

00:00.00

theautismhelper

Welcome back to the autism helper podcast I am so excited to have Rachel Schwartz with us on the podcast for a second time. Welcome back Rachel I'm good I'm I have to tell you I'm really excited for this interview but we have a.

00:07.49

Rachel

Hi How are you hi.

00:15.90

Rachel

Um, boo I'm excited to do it I Love talking about this I.

00:18.73

theautismhelper

Really good topic something we haven't talked about on the podcast and I think is really needed. Rachel's last episode on body autonomy was so valuable and needed and I think this will carry on that kind of same topic really nicely. So today we are talking about sexuality education and. Whatever you know, grades levels. You are teaching whether you're the educator or the parent. This is such an important thing to consider.

00:46.85

Rachel

Yes, yes, it is um and I think what happens with Sexuality education in particular is people end up focusing so much on this being just about sex and pleasure like you know if you tell you sexualized.

00:57.16

theautismhelper

Yeah, yeah.

01:01.70

Rachel

All the education. Oh that's you're talking about how to prevent sex how to have safe sex or how to just yeah or you're you're just scared about it like sex doesn't exist. Ah, but really I think there's ah it's about intimacy. It's about connection. It's about forming relationships of all kinds.

01:06.95

theautismhelper

Yes.

01:19.50

Rachel

And Community friendships. All of that. It's about human development

and just understanding your body and understanding how your body changes over time and for safety as well. Just general safety about that's what we touched on with the bodily autonomy.

01:30.15
theautismhelper
Yeah, yeah.

01:35.83
Rachel
But there are so many components of sexuality education that go way beyond pleasure and often we get stuck in just thinking about it as a very small piece which is really just a small piece of sexual education but just thinking about it as something about how you give or receive pleasure which is not.

01:49.91
theautismhelper
Yeah I mean that was an interesting explanation of how much could be included like there's a social skill component. There's a health. There is a science component. There's so many different things that are included in this umbrella.

01:52.78
Rachel
Really what? all of sexuality education is.

02:03.68
Rachel
Oh Oh yes, I mean is is and we'll kind of touch on this I think more as we talk but it's really that that piece of learning about intercourse or or sexual acts is such a small small small component. Of a true comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum.

02:22.25
theautismhelper
So from the perspective of a special Ed teacher or special Ed Clinician Why is this especially important and and why is this more challenging.

02:31.67
Rachel
Well I think as special educators we are tasked with building those skills and increasing Independence and the self-determination of all of our students. It is impossible to address those goals without addressing components of Sexuality education.

02:47.81
theautismhelper
Yeah, it's true.

02:50.66

Rachel

Individuals with disabilities experience. Higher rates of mental emotional physical and sexual abuse than their counterparts without disabilities. So I think the statistic and this might be from you know, twenty eighteen but it was children with disabilities are 3 times more likely to experience sexual abuse than peers without disabilities.

03:07.70

theautismhelper

Wow.

03:10.90

Rachel

So you know that's a very staggering and scary number. So at the very least to answer your question about kind of why does it matter it matters because it can help reduce abuse reduce future charges charges of any sort of sex crimes. It also can reduce loneliness.

03:25.51

theautismhelper

Oh.

03:27.54

Rachel

Can reduce this feeling of isolation that so often happens for individuals with disabilities as they age and ideally it's going to increase those connection those healthy relationships and healthy boundaries. So if you're a special education teacher.

03:34.93

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

03:43.70

Rachel

You're tasked with hey how am I going to make everyone says I want to make them as ah, all of our students as independent as possible I want to make them have the most enriched lives that they can have where you can't do that if you're not safe and if you don't know how to build friendships relationships and community.

03:58.17

theautismhelper

Yeah, that's true. It's a really good way to think about it and you're right, We just hear like sex ad it's like oh let's just avoid that. But if we go back to what our true goals are as educators. You really can't avoid it.

04:09.80

Rachel

Now no as much and and I have before in the past I've been like I do not want to touch on this and you know yeah it it is hard and you can't walk into it Blindly you have to walk into it.

04:14.61

theautismhelper

Yeah I know. Yeah.

04:24.97

Rachel

Purposefully and in collaboration with all the different stakeholders.

