

Disability, Romance and Sexuality Counselling by Liz Dore

People with Intellectual Disability and/or Autism have the capacity to form romantic and sexual relationships. Navigating all types of relationships can be extra challenging. The rights of people with disability to have intimate relationships is often not acknowledged and they have generally not been provided relationships and sexuality education in a way they can comprehend.

The focus of my career has been supporting people to have positive relationships and to increase their sexuality knowledge and awareness. Professionals and Carers are often not confident in supporting people with disability in pursuing relationships and romance, in a safe way. I have therefore, provided Training to Support Staff, Therapists and medical professionals. In my experience it is this combined approach, that has increased positive outcomes.

Everyone should learn about safe dating, relationships, sexuality and consent. This includes identifying early warning signs for negative relationships on and off the internet and positive relationships. People with disability deserve to have privacy to meet their own sexual needs. And an awareness of mutual respect for partner's wishes and the confidence to express their own choices, when discussing or having sex.

I have received feedback from clients regarding dates, forming relationships and breaking up. It's exciting to hear from people who met at the social events for singles and are now in long-term relationships. Our clients can lead a more fulfilling life, if they are given respect and opportunities to develop relationships and have sex with unpaid people, with whom they are mutually attracted and connected to.

Becoming friends

1. Wait to be introduced by a friend or the person organising the event.
If you want, ask them to introduce you.



2. After being introduced, ask what the person does during the week (work/study, leisure), or what they do on the weekends.
Look at the person when asking or answering.



3. If the person continues the discussion by asking you questions, the person might just be being polite or may be interested in you. If they leave and don't talk to you a second time find someone else to talk to (back to step 1).



4. Towards the end of the social event, if the person has returned to talk with you or stayed with you, it's OK to say 'see you next time' or 'here's my phone number if you want to ring me'.
If they say 'no' respect their decision.

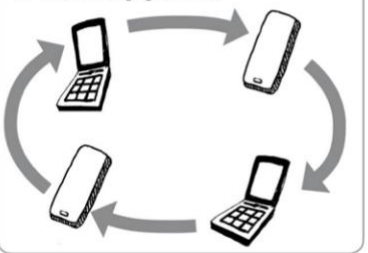


Tips for Becoming Friends & Safe Dating

1. Take it slowly



2. Take turns ringing each other



3. Ask the person if she or he is interested in going out.



4. Always let someone else know where you're going



5. Meet in a public place and stay where there are other people.



6. Pay half the bill

