and be taught to all people.

A RECENT STUDY FOUND THAT  
MORE THAN 70% OF WOMEN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED  
IN THEIR LIFETIME



## Prevalence of Sexual Assault and Abuse

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of women with intellectual disabilities will be sexually  
assaulted in their lifetime

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and of those nearly 50% had been sexually assaulted 10 or more times

# FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASED RISK

**01** Dependence on Caregivers

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**03** Lack of Education

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**02** Communication Barriers

**04** Social Isolation

# PREVENTION STRATEGIES

**01**

**Comprehensive Sexual  
Health Education**

**02**

**Empowerment**

**03**

**Training for Caregivers and  
Professionals**

**04**

**Safe and Supportive  
Environments**

**05**

**Support Networks**

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# BODILY AUTONOMY

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# **Understanding Bodily Autonomy**

Bodily autonomy refers to the right individuals have over their bodies, including decisions related to health care, sexual activity, and personal boundaries.

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For individuals with disabilities, it means having the same rights and opportunities to make informed decisions about their bodies as anyone else. Access to necessary information and support is crucial for effectively exercising this right.

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# **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BODILY AUTONOMY**

Bodily autonomy is vital for several reasons:

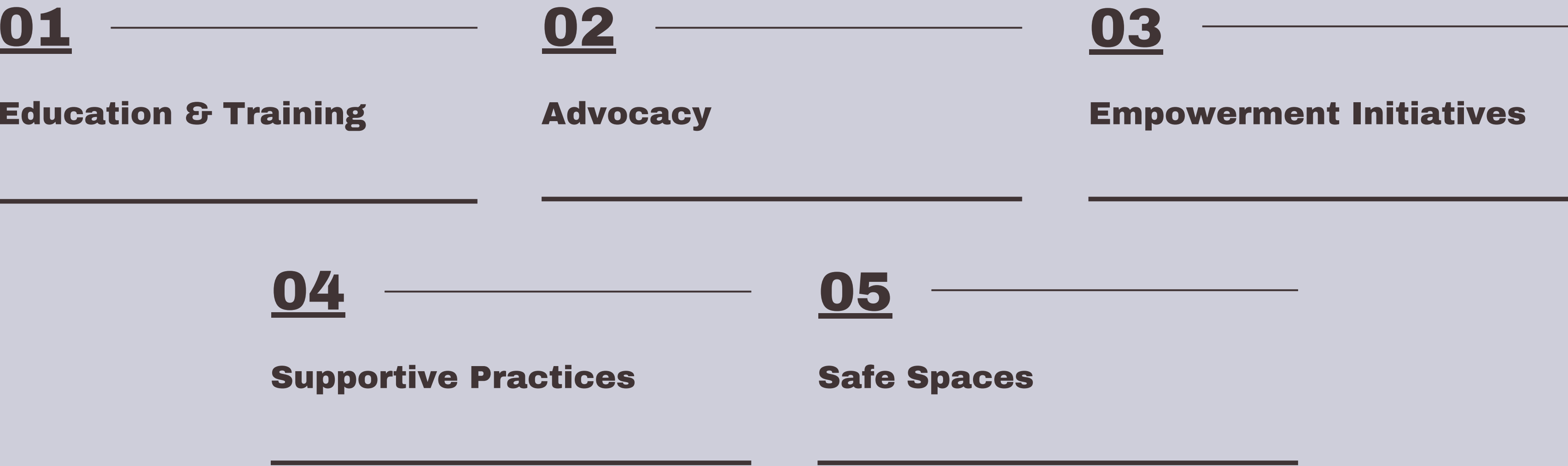
1. **Empowerment:** Control over one's body enables individuals to make confident decisions about their health and well-being.
  2. **Safety:** Understanding and asserting bodily autonomy help protect against abuse and exploitation, which is particularly important for those with disabilities who may be more vulnerable.
  3. **Healthy Relationships:** Respect for bodily autonomy is foundational for consensual and respectful relationships, ensuring that personal boundaries are honored.
  4. **Health and Well-being:** The ability to make informed decisions about one's body is essential for overall physical, emotional, and mental health.
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# **BARRIERS TO EXERCISING BODILY AUTONOMY**

