

# Autism and the LGBTQIA+ Community

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## Information, Video, and Image Disclosure

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## Polling – **REQUIRED FOR CEUs!**

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# ASHA Disclosure Slide

- Sharon Conty
  - Financial Disclosures
    - Employee of Kennedy Krieger Institute
  - Non-financial disclosures
    - ASHA member
- Sarah Michaels
  - Financial Disclosures
    - Employee of Kennedy Krieger Institute




# Objectives

1. Understanding language of the LGBTQIA+ Community
2. Common Thoughts
3. Supports for individuals, families, providers, and teachers
4. Resources



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How would you best describe yourself?

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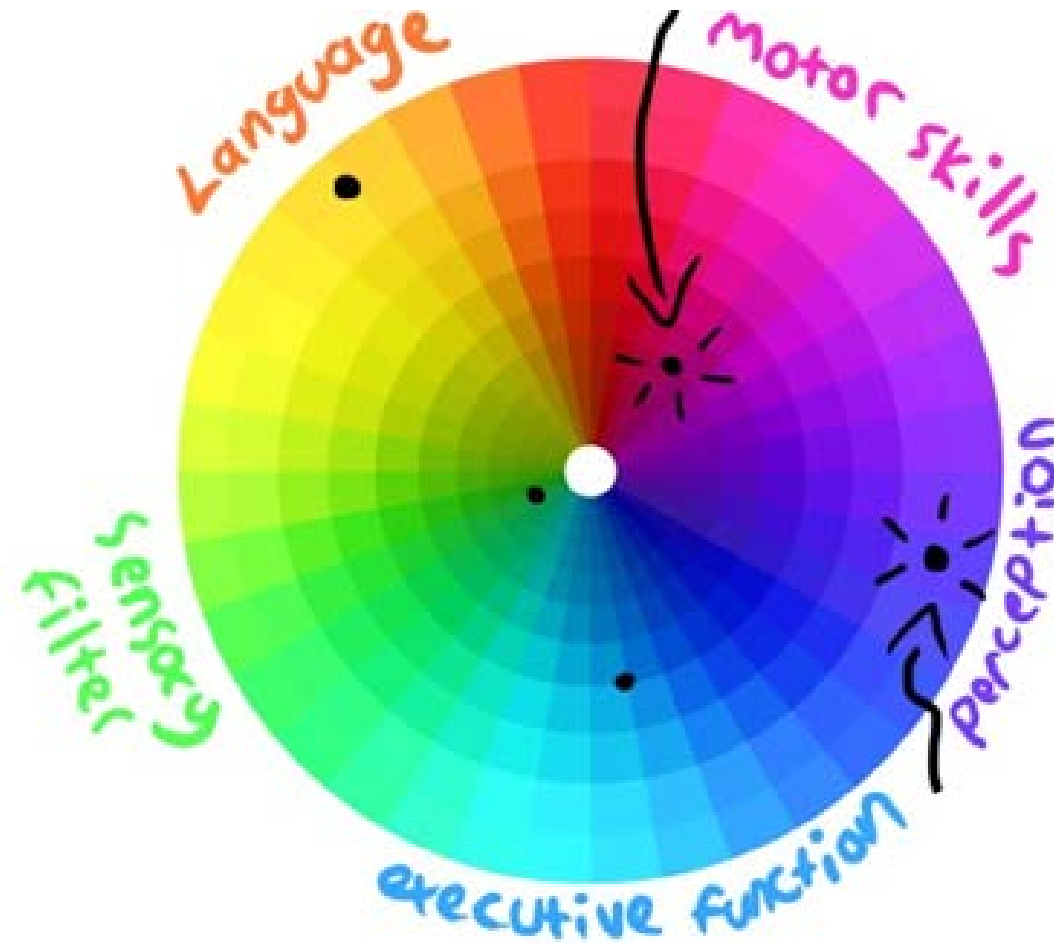
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Do you or a family member identify as autistic and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Language Orientation

- Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder/Autism Spectrum/Autistic
- Person First versus Identity First Language
- Neurodiverse
- Neurotypical



Burgess, R. (2019, October 31). Understanding the spectrum – a comic strip explanation. Retrieved from <https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/>



