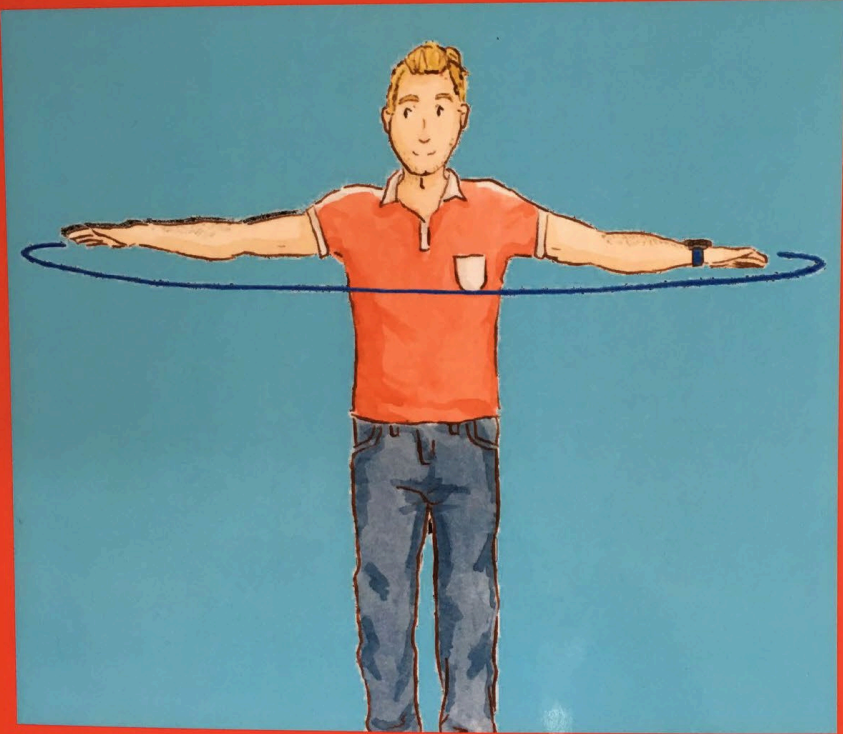


What is...

Personal Space?

*A book for young people with autism, developmental
and intellectual disabilities*



Kate E Reynolds

Illustrated by Lucy Pulleyblank

ENGAGING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN AROUND RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH
TELL US?

KATE REYNOLDS

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the reasons why parents might delay broaching relationships and sex education (RSE)
- To examine the potential consequences of reactive RSE
- To explore ways to engage and support parents

THE BACKDROP

- Raising expectations – from diagnosis onwards
- Judgment of professionals – PIP, managing home
- Rethinking rites of passage
- The two Gs – Grief and Guilt (Reynolds: 2013)
- Relationships with the father, family and friends
- Parents' overriding concern is what will happen when they're gone
- Parents' attitudes directly impact on access to relationships and social experiences (Johnson et al 2002, Brown & Pirtle 2008)

ATTITUDES AND ASSUMPTIONS

- Their children aren't & won't be capable of understanding or making decisions about their own sexuality (Hollomotz 2011; Dupras & Dionne 2014)
- Discomfort and lack of resources/support (Rushbrooke et al 2013; Garbutt 2008; CHANGE 2010)
- RSE as the sexual act/STIs
- Mental Age (McCarthy 1999)
- Delayed developmental milestones (Ballan 2012)
- RSE limited by perceived level of intellect (Thompson et al 2014; Tarnai 2006 Stokes & Kaur 2005)

ATTITUDES AND ASSUMPTIONS

That children with learning disabilities won't become sexual or are asexual
(McClelland et al 2012)

“the lifelong, non-distressing absence of sexual attraction to people of any sex or gender” (Lund & Johnson 2015 p 123).

That RSE will encourage sexual behaviours that otherwise wouldn't happen – hypersexuality, ‘inappropriate’ sexual behaviours (Tissot 2009; Rohleder 2010; Noonan & Gomez 2011)

ATTITUDES AND ASSUMPTIONS

- That children with learning disabilities have no need for privacy
- Learned compliance
- 'Ethos of Protection' and risk (Lafferty et al 2012 p30; Tissot 2009; Garbutt 2008; Gougeon 2010)
- Controlling 'acceptable' behaviours (Evans et al 2009; Dupras & Dionne 2014)

ATTITUDES AND ASSUMPTIONS

That children will learn like neurotypical (NT) or typically developing children

- Friendships – children with autism/learning disabilities often don't have friendship groups
- Children with autism/learning disabilities are much less likely to initiate questions about RSE
- The internet – with possible misinformation

ATTITUDES AND ASSUMPTIONS

- Single mothers and sons
- Low expectations of relationships
- Unfairly raising expectations of life
- Their children cannot or should not become parents (Ballan 2012; Lafferty et al 2013; Tarleton 2015)
- The law won't apply to their children with learning disabilities
- Other priorities – other children, tribunal, behaviours, work, money

LGBTQ+ (MARGINALISED MINORITY SEXUAL/GENDER IDENTITIES)

- Difficulty entertaining that their child might be LGBTQ+ that parents refuse to discuss LGBTQ+ issues (Lofgren-Martenson 2009)
- Refuse to answer questions about LGBTQ+ (Stoffelen et al 2013)

CONSEQUENCES

- Unwanted sexual behaviours become established (Schaafsma et al 2014; Ballan 2012; McConkey & Ryan 2001)
- ATUs, restricted community access, sex offenders register
- Friendships teach lessons for intimate relationships (Hollomotz 2011)
- Confusion due to fluctuating responses from parents/support workers (Evans et al 2009; McConkkey & Ryan 2001)
- Misinformation or prejudices information (Bernert & Ogletree 2013)

CONSEQUENCES

- Sexual abuse/ sexually abusive relationships (Hollomotz 2011; McCarthy 2014)
- Unsafe sexual experiences if LGBTQ+ due to hiding sexual orientation/gender identity (McClelland et al 2012; Stoffelen et al 2013; Abbott 2013; Abbott 2015)
- Late presentation in pregnancy (Burgen 2010)

WHAT ARE THE BASIC STRUCTURES AND ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUPPORT RSE AT HOME/RESPITE/SUPPORTED LIVING?

- Knocking
- Shutting doors
- Saying ;no'
- Hearing 'no'
- Greetings/personal space
- Naming body parts
- Public/private
- Ok and 'not ok' touch

HOW TO ENGAGE PARENTS

- New RSE legislation & CQC response
- Holistic RSE, avoid sole focus on sexual behaviours
- EHCPs and care & support plans
- Key staff for advice or referral
- Engage at regular school events eg teachers evenings
- Create new forms of communication eg surgeries with key individual staff

ENGAGING PARENTS

- Use existing parents groups and forums to disperse information and get feedback
- Opportunities to handle resources and possibly borrow them
- Schools/colleges and supported living to reflect RSE principle eg privacy in toilets, no homophobic language
- Support friendships and relationships
- Meet parents if a sexuality issues arises
- Low level response
- Evaluation

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Relationships?

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