

I Want to Date!

Supporting Healthy Dating Relationships

Terri Couwenhoven MS, CSE

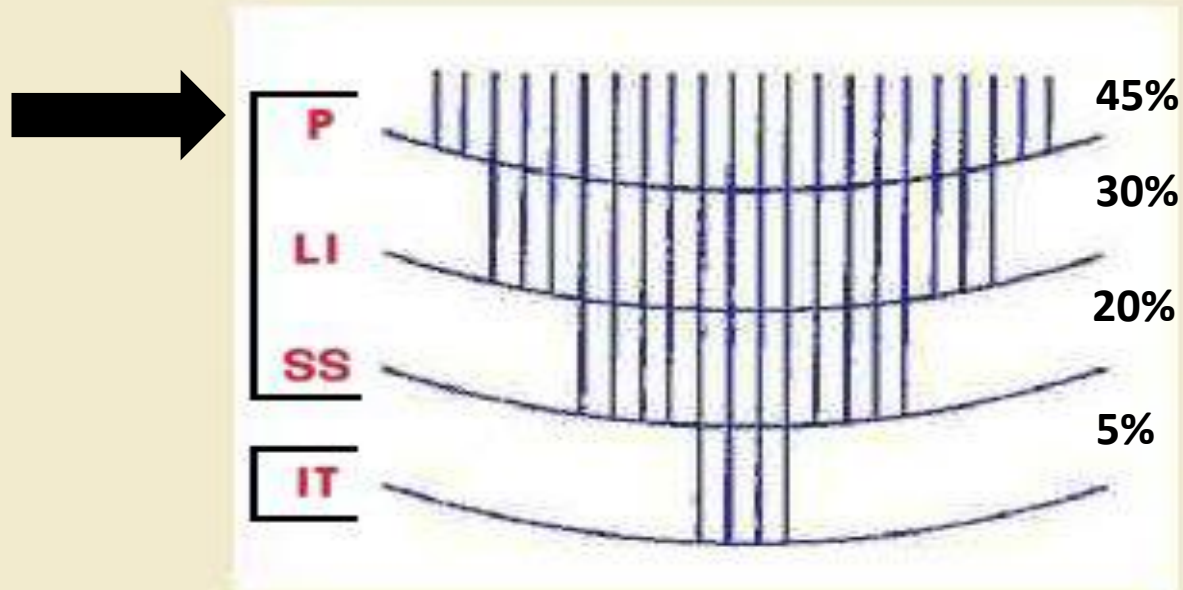
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Terri Couwenhoven
Sexuality Cons

The PLISSIT Model of Sex Therapy

(developed by Jack Annon)




