

From Nonspeaking to Netflix: Autistic Professional Speaker Shares His Consulting Role on Love on the Spectrum U.S.



Interactive Activity

We will be starting shortly!
In the chat box/comments
please tell us...



1. Where you are tuning in from?
2. What's your relationship to the autism community?
(Ex: My child is 6 and has autism, I teach autistic students, self-advocate)

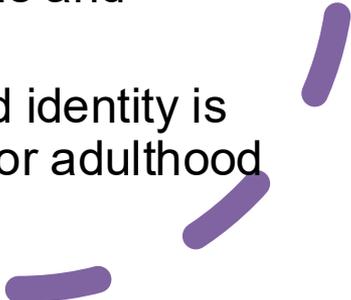
Dr. Kerry Magro Ed.D.

Speaker Inquiries: [Kerrymagro.com/contact](https://kerrymagro.com/contact)

PREVIOUSLY RECORDED



Why This Topic Matters Right Now

- Autistic teens and adults often receive little to no direct education about relationships, boundaries, and communication
 - Disabled students are 3–5x more vulnerable to social misunderstanding, bullying, and exploitation
 - Many families wait until puberty to talk about feelings—but autistic youth need earlier, explicit teaching
 - Media like Love on the Spectrum U.S. is increasing awareness, but schools and families still lack guidance
 - Understanding dating, safety, and identity is not optional—it's a core life skill for adulthood
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Your Voice Has Power More Than Ever

- 1 in 36 children are autistic
- 1 in 45 adults are autistic
- Autism prevalence has tripled in 20 years
- Nearly 50 percent of autistic children experience bullying
- 1 in 6 children have a developmental disability
- Average diagnosis age is still 5-7
- Up to 50 percent of autistic children wander/elope
- 70 percent have co-occurring sensory differences
- Majority of autistic adults are unemployed or underemployed
- Only about 1 in 3 autistic students complete a post-secondary program
- Less than 20 percent of autistic adults live independently
- Over 75 percent live with family or in supported housing
- High rates of social isolation among autistic adults
- Many adults go undiagnosed until later in life
- Disparities persist in access to services
- Demand for adult disability services is rapidly increasing

My Diagnosis

- Non-verbal till I was 2.5
- Diagnosed w PDD-NOS-at 4
- Speech delay, expressive and receptive language disorder, Severe sensory integration dysfunction, auditory processing disorder, twirling, dysgraphia, motor challenges
- Emotional issues throughout adolescence due to limited speech





DEFINING AUTISM FROM THE HEART



KERRY MAGRO

Autism and Falling in Love

To the One That Got Away



Kerry Magro

I Will Light It Up Blue!



By Kerry Magro
Illustrated by Tristan Tait

AUTISTICS ON AUTISM

STORIES YOU NEED TO HEAR ABOUT WHAT HELPED THEM WHILE GROWING UP AND PURSUING THEIR DREAMS



EDITED BY KERRY MAGRO



SCAN ME

DREAM A WHOLE LOT LOUDER



QUEEN LATIFAH DOLLY PARTON KEKE PALMER JEREMY JORDAN

JOYFUL NOISE

JANE WANTS A BOYFRIEND

Not Your Neurotypical Love Story



Mrs. Fletcher

A coming-of-age story.

