



GLOBAL
DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION®

Bias, Boundaries, and Relationship Basics

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Global Down Syndrome Foundation A Unique Affiliate Model!

The Global Down Syndrome Foundation is part of a network of affiliate organizations that work closely together on a daily basis to deliver on our mission, vision, values, and goals:



❖ **Global:** was established as a 501(c)3 in 2009 and is “Dedicated to significantly improving the lives of people with Down syndrome through Research, Medical Care, Education, and Advocacy”

❖ **Affiliates are:**

- Established with a lead gift from Anna & John J. Sie Foundation
- Must work closely together to benefit people with Down syndrome
- Must be self-sustaining financially

KEY TAKEAWAYS



- ❖ Recognize myths and realities about people with Down syndrome and social/sexual relationships
- ❖ Examine the barriers you may have in talking about sexuality/relationships
- ❖ Identify the four types of boundaries and how they play into each type of relationship



MYTHS AND REALITIES

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS



- ❖ People with Down syndrome cannot form long-term relationships
- ❖ People with Down syndrome don't want or need sex
- ❖ Talking to my child about sex will make them want to have sex
- ❖ Isolating people with Down syndrome will prevent abuse/exploitation

REALITIES: PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



- ❖ Puberty/physical development
 - ❖ Women
 - ❖ Men
- ❖ Fertility
- ❖ Contraception
- ❖ Trisomy 21 transmission
- ❖ Sexually transmitted infections

REALITIES: SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT



Age 0-8	Age 9-13	Age 14-20
Body parts Boys vs. girls All bodies are good! Safety	Puberty and body changes Rules around masturbation Friendship vs. romantic relationship	Sex, risks and protection When to act on sexual feelings Inappropriate relationships Consent

CONSENT!



BARRIERS

EXPLORING YOUR VALUES



- ❖ What do you value...
 - ❖ Cultural/Religious
 - ❖ Family Values

- ❖ How do your values shape how you respond to issues and questions related to sexuality and relationships?

- ❖ What messages do you want to project about sex and relationships?



EVALUATING FEAR



- ❖ It is okay to be embarrassed!
- ❖ You don't need to have all the answers
- ❖ These conversations prevent abuse

EXPLORING YOUR BIAS



- ❖ What is a bias?
- ❖ Explicit bias
- ❖ Implicit bias



EXPLORING YOUR BIAS

- ❖ Poll Time!
- ❖ Scale of 1-5
- ❖ 1 - I am comfortable with this statement.
- ❖ 3 - I am uncomfortable, but not too bad.
- ❖ 5 - I am very uncomfortable.





DEBRIEF

- ❖ Did you have some discrepancies?
- ❖ All people should be included in the first statements.
- ❖ Allow yourself to be uncomfortable.



BOUNDARIES AND BASICS

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TALK TO PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX?



- ❖ Foster healthy relationship
- ❖ Promote equality and civil rights
- ❖ Prevent abuse, STDs and unplanned pregnancies
- ❖ Curiosity killed the cat





BOUNDARIES

Types of Boundaries

- ❖ Spatial
- ❖ Physical
- ❖ Emotional
- ❖ Communication



RELATIONSHIPS



- ❖ Stranger
 - ❖ Community Helper
 - ❖ Personal Community Helper
- ❖ Acquaintance
- ❖ Friend
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Sweetheart



THE BASICS

- ❖ Normalizing - people with Ds *are* sexual beings
- ❖ Stop infantilizing their relationships
- ❖ Consent and Mutuality
- ❖ Your vocabulary / actions

TIPS FOR “THE TALK”



- ❖ Don't try to do it all at once
- ❖ Start simple
- ❖ Provide accurate, concrete information
- ❖ Use books, social stories, or other visuals
- ❖ Be consistent
- ❖ Repetition and practice



THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?



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