

Healthy Relationships

Education and Recognizing Abuse in the Disabled Community

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Today's Presenters

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She/Her/Hers

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Who We Are



Able SC is a disability-led organization seeking transformational changes in systems, communities, and individuals.

Since 1994, we've remained a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability nonprofit that seeks to make South Carolina a national model of equity and inclusion for all people with disabilities.

- We are the state's oldest and largest federally recognized disability-led organization.
- More than ¾ of our staff are people with disabilities, as are over half of our Board of Directors.

We practice coequality, disability justice and representation, and true inclusion through consumer-driven independence and disability pride.

We didn't just learn this.

As people with disabilities, our work doesn't end when we leave the office. Disability is part of who we are. We live this every day.

Able SC's Mission & Vision

Mission

We are an organization of people with disabilities leading the charge to:

- **Equip** people with disabilities with tools to foster pride and to direct their own lives;
- **Educate** the community to challenge stereotypes and eliminate barriers; and
- **Advocate** for access, equity, and inclusion at the individual, local, state, and national level.

Vision

A South Carolina that is a national model of equity and inclusion for all people with disabilities.



Overview of Services



- At Able South Carolina, disabled survivors of domestic/interpersonal violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking receive our services through a variety of grant funded programs.
- We partner with state agencies, domestic violence and crisis shelters, and other nonprofits to provide accessible, equitable, and trauma-informed care.
- We have partnered with the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SCCADVASA) to provide trainings to state agencies and domestic violence shelters statewide and increase their capacity to serve people with disabilities.

Disability Statistics

- 1 in 3 South Carolinians has a disability.
- South Carolina has a higher percentage of citizens with disabilities than the national average, which is 1 in 4.
- Individuals with disabilities are 4x more likely to be victims of violent crime than their nondisabled peers.
 - We are 3x more likely to be sexually assaulted.
 - Individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities are 7x more likely to be sexually assaulted.

Objectives of this consumer training:

- Define healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Identify traits of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Recognize signs of abusive behavior and how to get help
- Understand the importance of consent and setting personal boundaries

Signs of a Healthy Relationship

- Encourages freedom and decision making
- Allows us to be individuals
- Promotes compromise
- Respects personal boundaries

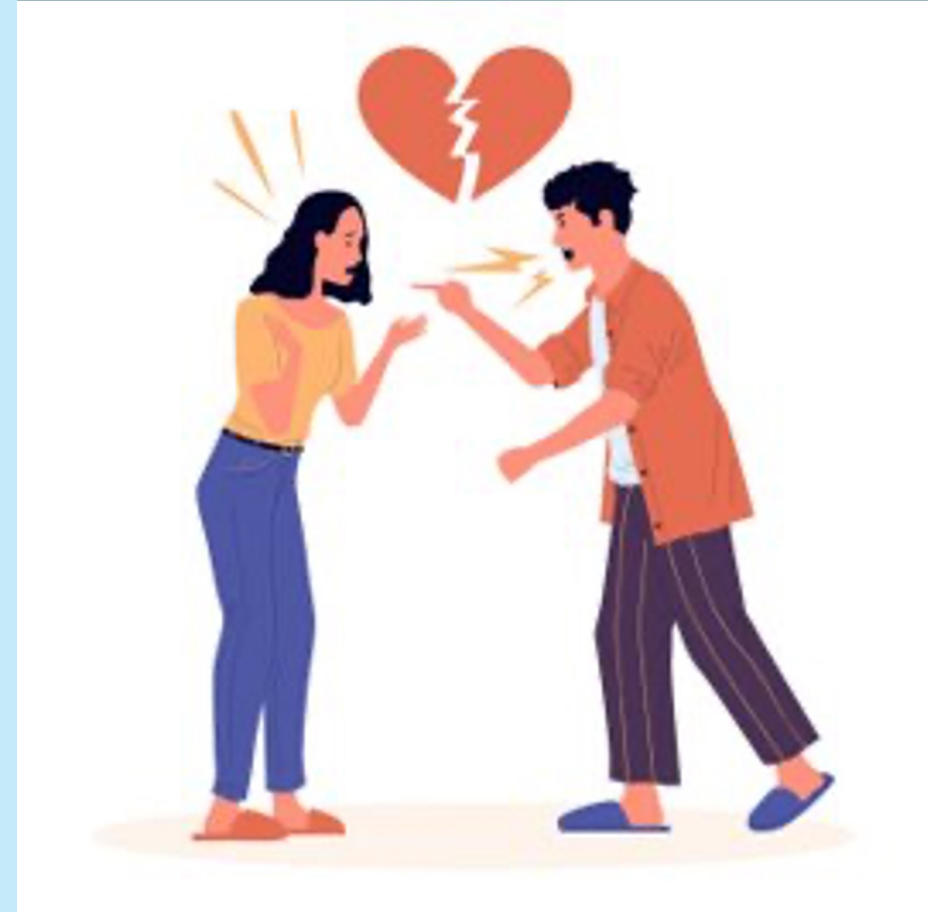
Since sex education is not taught to children with disabilities in South Carolina, many consumers have not had the opportunity to express themselves in regard to their own bodily autonomy. Teaching about safe, healthy relationships is one of the first steps in creating personal boundaries.



Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship

- Teasing, bullying, or violence
- Anger or constant fighting
- Pressure to do things you're not comfortable with
- Withholding love or friendship
- Making unreasonable requests

Recognizing unhealthy relationship traits is a helpful tool that can keep consumers safe. We often do a healthy vs. unhealthy characteristic activity to practice identifying these traits. Examples of these activities are featured on the next couple of slides.



Are the following situations healthy or unhealthy? Let's talk about how to respond.



While on a date with someone you like, they try to kiss you before you are ready.

Are the following situations healthy or unhealthy? Let's talk about how to respond, Slide 2.

Your significant other keeps going through your personal belongings (phone, wallet, social media accounts, etc.)

Unhealthy vs. Abusive

You may be in an unhealthy relationship if your partner is:

- Not communicating
- Disrespectful
- Not trusting
- Dishonest
- Trying to take control
- Only spending time together
- Pressed into activities
- Unequal financially

You may be in an abusive relationship if your partner is:

- Communicating in a hurtful or threatening way
- Mistreatment
- Denying their actions are abusive
- Controlling all action
- Isolating their partners from others

People with disabilities are 2x more likely to experience violence from a family member but are less likely to experience violence from a stranger than our non-disabled peers.

Healthy Relationships have:

- Equality
 - Partnership
 - Respecting each other's boundaries
- Flexibility
 - Accepting each other's differences
 - Respecting each other's preferences
- Trust and Fun
 - Honesty
 - Enjoyable activities



