

Being Safe Online:



How to Deal with
Online
Friendships,
Dating and Other
Interactions on
Social Media


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objectives

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- In this session, presenters will discuss how to use social media platforms when considering online friendships and dating.
 - Attendees will recognize how using social media impacts people with autism and other developmental disabilities and develop strategies and resources for safe and effective use of social media.

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1. Overview of social media
 2. Social media and online dating
 3. Safety tips and guidelines for social media and online dating



- Definition of social media:
- forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)





- Other forms of 'social media:'
 - Video games
 - Mobile games
 - YouTube
 - FaceTime
 - Various messaging apps



- What is not considered social media?
 - Assistive devices
 - Watching TV or movies
 - Learning or communication apps
 - Video games that are played offline



- Types of social media use:
- Active
 - Regularly share life experiences, create and share content, engage with others
- Passive
 - Observe only, rarely create or engage
- Passive is most common, and has been associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression ⁽¹⁾

- ‘Autism invites us to rethink our assumptions about communication in the digital age, accounting for both the pains and possibilities it entails.’⁽²⁾

- Adolescents with ASD use a variety of media
- In one study, 98% of adolescents with ASD used a computer for an average of 5 hours per day
- Of that group, those who visited social networking websites or received emails from friends reported more positive friendships (3)

- Adults with ASD also use a variety of media
- In a study, 84 percent of adults with ASD used social media
- Those who used Facebook were happier than those who did not, but the same relationship did not exist for users of Twitter
- ‘Social media use by adults with ASD, specifically Facebook use in moderation, may enhance well-being...in this population’ (4)

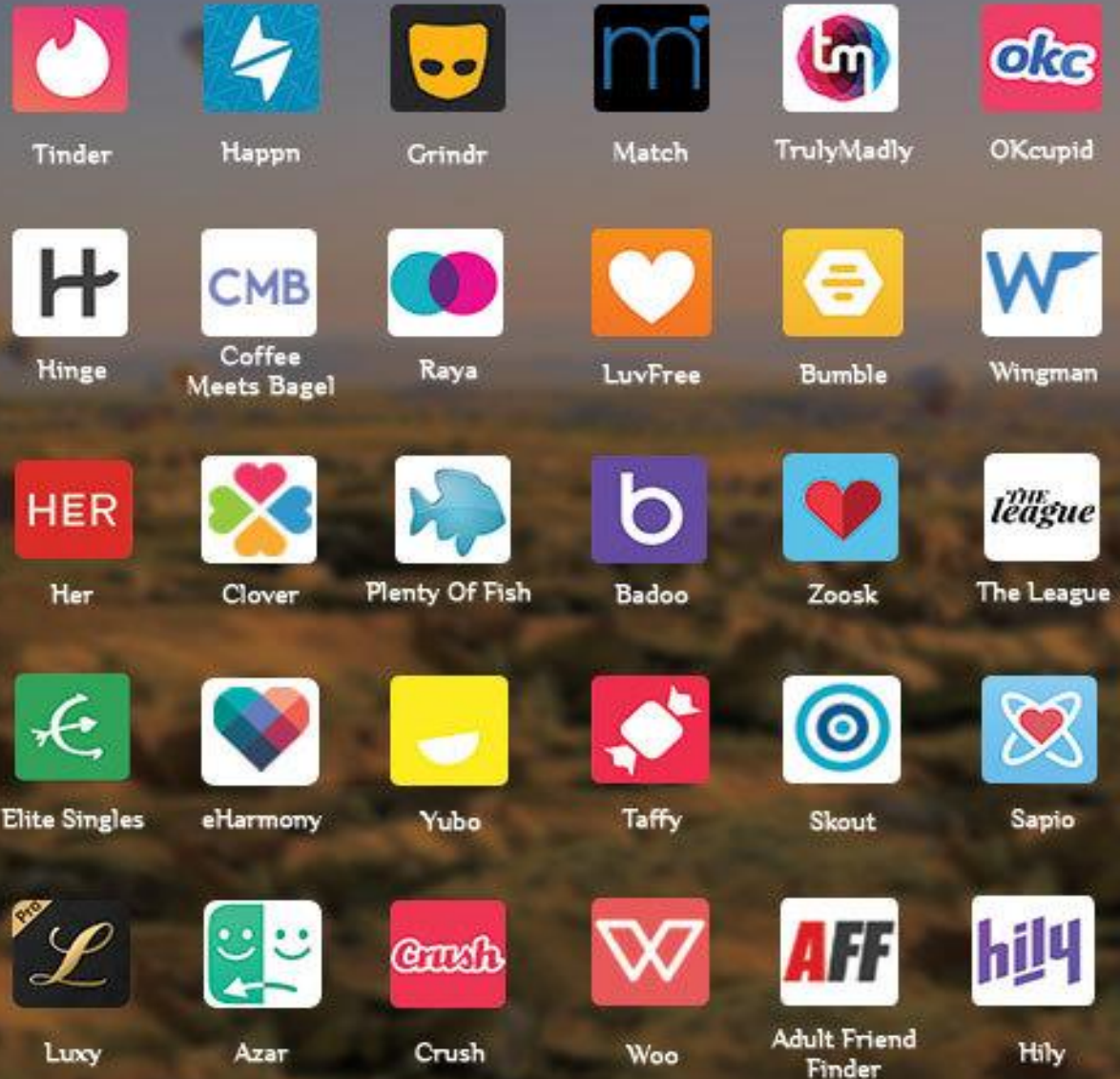
- Social media is also widely used by parents and caregivers of people with ASD
- Mothers of children with ASD reported that seeking online social support is an ongoing part of life
- They also emphasized a need to be connected and to be understood (5)

