

I want a girlfriend and a first KISS!

By: Bebe Bode



Almost all individuals have the need to give and receive intimacy. There's no reason why having a disability should stand in the way. Too many people assume that just because someone has a physical or intellectual disability, they lack the desire to fall in love or have sex.

I feel, as a parent of an adult with a disability, it is my responsibility to educate my son on all aspects of safety and responsibility when it comes to dating and being in a serious relationship. Of course there are numerous concerns I have as well.

We started teaching our son the basics at a young age... giving all body parts their correct anatomical name so there would be no confusion. I researched many ways to approach teaching about good touch, bad touch. I found a guidance lesson taught in Pre-K and Kindergarten. I felt this would be the best tool to teach this concept to my son. The lesson taught that if your swimsuit covers it, it's a private area and no one should be seeing or touching that area. Tell a grown up if someone is touching you in the wrong places because it's Mom and Dad's job to keep you safe. It's a simplified version but easy for younger children to understand.

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Puberty seemed to be a tad delayed, but Mother Nature caught up very quickly. We weren't sure if we were explaining the physical and emotional changes that our son was experiencing during puberty in a way that he could understand.

We sought assistance through our local Human Services Authority to guide us in presenting the information to our son in a way he could understand. After a few times meeting with the social worker, we all sat together and discussed what was happening to his body in a way he could understand. When his face turned beet red we figured he understood. It was a successful learning experience for us, as parents, and for our son.

Our son is 20 years old now. He has expressed the desire to have a girlfriend and wants a real kiss. As his mother, I very much want him to experience these things. My mind starts traveling all over the place with worry as well. How will he meet someone? How do I teach him how to be gentle? How do I handle a broken heart? The list is very long and I don't want anyone reading this to start feeling uncomfortable.

The staff at [Families Helping Families of Jefferson](#) receives calls about these kinds of concerns from parents all the time. We meet every week to discuss the concerns of the families we support, decide on topics we will provide [workshops/webinars](#) on, and celebrate the successes families share with us.

On **Tuesday, April 7, 2015** we will be having a workshop on "[How to Promote Healthy Relationships and Sexual Health for Teens and Adults with Disabilities](#)", **9:30 am - 12:00 pm, East Bank Regional Library, 4747 W. Napoleon Ave., Metairie.** Presenting will be **Maria Blanco, M.Ed. with LSU Health Sciences Center, Human Development Center.** I for one will be in the first row!

I've also spent a lot of time trying to find reputable resources to assist. The following resources I found to be helpful:

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/sexed/>

<http://www.connectwc.org/dating-relationships-sexuality.html>

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/479-sex-education-for-physically-emotionally-and-mentally-challenged-youth>



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