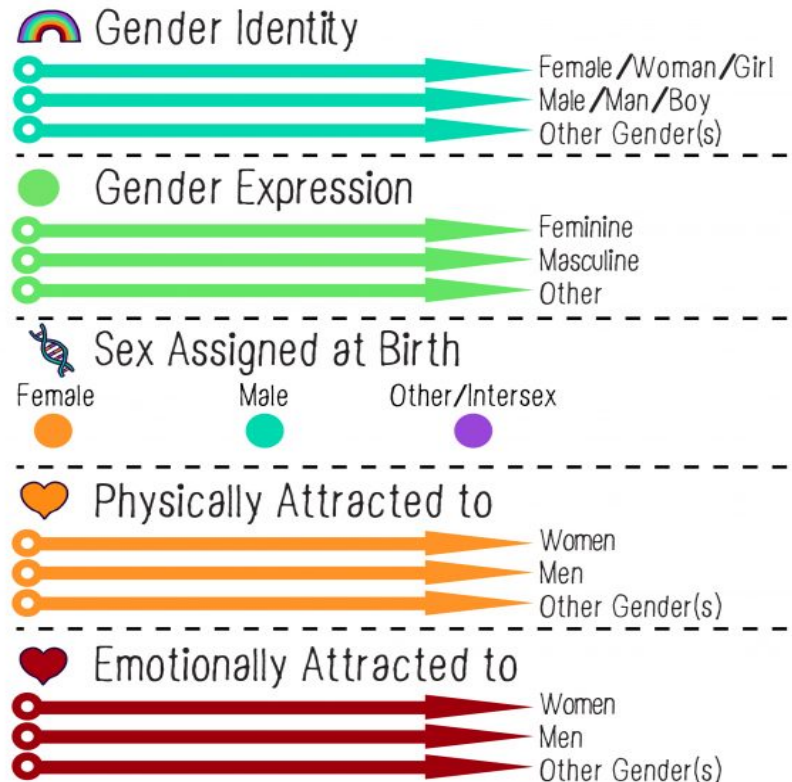
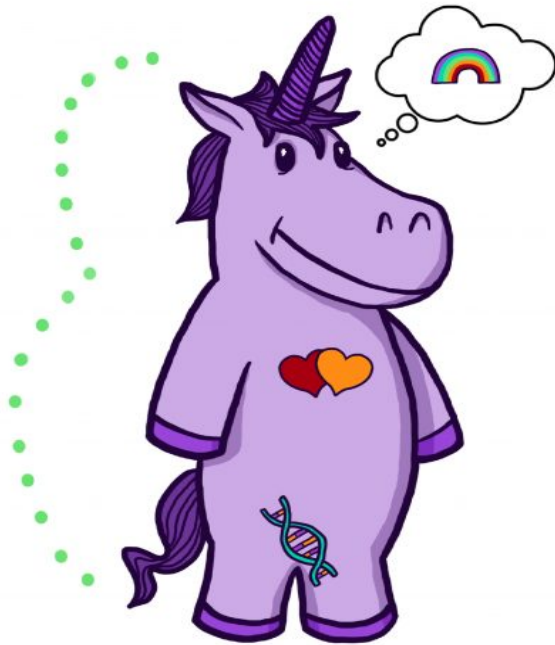


# Terms to be Used: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

## The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:  
**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources

# LGBTQIA+



To learn more, go to:  
[www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)