- Social media interactions are free of the burdens of face-to-face encounters ⁽²⁾
- Opportunities for feeling connected with others
- More limited and distinct emotional reactions
 - [Emoji's](#), [Facebook reactions](#)
- Posts can be reviewed and edited before sharing

- You can observe the logical progression of a conversation
- You can watch (passive social media use) to learn about the expectations of a group
- Lots of options for shared interests and experiences
- Professionals can gain insight into the concerns and experiences of people with ASD

online dating

Thirty 'Best' Dating Apps of 2020

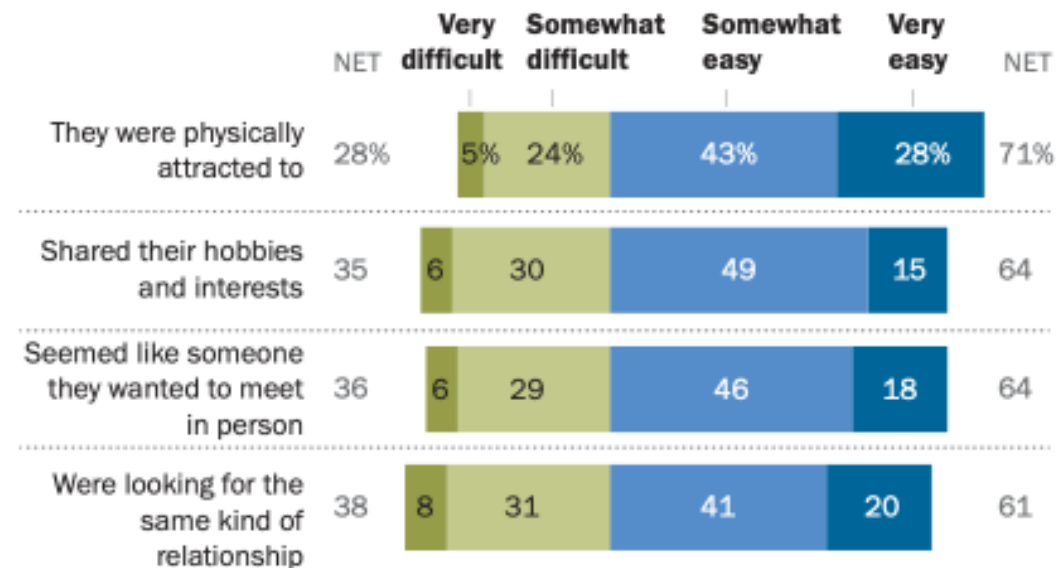


online dating

[2019 Pew Research Center study of online dating](#)

