

Dating for Teens & Young Adults on the Spectrum

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Our Story



Our Story



Our Story



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Roadmap for Today

1

Getting
Ready For
Romance

2

Successful
First Dates

3

Rejection &
Intimacy

4

Building A
Love That
Lasts

5

Launching
Your Love
Story

Part One: Getting Ready For Romance



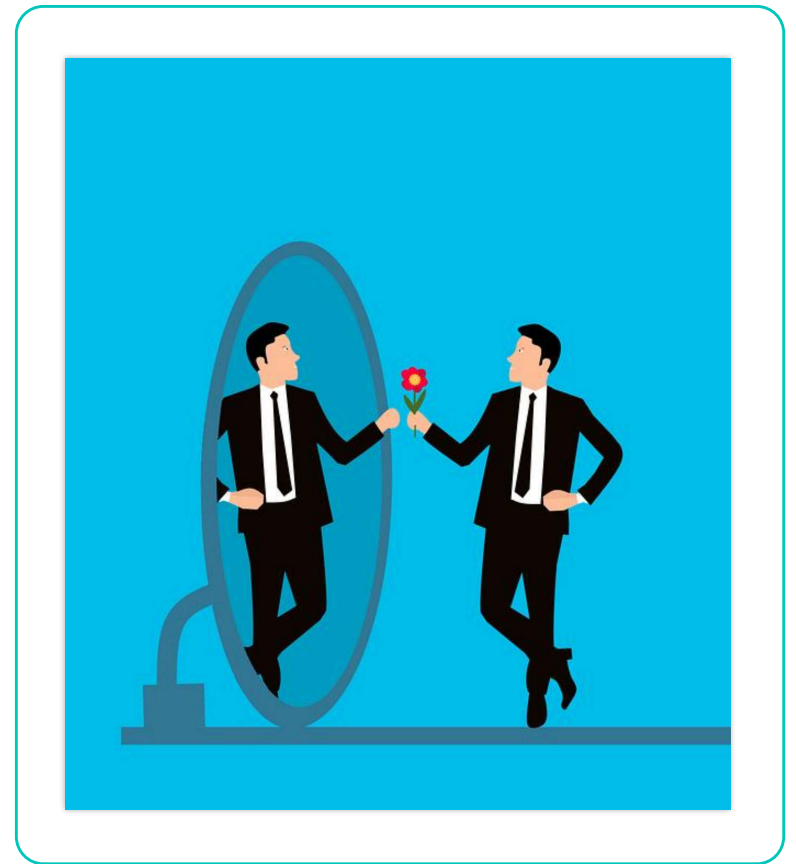
Start With
Self-Love



Learn To Be
A Friend

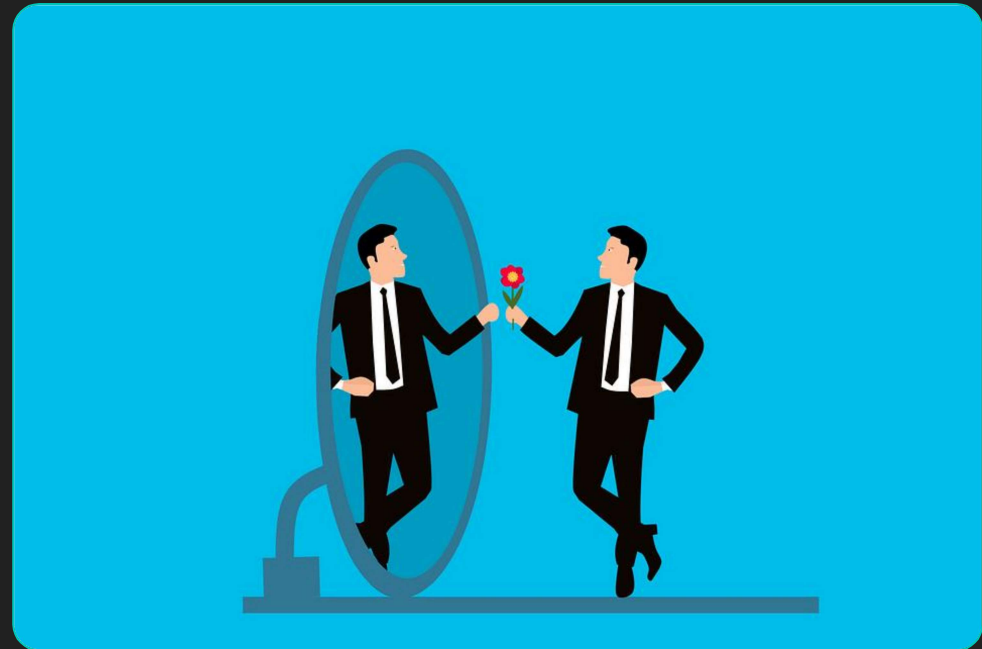
Start With Self-Love

1. Do something kind for yourself each day
2. Speak kindly about yourself (to yourself)
3. Build a community that sees the best in you