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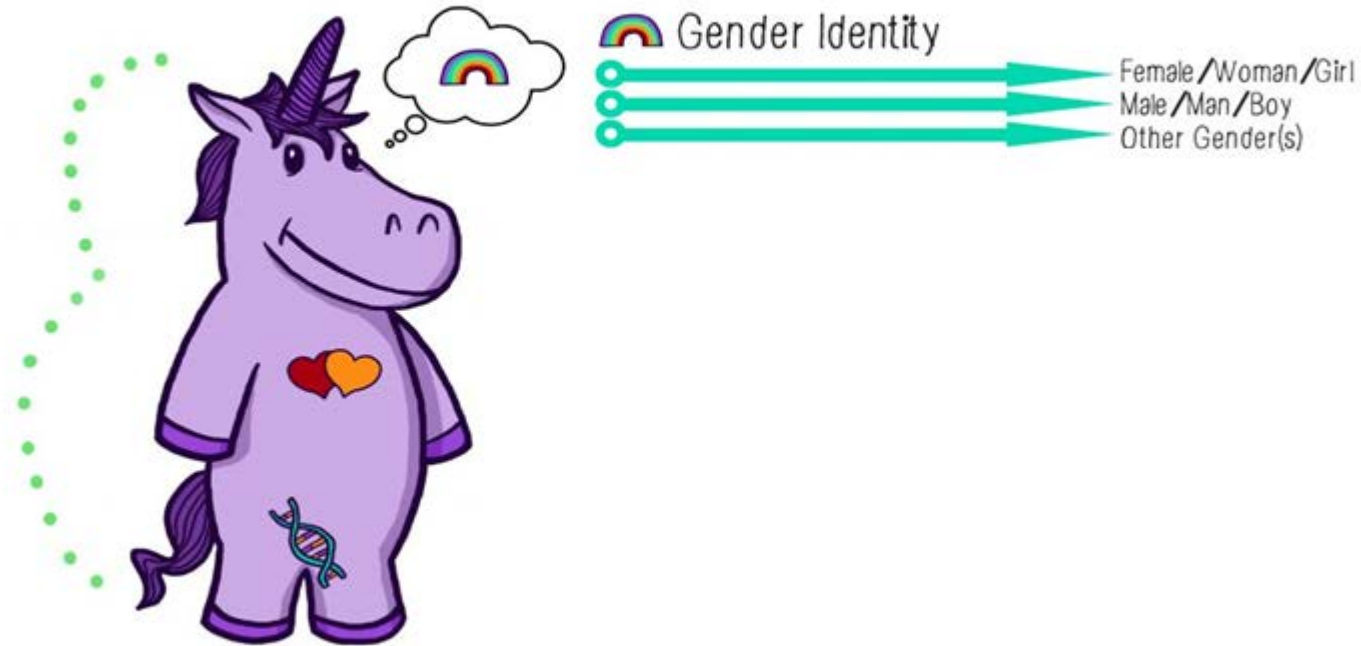
Pan, L. & Moore, A. (2021). Gender unicorn.  
Retrieved from <https://transstudent.org/gender/>



# Terms to be Used: Gender Identity

## The Gender Unicorn

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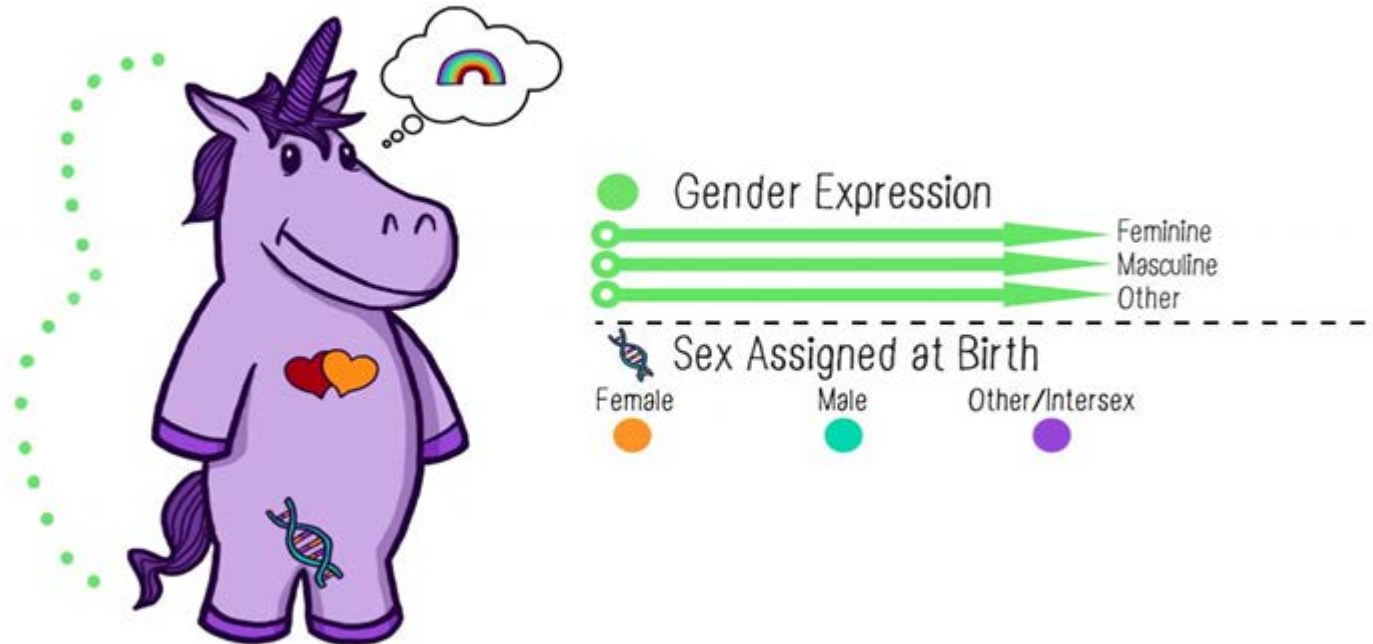
Center for Autism and Related Disorders  
at Kennedy Krieger Institute