P = Permission

LI = Limited Information

SS = Specific Suggestions

IT = Intensive Therapy

Permission statements

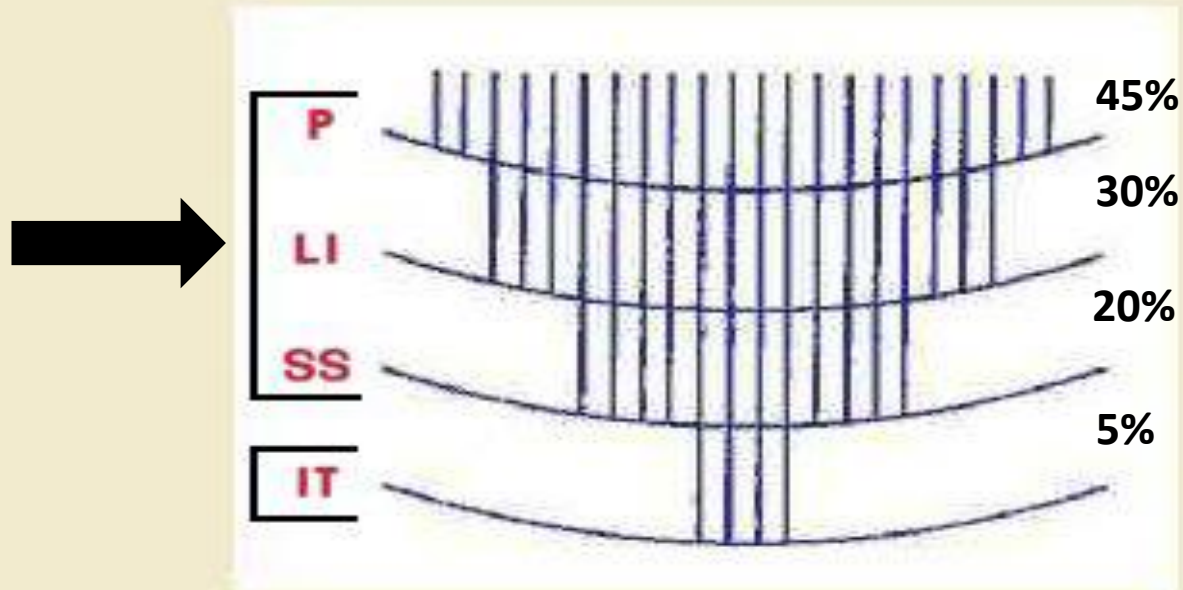
- It feels good to like someone doesn't it?
 - I remember when I felt that way too!
 - What it is about _____ that you like?
 - Is there someone who you might like to date?
 - What are some things you might want to do if you spent time with _____?
 - I'm glad you feel safe talking with me about this.
- 

Conversation stoppers..

- You need to be able to _____
- When you are old enough _____ (age?)
- We're not ready...
- You know what happened last time.

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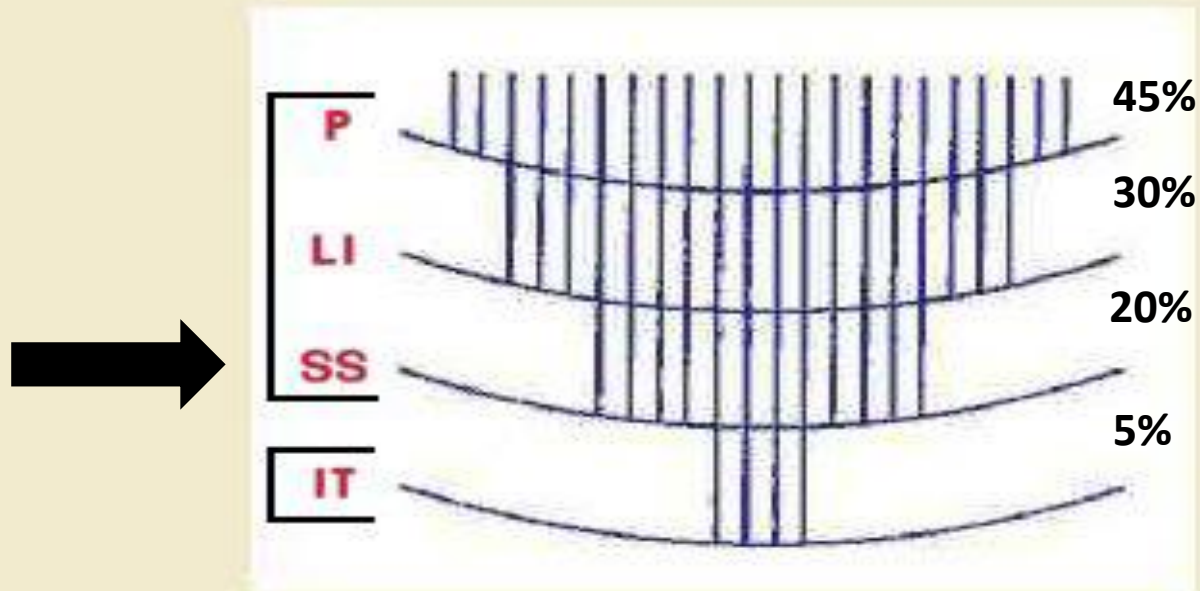
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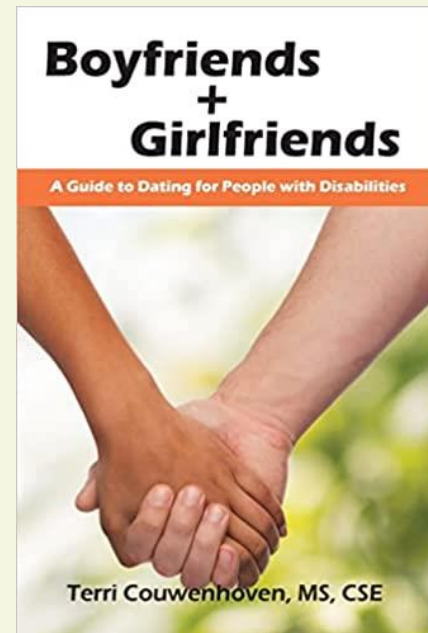
IT = Intensive Therapy

