

Family Training

PUBERTY, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY

Adolescence can be a very difficult time for everyone. In this session, we discuss the main aspects of puberty, relationships and sexuality that young people find difficult to cope with, along with support strategies that families can use to help their teens through this transition.

 EARLY SESSION AT 12 PM

 LATE SESSION AT 6 PM

 17 JANUARY 2023

FREE REGISTRATION

ONLINE VIA ZOOM



OLIVIA IZZO

Child Psychotherapist



SARA MURŠIĆ

Head of Autism Research and
Development

STARTING SOON

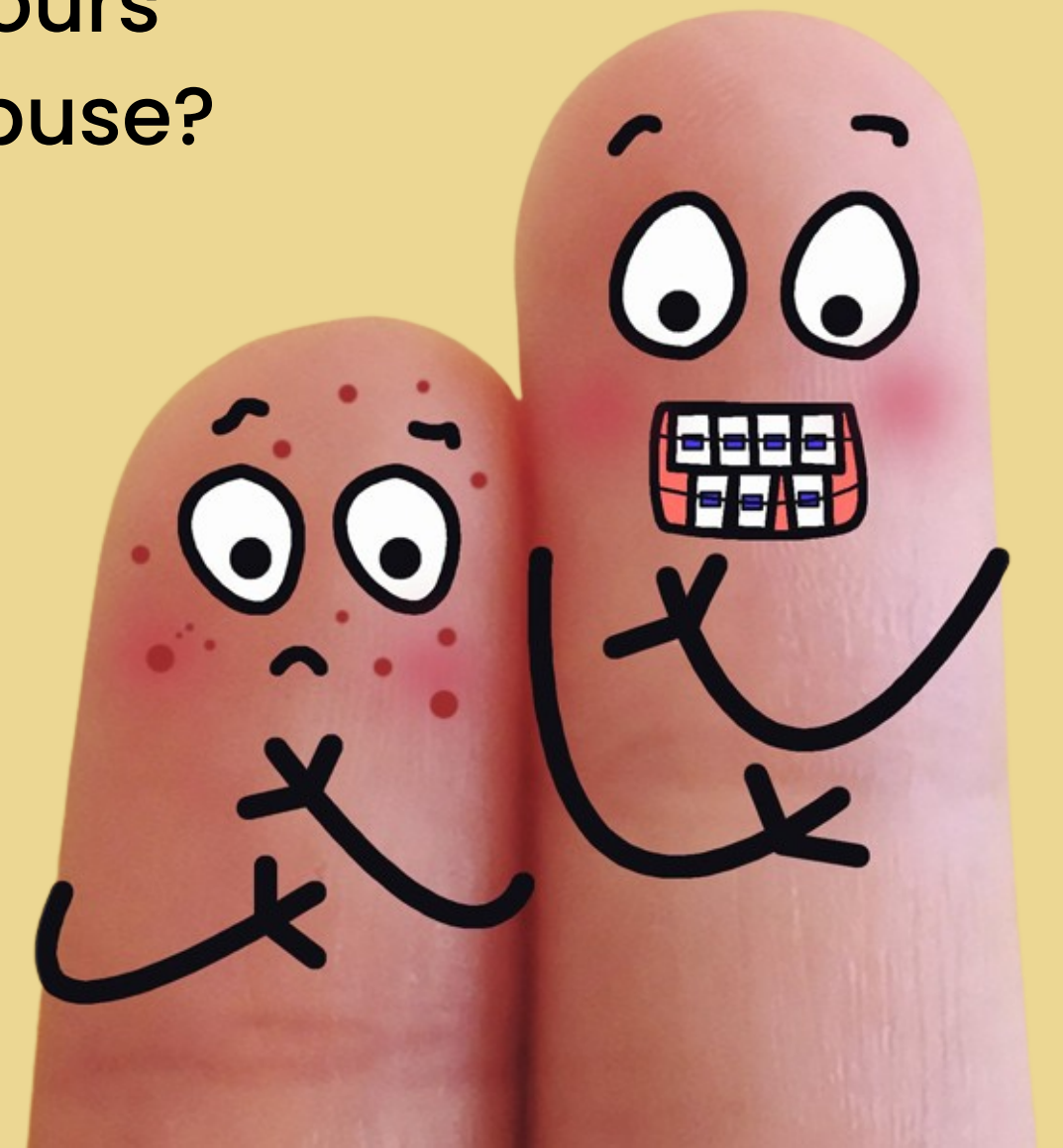
 **REC**

This session will be recorded and uploaded to our webpage for those families that are unable to attend. We suggest turning your camera off and keeping yourself muted. There will be an opportunity to unmute and join the discussion at the end. Until then your questions and comments are welcome in the chat box.

Unknowns, fears, questions

- Will my child understand body changes?
- Will they regress during puberty?
- How can I help them understand the effects of hormones?
- I fear that those urges and the lack of inhibition, self-control and self-awareness will lead to inappropriate behaviours
- How do I help them stay safe from exploitation and abuse?