# Terms to be Used: Gender Identity

## The Gender Unicorn

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# Terms to be Used: Sexual Orientation

## The Gender Unicorn

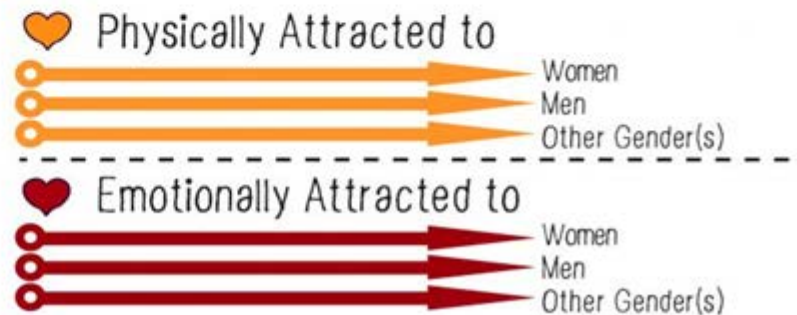
Graphic by:  
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Trans Student Educational Resources

# LGBTQIA+



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Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



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People with ASD are incapable of feeling love or sexual attraction to others.

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

People with ASD are incapable of feeling love or sexual attraction towards others.



- Disorder of Social Communication
  - Has nothing to do with the feelings that are experienced
- May be expressed differently
- May mature later in development



Shutterstock (2003).



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Ousley & Mesibov (1991); Healy, McGuire, Evans, & Carley (2009).



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People with ASD do not want a sexual relationship.

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

People with ASD don't want a sexual relationship.

**FALSE**

- Not a universal truth
- Sensory difficulties
- Difficulties in communicating feelings
- Difficulties in initiating romantic and sexual relationships



iStock (2021).

Z(2011); Stokes, Newton & Kaur (2007)





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Sexual education is NOT required for individuals with ASD.`

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Sexual education is not required for individuals with ASD.

**FALSE**

- Peer group
- Difficulty understanding social cues
- Still have same urges/needs, but more difficulty navigating



iStock (2021).

Chan & John (2012), Stokes, Newton & Kaur (2007) Travers & Tincani (2010), Koller (2000)



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Sexual education should be provided the same way it is for everyone else.

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Sexual education should be provided the same way it is for everyone else.

**FALSE**

- Parent involvement is crucial!
- Should be highly structured and concrete
- Talking about sexual behaviors is important
- Should be taught in an individualized manner




Stock Photos (2021).

Chan & John (2012), Stokes, Newton & Kaur (2007) Travers & Tincani (2010), Koller (2000)



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There is a universal sexuality to people with ASD.

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

There is a universal sexuality to people with ASD.

**FALSE**

There is a greater difference in gender identity in individuals with ASD than in the general population.

Dewinter, De Graaf, & Begeer (2017)

Assigned gender at birth	Male n (%)	Female n (%)
Feels male	299 (91.7)	3 (0.9)
Partly male, partly female	10 (3.1)	31 (8.9)
Not male, nor female	2 (0.6)	26 (7.4)
don't know (yet)	4 (1.2)	9 (2.6)
Different (e.g. human, no sex)	8 (2.5)	8 (2.3)
Feels female	3 (0.9)	272 (77.9)

There is a greater difference in sexual orientation diversity in individuals with ASD than in the general population.