Specific Suggestion

- Direct attempts to help a person reach their goal (s) related to sexual issue or concern
 - Often requires history taking
 - What have you tried so far?
 - Sharing of “do’s” or “don’ts”
 - setting limits re: behaviors
 - advice, coaching
 - making referrals

Sharing Information About Dating

- Find someone who interests you
- See if *they* are interested in you
- Spend time getting to know each other
- Decide if you want to be a couple
- Do the work!
 - Evaluating the relationship
 - Handling conflict/problems



Step # 1- Find someone who interests you

- Finding someone is one of the toughest parts about dating

Unique Issues- Finding Someone

- Caregiver/Parent Barriers
- LGBTQ+
- Limited social networks
 - Seeing caregivers/Paid support as potential dating partner
 - Desire to exclusively date “normal” people
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F1Wl4r-Xik>

Are you, or the people you support, stuck?

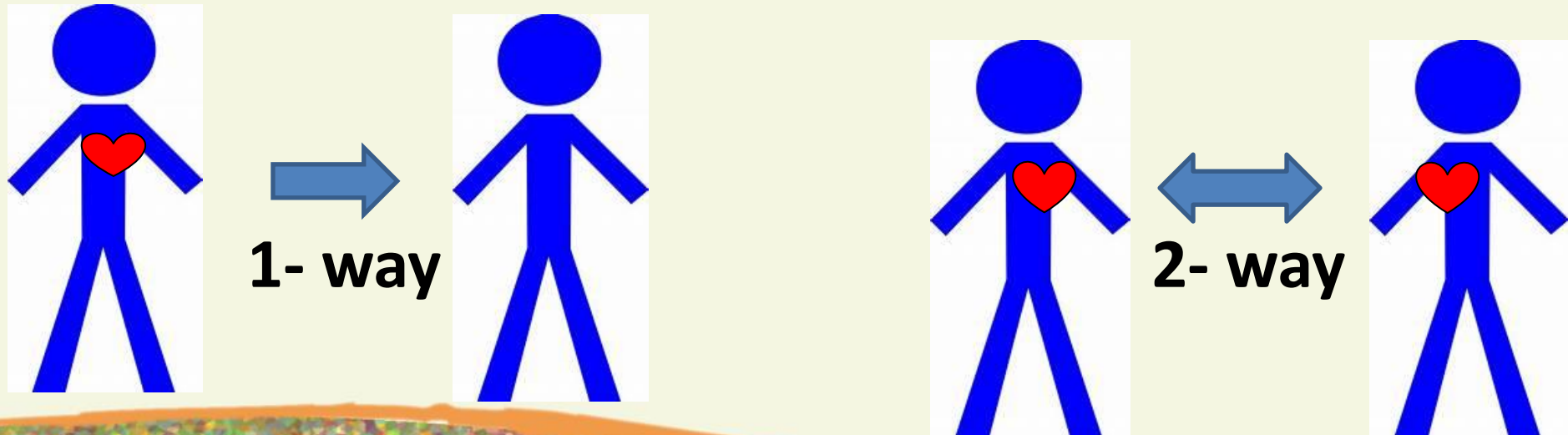
- Create an active social life in both worlds
- Online dating for people with I/DD
 - Making authentic friends app
 - www.specialbridge.com
 - www.specialmatch.com
- Identify new groups
- Encourage them to be open to all possibilities
- Ongoing assessment of skills- presenting your best self

Specific Suggestions?