Romantic vs. Workplace Relationships

- **Romantic Relationships:**

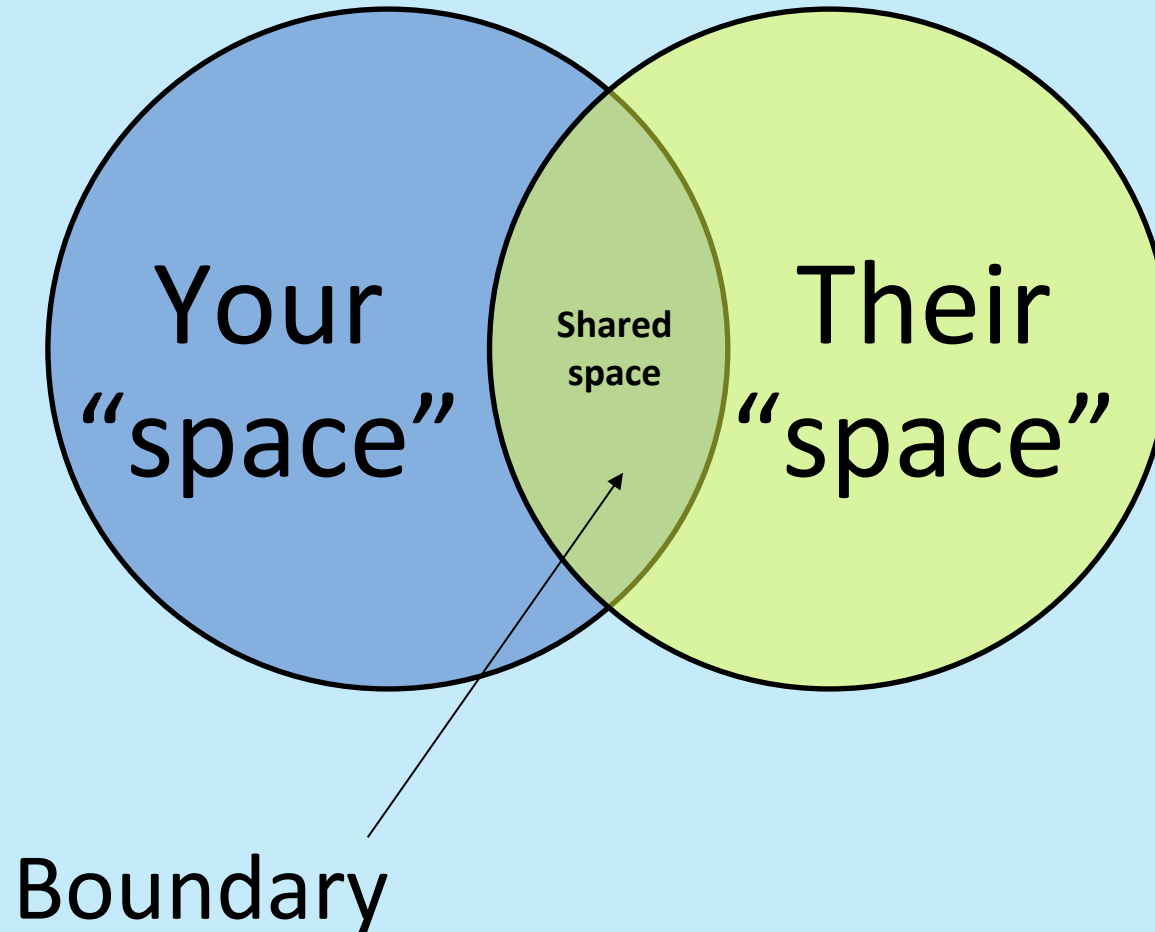
- A specific type of relationship involving both emotional and physical intimacy, and some level of commitment, is a romantic relationship.
- Examples: dating and marriage

- **Workplace Relationships:**

- Healthy workplace relationships will make your job more enjoyable.
- Being close to your coworkers can make your work more productive.
- A professional relationship is built on trust.
- Respect your coworkers and they should respect you.

Workplace relationships are very important to explain when teaching about unhealthy relationships and the disability community. Disabled individuals are at a higher rate of victimization for human trafficking than their nondisabled peers. Traffickers may try to exploit gaps in education, social isolation, and inadequate access to disability services.

Creating Boundaries



Visual explanations can help us all understand more completely. Visuals or graphics may be especially helpful for those with Intellectual or Developmental disabilities.

What is Consent?

- Giving consent means **clearly telling someone what you want.**
- If you can't communicate "yes" or "no", you cannot give consent.
- Giving consent is how we communicate our boundaries.

South Carolina has not mandated sex education for self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities. This includes topics of sex and contraception, reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, dating violence and consent.



When is consent important?

- Every relationship involves making choices about your body, your personal space, your time, or your values. You have the option of saying yes or no.
- Consent is very important in romantic and sexual relationships because you could accidentally hurt someone by crossing their boundaries.
- We all deserve to have control over our own bodies, who we want to be in a relationship with, and how we want those relationships to feel.

Consent is always important. We want consumers to know that they have the autonomy and independence to make their own choices, especially when it comes to making decisions about their bodies.