- 1. Legal Restrictions**
- 2. Social Stigma**
- 3. Institutional Inadequacies**
- 4. Insufficient Resources**



# PROMOTING BODILY AUTONOMY

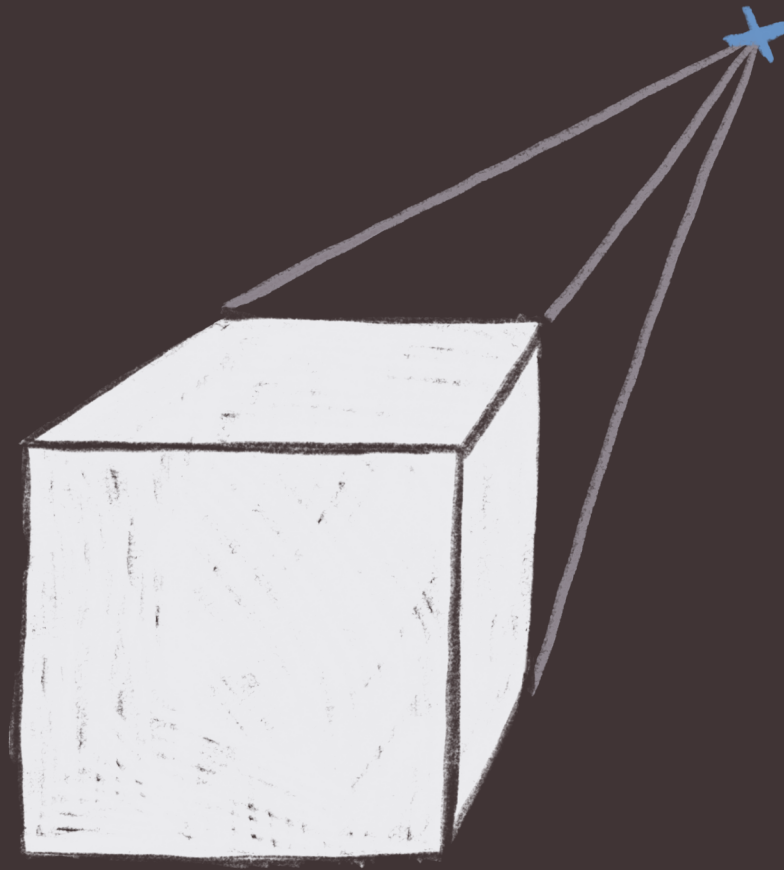


A close-up photograph of two young women lying down and smiling. The woman on the left is partially visible, showing her shoulder and arm. The woman on the right is more prominent, wearing a light-colored, polka-dot strapless top, and has her hand near her face. The background is a soft, textured surface.

# **Cultivating a Positive Perspective on Sexuality**

## **Unpack What You've Been Taught**

RE-EXAMINE AND CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS  
RELATED TO SEX AND SEXUALITY.



**IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS THE**  
**BIGGEST BARRIERS TO A**  
**SEX-POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE:**

