



ASD and Adolescence Part Three - Teaching Public and Private and Appropriate Sexual Language

This article is the third of a series of eight articles about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and adolescence. The articles are designed to be a guide for parents of children with ASD; they will provide information about adolescence, the extra challenges that may arise for children with ASD during this time, and techniques for teaching your child about adolescence and dealing with the challenges.

The eight articles are:

1. Introduction
2. Physical changes and lifestyle choices
3. Teaching public and private and appropriate sexual language
4. Emotional and social changes
5. Peer pressure, bullying, drugs and alcohol
6. Sexuality
7. Unwanted sexual attention and sexual abuse
8. Techniques and advice for parents

Teaching public and private and appropriate sexual language

When children are going through puberty, they should know what parts of the body are public and can be seen by anyone, and what parts of the body are private, and should only be seen by trusted adults in certain situations. As children become knowledgeable about the changes that occur during adolescence, and as the changes start happening to them, they

need to know what is appropriate to talk about when, where, with whom, and what words to use.

Public and private body parts

This distinction may be easily explained by the idea that private body parts are those parts that are covered by togs, and public body parts are all the other parts that are not covered by togs.

Public and private places

Public places can be defined as places where others do not need 'my' permission to be there, for example, the lounge, classroom, bus, playground, McDonalds, etc.

Private places can be defined as places where others do need 'my' permission to be there, and the door has to be shut, for example, bedroom, bathroom, toilet at home, toilet at school, etc.

Public and private topics

Public topics are those that can be discussed in a public place with different people around, for example, 'I have the flu'.

Private topics are those that are only appropriate to talk about in a private place with a trusted adult, for example, 'I have an itchy bottom'.



Appropriate sexual language

There are four main ways that sexual language may be described; medical, normally used terms, slang, and baby talk. Children with ASD need to learn what type of language is appropriate in which settings.

- Medical terms are commonly used in books and journal articles, but there is no need to be that formal everyday. For example, osculation.
- Normally used terms will not offend if used in public. They are understood by everyone, and suitable to be used at the doctors. For example, kissing.
- Slang is commonly used between friends. Slang does sometime differ by age and between groups of friends, so children with ASD need to be aware of the particular words that their friends are using. Slang might seem funny, but people may get offended because it can be disrespectful. For example, hooking up, pashing, making out.
- Baby talk or euphemisms are supposedly less offensive and often used for young children. It may seem to be the polite or least offensive way of naming certain topics, but for children with ASD baby talk can be confusing because it is less accurate. For example, tongue wrestling.

References and Recommended Reading

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