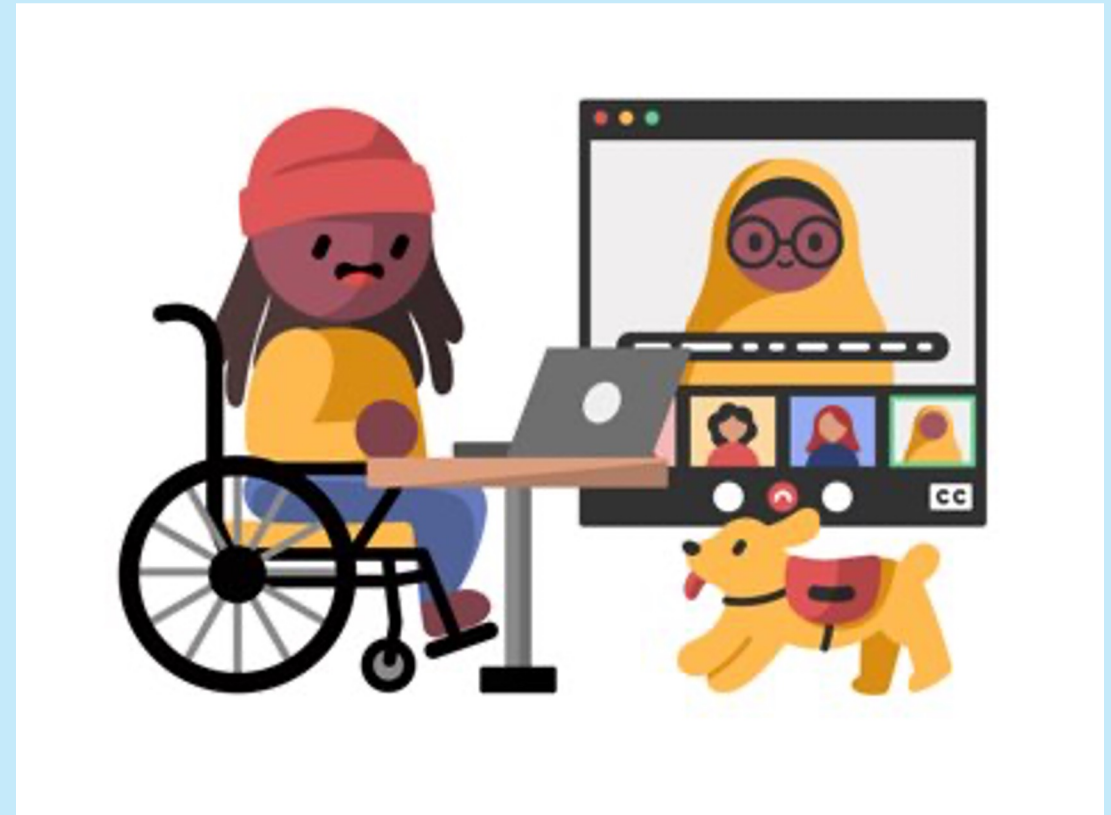
Flirting vs. Harassment: Consent is Key!

- Signs that someone may be flirting:
 - Smiling, laughing
 - Eye contact
 - Body language: facing you, close together
 - They are interested in the conversation
- Signs that someone may be uncomfortable:
 - They are quiet
 - They look away or are avoiding eye contact
 - They suddenly try to leave the conversation/interaction
 - They say things to communicate that they are unsure or uncomfortable
 - They give short answers or do not respond to what you say
- If someone is silent, or you're not sure, ask them directly!

Disabled individuals are not asexual beings. We have the same wants, needs, and desires as our nondisabled peers!

Meeting and Dating Tips

- Look past their outside, don't base your interest on looks alone!
- If you meet someone online, talk to them on the phone before you meet them in person.
- People can be much different than they seem online.
- Video chatting is a good way to make sure the person matches their online profile, and is a good way to make sure you're safe before meeting in person.
- Always meet them in a public place the first time face to face.



I have the Right to:

- Say “yes” or “no” to a relationship
- My own friends and separate time
- Privacy of my personal information, passwords, and accounts
- When and how to be intimate with my partner
- Change my mind at any time
- Never be controlled or abused
- Get help if I am being hurt or abused

Questions?

Stay in touch



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Social Media:

- Facebook: @AbleSC
- Twitter: @able_sc
- Instagram: @able_sc
- LinkedIn: Able South Carolina
- YouTube: Able South Carolina