

Intimacy Matters 2.0

Dating Skills Curriculum

Teaching Healthy Relationships, Communication & Respect

For Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Purpose: This curriculum is designed to help individuals build the knowledge, confidence, and social skills needed to form healthy, respectful relationships. It emphasizes **choice, consent, communication, self-esteem, and safety** while honoring each person's goals and preferences.

Recommended Length: 8–10 sessions (60–90 minutes each)

Session 1: Knowing Yourself Before Dating

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Identify their strengths.
- Recognize what they want in a relationship.
- Build self-confidence.
- Understand that they deserve respect.

Discussion

“What makes you a good partner?”

“What are your best qualities?”

“What makes you happy?”

Activity

“About Me” Poster

Include:

- My hobbies
- My favorite music
- My favorite foods
- My dreams
- What makes me laugh

- What I'm looking for in a partner

Session 2: Starting Conversations

Topics

How to introduce yourself

Making eye contact (if comfortable)

Listening

Asking questions

Finding common interests

Practice

Teach participants to ask:

“What do you like to do for fun?”

“What kind of music do you like?”

“Have you seen that movie?”

Role Play

Scenario

You meet someone at a community event.

Practice introducing yourself.

Session 3: Flirting Respectfully

Teach:

Smiling

Compliments

Friendly conversation

Humor

Respecting personal space

Good Compliments

“I like your smile.”

“I like your shoes.”

“You seem really nice.”

Avoid:

Comments that are overly personal, sexual, or make someone uncomfortable.

Role Play

Someone smiles at you.

What could you say?

Session 4: Asking Someone on a Date

Teach

Be respectful.

Be clear.

Accept any answer.

Examples

“Would you like to get coffee with me?”

“Would you like to go bowling?”

“It’s okay if you say no.”

Role Play

Participant practices asking someone out.

The other participant says:

YES

Practice responding.

Then repeat with:

NO

Practice responding respectfully.

Session 5: Handling Rejection

One of the most important lessons.

Teach:

Everyone gets rejected.

Rejection doesn't mean something is wrong with you.

People have the right to choose.

Healthy Responses

"Thanks for being honest."

"I understand."

"No worries."

"I wish you well."

Unhealthy Responses

Arguing

Begging

Following someone

Repeated texting

Anger

Threats

Role Play

Someone says:

"No thank you."

Practice responding.

Session 6: Healthy Relationships

Teach

Trust

Respect

Communication

Listening

Honesty

Boundaries

Compromise

Support

Activity

Green Flags

Yellow Flags

Red Flags

Discuss each.

Role Play

One partner is respectful.

One partner is controlling.

Identify the difference.

Session 7: Consent & Boundaries

Teach

Everyone has the right to say:

Yes

No

Stop

Not now

I changed my mind

Topics

Personal space

Touch

Holding hands

Kissing

Sex

Privacy

Role Play

“May I hold your hand?”

Partner says:

“No.”

Practice responding respectfully.

Session 8: Dating Safety

Topics

Meeting in public

Let someone know where you're going

Internet safety

Sharing photos

Money

Scams

Emergency contacts

Transportation

Activity

Safe or Unsafe?

Examples

Meeting someone in a busy restaurant

Sending money to someone you've never met

Giving out your address right away

Meeting alone at night with someone you don't know well

Discuss each scenario.

Session 9: Building Intimacy

Teach

Relationships grow over time.

Intimacy is more than sex.

Ways to build closeness:

Talking

Laughing

Holding hands (with consent)

Acts of kindness

Shared hobbies

Respect

Trust

Listening

Role Play

Your partner had a bad day.

How do you respond?

Session 10: Breakups

Teach

Breakups hurt.

They happen.

How to break up respectfully.

How to heal.

Healthy coping

Friends

Exercise

Journaling

Counseling

Music

Hobbies

Avoid

Threats

Stalking

Repeated phone calls

Showing up uninvited

Role Play

Someone tells you they want to end the relationship.

Practice responding.

BONUS ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS

♥ Scenario 1

Asking Someone Out

“I’ve enjoyed talking with you. Would you like to go to lunch sometime?”

Skills:

✓ Confidence

✓ Respect

✓ Listening

♥ Scenario 2

Receiving a “No”

“No thank you.”

Practice:

“Thank you for being honest.”

♥ Scenario 3

First Date Conversation

Ask five questions without talking only about yourself.

Practice active listening.

♥ Scenario 4

Respecting Personal Space

One person steps too close.

The other says,

“I’d like a little more space.”

Practice responding positively.

♥ Scenario 5

Consent

“May I hold your hand?”

Practice:

Yes

No

Changing your mind

♥ Scenario 6

Disagreement

One person wants pizza.

The other wants tacos.

Practice compromising respectfully.

♥ Scenario 7

Online Dating

Someone you’ve never met asks for:

- Your address
- Money
- Private pictures

Discuss:

What should you do?

♥ Scenario 8

Meeting the Family

Practice introducing yourself to your partner’s family.

♥ Scenario 9

Receiving a Compliment

Someone says,

“You look really nice today.”

Practice responding.

“Thank you.”

♥ Scenario 10

Setting a Boundary

“I don’t like when people yell at me.”

Practice saying it calmly and confidently.

♥ Scenario 11

Saying “Not Yet”

Your partner wants to kiss.

You’re not ready.

Practice saying:

“I like spending time with you, but I’m not ready to kiss yet.”

♥ Scenario 12

Ending a Relationship

Practice saying:

“I’ve enjoyed getting to know you, but I don’t think we’re a good match. I wish you the best.”

Graduation Activity

“My Relationship Action Plan”

Each participant creates a personal plan by completing these statements:

- The qualities I want in a partner are...
- Three boundaries I will always respect are...
- Three boundaries I expect others to respect are...
- If someone tells me “no,” I will...

- If I ever feel unsafe, I will contact...
- One thing I learned about healthy relationships is...
- One dating skill I want to keep practicing is...

Participants receive a **Certificate of Completion** recognizing their commitment to building healthy, respectful relationships.

Instructor Tip

Use **visual aids, picture cards, role-play props (flowers, menus, phones, greeting cards), videos, and repeated practice**. Many adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities learn best through modeling and rehearsal. The goal isn't simply to teach information—it's to help participants practice the real-life communication skills they'll use to build safe, meaningful, and fulfilling relationships. This curriculum is most effective when delivered in small groups with opportunities for feedback, encouragement, and celebration of progress.