04:26.56

theautismhelper

So where do teachers and related service Providers providers fit in this equation on either getting this started continuing this like where do we fit in here.

04:38.44

Rachel

Ah, parents are first and foremost the the primary sexual educators as a parent kids are first going to go to you and and try to learn about your value system in terms of sexuality education.

04:42.10

theautismhelper

Me.

04:53.22

Rachel

They're going to be looking at you know if you shut them down as a parent or if you say hey come talk to me want to talk to about that. That's where they're first going to learn information so parents always are the first ones fielding those questions teachers and related service providers have the opportunity to support those skills in the classroom. Because there's many you know there are many competing priority priorities in special education and sexuality education is typically not one of those and so when we're in the classroom. There are a lot of them. We'll talk about those subset of skills that we as educators are already touching on that actually. Fall into a comprehensive sex ed program some of the barriers that we often see with teachers in schools is the lack of teacher preparation. This isn't something we talk about and when we're preparing teachers and pre-service teachers to become teachers. There's a lack of teacher knowledge. That can lead to fear concerns and anxiety around this subject matter. There's the parental anxiety and fear and really a lack of valid and reliable sexual health education materials for

students with disabilities. There are not. There are some curriculums that are. Comprehensive and complete. But there's not a ton some are expensive and a lot of the times you might get the curriculum but you don't have the training so that can be very very difficult for teachers to manage.

06:09.37

theautismhelper

Or well. And for parents too I mean I was like kind of as you started off with like oh my gosh. The parents are the first ones I mean this is a hard topic with you know with all kids but adding in that neurodiversity component makes it even more challenging for parents.

06:27.69

Rachel

Oh Absolutely I Do a lot of parent training right now where we just talk through what we're talking about now. Why is this important? What is it involved and what can you do and to help Dispel some of the myths that parents might have and often teachers have about sexuality education and people disabilities. 1 of the biggest myths that I'm sure you've heard is if you teach anyone and this is for anyone about Sex. They'll run on have sex and that's definitely False. You know that doesn't actually happen. In fact, the opposite is usually true. Um, another myth that is.

06:46.22

theautismhelper

Ah.

06:51.65

theautismhelper

Um, yes, yeah, ah yeah.

07:01.43

Rachel

Really specific to special education is that you need to focus on the cognitive age of the child and not the biological. So and that's false We need to focus on that biological age but we present information that addresses the cognitive abilities that addresses how they're going to.

07:08.79

theautismhelper

Ah.

07:19.40

Rachel

Engage in information and learn information.

07:21.97

theautismhelper

Yeah I mean and that's a challenge with teaching you know language arts like versus um, getting to such a complex topic.

07:26.86

Rachel

Oh absolutely. Absolutely We're asking people to understand really ah abstract concepts. And to distill those down into here are some actions address those but more than just yes and you know it's not just yes, do this? No do that. It's we have all these yes and no behaviors. But on top of that we have a ton of gray and you need to learn about the context and when to discriminate to do these things you know masturbations when I always get.

07:37.88

theautismhelper

Ah.

07:47.50

theautismhelper

Yeah, yeah.

07:57.12

Rachel

Questions about and that's one of those things. It's not no, you don't do this. It's no, you don't do this here. We don't do it in the Nurse's bathroom. We don't do it in the school bathroom. You can do it at home under these situations and teaching kids How to discriminate those contexts.

08:02.50

theautismhelper

Yeah, yeah.

08:14.80

Rachel

It does require a lot of preparation and savviness to make sure that kids can understand that for whatever. However, they receive information. Yeah, so it's not a quick thing to just decide one day hey I think I really want to dive into these hard topics. You've got to have them preparation.

08:20.31

theautismhelper

Yeah.

08:29.52

theautismhelper

Yeah, well and you know that that example that you said on you know about masturbation and and looking at the the real age of the child.

Not the cognitive age. Um I'm I'm really curious. You know that you gave that advice where and when to do that and as a really young teacher I learned this. Very quickly on on this was going to be a part of my job I taught junior high for 10 years and did you do you recommend involving parents in those discussions of like how to teach that discrimination because I know every family has different rules and beliefs on where and when and all of that.

