

## ***Navigating the “Birds and Bees” Guiding Conversations on Dating Relationships and Sexuality for People with Autism***

**Jeneé Lewis-Walker, PsyD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist**

### **Session Description:**

"Navigating the 'Birds and Bees': Guiding Conversations on Dating, Relationships, and Sexuality for People with Autism" explores the unique challenges individuals with ASD face in understanding relationships, dating, and sexuality. It highlights common social vulnerabilities, including difficulties with communication, sensory sensitivities, and social boundaries. The importance of sexual education for people with AUTISM is emphasized, recognizing that while their sexual interests are often similar to those of their neurotypical peers, they may require additional social and cognitive support. Barriers such as limited social learning opportunities and parental discomfort are discussed, along with strategies to promote healthy sexual development. A brief overview of educational resources, such as the STAR Program and *Intimate Relationships & Sexual Health* curriculum, introduces structured approaches to teaching sexual health, social skills, and personal boundaries. The presentation encourages caregivers and professionals to facilitate open, informed discussions, ensuring that individuals with ASD receive the necessary support to navigate relationships safely and confidently.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify and discuss possible psychosocial vulnerabilities, nuances, and uniqueness of sexuality & dating in people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
2. Discuss health, puberty, and maturation for people with (ASD).
3. Identify appropriate age strategies for approaching healthy and sexual development for people with ASD
4. Identify available and brainstorm strategies for increasing resources to help people with ASD facilitate conversations about sexuality and dating relationships.

A native of Richmond, Virginia, **Dr. Jeneé' Lewis-Walker** earned a bachelor's degree from Elizabeth City State University, double majoring in Special Education and Psychology. She began her career as a special education teacher in Hampton Roads, VA. However, after noticing the psychological challenges many of her students and their families faced, she pursued further education, earning a master's degree in Community and Clinical Psychology from Norfolk State University. Dr. Walker's passion for psychology led her to continue her education at Regent University in Virginia Beach, where she earned another master's degree in Clinical Psychology, followed by a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology with a concentration in Children and Adolescents.

With extensive clinical experience, Dr. Walker has worked with children, adolescents, and adults across various ethnicities, genders, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds, offering services such as psychological assessments, psychotherapy, and research design. She has gained experience in diverse clinical settings, including mental health clinics, residential treatment facilities, detention centers, psychiatric hospitals, and private outpatient practices. Dr. Walker has collaborated with local and state agencies to enhance the quality of mental health services. She has also provided training on a variety of topics, such as behavioral management, trauma-informed care, and systemic consultation for children and adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Drawing from a biopsychosocial approach, positive psychology, and cognitive-behavioral therapy, she has practiced privately for over 15 years.

Currently, Dr. Walker serves as the Director of Children's Mental Health Services and as a Project Facilitator for the National Center for START Services® / Institute on Disability / UED at the University of New Hampshire.