# SHAMME

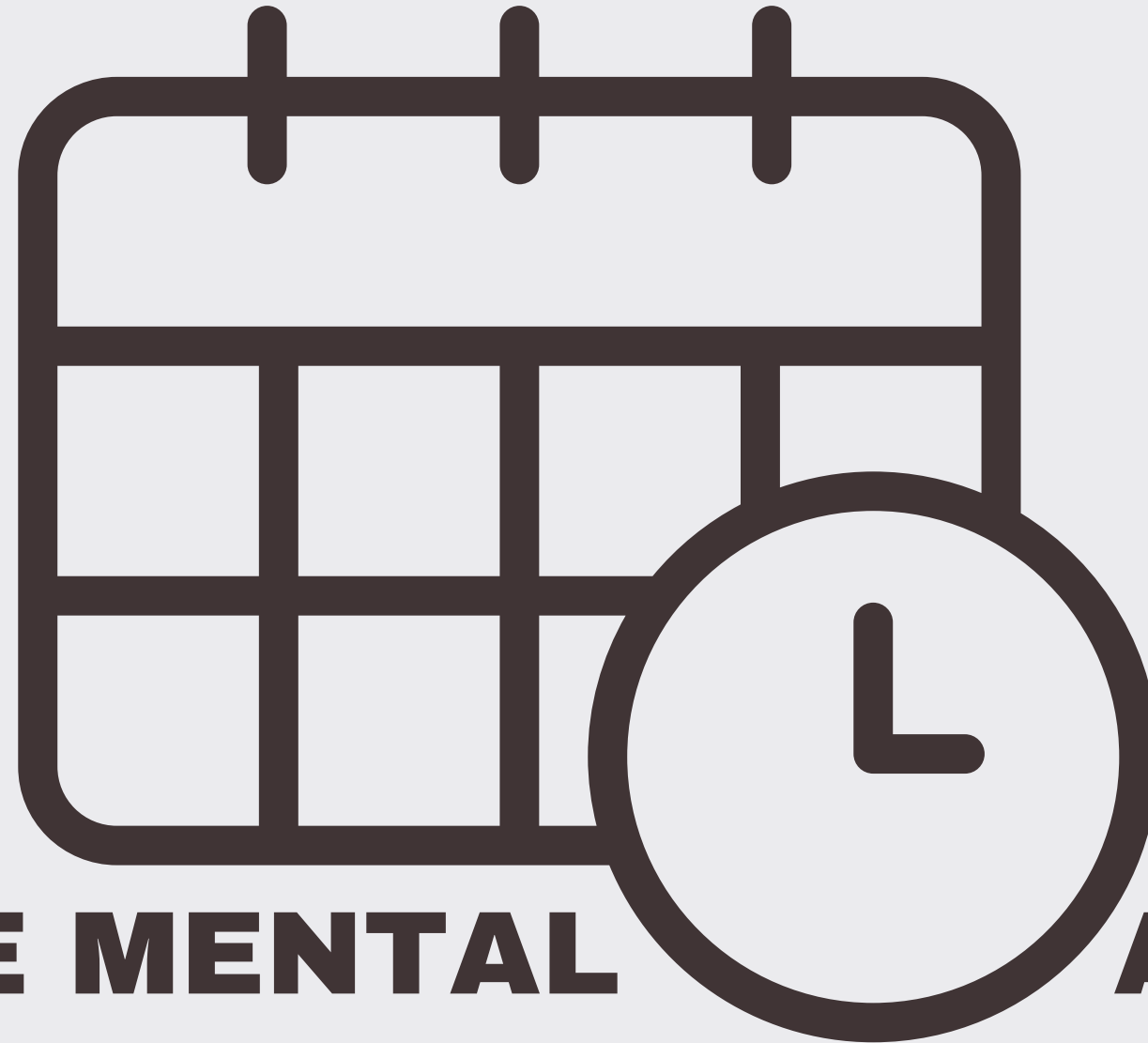


Implicit or explicit



ABOUT PEOPLE'S AUTONOMY

**I WILL ENCOURAGE**



**YOU TO LEAVE MENTAL AGE BEHIND**

The need is not for a certain level of ability to be a sexual being, but  
for information to make choices appropriate for each individual.

# **ACCESSIBLY SEXY:**

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**HOW CAN WE CREATE A**  
**MORE INCLUSIVE AND**  
**SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT?**

# **SOLUTIONS & LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

## **POLICY ADVOCACY AND REFORM**

### **1. Inclusive Sex Education Policies:**

- **Actionable Step:** Mobilize to support legislation requiring comprehensive, inclusive sexual health education that addresses the specific needs of individuals with disabilities.

### **2. Anti-Discrimination Laws:**

- **Actionable Step:** Advocate for the strengthening of laws that protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination, especially regarding healthcare and education.

