Autism and the LGBTQIA+ Community

Sharon Conty, MS, CCC-SLP (she/her/hers) – Speech-Language Pathologist
Sarah Michaels, LMSW (she/her/hers) – Social Worker
Information, Video, and Image Disclosure

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Polling – REQUIRED FOR CEUs!

Instructions:
• On your smartphone, laptop, or tablet, go to www.Slido.com or scan the QR code.
• Enter the event code: #CM16.
• Enter your name and email.
• Click “Join.”

• The online polling platform Slido will be used to track CEUs and monitor attendance.

• CEU attendees MUST respond to every Slido poll in this webinar to receive CEUs.
ASHA Disclosure Slide

• Sharon Conty
  • Financial Disclosures
    • Employee of Kennedy Krieger Institute
  • Non-financial disclosures
    • ASHA member

• Sarah Michaels
  • Financial Disclosures
    • Employee of Kennedy Krieger Institute
Objectives

1. Understanding language of the LGBTQIA+ Community
2. Common Thoughts
3. Supports for individuals, families, providers, and teachers
4. Resources
How would you best describe yourself?
Do you or a family member identify as autistic and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?

Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.
Language Orientation

- Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder/Autism Spectrum/Autistic
- Person First versus Identity First Language
- Neurodiverse
- Neurotypical

Terms to be Used: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

The Gender Unicorn

Gender Identity
- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Man/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth
- Female
- Male
- Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Terms to be Used: Gender Identity

Terms to be Used: Gender Identity

The Gender Unicorn

LGBTQIA+

Terms to be Used: Sexual Orientation

People with ASD are incapable of feeling love or sexual attraction to others.
People with ASD are incapable of feeling love or sexual attraction towards others.

- Disorder of Social Communication
  - Has nothing to do with the feelings that are experienced
- May be expressed differently
- May mature later in development

People with ASD do not want a sexual relationship.
People with ASD don’t want a sexual relationship.

- Not a universal truth
- Sensory difficulties
- Difficulties in communicating feelings
- Difficulties in initiating romantic and sexual relationships

Z(2011); Stokes, Newton & Kaur (2007)
Sexual education is NOT required for individuals with ASD.
Sexual education is not required for individuals with ASD.

- Peer group
- Difficulty understanding social cues
- Still have same urges/needs, but more difficulty navigating

Sexual education should be provided the same way it is for everyone else.
Sexual education should not be the same way it is for everyone else.

- Parent involvement is crucial!
- Should be highly structured and concrete
- Talking about sexual behaviors is important
- Should be taught in an individualized manner

There is a universal sexuality to people with ASD.
There is a universal sexuality in people with ASD.

There is a greater difference in gender identity in individuals with ASD than in the general population.

Dewinter, De Graaf, & Begeer (2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned gender at birth</th>
<th>Male n (%)</th>
<th>Female n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feels male</td>
<td>299 (91.7)</td>
<td>3 (0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly male, partly female</td>
<td>10 (3.1)</td>
<td>31 (9.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not male, nor female</td>
<td>2 (0.6)</td>
<td>26 (7.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know (yet)</td>
<td>4 (1.2)</td>
<td>9 (2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different (e.g. human, no sex)</td>
<td>8 (2.5)</td>
<td>8 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels female</td>
<td>3 (0.9)</td>
<td>272 (77.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dewinter, De Graaf, & Begeer (2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ASD (n = 316)</th>
<th>TD (n = 1932)</th>
<th>Women ASD (n = 343)</th>
<th>TD (n = 4137)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feels attracted to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men only</td>
<td>151 (48.4)</td>
<td>190 (36.0)</td>
<td>184 (53.6)**</td>
<td>350 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both men and women</td>
<td>94 (29.6)</td>
<td>164 (32.7)</td>
<td>77 (22.4)</td>
<td>410 (101.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women only</td>
<td>258 (81.6)**</td>
<td>354 (67.7)</td>
<td>21 (6.1)</td>
<td>53 (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>15 (4.7)</td>
<td>44 (1.1)</td>
<td>51 (14.9)</td>
<td>65 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>158 (50.3)**</td>
<td>2016 (74.3)</td>
<td>162 (47.2)**</td>
<td>2623 (70.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a man</td>
<td>115 (36.9)</td>
<td>113 (18.9)</td>
<td>131 (38.3)</td>
<td>280 (70.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a woman</td>
<td>150 (48.9)</td>
<td>280 (56.1)</td>
<td>11 (3.8)</td>
<td>62 (2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking together with partner</td>
<td>136 (43.1)</td>
<td>3450 (60)</td>
<td>130 (38.2)</td>
<td>2304 (79.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sexual orientation and gender identity differences are a phase for people with ASD.
Sexual orientation and gender identity differences are not a phase for people with ASD.

There is a higher instance of depression, stress, and anxiety in individuals with ASD who feel that they are unable to express or are not accepted for their gender identity and sexual orientation.

(George & Stokes, 2018)
What Does This Look Like?

