Being Safe Online:

How to Deal with Online Friendships, Dating and Other Interactions on Social Media

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disclaimer

- The information in this presentation is broad, and includes readily available data, information and resources that cover the topics of safety and social media. The presenters encourage that these resources be used and applied to support people with disabilities in a thoughtful and inclusive manner.

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social media

- Definition of social media:
- forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)

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social media

- Adolescents with ASD use a variety of media
- In one study, 98% of adolescents with ASD used a computer for an average of 5 hours per day
- Of that group, those who visited social networking websites or received emails from friends reported more positive friendships (3)

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social media

- Adults with ASD also use a variety of media
- In a study, 84 percent of adults with ASD used social media
- Those who used Facebook were happier than those who did not, but the same relationship did not exist for users of Twitter
- 'Social media use by adults with ASD, specifically Facebook use in moderation, may enhance well-being…in this population' (4)

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social media

- Social media is also widely used by parents and caregivers of people with ASD
- Mothers of children with ASD reported that seeking online social support is an ongoing part of life
- They also emphasized a need to be connected and to be understood (5)

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social media

- Social media interactions are free of the burdens of face-to-face encounters (2)
- Opportunities for feeling connected with others
- More limited and distinct emotional reactions
    - Emoji's, Facebook reactions
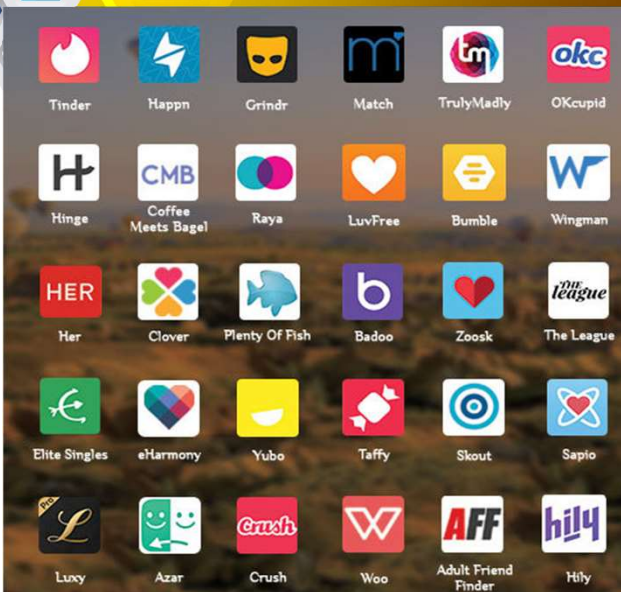- Posts can be reviewed and edited before sharing

