

Sexuality and Disability
'Breaking the Silence'

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TARSHI

**TALKING ABOUT REPRODUCTIVE AND
SEXUAL HEALTH ISSUES**

We believe that
all people have a right to sexual wellbeing,
and to a self-affirming and
enjoyable sexuality

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TARSHI's Activities

- Telephone Helpline
- Publications
- Trainings
- Public Education and Advocacy Initiatives

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Sexuality

Human sexuality is complex. It is often mistakenly (and narrowly) understood to solely mean the drive to have sexual intercourse. While this may be part of the truth, it does not reflect a comprehensive understanding of the term
sexuality

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Sexuality and Disability

- Persons living with disabilities are not one homogenous category
- In a lot of societies, sex is often associated with youthfulness and levels of physical fitness
- Culturally induced notions of shame shroud sexuality in secrecy
- Persons with disabilities are often treated as though they were asexual or 'oversexed'

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Sexuality and Disability in India

- Disability as being tied in with 'bad karma'
- Persons living with disability largely looked upon with pity, often considered undesirable sexually
- The assumption that persons living with disabilities are 'childlike'

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Challenges Faced by Care Providers and Parents

- Difficult to talk about sexuality
- How much /what kind of information?
- Addressing sexual abuse
- Gender, disability and sexuality
- Aspirations of marriage

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An Example of Challenges Shared

AGE GROUP OF CHILD/YOUNG PERSON	GENDER OF CHILD/YOUNG PERSON	DISABILITY	SEXUALITY RELATED CONCERN
9-10 year old	Male	Cerebral Palsy	Touching genitals in class
13 year old	Male	Down's Syndrome	Masturbation, frottage, simulation of sex mainly with girls and women
13 year old	Female	Moderate Mental Retardation and Childhood Schizophrenia	Masturbation in class, touches breasts, touches men
14 year old	Female	Severe Mental Retardation	Removes her clothes in class

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Some Effective Strategies

- Skills Building
- Accessible Information and Services
- Social Spaces
- Research
- Advocacy

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Some Strategies in Use



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The Way Ahead

- Share strategies and resources
- Conduct workshops
- Raise awareness
- Develop professional groups to guide and support parents and professionals
- Conduct research

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In Conclusion...

- Sexuality education needs to be introduced and encouraged in all schools for children with disabilities across the country
- Disability and sexuality are two very complex issues, and in a resource-poor setting like India, working on them may seem like a daunting task. It is heartening to note that work, however, is underway

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THANK YOU

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