Dewinter, De Graaf, & Begeer (2017)

n (%)	Men		Women	
	ASD (n = 316)	TD (n = 3927)	ASD (n = 343)	TD (n = 4137)
Feels attracted to				
Men only	16 (5.1)	150 (3.8)	194 (56.6)***	3601 (87)
Both men and women	27 (8.5)	184 (4.7)	77 (22.4)	418 (10.1)
Women only	258 (81.6)***	3549 (90.4)	21 (6.1)	53 (1.3)
None of these	15 (4.7)	44 (1.1)	51 (14.9)	65 (1.6)
In a relationship				
With a man	8 (5.1)	113 (3.9)	151 (93.2)	2861 (97.9)
With a woman	150 (94.9)	2803 (96.1)	11 (6.8)*	62 (2.1)
Living together with partner	136 (86.1)	2450 (84)	130 (80.2)	2324 (79.5)



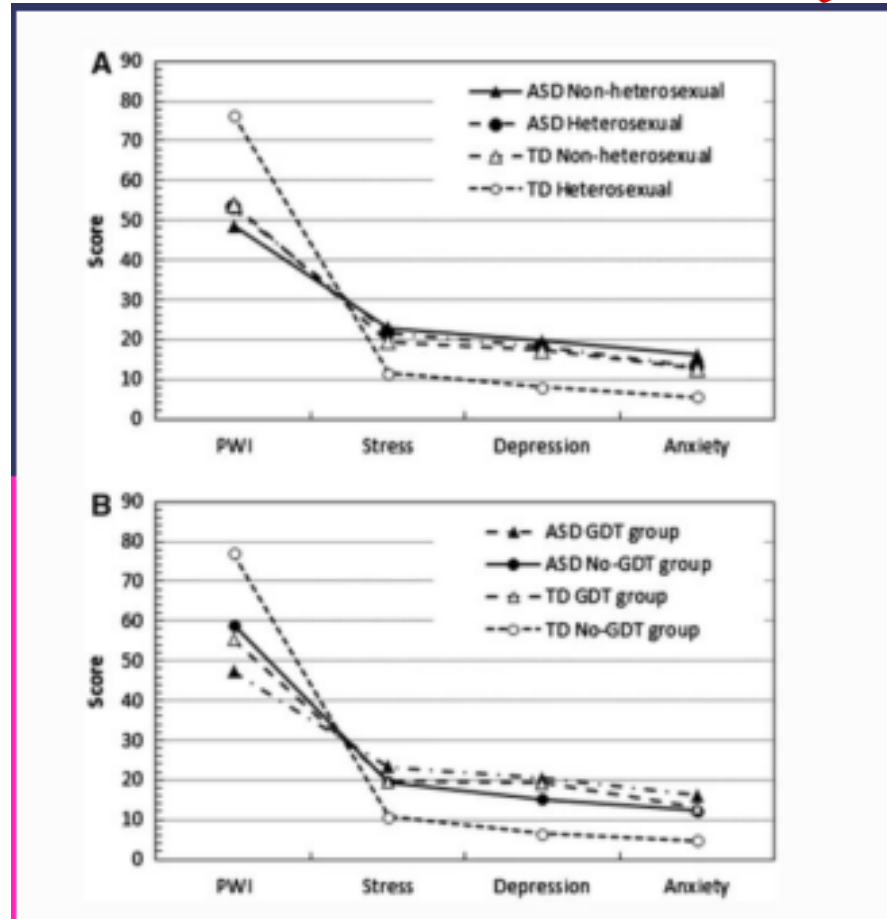
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Sexual orientation and gender identity differences are a phase  
for people with ASD.

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Sexual orientation and gender identity differences are a phase for people with ASD.

**FALSE**



There is a higher instance of depression, stress, and anxiety in individuals with ASD who feel that they are unable to express or are not accepted for their gender identity and sexual orientation.