### **4. Mandatory Reporting and Training:**

- **Actionable Step:** Lobby for policies that mandate training for educators and healthcare professionals on recognizing and responding to signs of abuse. Ensure mandatory reporting of sexual abuse.

### **4. Funding for Support Services:**

- **Actionable Step:** Campaign for increased funding for community support services catering to individuals with disabilities, including counseling and legal assistance.

# **COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS**

**COMMUNITY INITIATIVES PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN PROMOTING THE SEXUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES. EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES INCLUDE:**

**1. Support Groups and Networks:**

- **Actionable Step:** Establish peer-led support groups for individuals with disabilities to foster safe spaces for discussion and learning about sexual health.

**2. Public Awareness Campaigns:**

- **Actionable Step:** Launch campaigns that challenge stigma surrounding disability and sexuality. Leverage social media and local events to educate the community.

**3. Resource Hubs:**

- **Actionable Step:** Create physical and online resource hubs providing accessible information on sexual health, rights, and available services.

**4. Training Programs:**

- **Actionable Step:** Develop training for families, caregivers, and community members on supporting the sexual health and rights of individuals with disabilities.

# **EDUCATIONAL REFORMS**

**IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL REFORMS ENSURES SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION IS ACCESSIBLE AND EFFECTIVE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES:**

## **1. Curriculum Development:**

- **Actionable Step:** Collaborate with disability advocates to develop inclusive sex education curricula that utilize plain language and interactive activities.

## **2. Training:**

- **Actionable Step:** Provide professional development opportunities focused on inclusive sexual health education strategies for educators.

## **3. Assessment and Feedback:**

- **Actionable Step:** Collect feedback from students with disabilities and their families to continually improve educational programs.

## **4. Inclusive School & Institutional Policies:**

- **Actionable Step:** Advocate for school policies that promote respect and inclusivity for all students, addressing bullying and accessibility issues.

# TAKEAWAYS



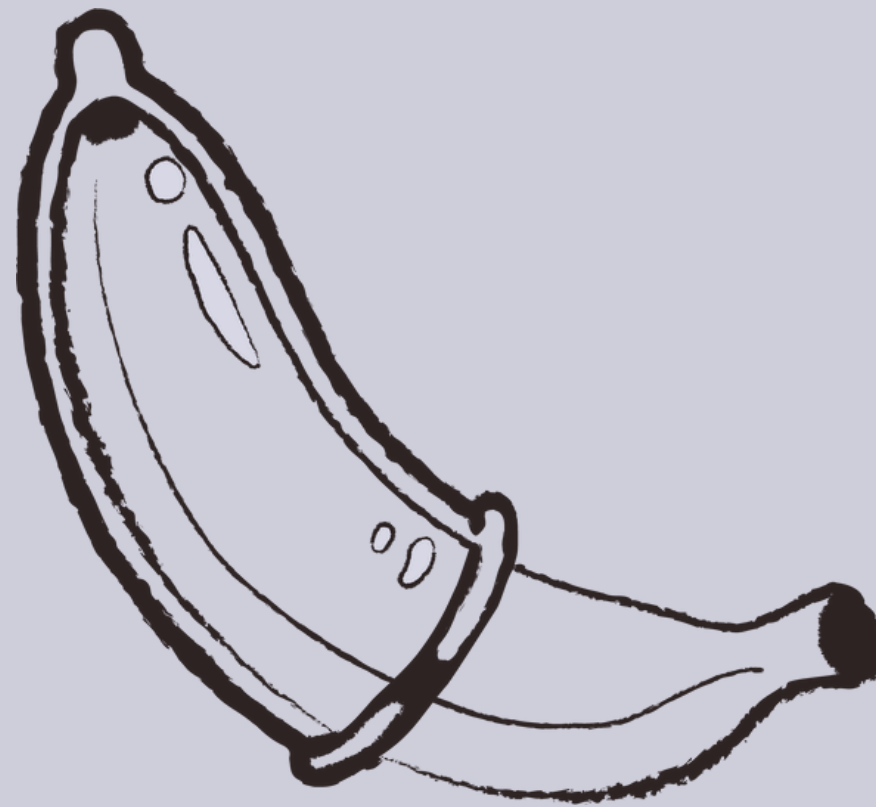
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# QUESTIONS?