**Type your questions
in the chat**



Supporting your child's transition into adulthood

Puberty, changes and Autism



Hygiene



Mental Health

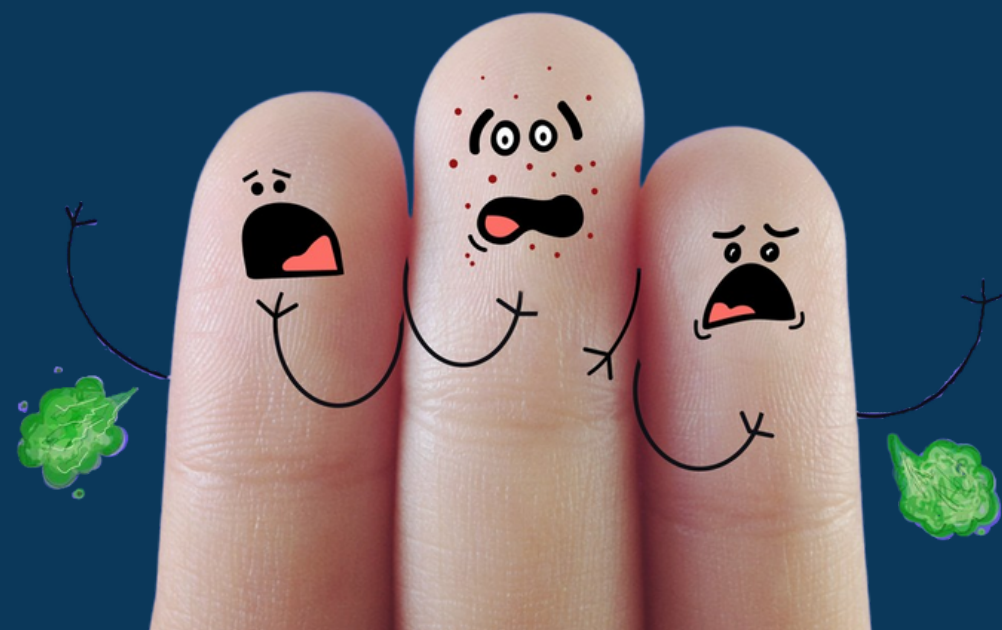


Sexuality



Safety

Hygiene



Physical maturation, body hair, acne, and body odor require a change in long-established hygiene routines.

Social Stories, role modeling, physical and verbal prompts, video modeling, and visual schedules are strategies you can use to help your child transition into more rigorous personal hygiene habits.

- sweat
- oily skin and hair
- acne
- body odour
- period
- body hair

Your class team and MDT can help work on some of the hygiene routines as part of the life-skills development.

- *hair brushing/washing?*

When I get my period, I may get some blood in my underwear.

When I get my period I may get some blood in my underwear.

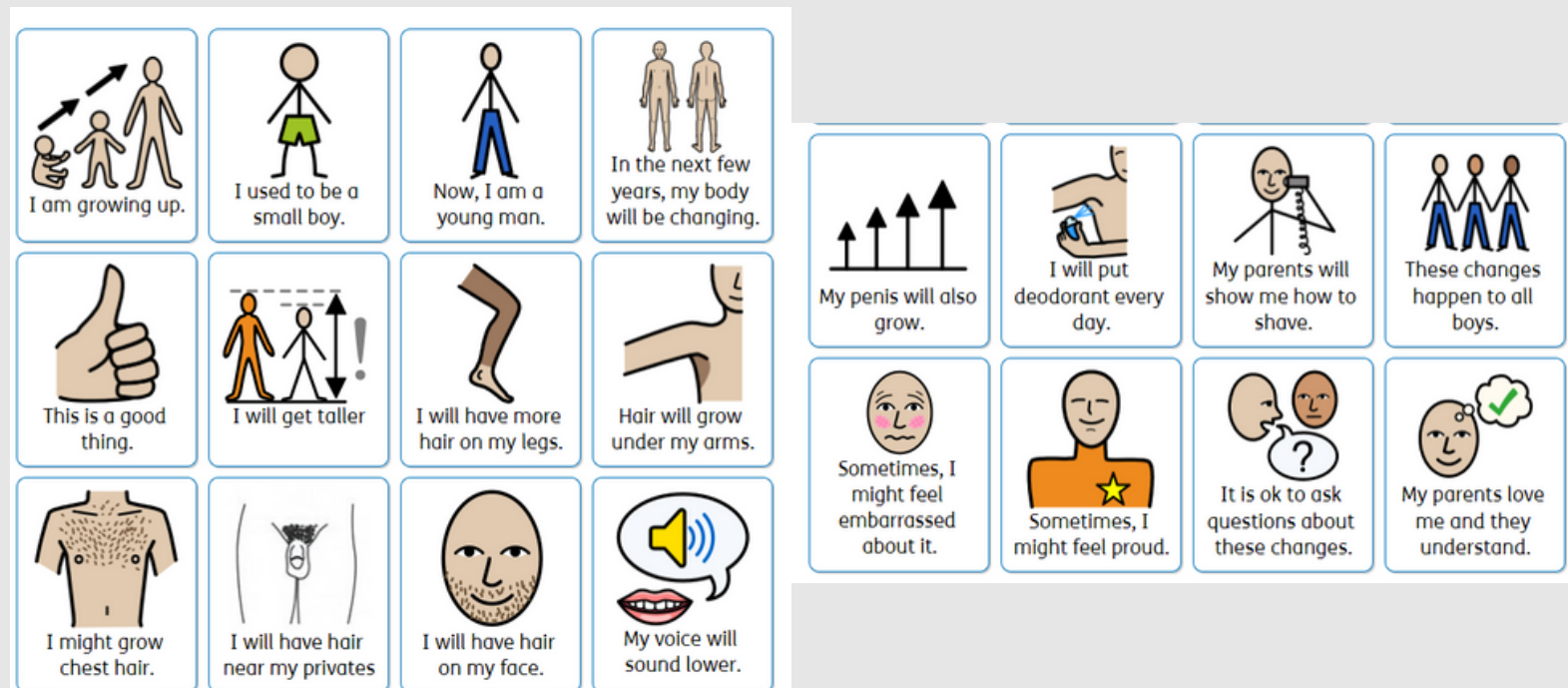
When I get my period I may get some blood in my underwear.

<p>I'm a young man</p>	<p>I'm growing up</p>	<p>Sometimes my underarms will sweat and feel wet</p>	<p>Sometimes they will smell bad</p>
<p>Now I need to wash with soap and water every day</p>	<p>I dry off</p>	<p>I put on deodorant</p>	<p>It keeps my underarms dry</p>
<p>Now I smell good!</p>	<p>I will pat on deodorant every day before I put on clothes</p>	<p>Deodorant helps</p>	<p>Now it's part of my daily routine</p>

Puberty is a non-stop change

For girls you might say/write/draw:

- Breast development – The shape of my body will change
- The onset of menstruation – I will begin to have my period



For boys you might say/write/draw:

- Growth acceleration – I will get taller
- Pubic, underarm, facial hair – Extra hair will grow
- Genitals enlarging – My body will look different
- Spontaneous erections, sperm production, wet dreams – My body will do new things
- Deepening voice – My voice will sound different

HOW TO SUPPORT:

- **REVISIT**
Strategies to cope with change that worked before
- **REMIN**
Your child about the support they have
- **RETELL**
Tell about your own experiences with change