Step #2 – Is the person you like interested in you?

After you :

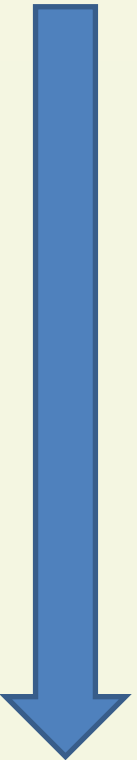
- 1) find someone who interests you
- 2) See if *they* are interested in you- (A dating relationship can't start unless BOTH are interested)



Step # 3- Spend time together

- Texting
- Zooming
- Face-to-face time
 - Chaperoning (for newbies or unfamiliar individuals)
 - Unchaperoned in public places
 - Unchaperoned in private places

Less



More

<https://www.real-talk.org/videos/>

Dating Skills- 101

- introduces self to others
- can start a conversation
- can send flirting signals
- reads and interprets responses to flirting
- can ask someone out on a date
- can plan a date
- recognizes and handles rejection

From: Bodies, Boundaries, and Sexuality by Terri Couwenhoven 2nd edition ©

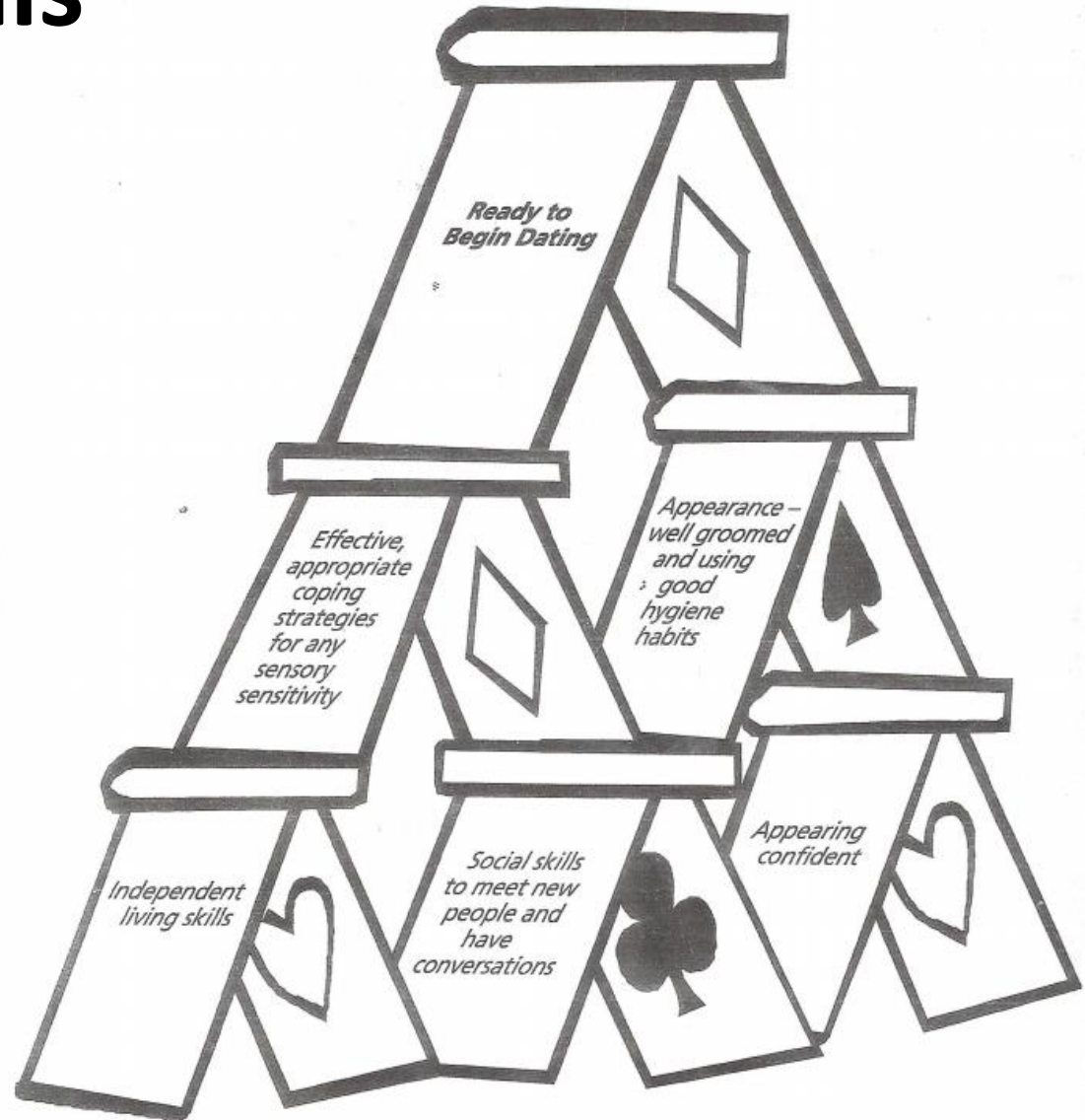
Assessing Skills

Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health

A Curriculum for Teaching Adolescents/Adults With High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Social Challenges

Catherine Davies, MEd, MSc, CPsychol, LMHC, & Melissa Dubie, MS

Foreword by Gary B. Mesibov, PhD



Unique Issues- Time Together

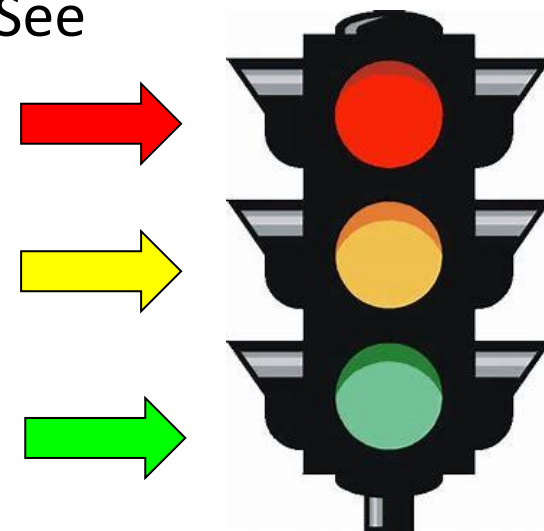
- Caregiver/Parent Barriers
- Usually requires support
 - Planning
 - Transportation
 - Chaperoning (for newbies)
 - Lack of privacy

Step # 4- Decide if you want to be a couple

- There is reciprocity of feelings
- Have spent some time together
- Assess how things are going. After getting to know a person better, you may feel differently..
 - Sometimes relationships don't work out (break up)
 - Sometimes couples become exclusive (decide together you will only date each other)
- You have a responsibility to be honest w/your partner about your feelings in the relationship.

Step # 5-Do the Work

- Dating relationships involve **WORK**
 - **BREAK UP** if not going well or unhealthy
 - **DO THE WORK** when there are problems. See if things get better.
 - **KEEP IT GOING** if things are going well



Resources

Sharing touch and affection

Types of touch and affection

- Hugging



- Holding hands



- Kissing



Rules for sharing touch and affection

- Know your boundaries.
 - What types of touch and affection are you comfortable sharing?
- Talk with your partner about their boundaries.
 - What types of touch and affection are they comfortable sharing?
- Respect each other's boundaries.
- Avoid public displays of affection (PDA)!
 - PDA is demonstrating a private behavior in a public space.

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“Adult Down Syndrome Center”- Facebook site

BREAKING UP



What is breaking up?

Ending your relationship with your boyfriend or girlfriend



People break up when...