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social media

- You can observe the logical progression of a conversation
- You can watch (passive social media use) to learn about the expectations of a group
- Lots of options for shared interests and experiences
- Professionals can gain insight into the concerns and experiences of people with ASD
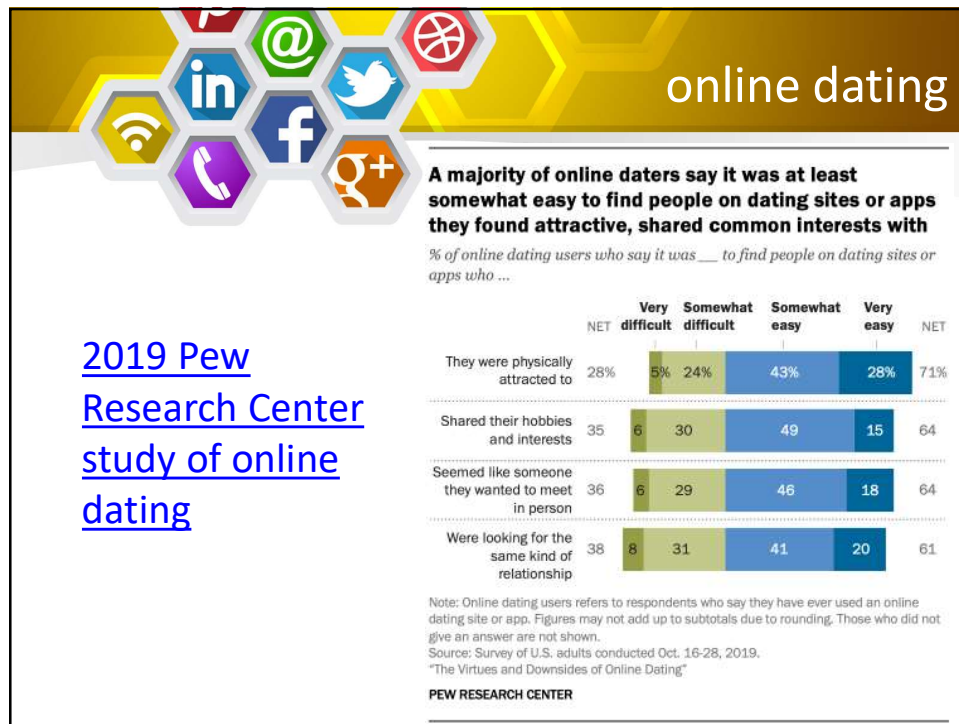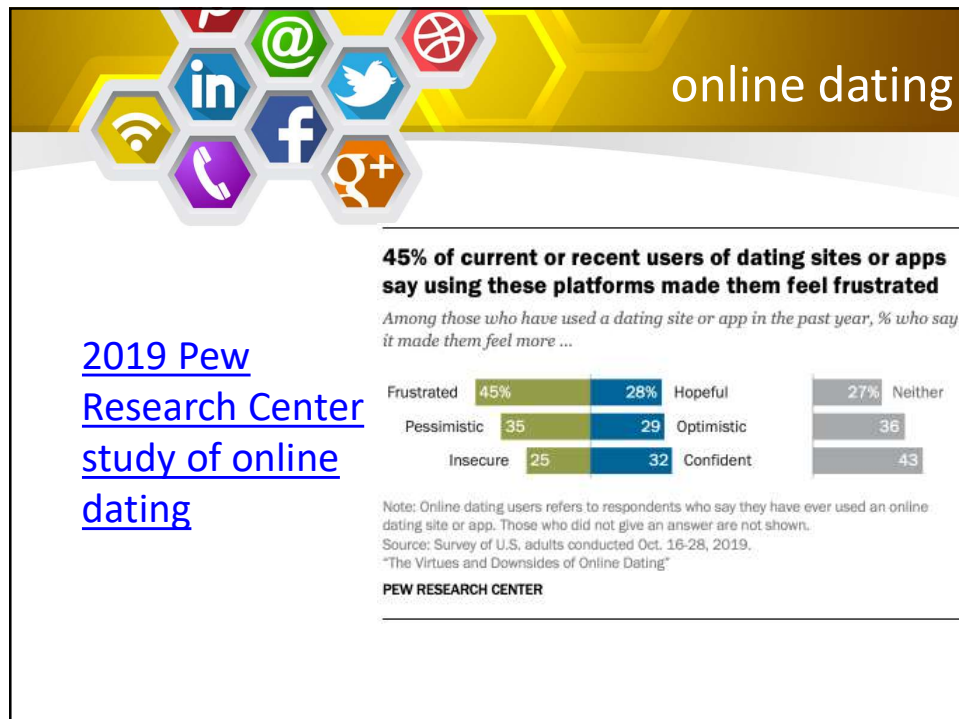
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online dating

Thirty 'Best' Dating Apps of 2020

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online dating

A majority of online daters say it was at least somewhat easy to find people on dating sites or apps they found attractive, shared common interests with

% of online dating users who say it was ___ to find people on dating sites or apps who ...

[2019 Pew Research Center study of online dating](#)

	NET	Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Somewhat easy	Very easy	NET
They were physically attracted to	28%	5%	24%	43%	28%	71%
Shared their hobbies and interests	35	6	30	49	15	64
Seemed like someone they wanted to meet in person	36	6	29	46	18	64
Were looking for the same kind of relationship	38	8	31	41	20	61

Note: Online dating users refers to respondents who say they have ever used an online dating site or app. Figures may not add up to subtotals due to rounding. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.
"The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating"

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online dating

45% of current or recent users of dating sites or apps say using these platforms made them feel frustrated

Among those who have used a dating site or app in the past year, % who say it made them feel more ...