Based on the bestselling book

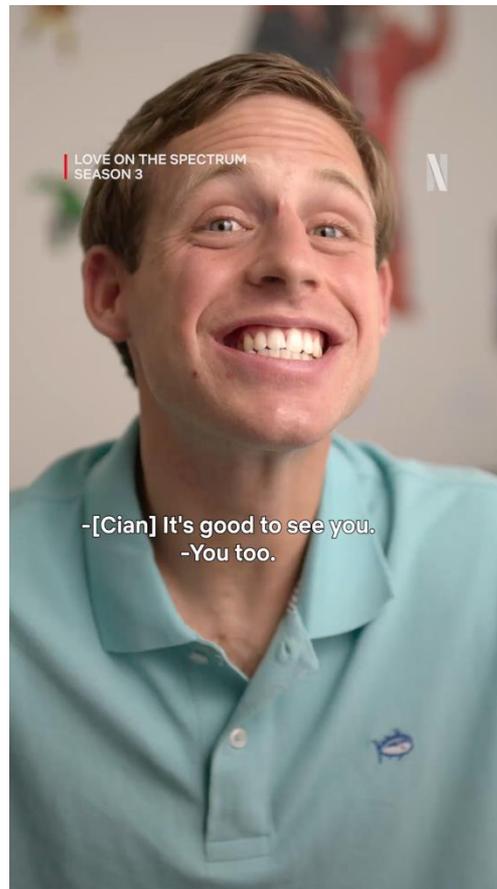


AN HBO LIMITED SERIES

A NETFLIX SERIES



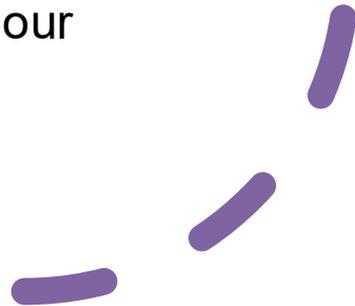
Love on the Spectrum U.S.





My Role as an Autism Consultant on Love on the Spectrum U.S.

- Advise on sensory needs, communication differences, lighting, pacing, and emotional safety
- Review scenes, dates, and dialogue
- Provide autism sensitivity trainings to the entire crew to provide them an education on autism language, tone, representation, and stereotypes to avoid
- Goal: representation that is accurate, empathetic, and empowering for our community





Talks I give

- Offer work on retainer in a technical advisor role with to help assist students with special needs, their families and schools through events in district, schools, online, and social media presence.
- Schools
 - Student assemblies
 - Professional development for teachers
 - SEPAC/PTA presentations for parents/community
- Businesses
 - ROI benefits of hiring people with disabilities
 - PowerPoint best practices
- Skype presentations for those with limited budgets
- Keynotes and breakout sessions at conferences and other special events on early access to care, transition to adulthood, bullying prevention and much more



Learning about my diagnosis
was empowering!
Celebrity Disability Bingo at 11

- Did you know Michael Jordan was diagnosed with ADD at a young age?
- Magic Johnson – ADHD
- Leonardo Dicaprio – Dyslexia
- Justin Timberlake – ADD and OCD
- Michael Phelps- ADHD
- Dan Aykroyd - Autism

Puberty &
feelings
Relationships
may be
possible



Children
with
disabilities
will become
adults with
disabilities

- Discussing feelings and promoting open communication is imperative.
- Make sure all loved ones are taking appropriate health courses to learn about sex.
- Many of my mentees want to talk about relationships – not post-secondary, employment, housing, etc.



Action Steps for Parents & Educators

- Start conversations about feelings, boundaries, and relationships early, not during crisis moments
- Use visual supports, social stories, and clear examples rather than abstract explanations
- Teach literal communication: “Ask before touching,” “Here is what interest looks like,” “Here is what disinterest looks like”
- Reinforce consent, autonomy, and bodily safety in age-appropriate ways
- Encourage supported opportunities for friendship, community, and social connection
- Focus on strengths while preparing for real-world risks (online safety, peer pressure, exploitation)

Misinterpreting signs of friendliness

- Just because somebody smiles or talks to you may not mean they are romantically interested.
- Also important to understand signals of disinterest.
- Nonverbal body language
 - Flirtation
 - Did he/she touch my arm when I was making a joke. Did they change the tone of their voice. Was their a compliment that was more intimate in nature.