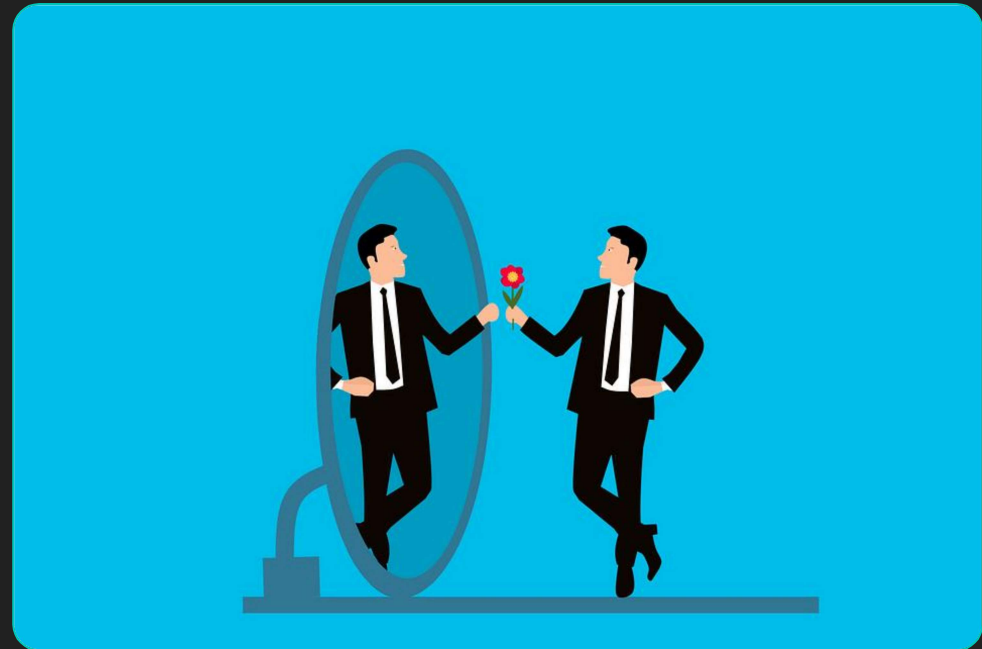
Do Something Kind For Yourself

- Pay attention to your needs
- Notice what makes you happy
- Do small actions to meet your needs & make yourself happy



Speak Kindly about Yourself (to Yourself)

- Would you be offended if someone talked about your friend the way you talk about yourself?
- Would you judge a friend as harshly as you judge yourself?
- Notice how you speak to yourself and stop and replace it with kinder words.
- Self-compassion fosters compassion for others.