- They do not want to spend time together anymore
- They no longer have romantic feelings

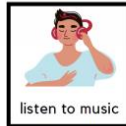


How to break up

- Meet up or call the person
- Say "I am breaking up with you because..."
- Tell them why



How to feel better



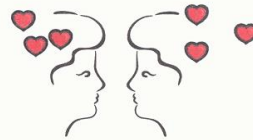
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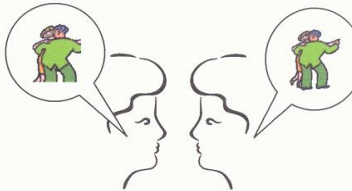
Some key ingredients of a healthy relationship..

EVALUATING DATING RELATIONSHIPS

1. Is there **MUTUAL INTEREST** ?



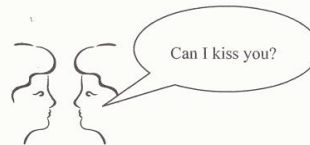
2. Do you have **THINGS IN COMMON** ?



3. Have you gotten to know each other slowly over **TIME**?



4. Are **BOUNDARIES** respected ?

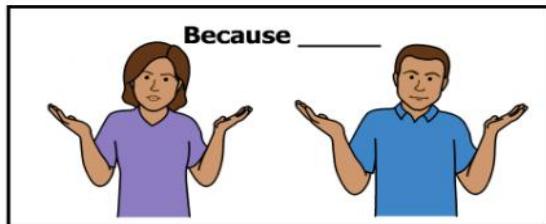
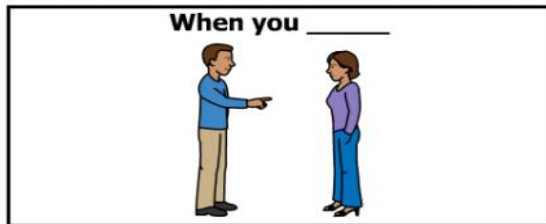
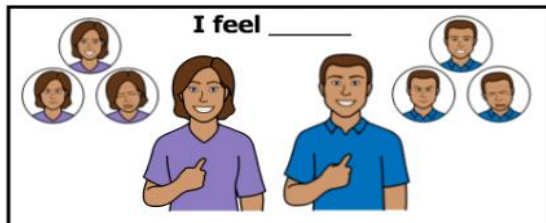


5. Is there **SHARED POWER** in the relationship ?

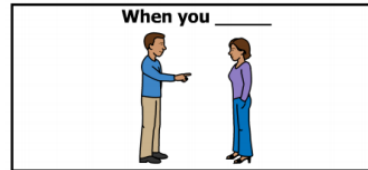


Yellow Light- solving problems

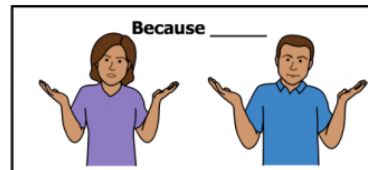
"I" Statements



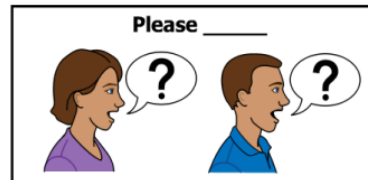
Tell the person how you feel.



Tell the person what they did to make you feel that way.



Tell the person why you feel that way.



Tell the person what you want them to do now.

I FEEL mad WHEN YOU call me nicknames BECAUSE I asked you not to. PLEASE do not call me nicknames.



Red Light = Break Up

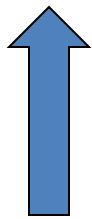
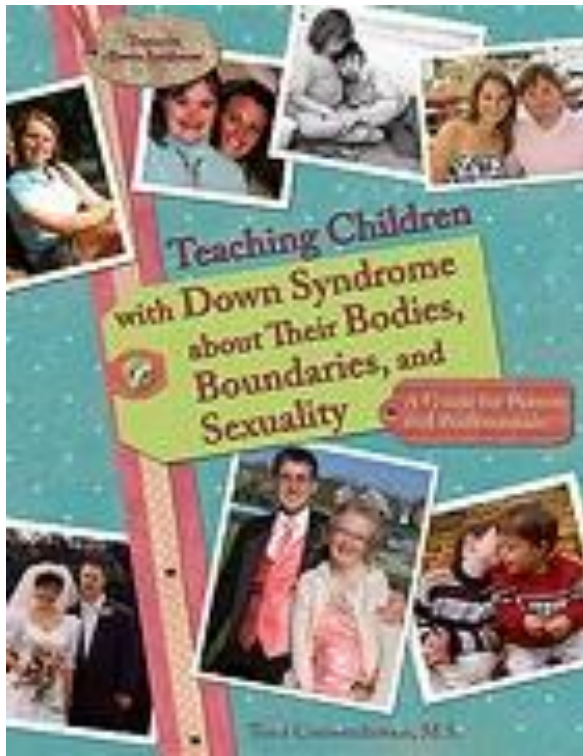
Good reasons to stop a relationship:

