

# Sexuality and Sexual Education Resources for Autistic Youth: Increasing Accessibility and Awareness

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## Background

Sexual education is an essential yet underrepresented topic around the world. The intersection between autism and sexuality is often omitted from daily conversations, research, school curricula and more due to stigma. While a handful of research studies have focused on the cognitive and social aspects of autism, there is still a significant gap in understanding how autism influences an individual's sexuality. It is important to improve the quality of life for autistic individuals – specifically regarding accessibility of sexuality and sexual education.

## Existing Research and the Current Gaps

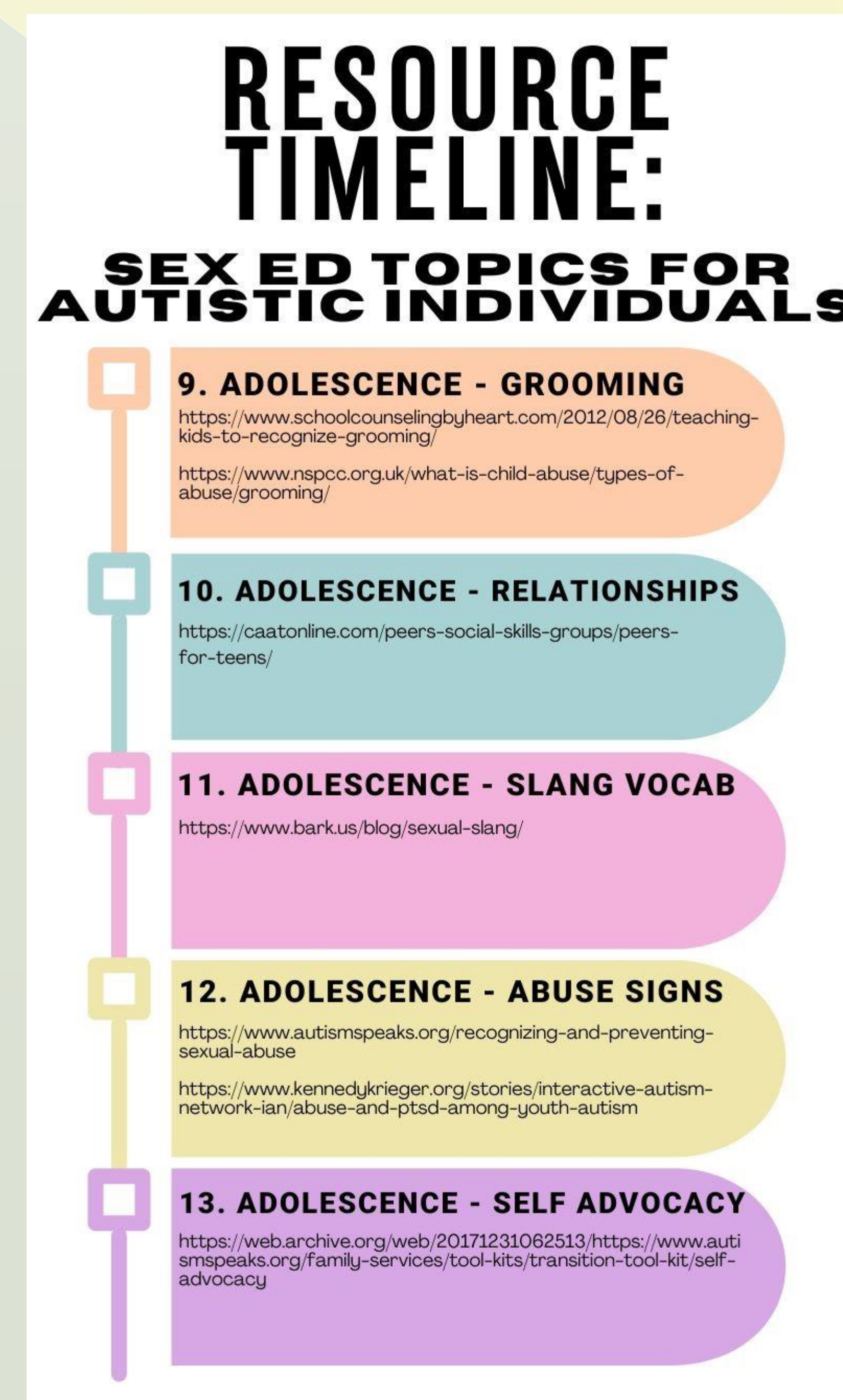
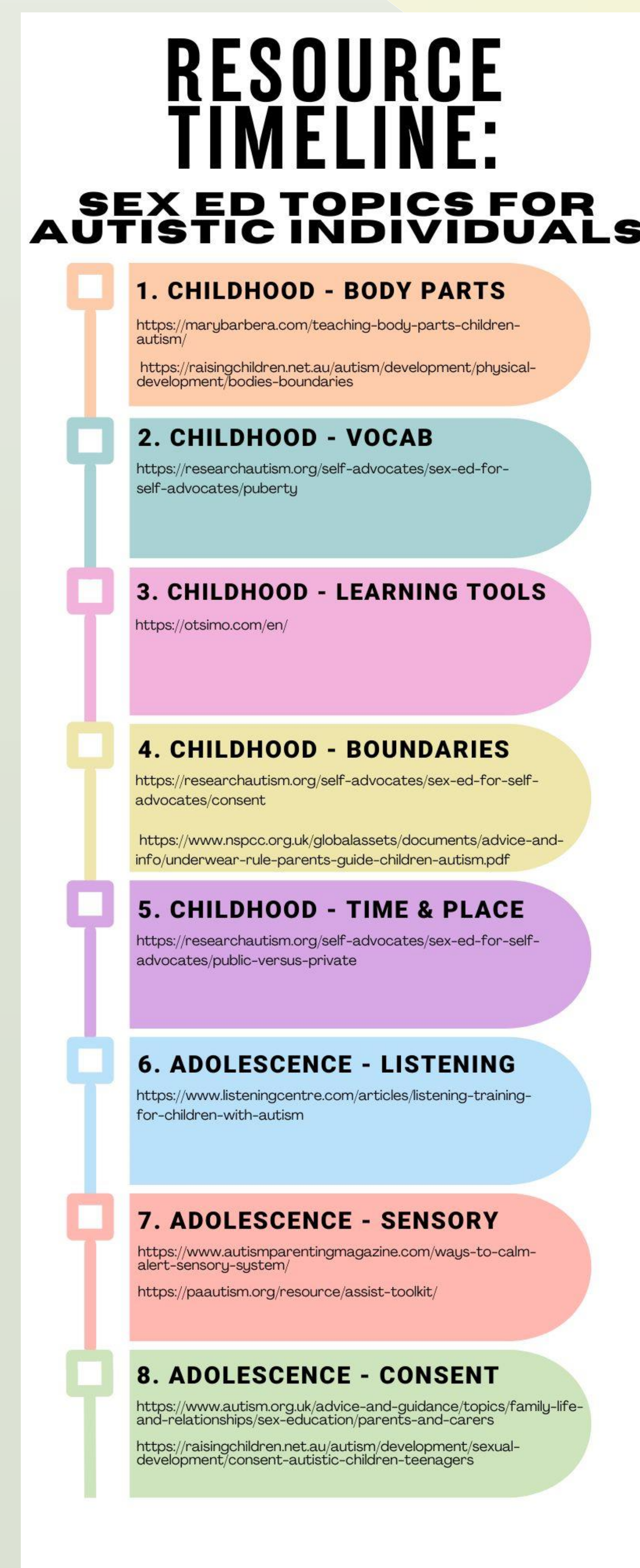
There is not much research regarding the intersection of autism and sexuality. Since the focus of the research is on problematic sexual behavior, there was a noticeable trend. Most of the search results come up as sources reporting on autistic individuals as offenders rather than as victims which alludes to the presence of bias regarding the research. Existing research on autism and sexuality has historically been recorded with three different lenses. The first perspective is that autistic individuals have no inherent sexual or romantic needs. The second is that autistic individuals do have needs, but they often engage in problematic sexual behaviors. The last lens is the present stage, where myths are slowly decreasing, and research is becoming more holistic.

## Conclusions

After overviewing the numerous resources relating to autism, sexuality, and sexual education, there is still a vast amount of knowledge missing. Many suggestions and lessons have been proposed in theory, yet it is difficult to find an accessible and comprehensive resource that can explain sexuality to the ASD population. As research progresses today, it is important to include holistic records of sexuality regarding autistic individuals as well as making sure researchers expand on what information already exists.

## Result of Literature Review

After conducting a review of the existing literature on autism and sexuality, I was inspired by the Crehan Lab online sexual resource guide. Based on a frame of developmental trajectory and identifying certain sexual education topics that would best be introduced at a particular period of time, I compiled my own guide to sexual education resources. Although it is beneficial for all of these topics to be introduced during a child's younger years, I sorted the sources according to what I believe to be digestible topics during a particular youth developmental phase.



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