(George & Stokes, 2018)





# What Does This Look Like?

- Timing
  - **Gender identity** (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2020; Strang et al., 2018)
  - **Sexual orientation** (Crehan, 2020)
  - **Neurotypical vs. Neurodiverse** (Crehan, 2020)
- Pervasive interests and obsessions
  - **Self-advocate reporting** (Strang et al., 2018)
- Characteristics
  - **Early gender non-conformity** (Strang et al., 2018)
  - **Societal norms**
  - **Information seeking** (Crehan, 2020)



(Sensational Kids, n.d.)



# The Importance of this Topic

- Prevalence
  - Gender identity diversity (Warrier et al., 2020)
  - Sexual orientation diversity (George and Stokes, 2018)
- Mental health
  - LGBTQ youth are at increased risk for depression, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts (Kann et al., 2016).
  - Transgender youth are nearly 4x as likely to experience depression as cisgendered peers (Reisner et al., 2015)
- Access to care
  - “The combination is seen to be too complex for the majority of clinicians, which led to long waiting times for specialized psychiatric care” (Strang et al., 2019)



# Parents: What should we do first?

- Have a conversation
  - Let them know that they are loved
  - Don't jump to conclusion
  - Keep your answers short and simple
    - Explain any possible new words
  - Keep the conversation open
  - Check their understanding
  - It's ok to feel a little awkward



Adobe Stock (2019).

Sanders & Fields (n.d.); Planned Parenthood (2021).



# Parents and Caregivers: Guidelines

- Start discussions early
- Incorporate materials that highlight the LGBTQ+ community
- Explore topics of discomfort beforehand
- Seek out support
- Don't be afraid to say you don't know something!
- Discuss rights and laws
- Assist with transition plan for gender diverse youth
- Provide siblings and other family members with support and information



iStock (2021).

(Children's Aid Society of Alabama, 2021; Crehan, 2020; Orlich & Earl, 2019)



# Providers: What should we do first?

- Be accepting and open
  - 1/6 of LGBTQ adults experience discrimination
  - 1/5 avoid seeking medical care
- Resources
  - Center for Transgender Health at Johns Hopkins
  - The Gertrude Stein Society
  - Top Health Issues for LGBT Populations Information & Resource Kit



iStock (2020).

Powell (2018)



# Providers, Teachers, and Other Adults: Guidelines

- Create a safe and open environment
  - Have quality resources available in waiting rooms, classrooms, and offices
  - Support and partner with local LGBTQ+ organizations (Crehan, 2020)
- Assess for safety (Crehan, 2020)
- Discuss legal nuances
- Understand barriers to care
  - Provider resistance
  - The urgency of treatment (Strang et al, 2018)
- Separate and Together Sessions
  - Hold sessions with a caregiver and child together and alone (Orlich & Earl, 2019)



# Language when talking to the individual

- Be blunt
- Be open
- Be willing to answer questions
- Be ok with saying “I don’t know”



Stock Adobe (2019).



# Person-Centered Care

- The person in front of us is the expert on their experience!



(New Horizons Families, n.d.)





# Looking Forward

- Past focus
  - Prevalence
  - Provider guided interventions
- Future focus
  - Self-advocate guided sexual education resources
  - Self-advocate guided interventions, evaluations, and support



(New Horizons Families, n.d.)



# Resources

## In Person Resources

- Center for Transgender Health (JHH)
- Sex and Gender Clinic (JHH)
- The Gender and Autism Program (CNH)
- Chase Brexton Health Care

## Quality Book-Based Resources

- The Facts of Life & More Laura Walker-Hirsch
- S.E.X. the all-you-need-to-know sexuality guide to get you through your teens & twenties Heather Corinna

## Quality Online Resources

- Sex Ed for Self-Advocates
- Twainbow
- OutCare
- Planned Parenthood
- PFLAG
- The Gender Spectrum
- Human Rights Campaign
- GLAAD



# Resources – Contact Information and Links

## In Person Resources

- Center for Transgender Health (JHH) – (844) 546-5645
- Sex and Gender Clinic (JHH) – (443) 447-4337
- The Gender and Autism Program (CNH) – (301) 765-5432
- Chase Brexton Health Care – (410) 837-2050

## Quality Book-Based Resources

- The Facts of Life & More Laura Walker-Hirsch – website to access: <https://www.amazon.com/Facts-Life-More-Intellectual-Walker-Hirsch/dp/B01FKWF6RO>
- S.E.X. the all-you-need-to-know sexuality guide to get your through your teens & twenties Heather Corinna – website to access: <https://www.amazon.com/X-second-All-You-Need-Know-Sexuality/dp/0738218847>