• Timing
  • Gender identity (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2020; Strang et al., 2018)
  • Sexual orientation (Crehan, 2020)
  • Neurotypical vs. Neurodiverse (Crehan, 2020)

• Pervasive interests and obsessions
  • Self-advocate reporting (Strang et al., 2018)

• Characteristics
  • Early gender non-conformity (Strang et al., 2018)
  • Societal norms
  • Information seeking (Crehan, 2020)

(Sensational Kids, n.d.)
The Importance of this Topic

• Prevalence
  • Gender identity diversity (Warrier et al., 2020)
  • Sexual orientation diversity (George and Stokes, 2018)

• Mental health
  • LGBQ youth are at increased risk for depression, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts (Kann et al., 2016).
  • Transgender youth are nearly 4x as likely to experience depression as cisgendered peers (Reisner et al., 2015)

• Access to care
  • “The combination is seen to be too complex for the majority of clinicians, which led to long waiting times for specialized psychiatric care” (Strang et al., 2019)
Parents: What should we do first?

• Have a conversation
  • Let them know that they are loved
  • Don’t jump to conclusion
  • Keep your answers short and simple
    • Explain any possible new words
  • Keep the conversation open
  • Check their understanding
  • It’s ok to feel a little awkward

Parents and Caregivers: Guidelines

• Start discussions early
• Incorporate materials that highlight the LGBTQ+ community
• Explore topics of discomfort beforehand
• Seek out support
• Don’t be afraid to say you don’t know something!
• Discuss rights and laws
• Assist with transition plan for gender diverse youth
• Provide siblings and other family members with support and information

(Children’s Aid Society of Alabama, 2021; Crehan, 2020; Orlich & Earl, 2019)
Providers: What should we do first?

• Be accepting and open
  • 1/6 of LGBTQ adults experience discrimination
  • 1/5 avoid seeking medical care
• Resources
  • Center for Transgender Health at Johns Hopkins
  • The Gertrude Stein Society
  • Top Health Issues for LGBT Populations Information & Resource Kit

Powell (2018)
Providers, Teachers, and Other Adults: Guidelines

• Create a safe and open environment
  • Have quality resources available in waiting rooms, classrooms, and offices
  • Support and partner with local LGBTQ+ organizations (Crehan, 2020)

• Assess for safety (Crehan, 2020)

• Discuss legal nuances

• Understand barriers to care
  • Provider resistance
  • The urgency of treatment (Strang et al, 2018)

• Separate and Together Sessions
  • Hold sessions with a caregiver and child together and alone (Orlich & Earl, 2019)
Language when talking to the individual

• Be blunt
• Be open
• Be willing to answer questions
• Be ok with saying “I don’t know”

Stock Adobe (2019).
Person-Centered Care

• The person in front of us is the expert on their experience!

(New Horizons Families, n.d.)
Looking Forward

• Past focus
  • Prevalence
  • Provider guided interventions

• Future focus
  • Self-advocate guided sexual education resources
  • Self-advocate guided interventions, evaluations, and support

(New Horizons Families, n.d.)
Resources

In Person Resources
- Center for Transgender Health (JHH)
- Sex and Gender Clinic (JHH)
- The Gender and Autism Program (CNH)
- Chase Brexton Health Care

Quality Book-Based Resources
- The Facts of Life & More Laura Walker-Hirsch
- S.E.X. the all-you-need-to-know sexuality guide to get your through your teens & twenties Heather Corinna

Quality Online Resources
- Sex Ed for Self-Advocates
- Twainbow
- OutCare
- Planned Parenthood
- PFLAG
- The Gender Spectrum
- Human Rights Campaign
- GLAAD
Resources – Contact Information and Links

In Person Resources
• Center for Transgender Health (JHH) – (844) 546-5645
• Sex and Gender Clinic (JHH) – (443) 447-4337
• The Gender and Autism Program (CNH) – (301) 765-5432
• Chase Brexton Health Care – (410) 837-2050

Quality Book-Based Resources
• S.E.X. the all-you-need-to-know sexuality guide to get your through your teens & twenties Heather Corinna – website to access: https://www.amazon.com/X-second-All-You-Need-Know-Sexuality/dp/0738218847
Resources - Links

Quality Online Resources with Websites to Access

- Twainbow: https://www.twainbow.org/resources/
- OutCare: https://www.outcarehealth.org/
- Planned Parenthood: https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/parents/resources-parents
- PFLAG: https://pflag.org/
- The Gender Spectrum: https://genderspectrum.org/
- Human Rights Campaign: https://www.hrc.org/resources
- GLAAD: https://www.glaad.org/
Resources – Books for Children

[Images of book covers: Julián is a Mermaid, I Am Jazz, Daddy, Papa, and Me, and Tango Makes Three]

Retrieved from: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4466386-daddy-papa-and-me?from_search=true&from_srp=true&qid=2W7kkXx91R&rank=1
References


References, cont.


References, cont.


References, cont.


Question & Answer (Q&A) Segment.

Instructions: Toggle over to the Q&A section in Slido to enter questions.

Questions are selected at random by the moderator. We cannot guarantee your question will be answered during the Q&A segment.

The moderator may make small changes to a question for clarification purposes.
Audience Q&A Session