



A STEP AHEAD  
— CHATTANOOGA —

# Let's Talk About Sex

Why is Sex Education Important?

Presenters:  
Tina Vance  
Mandy Cowley



# A Step Ahead Chattanooga



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# Mission and Vision

Our mission is to remove barriers to contraception through education, outreach, and access to free birth control.

A Step Ahead Chattanooga envisions a world where individuals become pregnant on their terms - enabling them, their families, and communities to thrive.



# Our Values

- Everyone has a right to knowledge about how their bodies work.
- When individuals have access to accurate information and access to contraception they are better equipped to make decisions right for them and their family.
- Health services should be provided free of judgment in a caring, respectful, and safe manner.
- Every individual should be able to select the birth control method that is best for them.





## Meet the Presenters

Tina Vance, MPH

Certified Comprehensive Sex Educator

- Power Through Choices
- Sexuality Education For People with

Developmental and Intellectual  
Disabilities

Mother of Two

- Daughter Age 17, diagnosed with ADHD
- Son Age 15, diagnosed with ADHD

Mandy Cowley, MA

Certificate in Parenting Education,  
Louisiana State University School of Social  
Work

Certificate in Special Education Advocacy,  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Mother of One

- Son Age 13, diagnosed with Autism and  
ADHD





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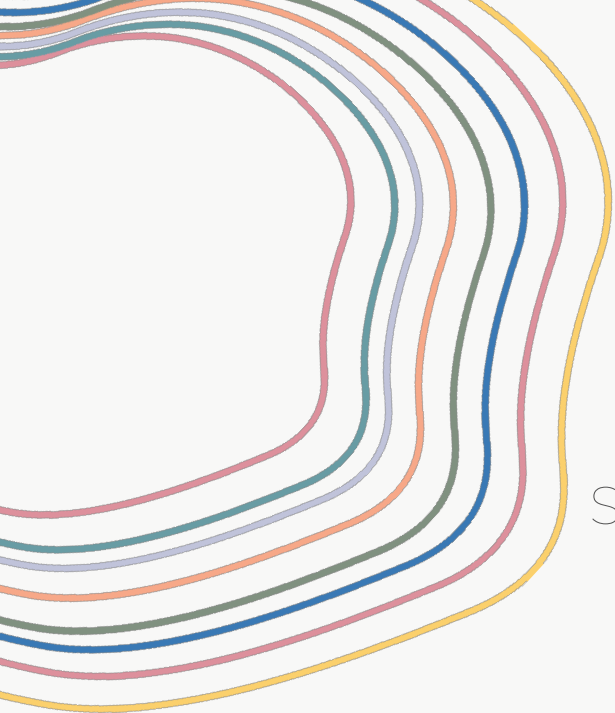
# Let's Talk About Sex

Why is Sex Education Important?

# Goals for this Session

1. Develop a better understanding of why these conversations are important.
2. Recognize and acknowledge some of the barriers to having these conversations.
3. Gain accurate information that you feel comfortable sharing.
4. Practice using some talking points and skills to have these conversations.





# Tell us about your kids ...

Share about your kids, the youth or adults that you are a caregiver for, or those who see you as a trusted adult.



# What were some of the messages you got growing up?

- Sexuality
- Relationships
- Gender Roles
- Showing Affections
- Communication
- Reproductive Health

# What are your personal values and attitudes about relationships and reproductive health?

Let's hear some statements and think about how the statements make you feel. You may agree or disagree with the statements and that's completely okay.

# What is your role as a parent Does it differ between children with disabilities and children without?

- Listen
- Model
- Support
- Source of Information
- Respond appropriately
  - to help destigmatize the topic.

# What is sexuality?



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# Sexuality Defined

- How we connect to others
  - Intimacy
  - Connection
  - Belonging
- Relationships
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Acquaintances
  - Romantic
- Gender Roles
  - Identity
  - Sexual Orientation
- How you feel
  - Body Image
  - Self Esteem
  - Self-Worth
- Sexual Expression
- Sexual Behavior
- Who we are, what we believe and how we respond



So what is sex ed?