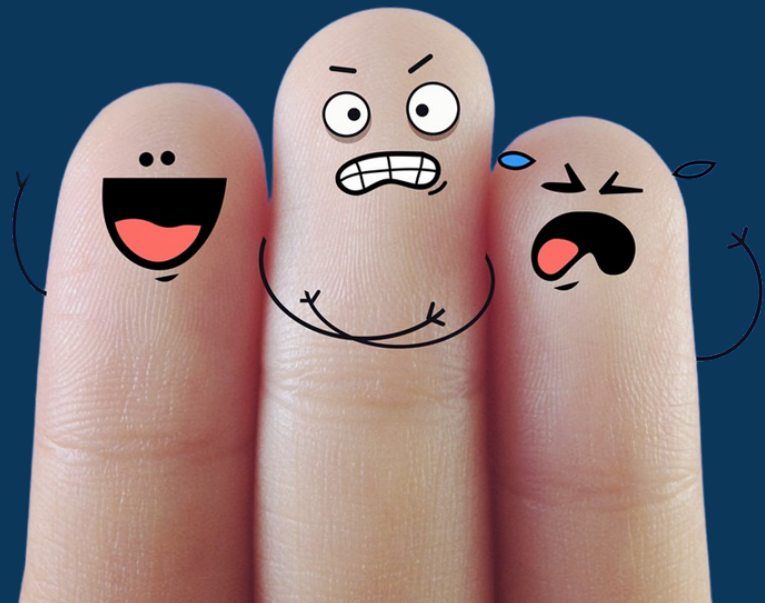


Top Tips

- Share your experience
- Be realistic
- Use correct language for body parts and body functions
- Talk about Big and Small changes
- Offer support and safe space/time

Because puberty is often accompanied by mood swings, resistance, and irrational behaviors, it can be difficult for families to distinguish between “normal” teen behaviors and a mental health problem.

Mental Health



Feeling left out. Children with autism might have problems interacting socially, but that doesn't mean they don't want to feel included. And if they don't share the same interests as their friends, they will likely feel isolated and left out.

Puberty CAN cause:

- mood swings
- withdrawal from family
- increased risk-taking
- changing appearances
- self-worth based on opinions of peers

Puberty should NOT cause:

- Excessive defiance and trouble-making, such as getting in trouble with the law, skipping class, or ongoing substance use
- Excessive anger or violent behaviors
- Persistent sadness or anxiety
- Drastic changes in sleeping or eating habits, and/or general health

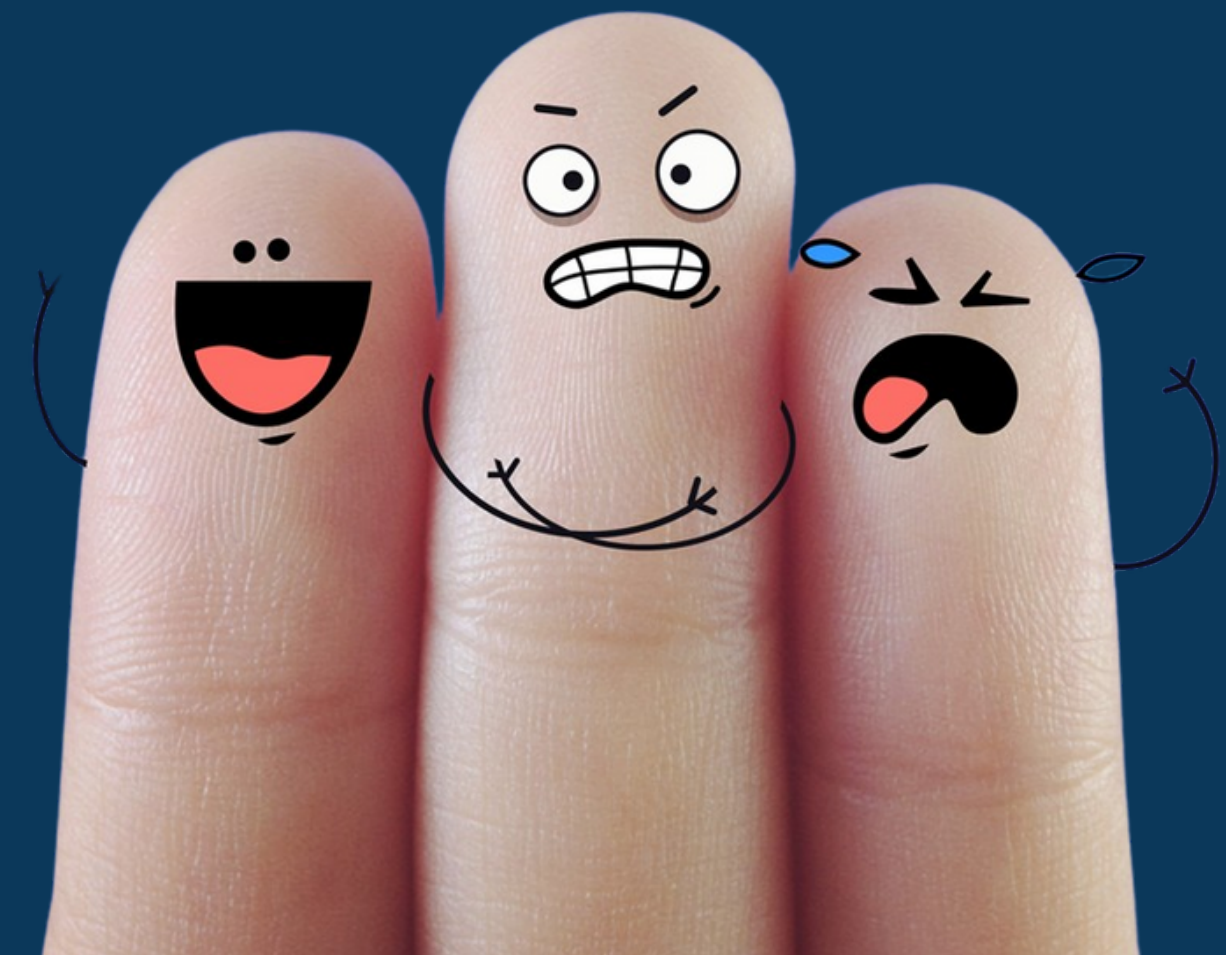
Close to 70% of teenagers with autism struggle with mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Mood swings