A majority of online daters say it was at least somewhat easy to find people on dating sites or apps they found attractive, shared common interests with

% of online dating users who say it was ___ to find people on dating sites or apps who ...



Note: Online dating users refers to respondents who say they have ever used an online dating site or app. Figures may not add up to subtotals due to rounding. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

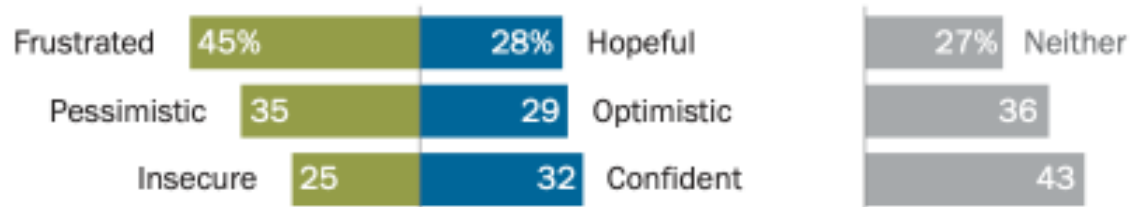
"The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating"

online dating

[2019 Pew Research Center study of online dating](#)

45% of current or recent users of dating sites or apps say using these platforms made them feel frustrated

Among those who have used a dating site or app in the past year, % who say it made them feel more ...



Note: Online dating users refers to respondents who say they have ever used an online dating site or app. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

"The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating"

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- “Convenience with the Click of a Mouse”: A Survey of Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder on Online Dating ⁽⁶⁾
- A survey of 17 individuals with ASD was done to learn about how adults with ASD utilize online dating
- 9 of the 17 people used online dating services in the past with variable success



- Benefits of online dating
- [online dating gives] “a more complete picture of who you are than you could if you met someone for the first time in person,”
- “reading about the other person to judge if I want to talk to them is easier than approaching people and trying to judge their body language or know what questions to ask”
- “social anxiety and sensory sensitivities are huge barriers to meeting people in person (p. 138)”



- Drawbacks of online dating
- “I never needed to date online, but if I did...I would worry about safety and being taken advantage of”
- “people presenting false images is troublesome especially for Aspies as [we] tend to be a bit naive and trusting”
- “hard on self-esteem...especially when text and phone contact go well and then they meet me and never call me back (p. 139)”

- The attractiveness, trustworthiness and desirability of autistic males' online dating profiles (7)
- Two studies of the online dating profiles of men with ASD led to the development of 3 key tips:
- Be consistent in your online profile (attributes and interests)
- Be explicit about your autism
- Frame your personality attributes and interests using positive wording



Friendship & Love in Autism

Hiki — meaning “able” in Hawaiian — is a friendship and dating social app specifically for the Autistic community. It is a space where being atypical is celebrated. A place where different is de-stigmatized and people can embrace their uniqueness and their shared experiences all at the same time. Every part of Hiki, from ideation to design to launch, has been built with the actually Autistic community to make sure that it is representative of our needs.