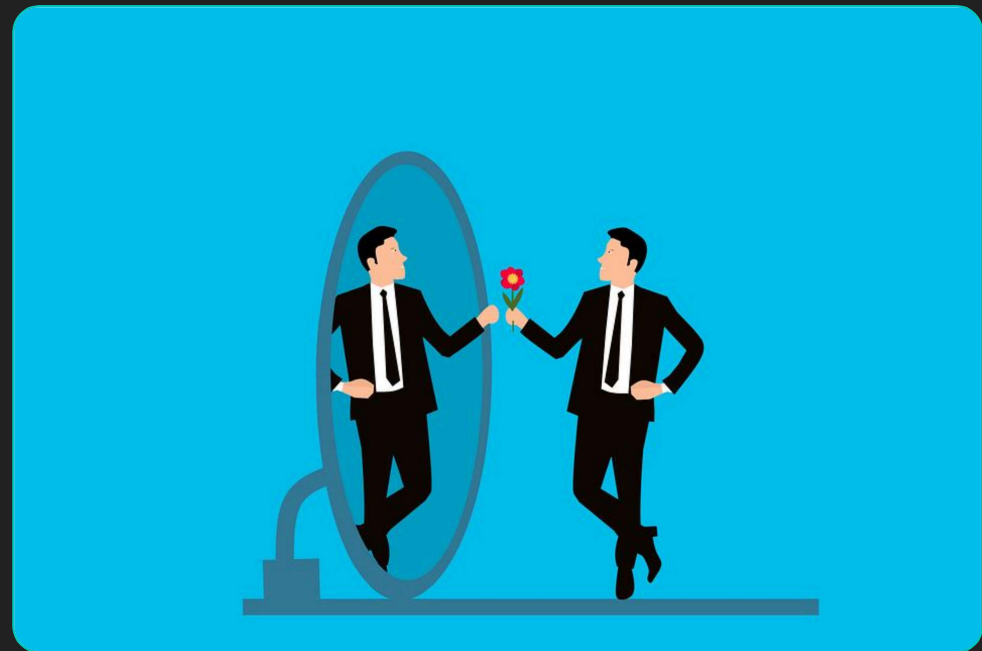
“I remind myself to be kind to myself, and
(as ridiculous as it may sound), to
treat myself in the same gentle way
I’d want to treat a daughter of mine.
It really helps.”

-Emma Stone

Build A Community

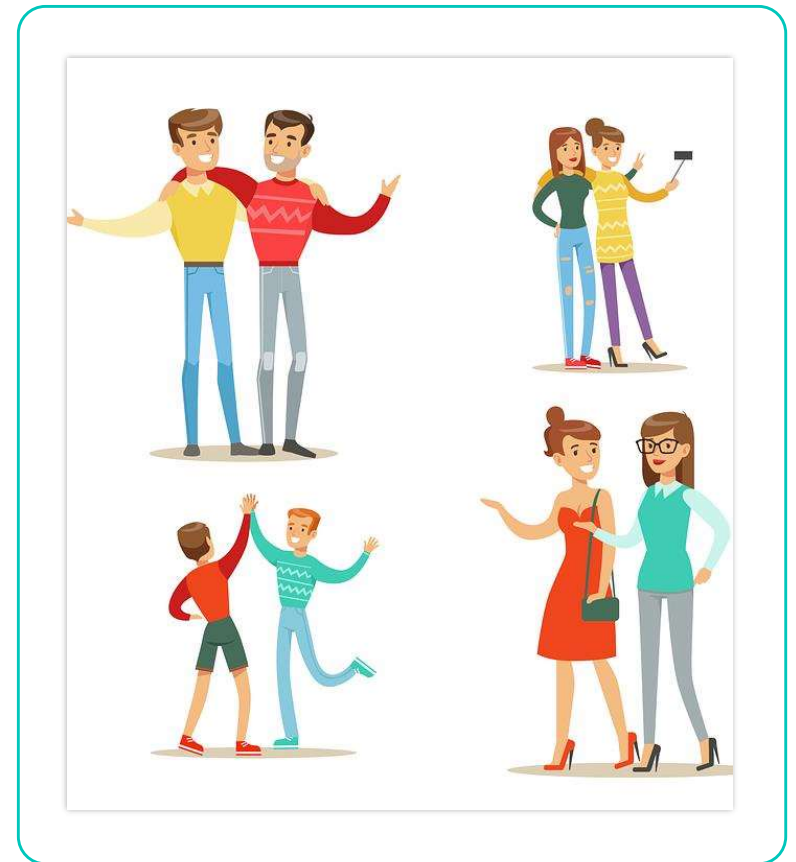
Spend time with people who...

- Accept & appreciate you for who you are
- Support you when you need help or compassion
- Encourage you to be the best version of yourself



Learn To Be A Friend

1. Practice social skills with someone safe
2. Create happiness with someone else
3. Develop intimacy without romance



Practice Social Skills

- Pick one skill to practice
- Experience failure (and realize that's okay!)
- Get feedback from them or someone else & try again



Create Happiness Together

- Plan everyday adventures
- Practice going outside your comfort zone
- Notice when you are your best self