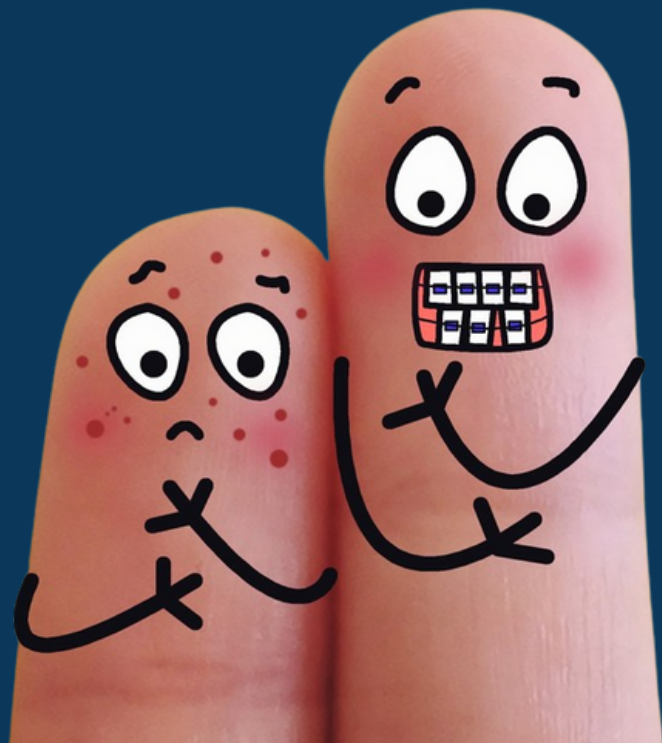
Mood swings are synonymous with puberty.

Teens can experience intense feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety, depression, or irritability without fully understanding why. In children with autism, this can manifest as aggressive or self-injurious behaviors.

- Exercise is a known mood regulator – make sure your child is getting daily exercise.
- Total cholesterol levels are lower during puberty. This can result in psychiatric symptoms including depression, anxiety, and aggression.
- Rapid growth spurts are taxing to your child's mitochondria and can cause fatigue and irritability. Work with your child's doctor to create a plan for mitochondrial support.
- With so many new changes and challenges during puberty, your child's anxiety can grow.

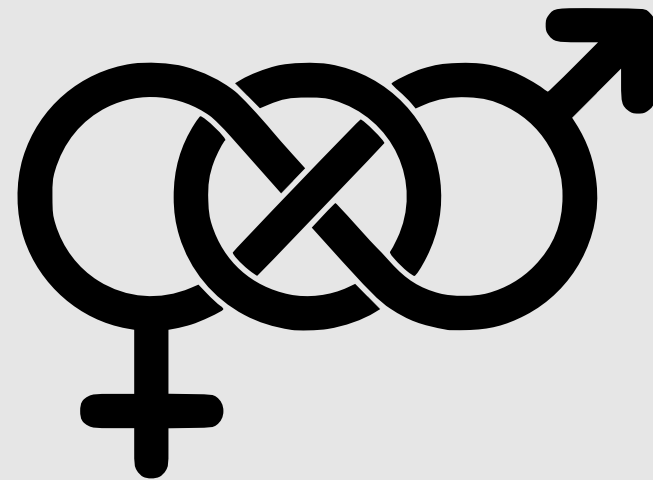


Sexuality



Troubles with sexuality

- Autistic teenagers may feel sexual urges but won't know what to do about them. And this can lead to mistakes.
- Due to communication and social interaction difficulties, they are more vulnerable to being sexually abused because they might miss some critical warning signs.



At school and at home, we should go beyond mere biology lessons to teach socially appropriate behaviour regarding sex, dating, and personal safety.

Use the correct language for body parts and body functions

Your teen will want to know about:

- How to find a partner?
- What to do in a relationship?
- What is sex/masturbation?
- Why do people have sex?
- When do people have sex?
- How do people talk about sex?
- What do people do when they have sex?
- How to communicate sexual and autism-specific needs with partners?

TALKING ABOUT IT IS BETTER THAN THEM SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS ON INAPPROPRIATE WEBSITES.

Sexualised behaviour

13 – 18 years: adolescence (Ref: Ryan, Lane and Leversee and LaTrobe University 2014 Health Study)

Age appropriate sexual behaviours

- Need for privacy
- Masturbating in private
- With peers:
 - Sexually explicit conversations, obscenities or jokes relevant to own culture
 - Sexual teasing and flirting
 - Kissing, hugging, holding hands
 - Foreplay with mutual consent
- Sexual intercourse plus full range of sexual activity with similar age partner
- Viewing sexual content for arousal (low risk)
- Sending/receiving sexual images of others with consent (low risk)*

Concerning sexual behaviours

- Being pre-occupied with/anxious about sex
- Being promiscuous (not making informed decisions about sexual relationships/have had frequent sexual relationships that they have felt uncomfortable about)
- Being interested in or using themes or obscenities involving sexual aggression
- Spying on others who are nude or engaged in sexual activity
- Engaging in unsafe sexual behaviour
- Seeking out pornography
- Having oral sex or intercourse with someone more than 2 years older/younger
- Sending/receiving sexual images of multiple people with their consent*

Very concerning sexual behaviours

- Compulsive masturbation (especially in public*)
- Degrading/humiliating self or others using sexual themes
- Chronic preoccupation with sexually aggressive pornography/child pornography*
- Attempting to expose other people's genitals
- Touching others genitals without permission*
- Making written/verbal sexually explicit threats*
- Making obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, voyeurism, or sexually harassing others*
- Sexual contact with much younger people*
- Sexual contact with animals*
- Penetrating another person forcefully*
- Taking sexual images of others to exploit them* (child pornography, exploitation risk)
- Having multiple nude images of others (risks as above plus exploitation)

Influences on children and young people's sexual behaviour

Most problem sexual behaviours are not due to a background history of sexual abuse. Age-appropriate sexual behaviours can become disrupted in children and young people for several reasons.