<https://www.hikiapp.com/>

- Cyber-Victimization of People With Chronic Conditions and Disabilities: A Systematic Review of Scope and Impact (8)
- Research review of the experiences of cyber-victimization of people with chronic conditions or disabilities
- 10 studies including 3,070 people
- The prevalence range of cyber-victimization was 2%-41.7%

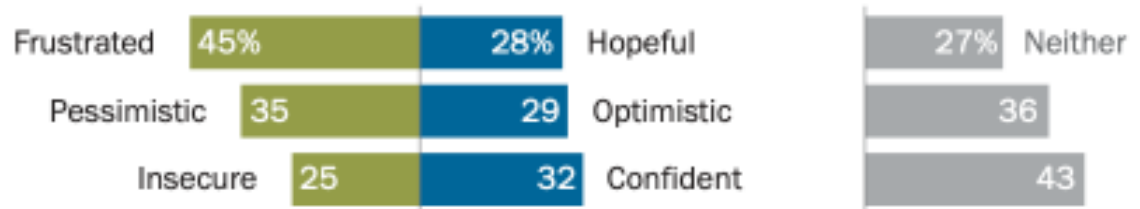
- Targeted conditions included physical impairments, intellectual disabilities and specific chronic diseases
- Impacts of cyber-victimization were psychological (depression, anxiety, distress) and physical (somatic health complaints, self-harm)
- Study concluded that people with chronic conditions and disabilities were at higher risk of victimization with devastating health complications



[2019 Pew Research Center study of online dating](#)

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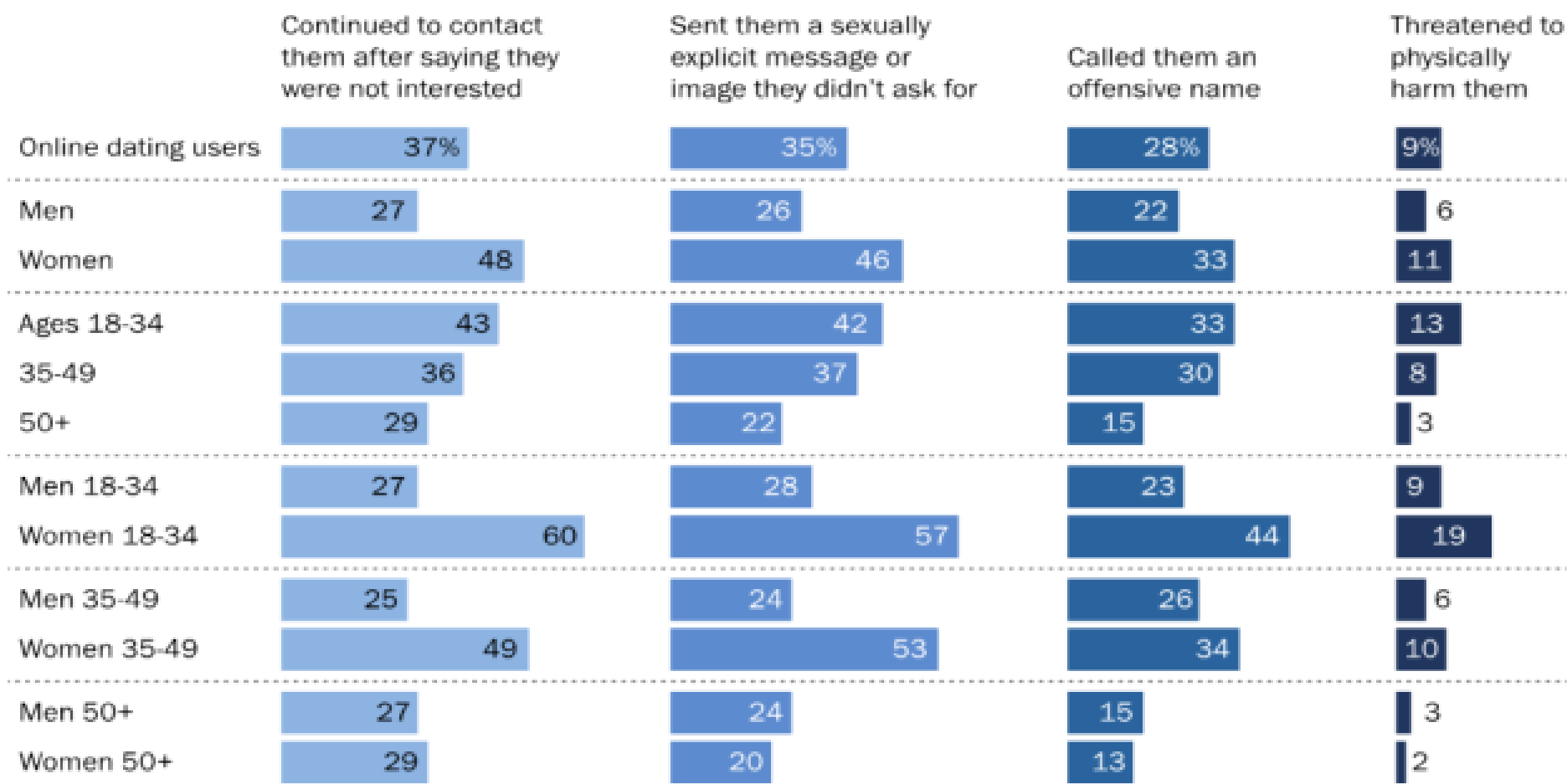
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