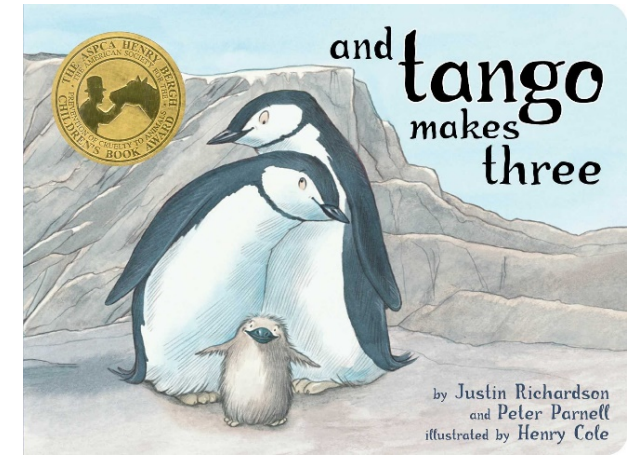
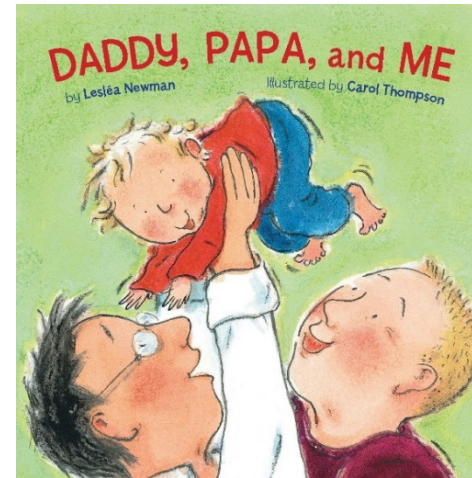
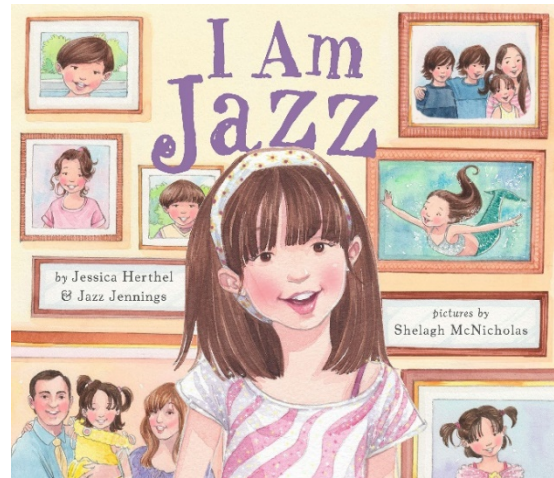
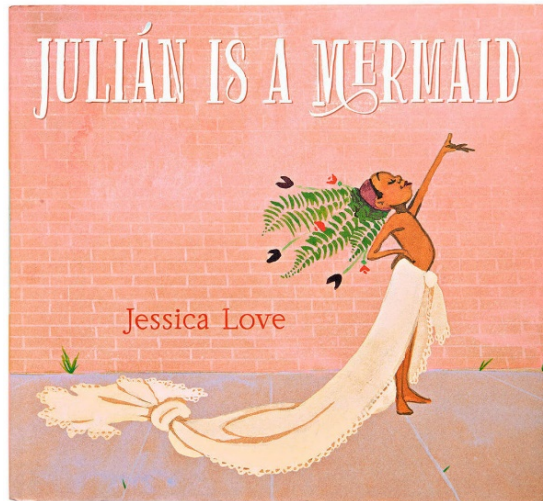
# Resources - Links

## Quality Online Resources with Websites to Access

- Sex Ed for Self-Advocates: <https://researchautism.org/sex-ed-guide/>
- Twainbow: <https://www.twainbow.org/resources/>
- OutCare: <https://www.outcarehealth.org/>
- Planned Parenthood: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/parents/resources-parents>
- PFLAG: <https://pflag.org/>
- The Gender Spectrum: <https://genderspectrum.org/>
- Human Rights Campaign: <https://www.hrc.org/resources>
- GLAAD: <https://www.glaad.org/>



