



Disabled Sexuality and Pleasure Access

Rachele Manett, MA, CTRS
pronouns: they/she

Resource Spotlight, May 2024

Overview

- About me
- A bit about That Sex Show
- Disability justice and pleasure politic
- Disabled Sexuality - a language choice
- Gaps and barriers
- Moving forward
- Q&A and discussion

About Me



- Sexuality Educator and Education Coordinator - Venus Envy
- Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)
- Consultation and training (community, health care professionals, disability support networks, policy, etc.)
- Host of That Sex Show on AMI-tv

That Sex Show

- TV show/podcast produced by Ocean Entertainment for AMI-tv
- Winner of Screen Nova Scotia 2024 Best Unscripted TV Show
- Entirely focused on intersections of sexuality and disability (as well as other intersections).

That Sex Show

Hosted by Rachele Manett. That Sex Show features experts and members of the disability community discussing the myths and misconceptions surrounding the sex lives of people with a disability.

Episodes Host About That Sex Show

About That Sex Show

That Sex Show debuts April 19 at 8 p.m. Eastern on AMI-tv

Hosted by sex educator Rachele Manett, *That Sex Show* is a deep dive into the intersection of sex and disability. Join Rachele as she meets with experts and members of the disability community to discuss the myths and misconceptions surrounding the sex lives of people with a disability.

The background features several abstract shapes in shades of purple and green. A large, dark purple rounded rectangle is centered horizontally, containing the text. To the left, there are concentric green circles. Other purple shapes of various sizes and colors are scattered around the central text box.

Disability Justice and Pleasure Politic

Disability Justice Framework

Sins Invalid

- A framework for disability movements created by a group of disabled artists, predominantly racialized women and trans folks
- Recognizes the importance of cross-movement solidarity, interdependence and intersectionality
- Anti-capitalist in nature - we are not what we produce
- Sins Invalid explores themes of sexuality, embodiment, and provocation, and challenges norms around beauty and sexuality



Sins Invalid, New Day Films

Pleasure Politic

Pleasure is a human right - we do not need to earn pleasure or the right to feel good, it is inherent.

Pleasure Politic and DJ

- All marginalization and oppression is connected - colonialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, hetero-cis-sexism and capitalism makes decisions of who is worthy of human rights, and seeks to control and punishes those who don't fit into those rules
- Sexuality and pleasure is a common theme in the way that oppressive systems assert power and control over marginalized communities
- But it's also a way to reclaim power

Disabled Sexuality

- An understanding of sexuality that isn't a response to able-bodied sex
 - There is no “normal” way to be sexual
- Prioritizing pleasure and desire above function or dysfunction
- Resistance to societal expectations and norms
- Focus on needs, boundaries, desires
- Prioritizing ongoing communication in any form

Sex and pleasure can be tools for reclamation of one's body and agency

Sex Lives & Videotape

That Sex Show - 22:20min

Depictions of the sex lives of people with disabilities are almost non-existent in pop culture. Rachele asks why and sets out on a mission to change it.



Start watching 'Sex Lives & Videotape'





Gaps and Barriers

De-sexualization

Infantilization of people with disabilities

- Terms like “mental age” or “developmental age” further the narrative that adults with disabilities are not adults
- Misunderstanding of peers and possible sexual partners

Exclusionary sex education

- Leads to the assumptions that disabled bodyminds are not considered sexual and therefore don't require sex education

Misunderstandings about asexuality

- People with disabilities getting forced into an identity leads to pushback in identifying with the identity at all

Consent

Compliance over consent

- Are disabled people allowed to say no? Is that no respected?

Lack of disability lens in conversations about consent

- What are the ways we conceptualize consent? Do they include the disabled experience?

Intersectionality

Lack of access to sexuality-based communities

- Are queer and trans spaces physically accessible? Can disabled people communicate in these spaces?

Pushback from disabled community

- Disability does not exist in a vacuum
- Disabled people can still oppress other disabled people

Physicality

Pain and sensation

- Too much focus on genitals and orgasm as the be all and end all of sex and pleasure

Physical supports for sexual experiences

- Involving care workers is challenging
- Solo play and masturbation might not be possible

The myth of spontaneous sex

The image features a solid purple background. In the center, there is a white rounded rectangle with the text "Moving Forward" written in a dark purple, sans-serif font. The background is decorated with various abstract shapes: a light purple wavy shape in the top left, a light purple circle in the top right, a large light purple shape in the bottom right, and several overlapping circles in shades of purple and white in the bottom left.

Moving Forward

Staying Healthy

[That Sex Show](#) - 22:20min

The sexuality of people with disabilities is too often denied or medicalized, which results in a lack of sex education. Rachele looks for ways to prioritize safety, while still enjoying great sex.

▶ Start watching 'Staying Healthy'



Best Practices

Training and education

- Anyone should be able to provide accessible and inclusive sex education. If there are gaps in your knowledge, how will you change that?

Accessible considerations

- Plain language, accurate anatomical models and diagrams, ASL

Tech and media literacy

- The internet is a useful tool when used correctly!

Other Considerations

If we wait until we're completely ready, it might be too late

- We learn as we go, we can't know everything

Representation is key

- How are disabled experiences represented in your work? Is it in ideas alone? Are there role models for disabled people to see themselves in?

What can you do right now?

- Are there myths and biases that you are perpetuating in your work? Can you address those?
- Are there immediate ways you can make your work more accessible?



Questions?

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