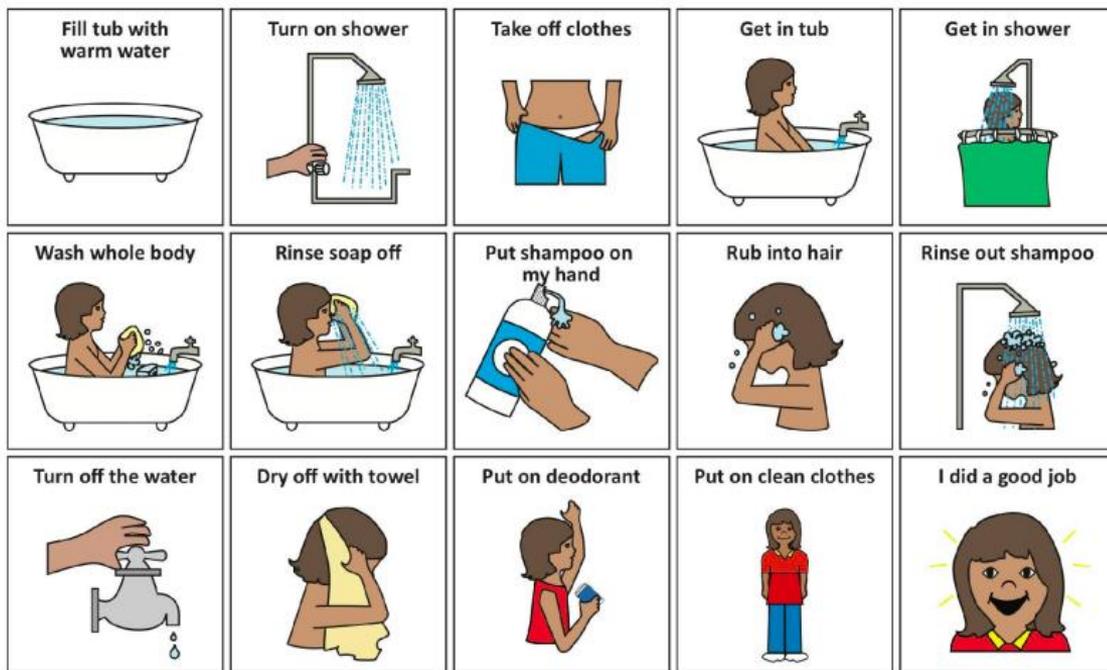
First date musts

- Showing up on time
- Don't assume
- Keep lines of communication open
- Listen and ask questions
- Don't settle
- Great resource on dating with a disability at Easter Seals:
<https://www.easterseals.com/explore-resources/living-with-disability/love-dating-relationships-disability.html>

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Appendix

Encouraging Good Hygiene – Showering Schedule Visuals



Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

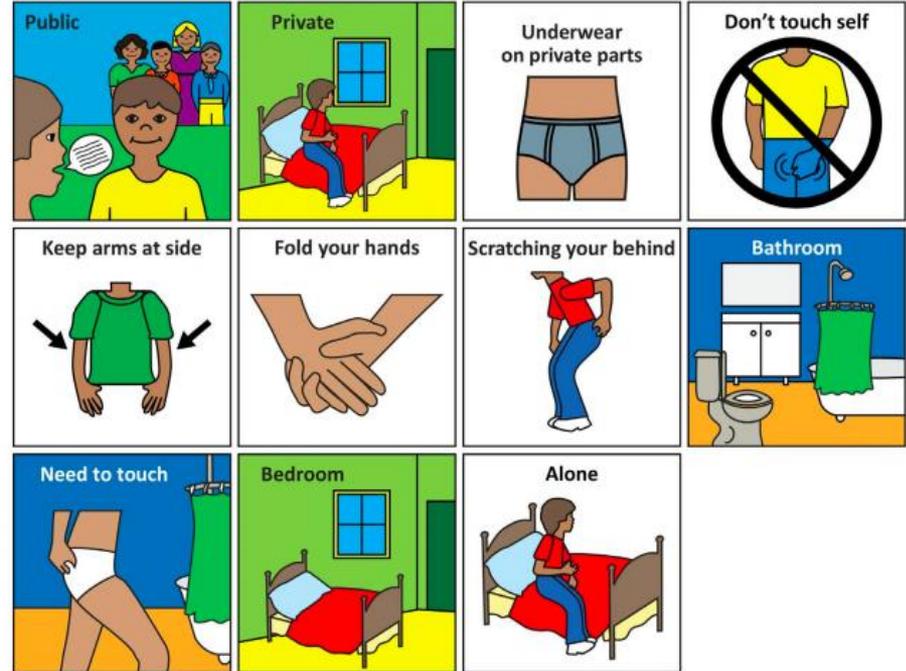
Good for discussions around masturbation

<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/healthybodies/>

Public/Private Behaviors – Story

Private Parts

Public places are where other people can see me. Private means away from other people, like in my bedroom or bathroom with the door closed. Everyone has private parts of their body. I can tell what parts of my body are private because I cover them with my underwear. I don't touch my private parts in public where other people can see me. I don't ever put my hands inside my pants in public. I can help myself remember not to touch by putting my hands by my side, crossing my arms, or folding my hands. Sometimes I need to touch my private parts, like when I itch or my underwear is uncomfortable. I can ask to go to the bathroom. When I am alone in my bedroom or bathroom, I can touch my private parts.



