



ASD and Adolescence Part Seven - Unwanted Sexual Attention and Abuse

This article is the seventh 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

Unwanted sexual attention

Unwanted attention and flirting is known as harassment. Individuals with ASD need to learn to read body language and nonverbal cues to be sure that they do not give someone unwanted attention. Individuals with ASD also need to know what to do if they are being harassed.

Sexual abuse

Beyond harassment, is sexual assault, sexual abuse and rape. These all involve non-consensual sexual touching. Individuals with ASD need to know the difference between sexual and non sexual touching, and that sexual touching is not ok with authority figures or members of the family. If they are ever in such a situation, they should say 'no', get out of the situation and tell a trusted adult. Teaching no, go, tell is an easy way for children to remember this.

Physical Signs of Abuse
Genital bruising
Genital itching or discomfort
Missing, torn or bloodied clothing
STIs
Head injuries
Headaches
Broken bones
Blood in urine or faeces
Pregnancy



Behavioural Signs of Abuse
Sudden change in behaviour
Difficulty concentrating or learning
Depression
Withdrawal or atypical attachment
Avoid certain settings/adults
Long periods of crying
Regression
Disturbances in sleeping patterns
Low self-esteem
Non-compliance
Self-destructive behaviour
Behaviour that is sexually inappropriate
Sudden decline in school performance
Inappropriately infantile or adult behaviour
Wearing clothing that is inappropriate to cover up

Keep your child safe from abuse

There are several things you can do to help to keep your child safe from abuse. You can give them safety information on a laminated card to keep in their schoolbag, teach them to use a cell phone in an emergency by calling 111, or how to dial numbers that have been programmed in.

You can teach your child to identify police officers, and about good and bad secrets. You could create a written script for your child to use if they have been hurt, and teach them to clearly communicate about

touching (where, who, how it felt, location, how often).

References and Recommended Reading

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