"The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating"

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Younger women who have used dating sites or apps are especially likely to report having negative interactions with others on these platforms

% of online dating users in each group who say someone ___ on a dating site or app



Note: Online dating users refers to respondents who say they have ever used an online dating site or app. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

"The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating"

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A Helpful Online Safety Guide for People With Autism Spectrum Disorders

People from all walks of life and all kinds of backgrounds fall victim to online bullying and cybercrime, but studies have shown that those with an **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** are **more susceptible to online threats** than others.

ASD is a developmental disorder that affects behavior and communication. People on the Autism Spectrum tend to live a relatively normal life but can need supervision and lack judgement – a trait that has been identified as dangerous when left to their own devices in cyberspace.

Not only are ASD children and adults at risk from others, but they can also develop compulsive online habits and internet addictions, and can be more deeply affected by exposure to inappropriate content.

Everyone should feel safe online. It's therefore extremely important to make sure you have adequate online security and remain internet vigilant.

3 Benefits of Wearing Blue Light Glasses

November 30, 2020

By: Jana Randall

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Different Types of Cyberbullying

 <p>Spreading gossip</p>	 <p>Humiliating posts</p>	 <p>Online threats</p>
 <p>Sharing your pictures and videos without permission</p>	 <p>Online stalking</p>	 <p>Hacking your social media account</p>

What to Do if You're Being Cyber Bullied

 <p>Secure your social media accounts</p>	 <p>Don't post personal information online</p>
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If someone sends you abusive messages, don't take the bait, report them

 <p>Block the bully</p>	 <p>Talk about it</p>
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12 Ways to Improve Social Media & Online Communication

1. Never add your boss, teacher, or supervisor on social media
2. Never comment about your work online
3. Refrain from posting content that might skew other people's opinions of you
4. Always meet a new online friend during the day and in a public place
5. Keep your passwords safe and don't hack into other people's accounts or websites
6. Don't believe everything that you read online – particularly on social media



12 Ways to Improve Social Media & Online Communication

7. Don't compare your life with someone else's on social media
8. Always be polite in your online discourse and avoid arguments
9. Remember that most internet users regard typing in capitals as the digital equivalent of yelling
10. You can use emojis or emoticons to better express the context and meaning of your words
11. If someone is making you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, leave the situation and block them
12. Never send explicit photographs of yourself or forward on pictures of anyone else

If there is a perceived problem, some advice for families include:

- 1 hour of physical activity each day and 8-12 hours of sleep each night
- No devices in bedrooms (TVs, computers, smartphones)
- No screen time 1 hour before bed
- Discourage entertainment media while doing homework
- Designate media-free times
- Designate media-free locations (example bedrooms)
- Communicate guidelines to other caregivers
- Engage in selecting and co-viewing media with your child
- Communicate regularly about online citizenship and safety (never post private information), never take pictures of yourself and post them
- No bullying (teach them to recognize when it is happening)
- Respect privacy of others
- Develop a network of trusted adults



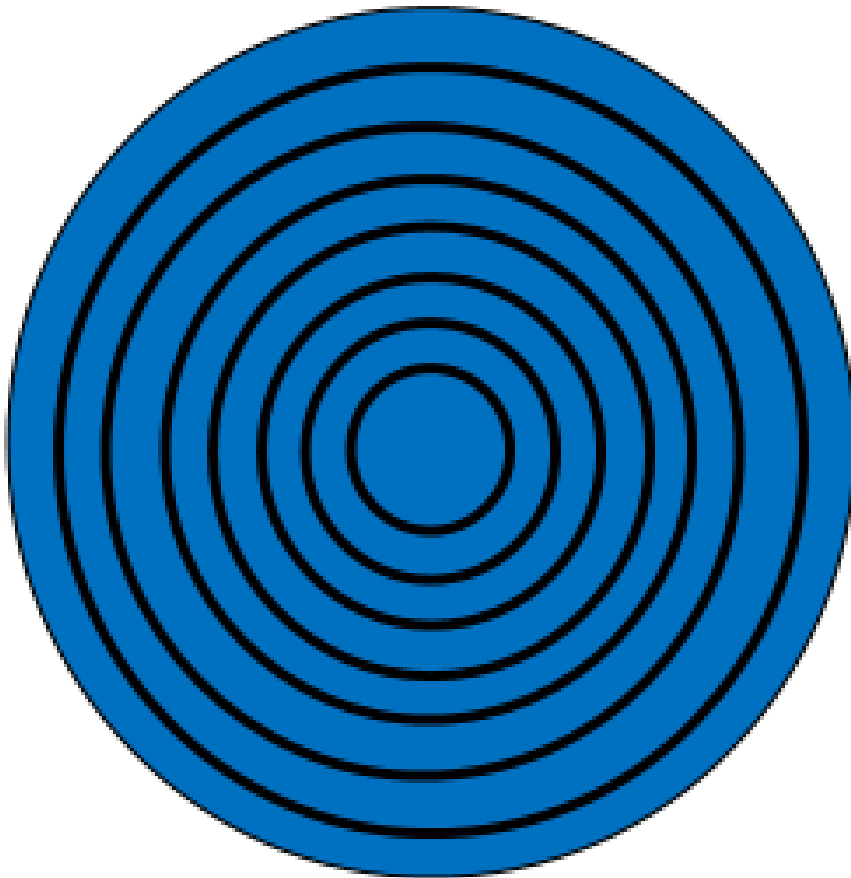
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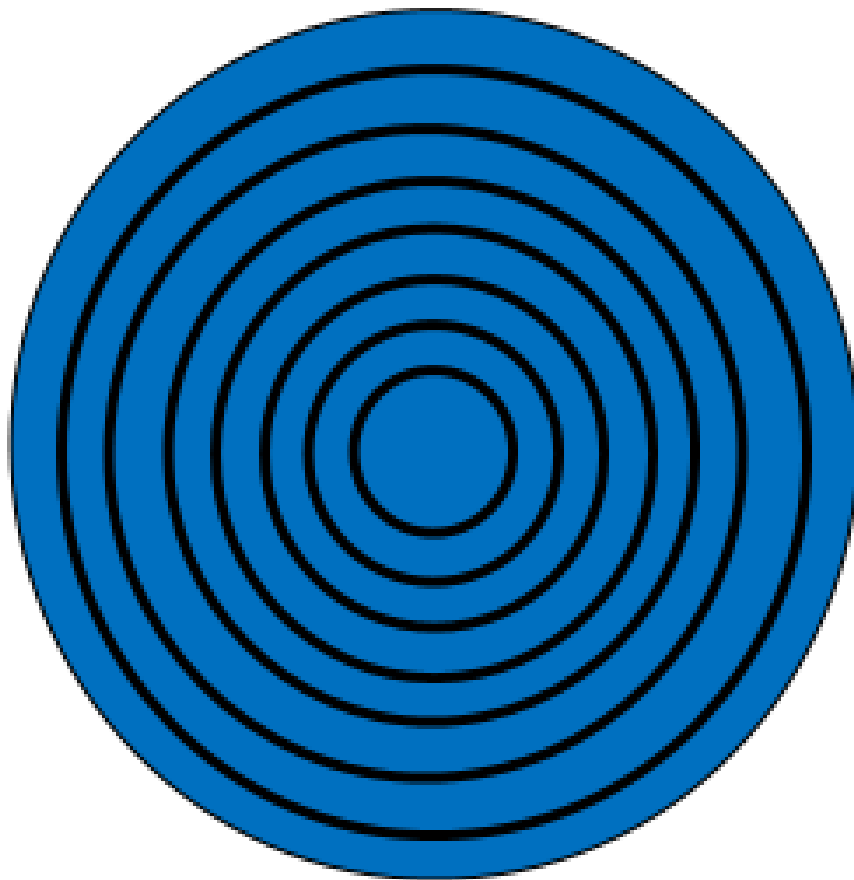
Develop and institute a media use plan:

- Screen free zones
- Screen free times
- Device Curfews and changing locations
- Choose what videos, games, apps, etc are OK
- Identifies what can be gained by decreasing screen time
- More time for exercise and reading
- Media manners, e.g., it is not polite to use a device when talking with someone
- Digital citizenship
- Safety rules
- Attend law enforcement presentations about internet safety (youth may pay more attention or give more weight to information provided by law enforcement)



- Public vs. Private
 - People
 - Behavior
 - Information
 - Social media posts
 - Data





- Non-political / religious / offensive memes
- Anything involving home address/location
- Criticism or concern about specific person
- Puppy missing!



Consent

Defined as a 'mutual and willing agreement about any kind of sexual exchange.'

Sheehan (9) lists eight factors which must be understood in order for an individual with a DD to be able to give consent:

- Sexuality is experienced with another person in a private place
- Sexual contact with animals, children, individuals from the same family, or to obtain money, is inappropriate
- Sexual relations can lead to pregnancy, which implies emotional and economic commitment on the part of the parents
- Methods of contraception, when used appropriately, decrease the risk of pregnancy
- Methods of contraception are available from pharmacies and specialized clinics
- Unprotected sexual behaviors increase the risk of contracting a STD
- People believe that sexuality should take place in a respectful and loving context
- It is always possible to refuse to engage in sexual contact; it is a personal choice



Consent

The legal definition of sexual consent across states generally involves three elements, with some exceptions by state:

1. Does the individual have the requisite knowledge needed to make the decision (appropriate time/place/person, lawfulness of the activity)?
2. Can the person demonstrate that their participation was fully voluntary... did they participate without coercion or undue influence?
3. Does the person demonstrate a 'reasoned understanding' and weigh the risks and benefits of the sexual engagement?
4. (Only in some states): Does the person appreciate the moral quality of their sexual activity?