Create Intimacy without Romance

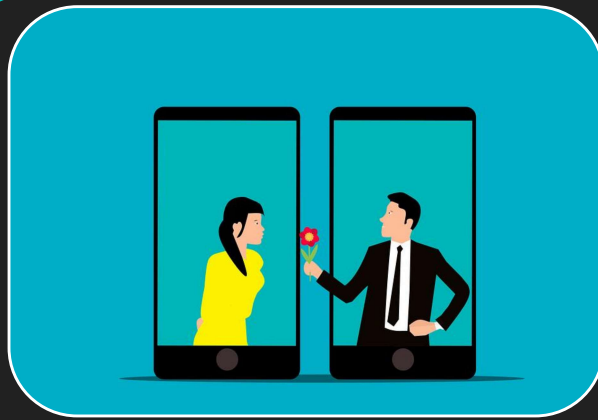
- Share “one step further” (when your friend is done sharing)
- Ask for (and offer) help with something small
- Practice sharing how you feel



“Friendship makes all of life
shine brightly”

-Henri Nouwen

Part Two: First Dates



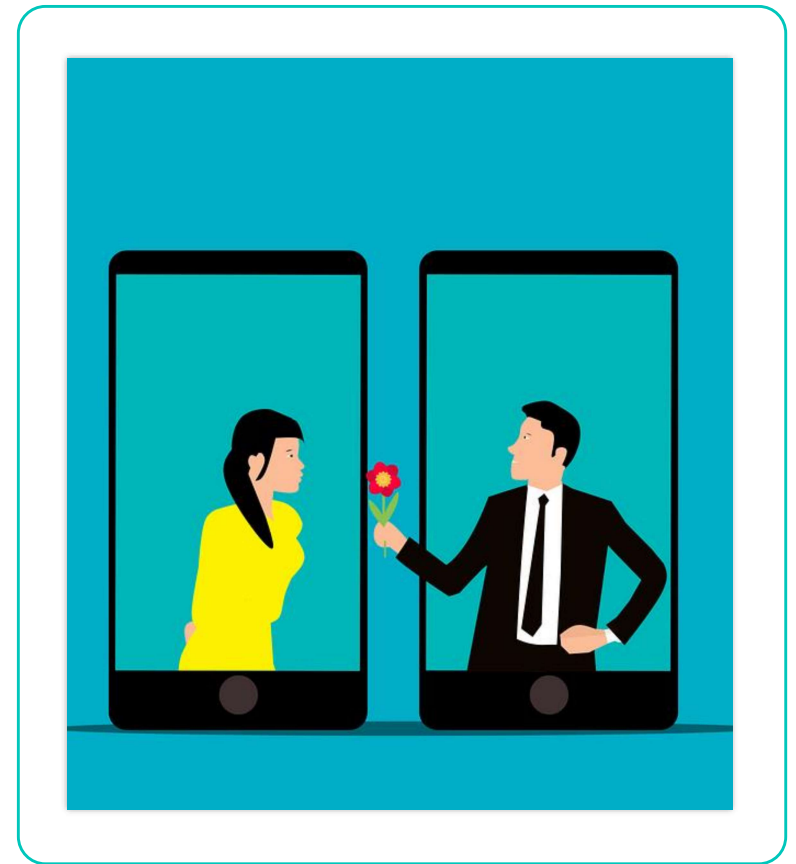
Asking them
out



Going on
the date

Asking Them Out

1. Connect as people before partners
 2. Give choices instead of reading cues
 3. Be intentional and clear
- (plus a bonus tip about online dating!)*