[2019 Pew Research Center study of online dating](#)

Frustrated	45%		28%	Hopeful	27%	Neither
Pessimistic	35		29	Optimistic	36	
Insecure	25		32	Confident	43	

Note: Online dating users refers to respondents who say they have ever used an online dating site or app. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.
"The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating"

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online dating

- ''Convenience with the Click of a Mouse'': A Survey of Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder on Online Dating (6)
- A survey of 17 individuals with ASD was done to learn about how adults with ASD utilize online dating
- 9 of the 17 people used online dating services in the past with variable success

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online dating

- Benefits of online dating
- [online dating gives] ''a more complete picture of who you are than you could if you met someone for the first time in person,''
- ''reading about the other person to judge if I want to talk to them is easier then approaching people and tying to judge their body language or know what questions to ask''
- ''social anxiety and sensory sensitivities are huge barriers to meeting people in person (p. 138)''

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- Drawbacks of online dating
- ''I never needed to date online, but if I did…I would worry about safety and being taken advantage of''
- ''people presenting false images is troublesome especially for Aspies as [we] tend to be a bit naïve and trusting''
- ''hard on self-esteem…especially when text and phone contact go well and then they meet me and never call me back (p. 139)''

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Friendship & Love in Autism

Hiki — meaning "able" in Hawaiian — is a friendship and dating social app specifically for the Autistic community. It is a space where being atypical is celebrated. A place where different is de-stigmatized and people can embrace their uniqueness and their shared experiences all at the same time. Every part of Hiki, from ideation to design to launch, has been built with the actually Autistic community to make sure that it is representative of our needs.

https://www.hikiapp.com/

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safety

- Cyber-Victimization of People With Chronic Conditions and Disabilities: A Systematic Review of Scope and Impact [8]
- Research review of the experiences of cyber-victimization of people with chronic conditions or disabilities
- 10 studies including 3,070 people
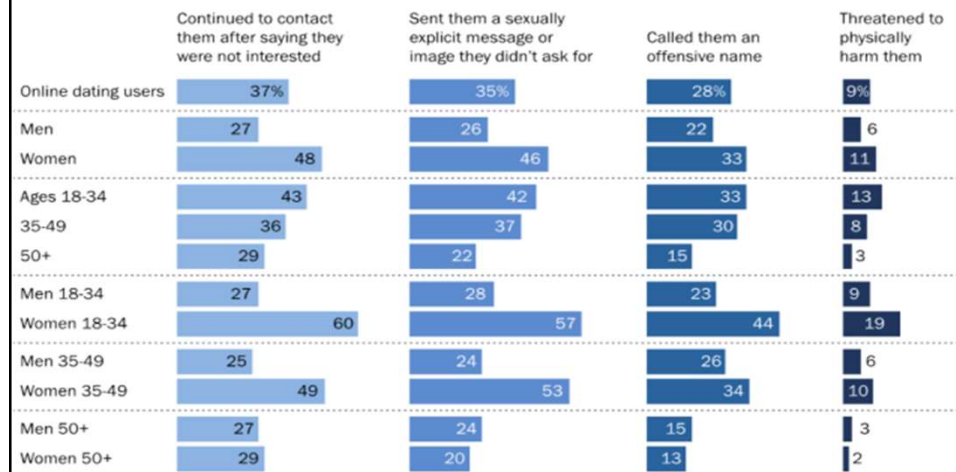- The prevalence range of cyber-victimization was 2%-41.7%

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safety

- Targeted conditions included physical impairments, intellectual disabilities and specific chronic diseases
- Impacts of cyber-victimization were psychological (depression, anxiety, distress) and physical (somatic health complaints, self-harm)
- Study concluded that people with chronic conditions and disabilities were at higher risk of victimization with devastating health complications

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Younger women who have used dating sites or apps are especially likely to report having negative interactions with others on these platforms

% of online dating users in each group who say someone ___ on a dating site or app

	Continued to contact them after saying they were not interested	Sent them a sexually explicit message or image they didn't ask for	Called them an offensive name	Threatened to physically harm them
Online dating users	37%	35%	28%	9%
Men	27	26	22	6
Women	48	46	33	11
Ages 18-34	43	42	33	13
35-49	36	37	30	8
50+	29	22	15	3
Men 18-34	27	28	23	9
Women 18-34	60	57	44	19
Men 35-49	25	24	26	6
Women 35-49	49	53	34	10
Men 50+	27	24	15	3
Women 50+	29	20	13	2

Note: Online dating users refers to respondents who say they have ever used an online dating site or app. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.
"The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating"

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safety

A Helpful Online Safety Guide for People With Autism Spectrum Disorders

People from all walks of life and all kinds of backgrounds fall victim to online bullying and cybercrime, but studies have shown that those with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are more susceptible to online threats than others.

ASD is a developmental disorder that affects behavior and communication. People on the Autism Spectrum tend to live a relatively normal life but can need supervision and lack judgement – a trait that has been identified as dangerous when left to their own devices in cyberspace.

Not only are ASD children and adults at risk from others, but they can also develop compulsive online habits and internet addictions, and can be more deeply affected by exposure to inappropriate content.