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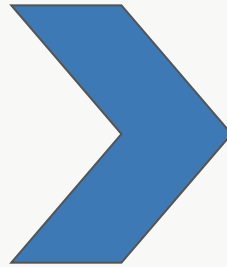
# Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- *Human Development*
  - anatomy & physiology, puberty, body image
- *Relationships*
  - family, friendships, romantic relationships, love
- *Personal Skills*
  - communication, decision making, assertiveness
- *Sexual Health*
  - abstinence, sexual response, sexuality throughout lifespan
- *Sexual Behavior*
  - STIs, pregnancy, contraception, sexual violence/abuse
- *Society and Culture*
  - gender roles, diversity, sexuality and society



# Comprehensive Sexuality Education Concerns

- Teaches youth to disregard their values and morals as well as causing children to lose their innocence
- Disregards abstinence as an effective method of prevention
- Encourages individuals to engage in sexual activity & is a how-to for sexual activities
- These talks are embarrassing
- Schools already teach all of this



- *Encourages ongoing, age appropriate discussions of medically accurate, scientifically based information*
- *Leads to a better understanding of healthy relationships, boundaries, body positivity, and typical body changes*
- *More likely to delay sexual activity*
- *Is effective for harm reduction and for preventing sexual abuse and intimate partner violence*
- *Often not taught in school due to state laws*





# Why do People with Disabilities Need and Want to Learn About Sexuality?


## *According to the Individuals*

- So we can be safe.
- Because we all have desires and needs and we need to know that that is normal.
- For help with the toughest part of the relationship, making it last.
- So that we know our rights.
- So that we can be sexual self advocates and not just self advocates

# Why do People with Disabilities Need and Want to Learn About Sexuality?

## *According to the CDC*

- Disability affects more than 1 in 4 women, and 1 in 5 men in the U.S.
- Men and women with a disability are at an increased risk of experiencing sexual violence and intimate partner violence.
- An estimated 2 in 5 (39%) female victims of rape are women with a disability.
- An estimated 1 in 4 (24%) male victims experience sexual violence other than rape.




# Tips and Tricks to have a Meaningful Conversation






## Tips for Discussing Sexuality

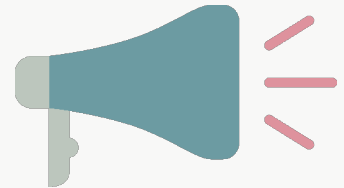
- You may have to initiate the conversation
  - It is OK to not know the answer, and come back to answer later
  - Use a “private” tone vs a “public” tone
  - Give age appropriate information
  - Use proper names when talking about body parts.
  - Explain that body parts will change as you age.
  - Discuss body parts as being public or private.
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## Tips Continued . . .

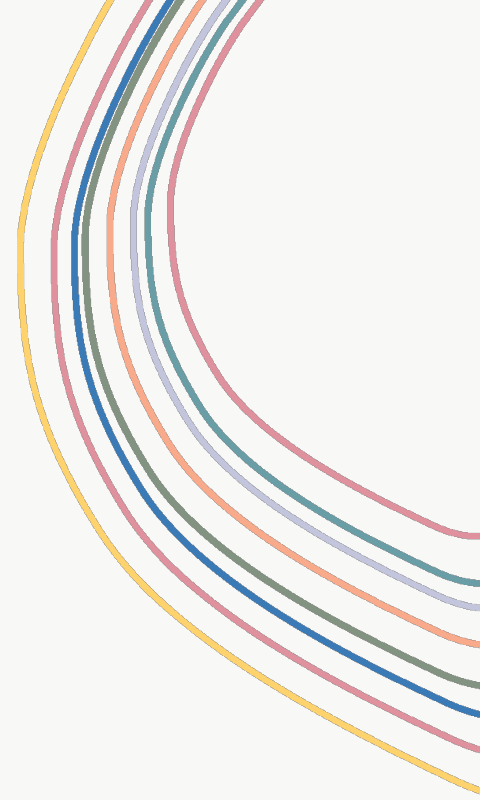
- Talk openly without embarrassment.
  - Reinforce that their body belongs to them.
  - Get creative - use models, scenarios, role-play, etc...
  - Be Consistent
  - Respond don't React
  - Practice what you are going to say.
- 

## Have a Plan

- **First, think about your approach:**
  - Are you answering questions to sway them from making certain sexual choices?
  - Are you afraid that answering a question will give them permission and make you somehow responsible for their actions?
  - Are you using a “fear” based approach?
- **Next, think about how you are responding:**
  - Are you being responsive or reactive?
  - Are you being an active listener or trying to problem solve?
  - What is your body language saying?
- **And lastly:**
  - Remember you are Human.
  - You don't have to have all the answers.
  - Don't be afraid to be vulnerable.



# Questions



# Additional Parent Resources



[mykidisgay.com](http://mykidisgay.com)



[amaze.org](http://amaze.org)



[everybodycurious.com](http://everybodycurious.com)



[talkwithyourkids.org](http://talkwithyourkids.org)



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[safesecurekids.org](http://safesecurekids.org)



[kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)