- your date puts you down
- your date makes all the choices (has all the power)
- your date hits you (then later says sorry)
- your date pushes you to do sexual things you don't want to do
- your date gets mad or jealous when you spend time with others
- your date asks you to keep secrets from family & friends
- your date makes you feel scared or afraid



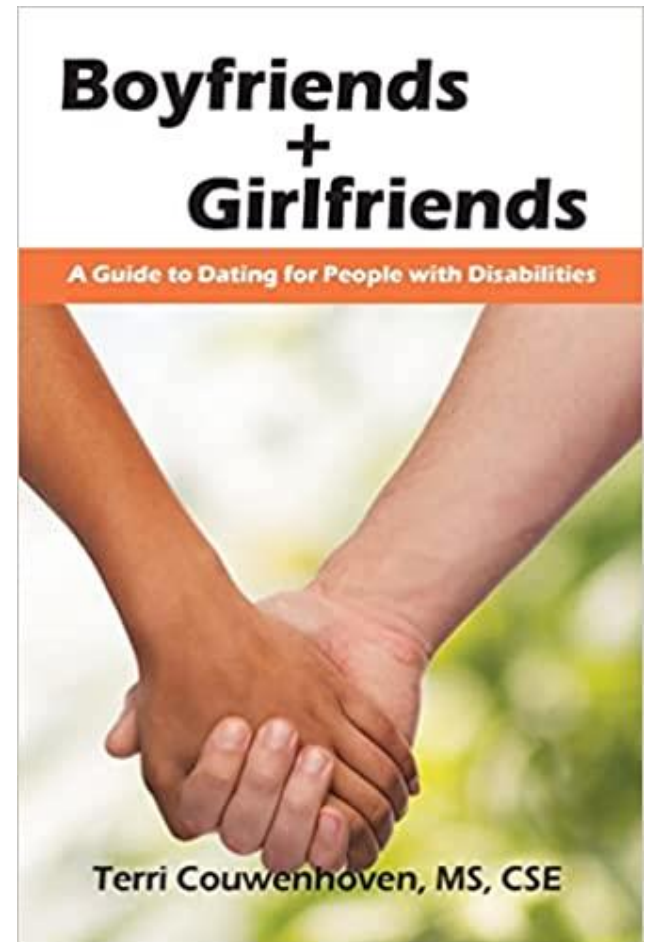
Sharing information about sexual expressio

FACT MESSAGES	BOUNDARIES/SOCIAL CONTEXT MESSAGES
Sharing touch & affection is one of the special things about dating..	What feels okay for you?
Sex- When 2 people really care about each other they may want to share their bodies in very private ways (become intimate)...	Sex for me is okay when....??
There are rights & responsibilities with sexual expression ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• consent (behavior is desired by both)<ul style="list-style-type: none">Equality of power (voluntariness)Equality of understanding (information)Similar developmental levels (competence)• protection from unwanted preg/STI's• privacy• pleasure- is it satisfying?



2nd edition 2024!

For people with I/DD



Summary

- Sexuality is a healthy and positive aspect of humanne
- Individuals with I/DD have same needs as others but:
 - Begin with less information
 - Usually need info and coaching *through* experiences
- Maturity happens with life experiences and expectati

***“The need for intimacy is far greater than
the need for sex”***

David Hingsburger