These include but are not limited to:

- Accidental/non-accidental exposure to sexually explicit material such as internet pornography, or other forms of pornography
- Exposure to adult sexual activity
- Physical abuse and emotional neglect (cumulative harm)
- Being exposed to family violence
- Re-enacting one's own childhood abuse
- Loss of significant others.

It is important to respond quickly to sexually problematic or abusive behaviours. Very few children and young people will go on to become adult sexual offenders. Children and young people respond well to strategies and support.



DO

Keep calm.

- Children and young people often do not understand that the behaviour is wrong, or why they behave this way.
- Your response is important in ensuring the child is able to manage any confusion, anxiety, shame or anger about their behaviour

DO NOT

- Appear shocked
- React in a way that makes the child or young person feel embarrassed or ashamed
- Ignore the behaviour
- Assume that sexual abuse has happened
- Use harmful language

Safety

There is no definitive answer to who or what is safe. This ambiguity causes problems for many autistic young people (especially in combination with their learning difficulties)

- online safety
- consent
- running away
- abuse and physical harm
- exploitation

Unsafe behaviours

- regardless of age or maturity could lead to harm
- non-negotiable, not a phase
- consistency in approach

Age-appropriate behaviours

- can be done safely and responsibly
- create a plan for safety and emergency:
 - Physical security of spaces
 - Personal identification
 - Technology
 - Trust and advocacy

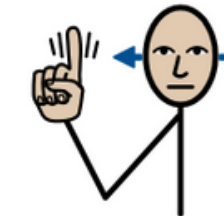
TAKING OFF ALL MY CLOTHES



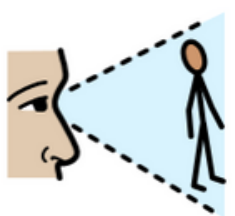
Getting undressed means taking off all my clothes. My body is then naked.



Sometimes, it is OK to take off my clothes. This is usually when I am alone. For example, in a bathroom or in my room.



It is not OK to take off all my clothes when other people are around. It is not OK to be naked in a public place, unless it is a changing room or a toilet.



Being seen without any clothes is generally not OK. Other children and adult people may be upset if I take off all my clothes.



I keep my clothes on when I am around other people.



I can take off or change my clothes when I am alone.

Safety



This curriculum was created with funds from



ORGANIZATION FOR
AUTISM RESEARCH



BOSTON
MEDICAL
CENTER
EXCEPTIONAL CARE. WITHOUT EXCEPTION.

SAFER DATING FOR YOUTH ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

AUTISM DATING:
AN HONEST DATING
GUIDE FOR AUTISTIC
PEOPLE




www.AutismParentingMagazine.com

TV SHOW/MOVIE/BOOK:

	YES	MAYBE / SORT OF	NO
They rushed into the relationship	1	2	3
They fell in love by magic	1	2	3
One or the other decided it was "love at first sight"	1	2	3
The main reason they are together is looks or sexual attraction	1	2	3
They interrupt each other when talking	1	2	3
They listen to each other's concerns [RC]	3	2	1
They play tricks, gags or jokes on each other	1	2	3
They use deception (lies) for any reason other than a surprise party	1	2	3
They express their anger in safe, healthy ways [RC]	3	2	1
They are supportive [RC]	3	2	1
They give sincere compliments [RC]	3	2	1
They use false flattery to get what they want	1	2	3
They put down the other person's family or friends	1	2	3
They yell	1	2	3
They threaten, blackmail, pressure or force	1	2	3
They "steal" a kiss or make sexual contact without asking	1	2	3
They are using the other person to get popular or for some other reason	1	2	3
They spy on each other	1	2	3
They don't trust each other	1	2	3
They are relaxed together [RC]	3	2	1
They demand time and attention	1	2	3
They threaten to hurt themselves if they are in a fight or breaking up	1	2	3
They cheat on the other person (sexually or emotionally)	1	2	3
They make the other person feel brave, happy, or calm [RC]	3	2	1