09:01.45

Rachel

Yes, you cannot start doing this without explicit conversations with parents because what you don't want to do is say I'm gonna work on sex Ed with these kids and we're gonna talk about privacy and then.

09:11.40

theautismhelper

Ah.

09:17.19

Rachel

Have the kid go home and start talking about privacy with their parents and maybe in ways that you're like what are you talking about? where did you learn this and because parents are the primary sexuality educators you want to make sure that you are aligned in what you were teaching and or just make them aware hey I want to.

09:20.53

theautismhelper

Yeah.

09:34.41

Rachel

Address this topic. This is how I'm going to teach it. There's most districts most states depending on the state's laws in regards to Sexuality education for kids you need parental permission Anyway, for some of this and they could say well I don't want you to talk about.

09:35.41

theautismhelper

Okay.

09:45.66

theautismhelper

Okay.

09:53.24

Rachel

Stis but I do want you to talk about privacy and development. You know they can kind of go through that and you know and those topics really vary by age because there are some things that are absolutely

inappropriate to talk about with a young child. But when you hit adolescence. Yeah, you're going to want to start discussing this.

09:56.16
theautismhelper
Away.

10:06.10
theautismhelper
Yeah, yeah, let's get into that. What are some topics that are appropriate for different ages.

10:15.10
Rachel
Well for young kids elementary school kids. The biggest topics are body parts and functions knowing the real name of everything because the last thing you need is to confuse a kid by calling parts different.

10:22.90
theautismhelper
Okay.

10:32.69
Rachel
Weird things like I have heard some strange stuff like this is your noodle like this is this? No no if um, so yeah, body parts functions even body image starting to use body positivity and just making everyone feel comfortable in their own skin the need for privacy. Really.

10:33.41
theautismhelper
Yes, ah me too. Ah oh my gosh.

10:52.57
Rachel
Increases through elementary school where where kids you know 3 4 5 they're going to barge in on you in the bathroom they're going to keep the door open in the bathroom and they're going to. You know they're on the body and you have to remind them hey we close the door that's going to start to change so when they're 10 9 10 they're not going to be doing that.

11:03.31
theautismhelper
He yeah.

11:10.43
Rachel

So the focus is being able to communicate yes and no, that's essential for consent so we need someone to be able to discriminate between yes and no and somehow communicate that and being able to identify different relationships from a family to a stranger a friend or an acquaintance and there's.

11:21.54
theautismhelper
Ah.

11:29.84
Rachel
You know there's circles Curriculum. There's a lot of different curriculum that you can use for that but understanding those different relationships because that's going to then feed into adolescence where we talk a little bit more about some of those feelings that you're starting to have you know those sexual feelings or interest in Others. And adolescence you have the physical changes of Puberty. So We start to really have to dive into Hygiene body odor all of that. Um, in adolescence we talk about friendships more the different levels of Friendship. You've established friendships and relationships as young children. How does that evolve in adolescence.

11:52.71
theautismhelper
And.

12:07.34
Rachel
What happens when you feel like this person's a friend and then have start to get interested in them. What does that look like that's kind of bringing in those different feelings So more in-depth Relationship Discussions. You might start teaching about reproduction Pregnancy Birth If you might start teaching. Teaching about sexually transmitted diseases and sexual safety again. The most important thing in adolescence is still for for all kids and especially kids in special education as well is to ensure how to give consent how to make choices understand privacy and private.

12:42.44
theautismhelper
Or.

12:43.85
Rachel
Behaviors and with the consent. It's both to give consent and accept when someone is saying no so accepting A no and that can be across tasks. You know often.

12:50.28

theautismhelper
Yeah.

12:57.13

Rachel

And I'm sure in your experiences Behavior Analyst you've had this too where we're trying to teach someone to accept. You don't an alternative you don't get what you want all the time so accepting A no is really an important skill under the umbrella of that sexuality education.

13:01.88

theautismhelper
M.

13:10.26

theautismhelper

It's so interesting to think about what how many skills we work on would fall under this and and the conceptualize that like we're already working on these things in classroom but have that connection of this is why and this is what it does in long term it. It's It's pretty cool to think about it that way.