Everyone should feel safe online. It's therefore extremely important to make sure you have adequate online security and remain internet vigilant.

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12 Ways to Improve Social Media & Online Communication

1. Never add your boss, teacher, or supervisor on social media
2. Never comment about your work online
3. Refrain from posting content that might skew other people's opinions of you
4. Always meet a new online friend during the day and in a public place
5. Keep your passwords safe and don't hack into other people's accounts or websites
6. Don't believe everything that you read online – particularly on social media

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12 Ways to Improve Social Media & Online Communication

TOUCHPOINT
BETTER LIVING THROUGH NEUROSCIENCE

7. Don't compare your life with someone else's on social media

8. Always be polite in your online discourse and avoid arguments

9. Remember that most internet users regard typing in capitals as the digital equivalent of yelling

10. You can use emojis or emoticons to better express the context and meaning of your words

11. If someone is making you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, leave the situation and block them

12. Never send explicit photographs of yourself or forward on pictures of anyone else

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If there is a perceived problem, some advice for families include:

- 1 hour of physical activity each day and 8-12 hours of sleep each night
- No devices in bedrooms (TVs, computers, smartphones)
- No screen time 1 hour before bed
- Discourage entertainment media while doing homework
- Designate media-free times
- Designate media-free locations (example bedrooms)
- Communicate guidelines to other caregivers
- Engage in selecting and co-viewing media with your child
- Communicate regularly about online citizenship and safety (never post private information), never take pictures of yourself and post them
- No bullying (teach them to recognize when it is happening)
- Respect privacy of others
- Develop a network of trusted adults

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Develop and institute a media use plan:
- Screen free zones
- Screen free times
- Device Curfews and changing locations
- Choose what videos, games, apps, etc are OK
- Identifies what can be gained by decreasing screen time
- More time for exercise and reading
- Media manners, e.g., it is not polite to use a device when talking with someone
- Digital citizenship
- Safety rules
- Attend law enforcement presentations about internet safety (youth may pay more attention or give more weight to information provided by law enforcement)

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- Public vs. Private
  - People
  - Behavior
  - Information
  - Social media posts
  - Data

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safety

- Non-political / religious / offensive memes
- Anything involving home address/location
- Criticism or concern about specific person
- Puppy missing!

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safety

Consent

Defined as a 'mutual and willing agreement about any kind of sexual exchange.'

Sheehan (9) lists eight factors which must be understood in order for an individual with a DD to be able to give consent:

- Sexuality is experienced with another person in a private place
- Sexual contact with animals, children, individuals from the same family, or to obtain money, is inappropriate
- Sexual relations can lead to pregnancy, which implies emotional and economic committment on the part of the parents
- Methods of contraception, when used appropriately, decrease the risk of pregnancy
- Methods of contraception are available from pharmacies and specialized clinics
- Unprotected sexual behaviors increase the risk of contracting a STD
- People believe that sexuality should take place in a respectful and loving context
- It is always possible to refuse to engage in sexual contact; it is a personal choice

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Consent

The legal definition of sexual consent across states generally involves three elements, with some exceptions by state:

1. Does the individual have the requisite knowledge needed to make the decision (appropriate time/place/person, lawfulness of the activity)?

2. Can the person demonstrate that their participation was fully voluntary... did they participate without coercion or undue influence?

3. Does the person demonstrate a 'reasoned understanding' and weigh the risks and benefits of the sexual engagement?

4. (Only in some states): Does the person appreciate the moral quality of their sexual activity?

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Consent

- Each state has statutory language to discriminate between consensual and non-consensual sexual contact
- Most identify age, consciousness, and ability to understand the nature and consequences of the act
- Some states also require an understanding of the moral and social consequences related to engaging sexually with another adult
- In addition, there is language regarding threat (perceived and real), use of a weapon and force
- As there is not uniformity of criteria among the states, there is no nationally accepted assessment instrument to measure consent to sex