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**SUPPORTING NEURODIVERSE**  
**PEOPLES' SEXUALITY**

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## **DEVELOPING EMPATHY & UNDERSTANDING:**

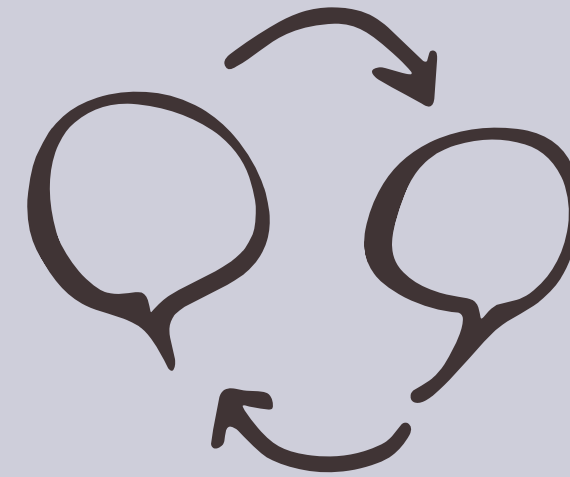


- Strive to understand the unique sensory and emotional experiences of neurodiverse people.
  - This empathy can foster more supportive and accommodating relationships.
  - Listening actively and validating other's experiences can create a strong foundation of trust and mutual respect.
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②

## **CLEAR AND OPEN COMMUNICATION:**



- Encourage open and direct conversations about sexual desires, boundaries, and expectations.
  - Fosters understanding of needs and reduces the potential for misunderstandings.
  - Regular check-ins can be beneficial. Setting aside time to discuss what is working and what needs to change.
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## ③ **PATIENCE AND FLEXIBILITY:**



- Patience is crucial. Understand that neurodiverse people may need more time to become comfortable with new experiences or changes in relationships.
  - Be flexible with plans and expectations.
  - Adjusting to each other's needs and finding compromises can strengthen the relationship.
-

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## **④ CREATING SAFE SPACES:**



- Establish a safe and judgment-free space where their thoughts and feelings can expressed openly.
  - A safe space is essential for discussing sensitive topics related to sexuality.
  - Offer nontraditional means of communication, working with each individuals needs.
  - Positive reinforcement and encouragement after discussing uncomfortable topics can help build trust and openness.
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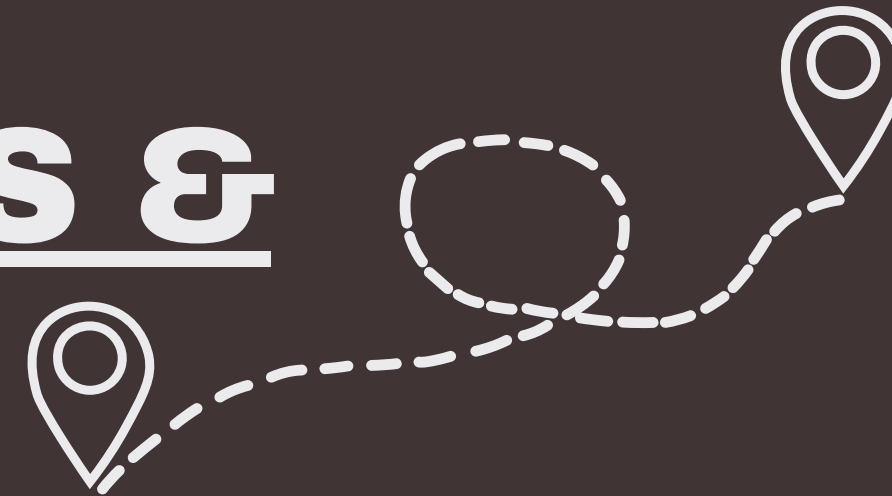
## **ENCOURAGING EXPLORATION & CONSENT**