13:20.97

Rachel

Um, yeah I mean you're already doing most teachers are already covering this. They might not be covering. For example, you know contraception in detail or sexual expression in detail. But I guarantee there.

13:30.30

theautismhelper
Yeah.

13:36.72

Rachel

Working on communication skills accepting those nos they're working on hygiene. They're working on all of those other pieces and they're probably working on the relationships piece. Even if they're not working on kind of the next stage of what is ah, what do you do? if you are in a relationship with someone. What are some ways that you physically express that and again, that's that sexual expression that. We might not be hitting that in our lessons that we probably in high school if they haven't learned that you know and and most kids stay you know til 21 22 and pa they just can stay to their twenty second birthday. So you know there's opportunities as they get into high school. So if you have not covered.

14:02.71

theautismhelper

Okay.

14:12.38

Rachel

A lot of those you know the the pregnancies the reproduction somewhat more details about human development. There was an opportunity to do it at that level and as a teacher. Oh go ahead? yeah.

14:19.79

theautismhelper

What recommendations quick question on high school teachers. Do you recommend that they maybe like collaborate with Junior high teachers. You know you get kids from all different schools but it would be nice to know I would assume as a high school teacher have they had exposure to this So I know what to teach or what parents have already discussed with teachers.

14:29.69

Rachel

Oh yes.

14:39.49

theautismhelper

Do what do you? What advice you have for those high school teachers getting incoming freshmen.

14:44.18

Rachel

The short answer is yes yes to all the above the ideal is that there is a curriculum or a guide you can go to? Um, yeah, you know like I'll send a long term resources. To have a guide so that you can say okay in elementary school. This is what we've worked on and this is where everyone is with us and then middle school here here. This is what we're trying to work on and here's where they are and then in high school you're building up on that curriculum and because it is really hard when you get a kid and and this often happens you have those splinter skills.

15:01.21

theautismhelper

Other.

15:15.98

Rachel

But in terms of this material. You know if you're getting a kid in high school who still struggles understanding private private and public acts. That's a big you know that's a big deal. So some of these core Concepts I might not then focus on. Okay, who cares about.

15:29.78

theautismhelper
Anyway.

15:30.61

Rachel

Contraception right? Now. Let's just focus on this huge behavior that is actually necessary for safety and you know if there's a way there are some initial assessments you can do to figure out what do they know about this information so all high schoolers or high school teachers I mean could give that. Um, initially and just say Okay, how much does your kid know talk to the family. How much do they know and if they get the permission can I teach them this this content then share the content with them. And ideally you can collaborate with other health teachers or someone else who is approaching this with the rest of the students as well. Okay.

16:07.67

theautismhelper

Yeah, yeah, they'll be just a tough position to be and I'm envision it yeah like it would be great if we had that streamlined communication between schools but you know it doesn't always happen. So ah yeah.

16:13.70

Rachel

I know it it it never happens I mean I thought when I like really started teaching sex Ed I was teaching adults and so it was a very different world because these are people I wasn't.

16:23.24

theautismhelper

Ah.

16:26.93

Rachel

Bound by the school system. It was you knew what class you were taking because you signed up for it. So all of these in the adult I was 22 through I think we had 58 or 59 was the oldest student in that first class so there were a lot of people who were interested and it is a little easier in the adult world to be able to do that than in.

16:38.10

theautismhelper

Wow.

16:46.87

Rachel

And when you're in a school system because in the school system. There's just yeah, the ideal is you would get this. You'd have a curriculum but more more people most people are worried about math and literacy and not sex ed.

16:53.73

theautismhelper

Yes, yeah, yeah, well when we get into you know we kind of talked earlier about how people tend to avoid this topic because it feels taboo or whatever what if. As a special Ed teacher other staff members maybe disagree with you bringing this into the classroom.

17:13.39

Rachel

Yeah, um, any if anyone's interested in doing this. That's listening you will ah you will face that I have gotten a lot of I've gotten a lot of interesting discussions with people who are just this is absolutely not something I'm interested in I don't think we should teach it. Yeah, it's okay. You as a staff member have different values. We aren't here to actually teach others our value system that's for parents parents teach kids their value system my kids learn my value systems about this and all of our students will learn their values from their families. So We aren't here to teach a value system.