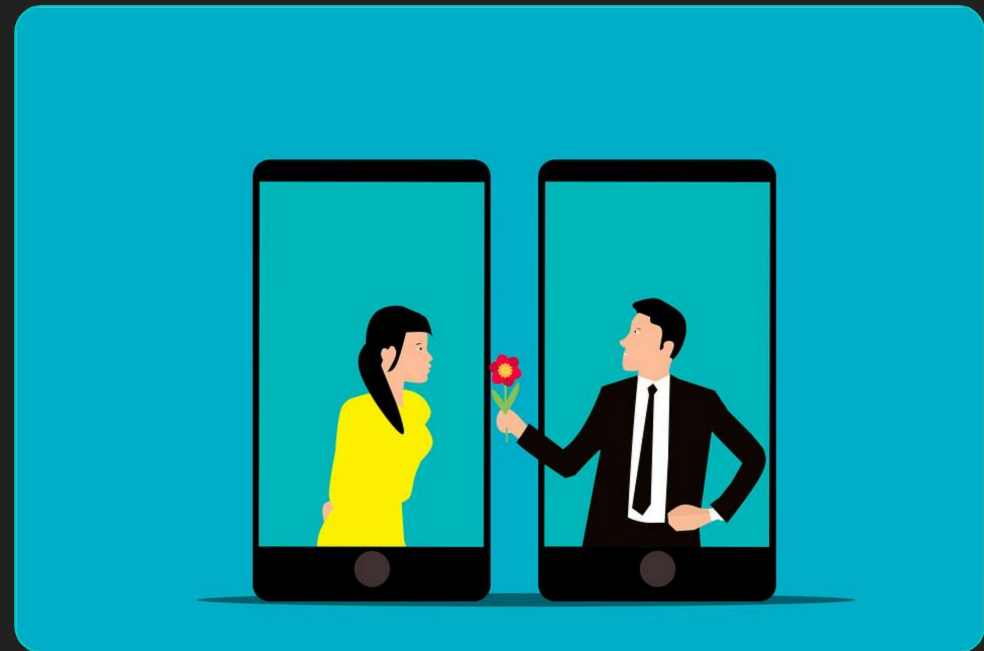
Connect as People Before Partners

- Show interest in them as a person (not as a romantic prospect)
- Lower the stakes
- Try to spend time together as friends before you ask them on a date



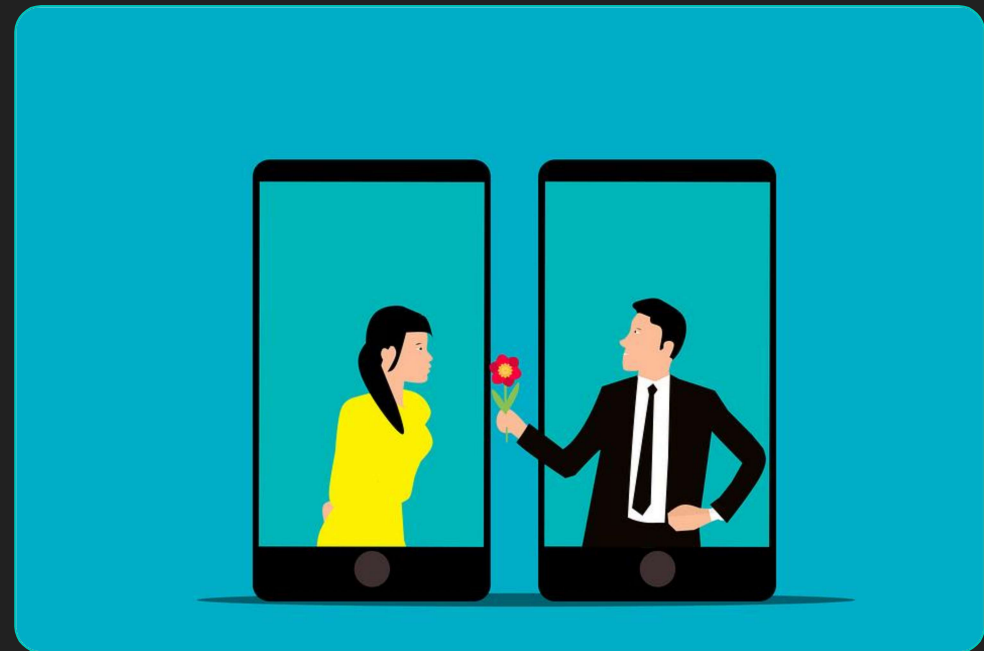
Focus on Choices, not Cues

- Observe what choices they make
- Put more weight on “yes” choices than “no” choices
- Give them two good options that let them choose connection or not.