Hygiene



Get a visual timer to keep a routine –
timetimer.com



Do better when they
are allowed to choose

Shampoo

Soap – Bars usually
easier than liquid

Shaving – Consider



Let them see things like you shaving to
understand and imitate the process
themselves



Teach themselves to bathe themselves
early on. Make it detailed (checklists)

Discuss self-care

- Self-care goals
 - Creating visual supports to help with bathing, dressing, grooming, etc.
 - Helping with sensitivities
 - Creating a calendar
 - Every 4 weeks: Get my haircut
 - Every 2 weeks: cut my nails
 - If they like technology – use a google calendar with notifications turned on their phones (i.e a day before, 30 minutes before)

LGBTQ+ Community

- Still a stigma that ‘disabled people don’t have sex.’
- Special education classes need to offer Sex education properly in schools, can help disabled students understand their identities
- Some individuals on the other end won’t want to be in a relationship (Temple Grandin)
 - Asexual

Disclosing your diagnosis

- I recommend bringing it up after the first few dates
- Discuss what challenges your diagnosis brings but also your strengths
 - “I just wanted you to know that, sometimes because of disability, I have challenging times sitting down for long periods of time, eye contact, etc.
- Understand that someone should love you for you.

Levels of intimacy

- Discussing different levels of intimacy
 - Hand-holding, kissing, sex
 - Roleplay a conversation with someone in your circle
- Best policy is directly asking both in physical and emotional intimacy
- Think about any sensory challenges you may face with levels of intimacy and try to rank them on a number scale

Consider online dating

- Gives you time to prepare what you want to say
- Challenges for males as females on average tend to receive more likes (embrace that it might take some time to find a match)
- Catfishing is an issue in our society
 - Keep to first names and don't give out any specific information online
- Hiki – dating app for those on the spectrum



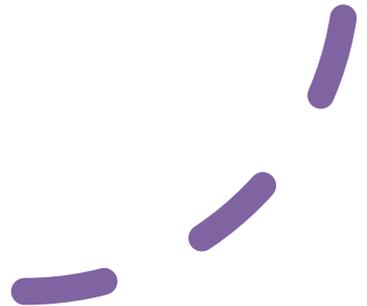
Understand rejection happens to everyone

- Look at 5 stages of grief...
 - Denial
 - Anger
 - Bargaining
 - Depression
 - Acceptance
- If you are feeling depressed at the time of a breakup – talk to someone and keep yourself busy with your key interests.

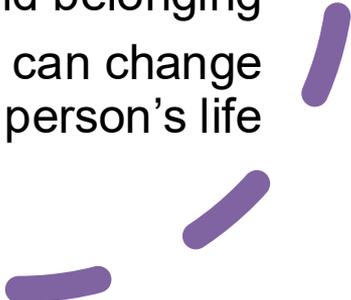


Be sure
to look
out for
disabled
women

- More likely to deal with masking different characteristics
- Also more likely to deal with sexual abuse



What I Want You to Leave With Today

- Autistic people deserve love, safety, autonomy, and meaningful connections
 - Relationship and sexuality education must be direct, compassionate, and accessible
 - Healthy communication, boundaries, and consent can be taught at every age
 - Representation—from schools to Netflix—helps reduce stigma and opens doors
 - Every parent, educator, and ally has the power to remove barriers and build belonging
 - Your voice, empathy, and actions can change the entire trajectory of an autistic person's life
- 

Thank you! Questions?

Free list of autism resources for our community to enjoy available here:
<https://bit.ly/freeautismresources>
(all lower case)

1. Take your cell phone out.
2. Go to the camera app like you'd be taking a photo.
3. Zoom in on this QR Code and tap that little box that shows up called (bit.ly) that will show up to give you access to the list!



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