- Support exploring sexuality and preferences. Encourage them to share their fantasies and interests without fear of judgment.
  - Consent is key. Always ensure that people are equipped with tools to know if they are comfortable and willing to engage in any sexual activity.
  - Consent should be ongoing and can be withdrawn at any time.
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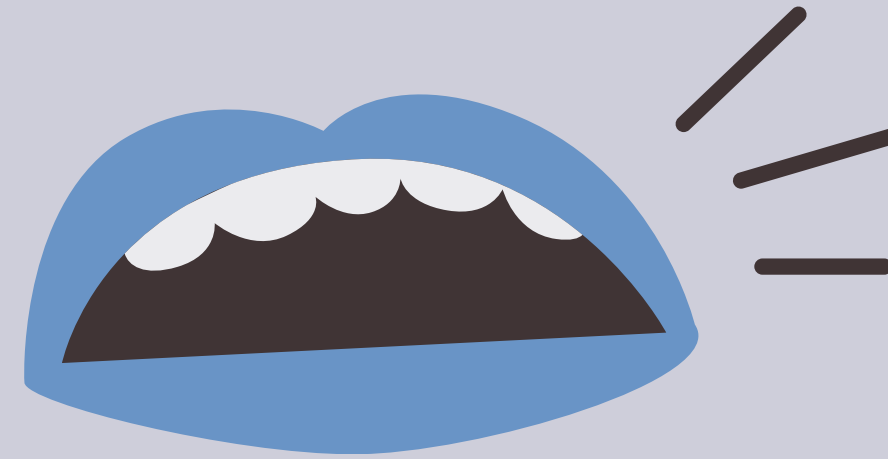
## **CONCRETE PLANS & SAFE WORDS:**



- Be specific about what behaviors are acceptable and which are not, providing clear guidelines that both partners can follow.
  - Establish concrete plans for handling sexual feelings and setting boundaries. Using safe words during sex can help ensure that all parties feel secure and respected.
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# COMMUNICATION & SCRIPTS

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**Expressing Sexual Needs**

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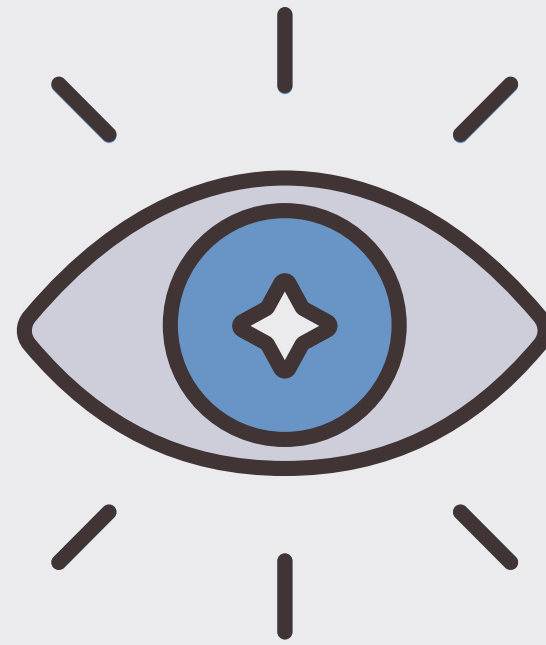
**Social Scripts & Communication**

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**Open Conversations**

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**SENSORY EXPERIENCES &**



**SEXUALITY**

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## **Hypersensitivity to Touch**

Touch sensitivity may lead to issues such as painful sex or premature ejaculation in people with penises. It's crucial for partners to communicate and find ways to moderate touch sensitivities. Relaxation exercises and mutual masturbation can be helpful strategies to increase comfort with sexual touch.