17:30.53

theautismhelper

Hello.

17:47.29

Rachel

We are here to teach information factual information. This is what happens when you do Xy or ZSoSexuality education is not something that a staff member can just decide to do on their own because they're gonna be talking about the sensitive materials like we said they're gonna have every school district has some. Regulations in terms of how you talk about sexuality education. How it's addressed what a special educator can do and should do is see how they can support the access to that information for their students so that might be adapting some curriculum from the health teacher. It could be that if they don't have access information. There're um, you know because if they don't have access to information. They're able to make those choices and they're not able to participate in some of these discussions. You know, making sure that all kids in special education have options to join some of those I forget what they're called. You know every school calls them something different but essentially like a health like a.

18:39.70

theautismhelper

Yeah.

18:41.97

Rachel

Learn about puberty kind of class like making sure that all kids are able to participate and you as a special educator can help convey that

information. But I interact with staff members from all value systems all the time I mean I was in a training I did training recently where a staff member was just like I do not believe that we should be teaching this I don't believe. In people with disabilities learning about this and it it was like okay, that's all right? But the question is not whether or not you believe because you're still tasked with providing information.

19:11.25
theautismhelper
Yeah, so.

19:13.98
Rachel
So it's okay I'm not walking into a school to teach my value system I'm just walking in to provide information or to facilitate access to information.

19:22.58
theautismhelper
No more we need to like save that little clip. That's a great response like yeah, um.

19:24.51
Rachel
But Also and I will say also with that last last thing is that I also like to appoint a primary staff person. So if this is happening whether it's in a school whether it's an organization. Whatever it is. There's the primary person who's the go to for this. So if a student asks a different staff member a question. That would be in this realm so it might be like you know what I was thinking about whatever and I have these feelings when I look at so-and-so so and dahda-da-da the staff member member can say let's go talk to sasha about it. Let's go talk to whoever that point person is.

19:55.31
theautismhelper
Yeah.

19:59.52
Rachel
And maybe that point person is the one with the training and is able to to give them that access so it's helpful when there are staff members who don't want to be in the position to know that there's somebody else who's hey I'm good with this just send them to me.

20:02.94
theautismhelper
Oh yeah.

20:08.83

theautismhelper

Yeah, and that might be some of the pushback that staff members give you know it's just I don't know how to deal with it like how let's just not do it because I don't know how to deal with it I don't know how to answer those questions So taking that you know pressure off might be helpful too.

20:22.69

Rachel

Yeah, and adult it is awkward I've had so many questions from from that have made me blush and I do this often and and and I'll have questions and I'll just be like okay fluster fluster fluster but you just its yeah, it's um.

20:30.96

theautismhelper

Ah.

20:35.00

theautismhelper

Ah, ah, let's take a minute.

20:41.58

Rachel

But I also think every time that happens I think Wow I'm so glad that we are sitting and having this conversation because I'm a safe person your parents like these are safe people for you to go and talk to and I read this great article where essentially adults with disabilities were saying that.

20:51.88

theautismhelper

True.

21:00.26

Rachel

They had to learn about relationships and intimacy from the Tv show friends and from like you know other magazines Cosmopolitan I Mean can you imagine those quizzes from Cosmo that is that that what your your your thinking is normal I mean.

21:07.35

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, yeah, thinking is normal. Yeah.

21:18.23

Rachel

So we have to remember if someone wants the information they're going to find it so we want to make sure that we're giving accurate

information in a really safe way.

21:22.85

theautismhelper

True. Um, well I mean like I mean my mind is going to a lot of weird places right now but beyond like friends and Cosmo I mean think of what the internet gives access to like. So yeah, you'll find those answers and it yeah may definitely be something not but you want your child or teenager to be consuming.

21:43.39

Rachel

No I mean I worked with a adult who he essentially was like I He had a really um, different view of what of of sexuality sexual acts because he had. Gone down a very dark rabbit hole inter and in the internet in the inner webs that led him to just what is and he was like oh this is what people do and I had to finally say most people don't It's fine if it's something you've like but ah like this is not what most people do and and it's um, it's a again.

22:02.22

theautismhelper

Yeah.