RC= reverse coded

22-30 points: Not healthy

31-54 points: Mostly unhealthy

55-66 points: Healthy

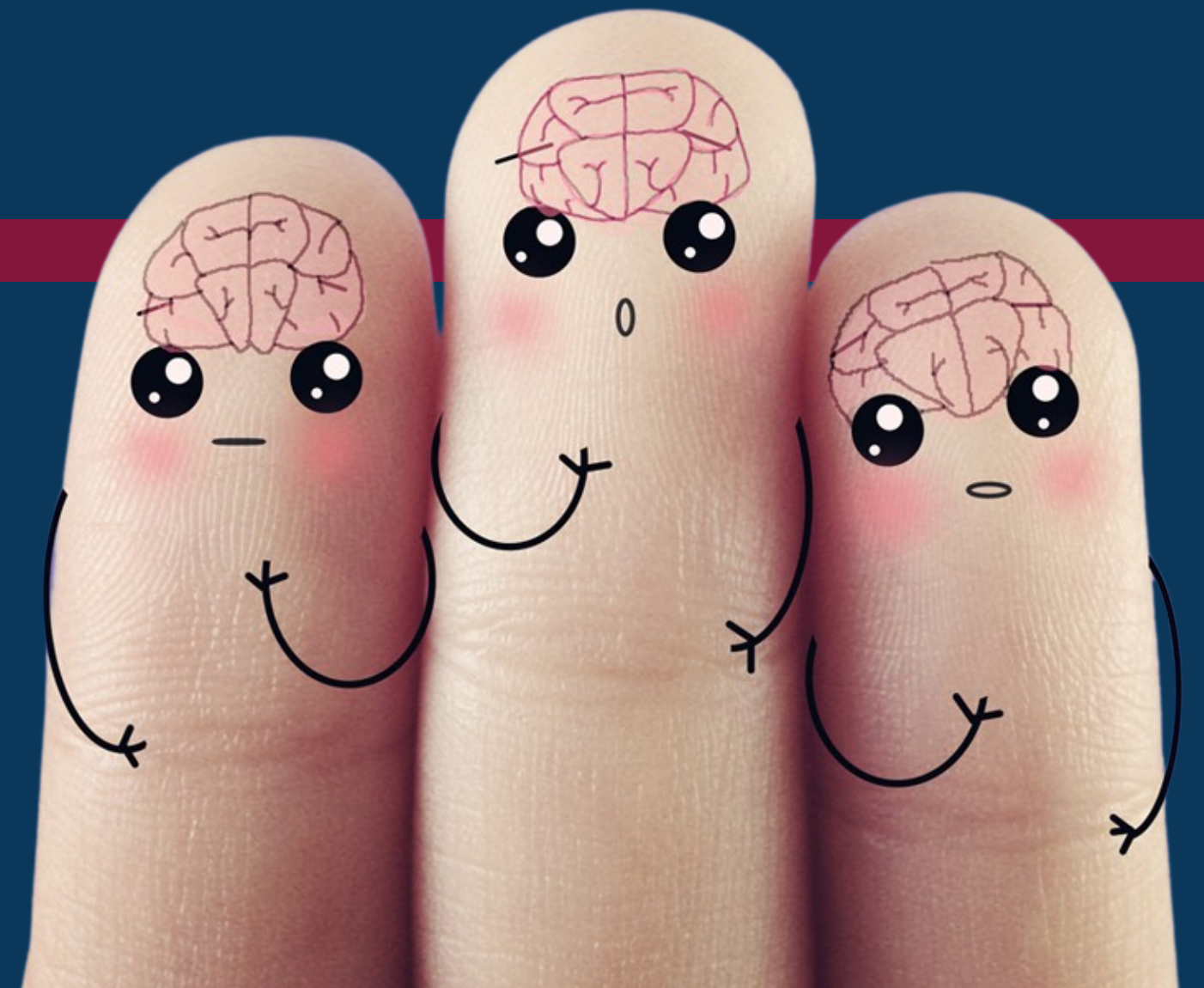
Total score: _____

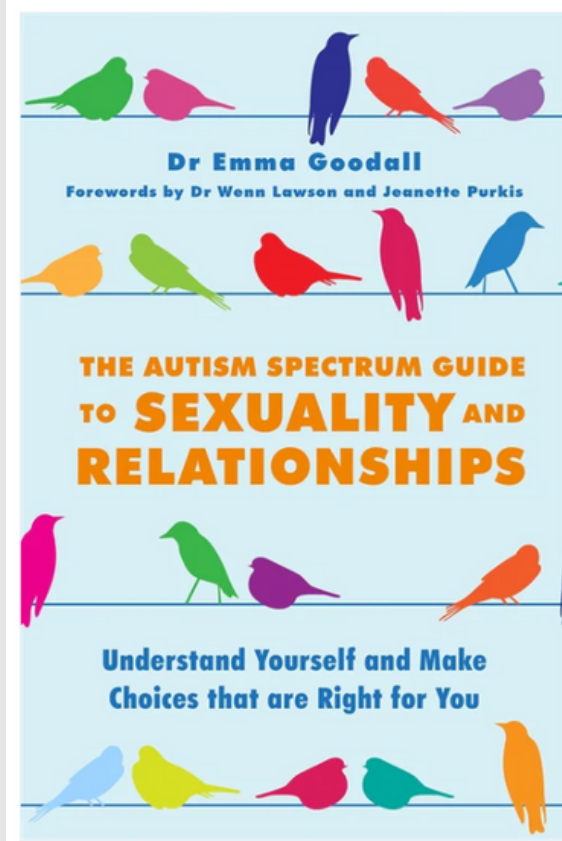
Seizures

- One in four individuals with autism have seizures.
- There is an **increase in prevalence of seizures** around puberty:
 - 12% of people with autism in infancy
 - **26%** in adolescence

If you believe your child is having seizures, make an appointment with a neurologist:

- Request that your child receives a **24-48 hour EEG recording electrical activity both when sleeping and awake.**
 - Discuss with your neurologist both prescription medications and non-pharmacologic treatment





The Autism Spectrum Guide to Sexuality and Relationships

Understand Yourself and Make Choices that are Right for You

Author [Emma Goodall](#)
Foreword [Yenn Purkis](#), [Dr Wenn Lawson](#)

Trade Paperback

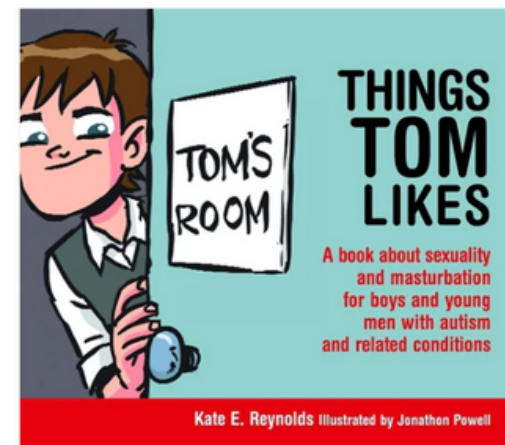
\$26.95

Pay in 4 interest-free installments for orders over \$50.00 with [Learn more](#)

Quantity
- 1 +

Add to cart

Unravelling the complexities of relationships and sexuality, this straight-talking guide will help you to navigate the associated social, emotional and physical issues. Expert advice and real life examples give you the knowledge to reflect on your own sexuality, provide you with information on different types of relationship, and gives you the confidence to decide which type of relationship is



Things Tom Likes

A book about sexuality and masturbation for boys and young men with autism and related conditions

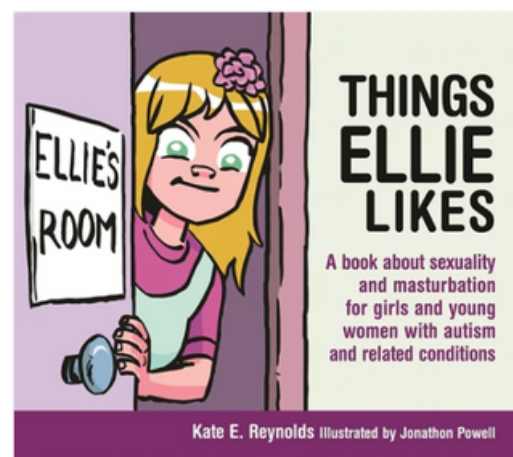
Author [Kate E. Reynolds](#)
Illustrator [Jonathon Powell](#)