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## **Hypersexuality**

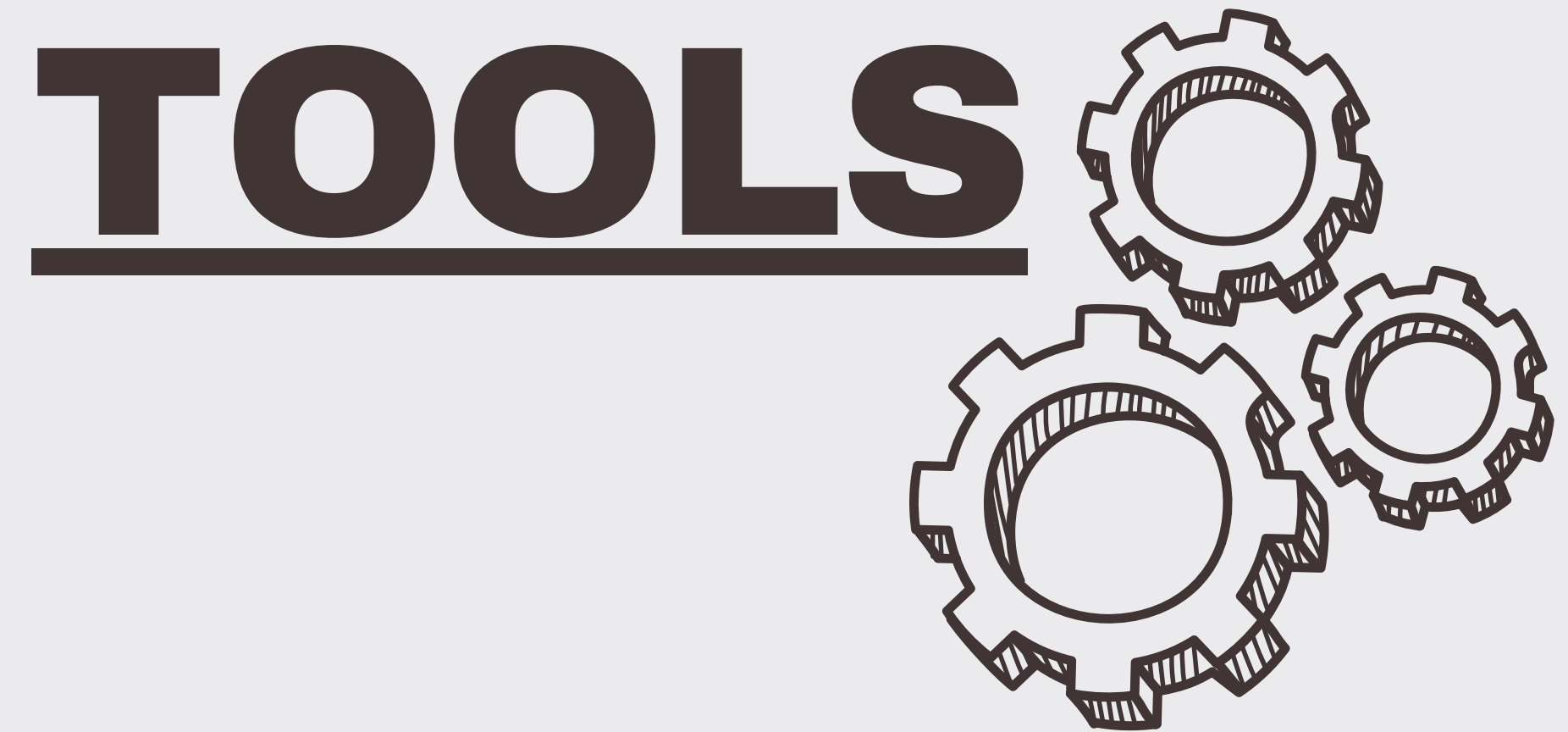
Can sometimes lead to inappropriate or risky behaviors as individuals try to fulfill their sexual needs. It's essential for both partners to have open discussions about their sexual expectations and boundaries.

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## **Sensory Overload**

Sex can be messy from bodily fluids to different textures and sounds. For neurodiverse individuals, becoming comfortable with these sensory aspects can take time and practice. Partners should discuss and prepare for these sensory experiences, keeping clean linens ready or agreeing on certain boundaries to reduce sensory overload during sex.

