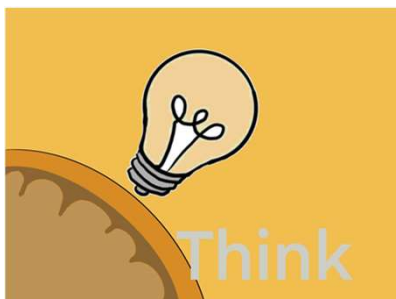


Sexuality

Sexuality is about how we experience and express ourselves sexually and emotionally. Sexuality is about our sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. Sexual orientation is an important aspect of our sexuality and refers to the pattern of who we are attracted to and want to have relationships with. Our sexual orientation may be bisexual, heterosexual, homosexual, pansexual or asexual. There are a variety of sexual orientations but you do not have to identify as any particular sexual orientation. You do not need to be sexually active in order to identify as a particular sexual orientation.



Like their non-autistic peers, Autistic people may identify as any sexual orientation or as none. Autistic people may experience stigma or discrimination because they are Autistic. They may face additional stigma associated with identifying as a minority sexual orientation. All forms of stigma and discrimination have a negative impact on an individual's wellbeing.



Social isolation may limit opportunities for Autistic people to initiate or develop romantic and sexual relationships (see *Loneliness, Stigma and Bullying* resources). People around the Autistic person may believe the individual lacks the desire, social skills, or understanding to identify as a sexual person with a sexual orientation. This is especially the case if the Autistic person also has a learning disability or a physical disability or they do not use speech as their main form of communication.



Sexuality is a basic human drive like hunger, thirst and avoidance of pain. Most Autistic people have different sensory processing experiences and these may play an important part in the emergence of their sense of self and their connection to others.