Hardback

\$15.95

Pay in 4 interest-free installments for orders over \$50.00 with [Learn more](#)

Quantity



Things Ellie Likes

A book about sexuality and masturbation for girls and young women with autism and related conditions

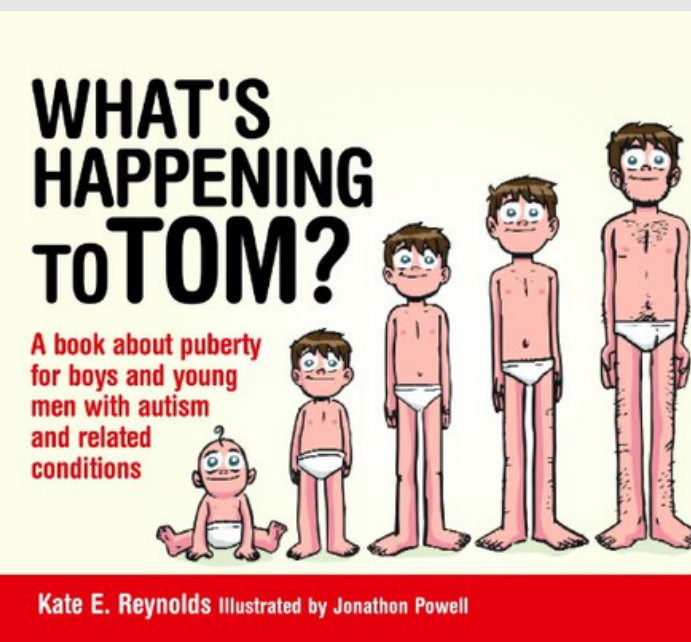
Author [Kate E. Reynolds](#)
Illustrator [Jonathon Powell](#)

Hardback

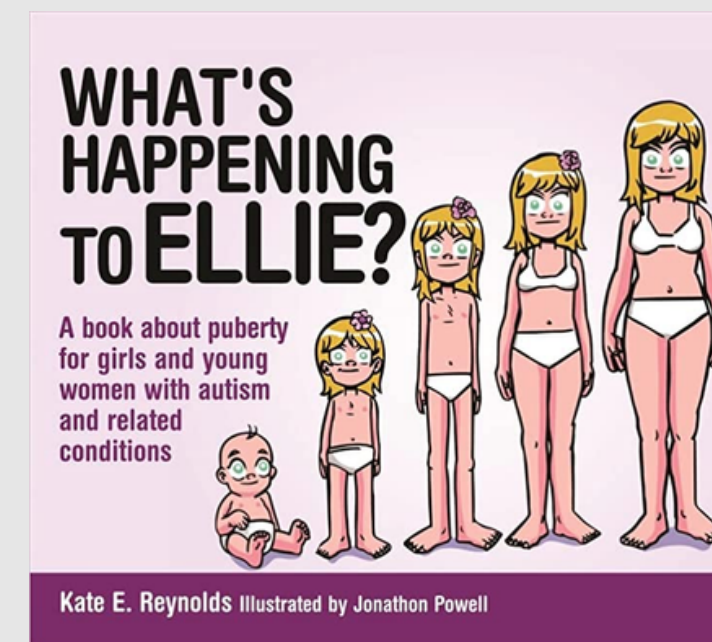
\$15.95

Pay in 4 interest-free installments for orders over \$50.00 with [Learn more](#)

Quantity



Kate E. Reynolds Illustrated by Jonathon Powell



Kate E. Reynolds Illustrated by Jonathon Powell



The Growing Up Book for Boys: What Boys on the Autism Spectrum Need to Know! Hardcover – Illustrated, March 21, 2015

by [Davida Hartman](#) (Author), [Margaret Anne Suggs](#) (Illustrator)

★★★★★ 333 ratings

Part of: [Growing Up](#) (3 books)

See all formats and editions

Hardcover
\$12.54

19 Used from \$4.32
17 New from \$11.48

The Growing Up Book for Boys explains the facts behind the growth spurts, body changes and mood swings of adolescence for boys aged 9-14 on the autism spectrum.

The pre-teen and teenage years are a confusing time when bodies start acting with a will of their own, friendships change and crushes start to develop. Using direct literal language and cool colour illustrations, this book tells boys all they need to know about growing hair in new places, shaving, wet dreams and unexpected erections. It's full of great advice on what makes a real friend, how to keep spots

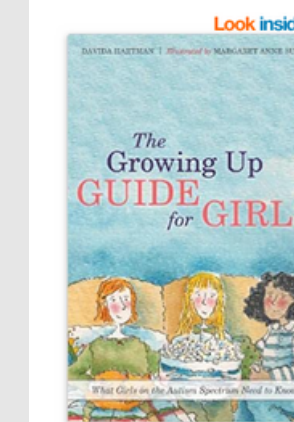
[Read more](#)

Reading age Print length Language Grade level Dimensions Publisher



See all 5 images

BOOKS > Children's books > Growing Up & Facts of Life



The Growing Up Guide for Girls: What Girls on the Autism Spectrum Need to Know! Hardcover – Illustrated, March 21, 2015

by [Davida Hartman](#) (Author), [Margaret Anne Suggs](#) (Illustrator)

★★★★★ 127 ratings

See all formats and editions

Hardcover
\$16.84

12 Used from \$8.00
15 New from \$12.84

The Growing Up Guide for Girls is a one-stop guide for young girls on the autism spectrum explaining all they need to know about puberty and adolescence.