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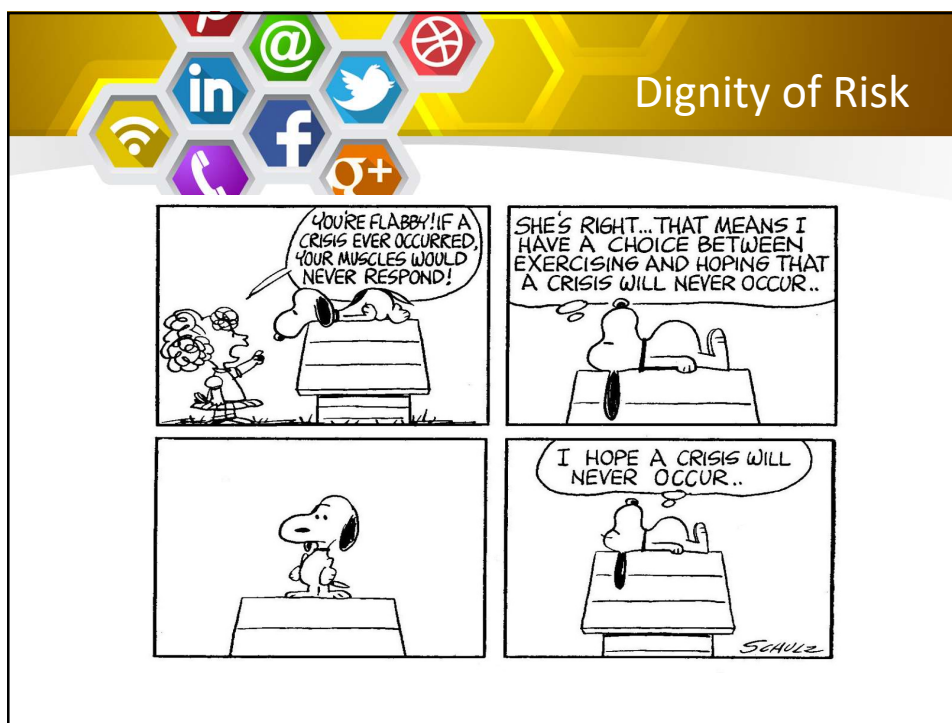
Overprotection may appear on the surface to be kind, but it can be really evil. An oversupply can smother people emotionally, squeeze the life out of their hopes and expectations, and strip them of their dignity. Overprotection can keep people from becoming all they could become. **Many of our best achievements came the hard way: We took risks, fell flat, suffered, picked ourselves up, and tried again. Sometimes we made it and sometimes we did not. Even so, we were given the chance to try. Persons with special needs need these chances, too.** Of course, we are talking about prudent risks. People should not be expected to blindly face challenges that, without a doubt, will explode in their faces. Knowing which chances are prudent and which are not – this is a new skill that needs to be acquired. On the other hand, a risk is really only when it is not known beforehand whether a person can succeed. The real world is not always safe, secure, and predictable, it does not always say "please," "excuse me", or "I'm sorry". Every day we face the possibility of being thrown into situations where we will have to risk everything… In the past, we found clever ways to build avoidance of risk into the lives of persons living with disabilities. Now we must work equally hard to help find the proper amount of risk these people have the right to take. We have learned that there can be healthy development in risk taking and there can be crippling indignity in safety!

Perske, R (February 1972). "The dignity of risk and the mentally retarded". Mental Retardation. 10 (1): 24–7.

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resources

- https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/my-life-aspergers/201308/autism-and-porn-problem-no-one-talks-about
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5789215/
- https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx
- https://www.covenanteyes.com/2020/05/18/10-amazing-resources-for-talking-to-kids-about-porn/
- https://corticalchauvinism.com/2018/01/08/pornography-and-autism/
- https://www.aane.org/principles-for-prosecutors/
- https://autismspectrumnews.org/when-behaviors-result-in-real-trouble-legal-challenges-in-individuals-with-asd/
- https://www.aane.org/principles-for-prosecutors/

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resources

Using Social Media on the Autism Spectrum

- https://psychcentral.com/lib/using-social-media-on-the-autism-spectrum/

  – Short article with tips on how to understand and correct mistakes when using social media

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resources

Using Facebook reactions correctly

- https://www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-facebook-reactions-3894307

  – Article that explains the different reaction options in Facebook. Website also has a Social Media Tips & Strategies for the most popular social media sites.

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resources

Autism Wiki

- https://autism.wikia.org/wiki/Social_networks

  – Links to a wide variety of social networks and resources for ASD

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resources

Wrong Planet

- https://wrongplanet.net/

  - Wrong Planet is the web community designed for individuals (and parents / professionals of those) with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, PDDs, and other neurological differences. We provide a discussion forum, where members communicate with each other, an article section, with exclusive articles and how-to guides, a blogging feature, and more.

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(9) Sheehan, S. (2002) "Consent for sexual relations." in Ethical Dilemmas: Sexuality and Developmental Disability.

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