Consent

- Each state has statutory language to discriminate between consensual and non-consensual sexual contact
- Most identify age, consciousness, and ability to understand the nature and consequences of the act
- Some states also require an understanding of the moral and social consequences related to engaging sexually with another adult
- In addition, there is language regarding threat (perceived and real), use of a weapon and force
- As there is not uniformity of criteria among the states, there is no nationally accepted assessment instrument to measure consent to sex

Dignity of Risk





Dignity of Risk

Overprotection may appear on the surface to be kind, but it can be really evil. An oversupply can smother people emotionally, squeeze the life out of their hopes and expectations, and strip them of their dignity. Overprotection can keep people from becoming all they could become. **Many of our best achievements came the hard way: We took risks, fell flat, suffered, picked ourselves up, and tried again. Sometimes we made it and sometimes we did not. Even so, we were given the chance to try. Persons with special needs need these chances, too.** Of course, we are talking about prudent risks. People should not be expected to blindly face challenges that, without a doubt, will explode in their faces. Knowing which chances are prudent and which are not – this is a new skill that needs to be acquired. On the other hand, a risk is really only when it is not known beforehand whether a person can succeed. The real world is not always safe, secure, and predictable, it does not always say “please,” “excuse me”, or “I’m sorry”. Every day we face the possibility of being thrown into situations where we will have to risk everything... In the past, we found clever ways to build avoidance of risk into the lives of persons living with disabilities. Now we must work equally hard to help find the proper amount of risk these people have the right to take. We have learned that there can be healthy development in risk taking and there can be crippling indignity in safety!

safety

Pornography and Autism

corticalchauvinism.com/2018/01/08/pornography-and-autism/

CORTICAL CHAUVINISM

A site discussing autism related issues



Parents should anticipate exposure, it is inevitable within our society. They should talk about it (not just one conversation but an ongoing dialogue):

- Curiosity is normal
- Seeing and even looking at it doesn't make you a bad person
- Once you see it, you can't unsee it
- When you saw it, how did it make you feel? Be prepared to listen
- Trying to hide it from me doesn't do you any good
- What can you say to remove yourself from watching it with friends
- It is not a "how to" lesson
- It can affect how you feel about your body
- Porn desensitizes you when it comes to violence
- It can become addictive and affect your own sexual function

resources

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/my-life-aspergers/201308/autism-and-porn-problem-no-one-talks-about>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5789215/>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://www.covenanteyes.com/2020/05/18/10-amazing-resources-for-talking-to-kids-about-porn/>
- <https://corticalchauvinism.com/2018/01/08/pornography-and-autism/>
- <https://www.aane.org/principles-for-prosecutors/>
- <https://autismspectrumnews.org/when-behaviors-result-in-real-trouble-legal-challenges-in-individuals-with-asd/>
- <https://www.aane.org/principles-for-prosecutors/>

Using Social Media on the Autism Spectrum

- <https://psychcentral.com/lib/using-social-media-on-the-autism-spectrum/>
 - Short article with tips on how to understand and correct mistakes when using social media



Using Facebook reactions correctly

- <https://www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-facebook-reactions-3894307>
 - Article that explains the different reaction options in Facebook. Website also has a Social Media Tips & Strategies for the most popular social media sites.



Autism Wiki

- https://autism.wikia.org/wiki/Social_networks
 - Links to a wide variety of social networks and resources for ASD



Wrong Planet

- <https://wrongplanet.net/>
 - Wrong Planet is the web community designed for individuals (and parents / professionals of those) with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, PDDs, and other neurological differences. We provide a discussion forum, where members communicate with each other, an article section, with exclusive articles and how-to guides, a blogging feature, and more.

A decorative graphic in the top left corner consisting of a cluster of hexagons. Each hexagon contains a different social media or communication icon: a red hexagon with a white 'P', a green hexagon with a white '@' symbol, a blue hexagon with a white 'in' logo, a blue hexagon with a white Twitter bird, a red hexagon with a white basketball, a yellow hexagon with a white Wi-Fi symbol, a purple hexagon with a white telephone handset, a blue hexagon with a white 'f' logo, and an orange hexagon with a white 'g+' logo. The background of the slide is a gradient from dark brown at the top to light grey at the bottom.

references

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- (4)** Ward, D.M., Dill-Shackelford, K.E., Mazurek, M.O. (2018). Social media use and happiness in adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21 (3).

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