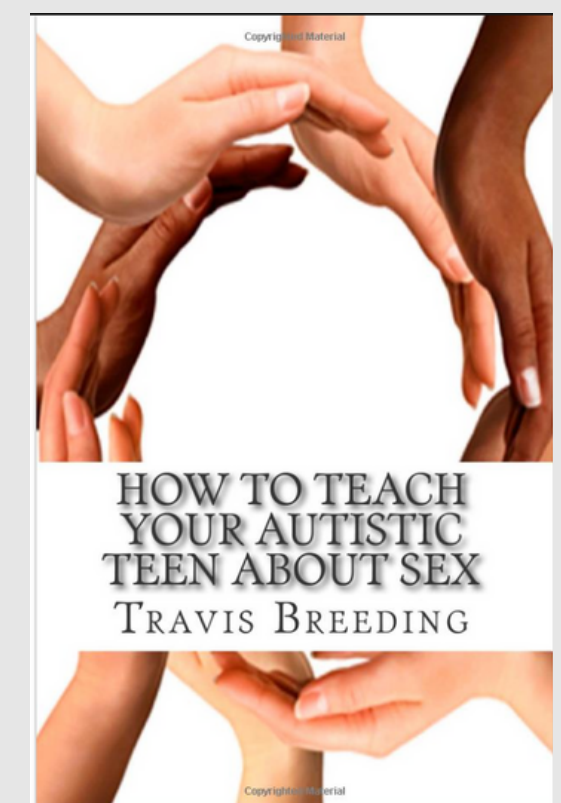
The pre-teen and teenage years are a bumpy time when bodies change, emotions are high and peers are developing at different paces. Using simple, literal language and delightful colour illustrations, this book explains the facts about body changes such as growing hair in new places, periods, wearing a bra and keeping spots away! It gives cool tips on what makes a real friend, what it

[Read more](#)

Reading age Print length Language Grade level Dimensions Publisher






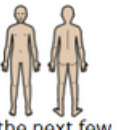












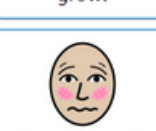



See all 2 images












HOW TO TEACH YOUR AUTISTIC TEEN ABOUT SEX
TRAVIS BREEDING

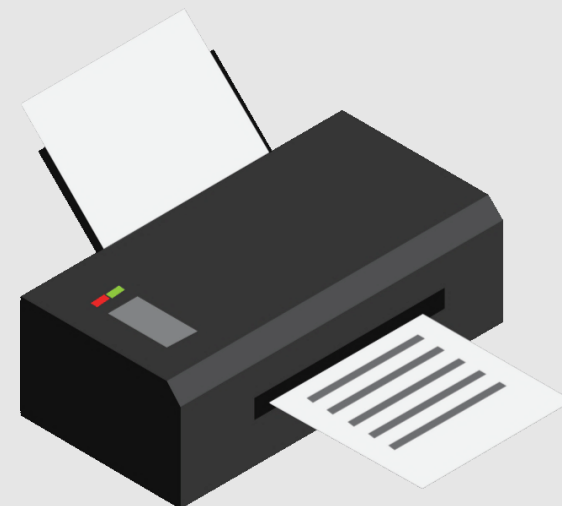
Materials are available at school.
Ask your class team or call the reception for a pack to be sent.

Puberty Social Story

 I am growing up.	 I used to be a small boy.	 Now, I am a young man.	 In the next few years, my body will be changing.
 This is a good thing.	 I will get taller	 I will have more hair on my legs.	 Hair will grow under my arms.
 I might grow chest hair.	 I will have hair near my privates	 I will have hair on my face.	 My voice will sound lower.
 My penis will also grow.	 I will put deodorant every day.	 My parents will show me how to shave.	 These changes happen to all boys.
 Sometimes, I might feel embarrassed about it.	 Sometimes, I might feel proud.	 It is ok to ask questions about these changes.	 My parents love me and they understand.

My Body is Private

 My body is private.	 Being naked means wearing no clothes.	 Who can see me naked?
	 Sometimes, my doctor needs to see my body.	 It is ok for my mum and dad to see my body.
 NOT my siblings	 NOT other students	 NOT other grown ups.
	 I wear clothes to protect my privacy.	



Sorting Activity Space, clothes, actions

 When I am	 at a playground	 in a shop	 at school
 I wear	 in a bus	 in a bathroom	 in my room
 I can	 visiting a doctor	 outside	 Pick nose
 I should not	 Pass gas	 Shower	 Undress



ORGANIZATION FOR
AUTISM RESEARCH

Sex Ed.

FOR SELF-ADVOCATES

Sexual Activity

What Is Sex?

Why Do People Have Sex?

When and Where Do People Have Sex?

How People Discuss Sex

Talking With Others About Sex

Sexual Innuendos

How Do People Have Sex?

Cleaning Up After Sex

Is Sex Different For Autistic People?

Navigating the Social Aspects of Sex

Conclusion

Test What You've Learned

Sexual Activity



00:00 / 01:52

Public Versus Private

In this section, we will discuss the difference between public, semi-public, semi-private, and private places and what conversations, personal information, and behaviors are appropriate in each type of place.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Puberty and the Body

In this section, we will explain what puberty is, describe related body parts, and discuss how bodies and brains change during puberty through hormonal changes, and how the reproductive system works.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Healthy Relationships

In this section, we will discuss various types of relationships, the differences between appropriate and inappropriate relationships, and how to recognize healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.

[LEARN MORE](#)

All About Consent

In this section, you will learn about boundaries, what "consent" is, how to know if someone is able to consent, and how to say "no" or respond to "no."

[LEARN MORE](#)

Dating 101

In this section, we will discuss crushes, flirting, asking people on dates, going on dates, being in a relationship, and ending a relationship.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In this section, we will explain sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, LGBTQ resources, coming out, and homophobia and transphobia.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Am I Ready?

In this section, you will learn to recognize what your personal values are about sex, how they are shaped, and how to determine whether you are ready to have sex for the first time.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Sexual Activity

In this section, we will discuss the basics of what sex is, why and when people have sex, how people talk about sex, and how to communicate sexual and autism-specific needs with partners.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Online Relationships and Safety

In this section, you will learn about what information is safe to share online and how to manage it, online dating and friendships, and how to deal with negative interactions.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Preparation, not surprises

If you talk to your child in advance about the likely changes, they won't get caught by surprise. And that makes the whole experience less traumatic.

Embrace the awkwardness

Share your experience - talk about big and small changes. Offer support and safe space/time. Have a laugh.

Respect, take interest and compromise

Their puberty and identity could be different from yours. Remember to be respectful, flexible and ready for compromises. Model the support you expect from others



OLIVIA IZZO

Child Psychotherapist



SARA MURŠIĆ

Head of Autism Research and
Development

That's all from us.

THANK YOU!

**IT'S TIME FOR
QUESTIONS**