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# FACTORS OF ACCESSIBILITY

Because disability is such a diverse and varied experience people will have different needs, different types of support, and solutions.

**Decreased Dexterity**

**Increased Sensation**

**Decreased Sensation**

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# **ACCESSIBILITY** **FEATURES**

- Button Configuration
  - Braille Labels or Tactile Markings
  - Color Contrast
  - Adjustable Straps or Fastenings
  - Vibration Intensity Control
  - Remote Control or App Connectivity
  - Grip/Handle Type
-

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**SEX TOY ID**

# The Doxy Wand



# The Doxy Wand



- Large separate buttons
- powerful, provides strong stimulation
- the broad head doesn't demand precision to stimulate the desired spot
- Can be heavy and difficult to hold for long periods but can relatively easily be used hands-free



**Bondage  
tape**



- only sticks to itself and can be a very simple option to explore bondage
- doesn't leave any sticky residue. (good for sensory issues)
- Can adapt sex toys, attach to pillows, body parts, beds or wheelchairs

## **Bondage tape**

# Sportsheets Sports Cuffs



# Sportsheets Sports Cuffs



- Fastened with velcro, with limited grip or dexterity, buckles and clips can be inaccessible
- comfortable, flexible can be a more sensory-friendly option



# Sliquid Sample Packs



- lube sample packs allow people to find a lube that doesn't trigger sensory issues
- the Sliquid brand is widely recommended online by those with sensory issues

# Sliquid Sample Packs



**WaterSlyde**



- completely adjustable: water pressure and where its focused
- Hands-free

**WaterSlyde**

# **PlusOne® 2-in-1 Grinder**



# **PlusOne® 2-in-1 Grinder**



- hands-free, accommodates mobility issues or limited hand function
- Powerful vibrations accommodates decreased sensitivity / Adjustable vibration intensity accommodates hyper sensitivity
- sit-on vibrator, Reduced physical effort accommodates mobility issues, fatigue, and pain

# Lorals



# Lorals



- hands-free, accommodates mobility issues or limited hand function
- allows for different positions that may be harder to use a sex dam for
- Sensory solution, for those sensitive to tastes and smells (having a natural odor isn't negative, our bodies aren't made to smell like flowers and definitely aren't made to taste like one)
  - thin material and the skin taught design assist those with reduced sensation utilize barrier method to protect from STIs without potential interference to stimulation

**Starsi**





- 
- **Did any of the products stand out to you?**
- 
- **Did any of the traits we identified surprised you?**
- 
- **Which, if any product features were particularly challenging to recognize?**
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# QUESTIONS?





**THANK YOU FOR  
LISTENING!**

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# RESOURCES

- 01** "The Safer Sex Stories" from Health Signs Virtual Care on Youtube. A web series focused on STI prevention all in ASL with voiceovers. it was produced and developed with the Massachusetts department of health and the Massachusetts commission for the deaf and hard of hearing
- 02** "Sex Ed for People With I/DD" from National Council on Independent Living on youtube is sexual health videos made by disabled people for disabled people.
- 03** Amaze.org "AMAZE takes the awkward out of sex ed. Real info in fun, animated videos that give you all the answers you actually want to know about sex, your body and relationships."
- 04** Access, Autonomy, and Dignity: Comprehensive Sexuality Education for People with Disabilities created By The National Partnership For Women & Families And Autistic Self Advocacy Network
- 05** RealTalk: Provider Toolkit: Improving Quality of Sexual Health Care for Patients with Disabilities created by The Autistic Self Advocacy Network & The National Council On Independent Living
- 06** Sexual Health & Intimacy Psychological services "Sexual Health and Intimacy Psychological Services (SHIPS) is a progressive psychology organisation in Fitzroy and Box Hill, Melbourne. We provide sex, intimacy and mental health treatment & training."





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<https://linktr.ee/r1.v.3r>

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