22:09.11

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, yeah, yeah for you? yeah.

22:19.84

Rachel

Awkward discussions and you're trying to and I and I would love to be able to avoid some of those by kids having more of this knowledge in high school more of this knowledge leading too. So when we get to adulthood. We're not having to say hey let me tell you what this this thing is because now you've developed an idea of this concept that you know 70% 80% of the population. Don't.

22:33.63

theautismhelper

Yeah, yeah, well. Also I mean I imagine this happens quite frequently with typically developing teenagers that if parents avoid the topic. They're just going to find videos online that might show them things a little different than.

22:39.55

Rachel

Have a different response to it.

22:44.89

Rachel

No absolutely.

22:53.59

theautismhelper

What you would maybe want to teach. So yeah.

22:54.49

Rachel

And I think the difference is with those peers is often. They're a little savvier at discriminating. What is okay, okay this is what I really should be focusing on I I understand some of these societal rules and cues.

23:02.37

theautismhelper

Ah, true.

23:10.89

Rachel

Whereas some of these students in special education. Do not read those cues and then we start to have issues with the legal system because um, you know I feel like I told you this last time I worked with individuals who just masturbated on the bus because someone taught them at one point that privacy was if someone can't see you which is not what private is so um.

23:14.71

theautismhelper

Yeah.

23:21.23

theautismhelper

Yeah. Yeah.

23:29.68

Rachel

You know he was involved in the legal system and that's just we want to avoid that at all costs.

23:34.22

theautismhelper

Yeah, you know I had a similar I used to work in special recreation and um, this child teenage you know, young man was taught that you could masturbate in a bathroom and so he would masturbate in the public bathrooms at the park and that.

23:45.33

Rachel

Oh ah see.

23:47.74

theautismhelper

You know police were involved and parents were involved and it got really tricky really quick and I I felt so bad for him because he was following the rules he was told you know he was told a bathroom he went to the bathroom and that's what he did So You know it gets you have to think through everything so critically because some of our. Students Kids are so black and white that we have to think through all those gray situations.

24:09.93

Rachel

And if I had a nickel for every time someone said to me well the functions automatic So don't we need to allow them to do this like no be that is where I think sometimes the behavioral science I'm like yes that's true, but this is illegal So like we.

24:18.55

theautismhelper

Yeah, no yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

24:27.94

Rachel

We can't teach people. You know there's a where and a when and and you know that's that's really important. That's what I mean about some of those gray behaviors. It's not just yes, you can no, you can't It's well you can under these contexts and conditions. That's what you what we're teaching them to look for.

24:38.30

theautismhelper

Yeah, well this is a good segue so kind of getting into those interfering behaviors to put it like mildly that you know can happen in the classroom that are sexual in nature especially Junior high high school transition teachers. What is your advice on.

24:47.98

Rachel

Um.

24:57.95

theautismhelper

Unapproaching those and I know it it you know gets complicated very quickly. So for teachers that have that happening in their classroom. What is your kind of overall advice there without getting specific.

25:09.30

Rachel

Yeah, um, well first anyone who is about to address or you feel like you're in a position that you have to address a sexual behavior of

concern something that sexual nature should determine if you have a scope of competence and confidence to address the issue There's a great resource from Matt Broadhead it's not about sexuality in general but it's just about behavior analysts and interventionists. How are we intervening and to make sure you actually have the skills to do this. So do you as a professional have the skills to do this work. Are you confident that you can do it and if the answer is no to either 1 of those questions who can you go to. What can you? How can you get more information and in this article broadhead discusses some ways to increase your skills and confidence. But that's always my first place to go because often as an educator you're faced with analyzing these types of behaviors especially as kids grow and there's always going to be. 1 or 2 kids that are really fidgety that are maybe engaging some of these more sexual behaviors and so you might feel confident in doing an initial analysis and initial observations and data but not necessarily identifying some of those replacement behaviors or you might feel that you can identify their replacement behaviors but you can't teach them. So there's some. There's some resources sources in this but really where I land is that do some of those exercises do some of those activities to determine. Do you have the confidence doing this. Do you have the skills to do this and before you intervene do that through those steps and then do some risk benefitne analysis to determine.