# Resources – Books for Children



Retrieved from: [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/26532714-juli-n-is-a-mermaid?from\\_search=true&from\\_srp=true&qid=BCdzigXxrF&rank=1](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/26532714-juli-n-is-a-mermaid?from_search=true&from_srp=true&qid=BCdzigXxrF&rank=1)

Retrieved from: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18763344-i-am-jazz>

Retrieved from: [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4466386-daddy-papa-and-me?from\\_search=true&from\\_srp=true&qid=2W7kkXx91R&rank=1](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4466386-daddy-papa-and-me?from_search=true&from_srp=true&qid=2W7kkXx91R&rank=1)

Retrieved from: [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/117997.And\\_Tango\\_Makes\\_Three?ac=1&from\\_search=true&qid=ttvDDawafx&rank=1](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/117997.And_Tango_Makes_Three?ac=1&from_search=true&qid=ttvDDawafx&rank=1)



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George, R., & Stokes, M. (2017). Sexual orientation in autism spectrum disorder. *Autism Research*, 11(1), 133-141. doi:10.1002/aur.1892

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Stokes, M., Newton, N., & Kaur, A. (2007). Stalking, and social and romantic functioning among adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 37*(10), 1969-1986. doi:10.1007/s10803-006-0344-2



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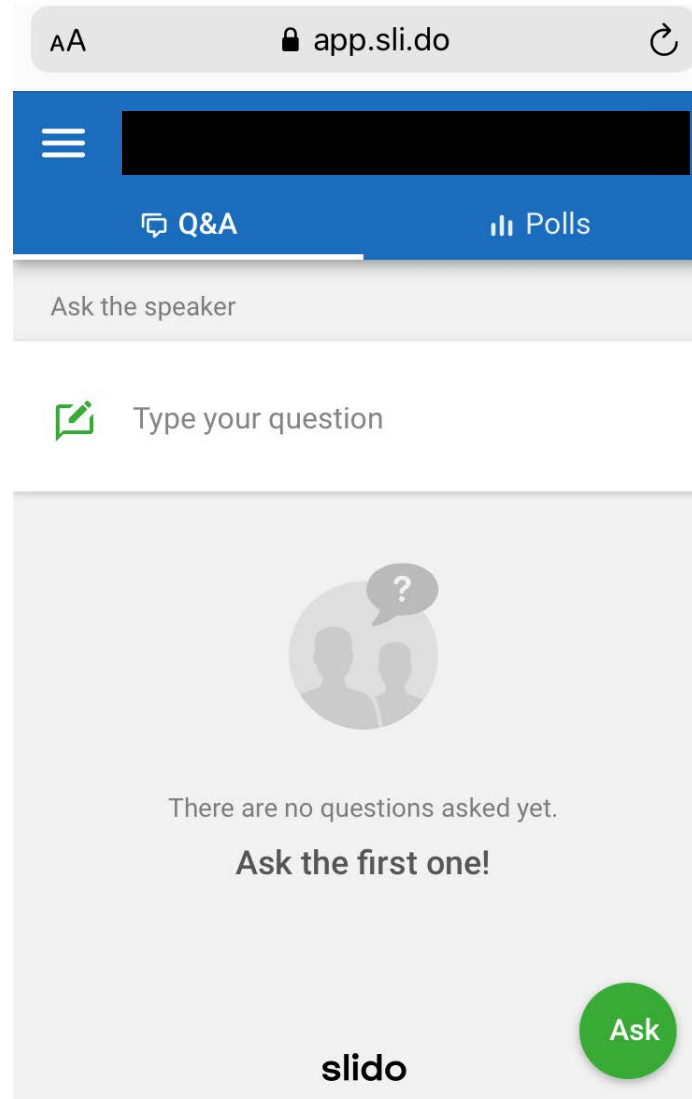


# Question & Answer (Q&A) Segment.

Instructions: Toggle over to the Q&A section in Slido to enter questions.

Questions are selected **at random** by the moderator. We cannot guarantee your question will be answered during the Q&A segment.

The moderator may make small changes to a question for clarification purposes.



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## Audience Q&A Session

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