



OAASIS INFORMATION SHEET

Inappropriate (sexual) behaviour and the child with Asperger Syndrome and similar conditions

Children and young people with Asperger Syndrome and similar conditions are not always aware that their behaviour is inappropriate. This can become a distressing issue for parents when their son or daughter begins to exhibit what parents often see as 'disturbing tendencies', or overtly sexual behaviour.

What *you* see as promiscuous, forward, sexual behaviour, your son or daughter may be copying because they have seen others do the same, and they think it is 'good-friend' behaviour.

Ask your child: What do you want to happen if you do that? Did you see someone else do it? These questions may give you a clue as to what your child was really trying to achieve by his behaviour.

It is wise to stop any and all inappropriate behaviour whenever it occurs. In a calm, steady voice tell your child that whatever he did was inappropriate – "now you are 12 you are too grown up to do that" or something similar. It is essential to suggest what they can do instead, for example the shoulder-to-shoulder hug instead of the bear-hug, the count-to-three kiss on the cheek.

Keep in mind what you want your child to do when he is 20 - and start training NOW.

- Tell your child whenever he does something inappropriate each time it occurs
- Show him what is inappropriate about it: "I did not like you doing that to ... This is what was inappropriate" or "I did not feel comfortable when you ..." and physically demonstrate what was wrong - the arm- or breast-stroking, the too tight a cuddle, etc
- Explain that when people grow up and become adult, there are certain rules we have to keep to make life easier and safer for everyone, including him. Here are some:
 - when dressing and undressing we should do it in the privacy of our bedroom, bathroom or changing room with the door closed, and we don't come out until we have finished changing clothes
 - when we kiss someone hello or goodbye we do so on the cheek, with mouth closed
 - when we kiss someone hello or goodbye we do it for a count of three
 - boys who are grown up should shake hands with an adult person who is not a close member of his family - not kiss or hug
 - when listening to or talking with people, we sit next to them, not on their laps
 - when talking with or listening to a younger child, they sit next to us, not on our laps
 - if we want to give a young child a hug, we give a 'shoulder-to-shoulder' hug, not full-body bear-hug
 - now we are grown up, we sleep in our own bedroom, in our own bed, by ourselves
 - some subjects are very private, and are only for talking about in the right place, at the right time and with the right person. For example at school in PSE lessons when the teacher asks you.
- Teach your child 'stranger-danger' - if someone they do not know does or tries to do something to them which they do not like or they feel uncomfortable with, tell them
 - to say **NO**, loudly and firmly
 - to have a serious expression on their face
 - to put out their hand to keep the person away
 - to run away if the person persists
 - they must tell someone they trust - their mother, father, teacher - if something they did not like has happened or they had to stop it happening.
- If an adult who is not a close family member wants to hug/cuddle/kiss, tell your child that this is not appropriate, except in some circumstances: such as a teacher offering praise or congratulations (passing exam, or other important test), or team-mates (scoring a goal, winning match, etc)
- Even a very young child should be aware of what is and is not acceptable. He too can learn to greet adults with a hand-shake, to walk holding hands or with arms linked rather than clinging to a parent/friend of the opposite sex. He must learn 'stranger-danger' signs and how to say **NO** loudly.

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Remember: whatever you say or do must be consistent - do not give mixed or confusing messages.

Remember: always praise appropriate behaviour every time it happens as children / young adults with Asperger Syndrome will not remember from one time to the next what they should do unless reminded constantly during their learning period. If you have Aspergers you do not always know what you know.

Remember: good teaching in appropriate social skills from a very early age will pay dividends later.

Some Community Health Nurses have expertise in supporting parents and children on sexual matters - they can be contacted via the family GP.

Remember:

Information needs to be -

- Simple
- Factual
- Direct
- Use role-play, video and other appropriate resources.

Teach in -

- Small groups
- Individually focussed
- Staff should be trained
- Each session should be thoroughly planned.

Books and Videos:

The **Family Planning Association** has these books specifically for children with learning disabilities: *Talking Together..... About Growing Up. A workbook for parents of children with learning disabilities* £12.99 and *Talking together about sex and relationships: A practical resource for schools and parents working with young people with learning disabilities* £14.99 (p&p free). Further information on the books from **The Family Planning Association** on 0845 1228 600 or online at Web: www.fpa.org.uk.

Specifically for young people with AS/special needs are the **Life Support Productions** DVD's *Kylie's Private World (for females)* £45.83, *Jason's Private World (for males)* £45.83 and *You, Your Body and Sex* £70.00 (a subtitled DVD featuring content from all three videos). They are used at appropriate Cambian schools. You may get a discount for bulk orders. They can be ordered at Tel: 020 7723 7520 or online at Website: www.lifesupportproductions.co.uk.

Sense - Sex and Relationships CD-ROM is an interactive CD Rom produced by Sense Educational CDs and the National Children's Bureau with advice and support from young people, parents/carers, teachers and health professionals. Has a Teachers' Support Manual and is suitable for ages 12-16 but can be used by parents too, priced £21.99 for home use and £75.00 for school use. Used successfully in one of our Asperger schools. Available from www.sensecds.com or tel: 01375 484546.

Growing Up, Sex and Relationships booklets by Contact a Family are comprehensive booklets written in a clear, concise manner and are relevant for young people with learning difficulties. There are three different booklets for parents, teachers and young people themselves. The booklets are available from their helpline 0808 808 3555 or website www.cafamily.org.uk.

Growing and Learning is a set of three books and picture cards written by Jane Keeling a nurse, mum of an autistic child and a sexual health educator, to support parents and carers. The three packs cover subjects from puberty to periods and masturbation/wet dreams and are designed to be accessible to even youngsters with profound communication difficulties. www.growingandlearning.co.uk.

The National Autistic Society website has a downloadable section entitled 'Sex education and children and young people with an ASD' which explains in matter of fact terms what topics to consider and how you should discuss them. Web: www.autism.org.uk.

The NSPCC has produced a handy little booklet for children / teenagers entitled *Worried? Need to talk?* covering fear of violence, arguments, abuse, bullying, alcohol, drugs, sex and sexuality, racism and other topics. Available for a small charge from 0207 825 2775 or Email: info@nspcc.org.uk. There is also a linked website www.worriedneed2talk.org.uk.

Me-and-Us Ltd produce *Sex and Relationships Education for People with Learning Disabilities* which is a pack with resources and training to support educators with sex education programmes. Available from www.me-and-us.co.uk or tel: 01539 622310.

Cambian Education Services run seven residential special schools and colleges for young people with autistic spectrum disorders, Asperger Syndrome/HFA, severe learning difficulties. OAASIS can give you advice on the schools and send you their prospectuses or visit the website www.cambianeducation.com. They also have information on suitable post 16 establishments. OAASIS produces a wide range of **free Information Sheets**, **8 publications** entitled 'First Guide to...' and **wallet sized cards** explaining 9 learning disabilities. Please contact OAASIS (see front of sheet for contact details) for the full list, or view and download them on the website at www.oaasis.co.uk. All sheets are checked annually, please ensure you have the current version.

Note: The OAASIS Information Sheets use 'he' 'his' 'him' rather than the cumbersome 'he / she' 'his / her' 'him / her'. No sexism is intended. The sheets are checked annually; please ensure you have the correct version.