26:37.66

Rachel

Risks of any intervention and the potential benefits of those interventions and to make sure that there are skills that I'm sure you can teach or address because often there are a subset of foundational skills such as the concept of privacy that someone hasn't learned so you can teach that you might not be able to intervene.

26:48.66

theautismhelper

Her.

26:55.93

Rachel

Directly on for example, masturbation or so or um, touching others privates. Maybe there's parts of that you feel nervous about but there are I'm I'm sure basic skills that you as an educator can address. So I you know I always say it is something you have to be really careful on because you never want to make a problem worse.

27:04.17

theautismhelper

Yeah.

27:14.38

Rachel

So going back and just saying do I have the conference to do this do I feel like I have the skills. What are the benefits of this. What are the potential risks who can I reach out to for help for this. Those are good exercises to get you started and then you can find out what you you do feel good about teaching because there will be stuff that you feel like you can do.

27:31.81

theautismhelper

I Think that's good advice. Um in general and that second piece is really important that risk benefit because as you were talking I was thinking through so many teachers that I work with that. There isn't a bcba in the district and there isn't maybe you know, especially in more rural areas like there might not be someone to go to.

27:43.80

Rachel

Oh yeah.

27:48.90

theautismhelper

Um, and they're quick answers to your questions of are you confident you for a con and be like heck no I don't you know? um, but that behaviors that you kind of quite truly can't ignore that you know where can we start with things like privacy and accepting no and things like and personal space. Um, at least those things could have some.

27:53.75

Rachel

Um, yeah.

28:07.88

theautismhelper

Benefit to the safety of the classroom and that child.

28:09.32

Rachel

And there's a lot more resources now that I think are widely available. So if you say hey now I don't have the skills for this I don't have the confidence. There's Self-educ education that's available and again if you get risk benefits you're like I think the benefit out raise the risk here and everyone agrees that do that self-education see what happens.

28:15.60

theautismhelper

Oh.

28:29.14

Rachel

Try to bolster some of those foundational skills and see you know see where you go and if you need additional supports. Also there's a lot of more virtual consultation particularly in an area like this that you can that you can get.

28:40.53

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, oh that's a good point so kind of wrapping up this such a I mean I've learned so much from this conversation. So many great points. But what are some in general some kind of absolutes that you think every teacher should be working on with their student when it comes to this topic.

28:56.10

Rachel

Um, well I've already talked about privacy because it's just the biggest thing every student needs to learn the difference between private and public I have had so many students get in legal trouble because of what they do in public spaces. We talked about masturbation it just it doesn't matter.

28:56.95

theautismhelper

Yeah, it's an important one? Yeah, so. Yeah.

29:13.68

Rachel

Who you are You can't do certain things in public so learning private and public and that can start young that starts in elementary school you closed door when you're in the bathroom. You don't pull your pants out I see all these elementary school students who are like I'm just gonna you know, pull my pants out a little bit and show people my butt crack. No you know if we we can start that.

29:30.74

theautismhelper

Ah.

29:32.27

Rachel

Early. It's silly but we can really start that and that's an easy thing for families to also work on at home. There's so many ways we can start modeling privacy and so that's a huge one. Um, this.

29:41.85

theautismhelper

You know with that privacy one nuts and Neio I was just thinking as you're talking I feel like staff members sometimes need to do a better job on teaching that too especially in you know some of them are self-

contained rooms kids that have toileting needs I know people are short-staffed I've been guilty of.

29:49.69

Rachel
And.

29:58.28

theautismhelper

You know, maybe not maintaining privacy as much as I should for a student just being short-staffed but on on making sure that all of our older students still have and and younger too have have dignity maintains and are in a bathroom without other kids that are visible and things like that and and I know that gets tricky if you have multiple students with toileting needs. But.

30:17.14

Rachel

No, it's such a good point. Such a good point because often what happens and I've and I've heard this have you heard this that we're they're like well we can't close the door. There's like you know and me too I was told the same thing they kept being like and for so for the first like 5 years I'd be like oh well we have to crack the door in the bathroom.

30:17.27

theautismhelper

That's an important part of it too.

