



Teaching Sexuality Education to Individuals with ASD

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Atlas Insights

How do we teach?



What do we know?

- Lots of info on how important it is to teach sex ed
- Pretty little on how to teach it!

What do we know?

Current research:

- MOSTLY knowledge tests, pre-post, some assessment by self, some by caregivers or teachers

(Casper & Glidden, 2001; Garwood & McCabe, 2000; Klett & Turan, 2012; Stankova & Trajkovski, 2021)

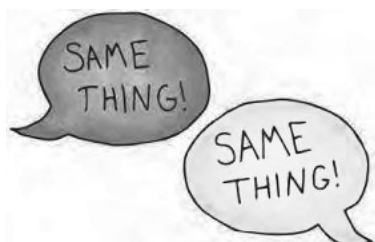


Problems with this

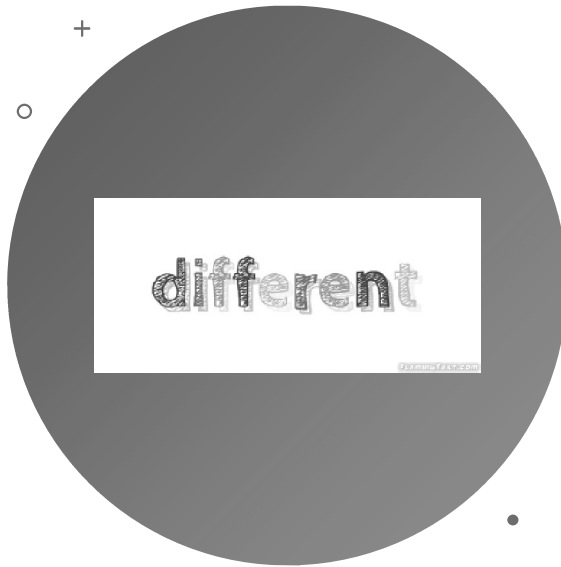
Say-do correspondence (Risley & Hart, 1968)

Behavioural Skills Training PLUS
In-situ training (Miltenberger et al., 2004; Beck & Miltenberger, 2009)

Take what we know – sex is not different!



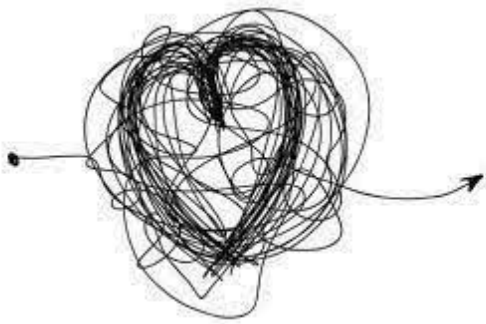
- Behaviour
- Shaped by contingencies, evoked by stimuli
- Rules of teaching, generalization, maintenance all apply



But also... sex IS different!

- Taboo!
- Morals, values, culture
- High influence of physiology
- Lots of “private” behaviour
- Law
- Its just hard

Consider...



- How many trials it takes to learn simple discriminations
- How much more complicated many skills get as kids get older
- How much fewer learning opportunities older kids get
- How many competing variables are present with older learners
- How little control we have over natural teaching environments



Approach this like a Behaviour Analyst!

Forest and trees

What ARE we good at?

- Defining behaviours!
- Breaking down big skills into smaller components
- Figuring out stimulus control
- Prompting, shaping, reinforcement!
- Adjusting teaching as we go
- Individualization



Definitions matter...

Steve touches his penis in a pleasurable manner. It doesn't count when he is scratching or "adjusting" himself.

Steve touches his penis with his hand(s) on top of his pants or with his hand underneath his pants in a public setting for more than 1 second. Touches that occur in a private setting like a bathroom or his bedroom are not included.



Definitions of behaviour...

- Under what conditions...
- When behaviour should or should not occur
- Consider topography > function
- Clear, measurable... observable?
 - What tools do we use for non-accessible behaviours?



Non-observable

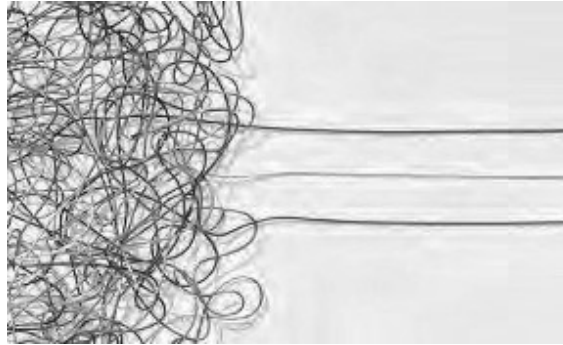
- Permanent product
- Pre-cursor behaviour
- Self-report

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Breaking Skills Down



Component skills

- Take a big skill
- Break it down
- And some more
- Until you find something you can teach

Component skills - consent

Asking
permission

Recognition of
non-verbal
cues

Waiting

Accepting
delay

Accepting
denial

Understanding
transient
nature

Component skills - consent

Identifying likes and dislikes

Communicating preference - vocally

Communicating preference – non vocally

Functional no!

Component skills – online dating

- Photo posting – self and others
- Online vocabulary
- Logistics – finding app, downloading, account
- Sharing personal information
- Protecting financial information
- Social interactions – initiating, maintaining, getting out of them!
- Flirting/sexting
- Planning to meet



Benefits of component skills

- We know how to do this!
- Can start early
- Often nothing to do with sex

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Stimulus control

- Under what conditions!
- Work towards naturally maintaining stimuli:
 - Real world teaching materials
 - Use of peers
 - Consider changing environments
 - How do we make these skills show up when and where we need them to



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Prompting, shaping, reinforcement

- All our creativity!
- Some sexuality skills are very private
- Some sexuality skills have very powerful reinforcers
- Understanding these



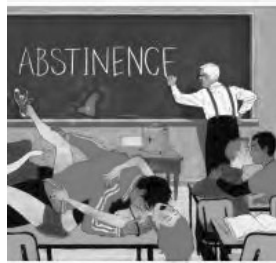
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Changing and individualization

- Individual:
 - Learning history
 - Preferences
 - Values, morals, beliefs, culture



Challenges with sexuality teaching

- Discomfort with subject matter
- Personal values
- Lack of research/great teaching material
- Individual preferences
- Moving target
- In-situ demonstration
- Natural reinforcers

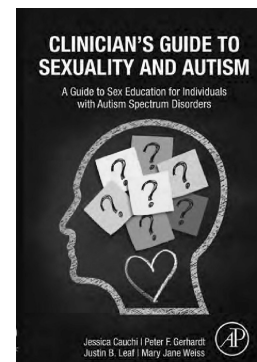


What about fringe skills?

- The “lessons” that might be acquired by a learner that were unintended by a teacher:
 - Help in the bathroom
 - Forced compliance
 - Physical prompting
- Sometimes we can't avoid these, but be aware!

Some potentially useful resources

- <https://www.aasect.org/>
- <https://oar.dev1-ironistic.com/self-advocates/sex-ed-for-self-advocates/>





Thank you!

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