30:24.23

theautismhelper

Yes, That's what I was told as a first year teacher and I was like absolutely not yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

30:35.93

Rachel

I Don't know what people guys are doing and then I look I had another person who was just like but why and suddenly I was like why are we doing this but I was told that and when you think about it, you're like so everyone can watch this student.

30:49.54

theautismhelper

Yeah.

30:50.64

Rachel

In the most vulnerable position I feel like if I if that happened to you as a staff member when you actually think about also typical kids can you imagine if we told every typical kid oh crack the door open.

So everyone sees you So we know what you're doing. It's it's absurd.
So and that still is maintained I think a lot particularly in younger
classrooms.

30:56.15

theautismhelper

Yeah. Yeah. Yes, yeah.

31:10.20

Rachel

Um, yeah, so so that's a huge one The second I think absolute is the
importance of saying yes no and accepting a no you know everyone needs
to be able to express their consent to something and that's consent to
learning that's consent to prompting. We had talked about that last
time and you need a way to say yes.

31:16.74

theautismhelper

Okay.

31:29.96

Rachel

And what's accepting A no is really hard for a lot of individuals.
It's accepting alternatives. It's not enough to be able just to say
Yes, no, you need to be able to accept when someone's saying not now
no thank you? Um, and that you know and that really especially now
tying into.

31:41.86

theautismhelper

Yeah, yeah.

31:48.72

Rachel

Consent and we're much more aware as a society about that that I think
we we can we need to embed it more into our special education
classrooms. Um, and the last guy the last few that I think are
critical. Are you know. Everyone should be able to identify body
parts. That's huge have basic hygiene and some sort of understanding
of their body that body only autonomy that their body belongs to them
and just some of that awareness because that's going to lead to self-
determination that's going to help them be stronger advocates for
themselves and will protect them later. Not from I mean assault but
just protect them in general from if they if they want to be out of a
space if they don't like the way something is prompting if they don't
like the way they're learning. They're able to advocate for
themselves. So I think that one's huge. Um yeah I feel like those are
my big ones and then again like.

32:39.90

theautismhelper
Yeah, those are big.

32:42.96

Rachel

Context I keep on repeating it because it's really learning those contextual cues of where you are to understand what you can engage in I was recently talking to another teacher because this kid just like blurts out cusswords in class And. We were talking about it and I was like well the problem is is that this actually isn't bad like if if you were at home saying this or on the you know at a park or whatever people might not even Batten I You just can't blurt this out in the middle of class in this Context. So How do you? you know teaching those contextual cues when it comes to Sexuality education is just huge.

33:09.22

theautismhelper
6

33:18.29

theautismhelper
Yeah, yeah.

33:20.43

Rachel

That's like it's just everything it ties into everything we do in terms of how we relate.

33:25.84

theautismhelper

Oh my gosh This was this was Great. So many good um pieces of advice and I think really thought provoking ideas on not just taking I don't know the easy way out's not the right phrase. But. Simply avoiding. It is not going to I think be in line with most people's values and when you really get down to it on on our goals for Independence and Autonomy. Um, so it was really useful for me to think about it in that Way. Ah.

33:46.43

Rachel

Right? Yeah, well you know I love talking about this I can talk about this up all day. Okay.

33:54.45

theautismhelper

I know keep going well Rachel where can people go to learn more from you.

33:59.53

Rachel

Well I work with the Watson Institute so you can find me there email is Rachel S at the Watson Institute Dot Org um we have resources on our website I do some information about I have some information there that relates to sexuality education that relates to you know again. Masturbation.

34:15.70

theautismhelper

No.

34:16.22

Rachel

Favorite topic ah stuff like that privacy. And yeah, if anyone's interested in more information consultation anything like that. This is a really hard topic and it is one of those things that it's scary and when I first started doing it I was super scared I had a lot of very interesting moments where in the middle class I Realized like oh man I.

34:36.12

theautismhelper

I left.

34:36.25

Rachel

Didn't teach this foundational thing and now no one knows what we're talking about. So I understand that it's a it's a hard thing to do.

34:40.76

theautismhelper

Well thanks so much for joining us for a second time on the podcast.

34:43.87

Rachel

Thank you, Thank you so much have a great one.