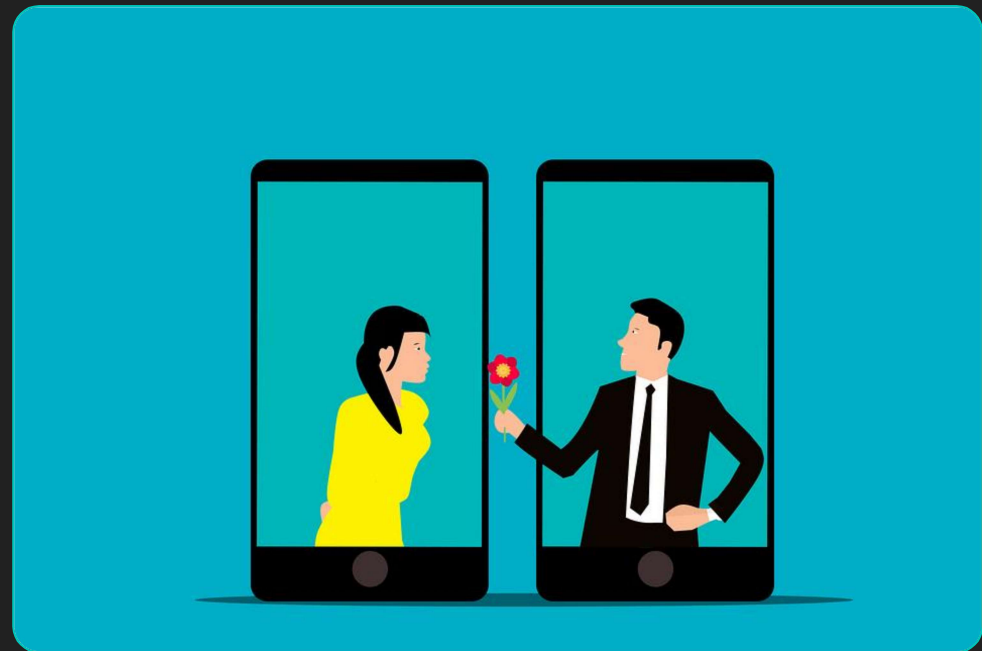
Be Intentional and Clear

- Start by saying you are interested in getting to know them better
- Invite them to a specific activity
- If you're going to treat it like a date, mention that it's a date



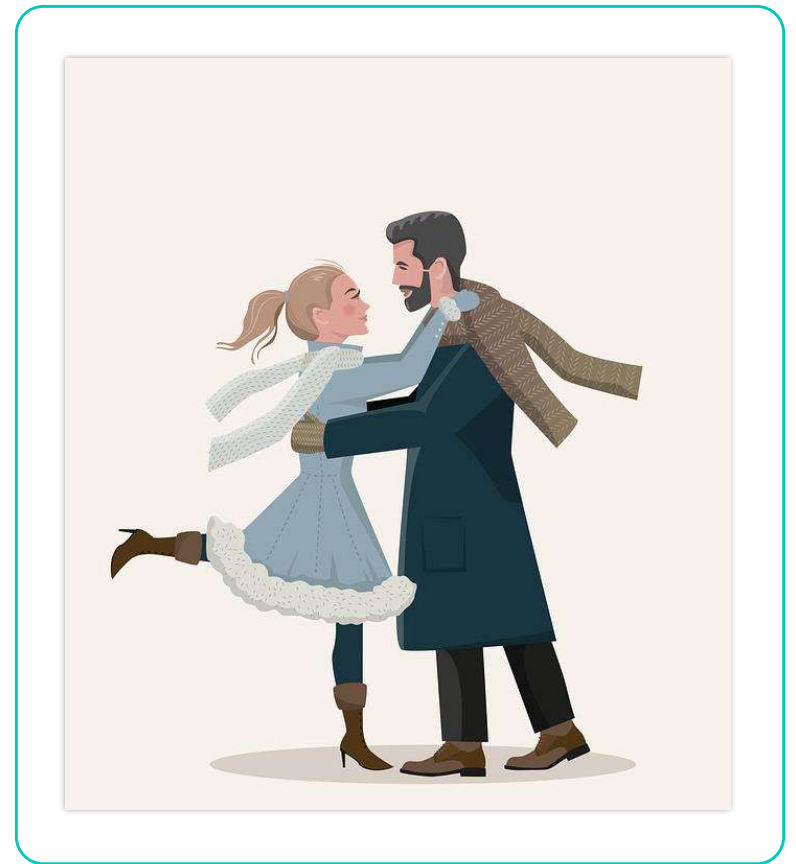
Bonus Online Dating Tips

- Set a time budget (1x/day AT MOST)
- Get off the app as soon as you can
- Start with a “date zero”, not a first date



Going On the Date

1. Where to go for your date?
2. What to do on your date?
3. You had a date, now what?



Where to Go for Your Date?

- Public setting & casual vibe
- Mix of interaction and activity
- General appeal OR something you share
- (Scope it out first, if you need to)



What to Do on Your Date?

- Be the best version of yourself
- Focus on sharing a fun time
- Plan “expanders and contractors”
- Treat the date like a gift



You Had a Date, Now What?

- Send a “thank you/home safe” text that day.
- Say you want to see them again the next day.
- (Or kindly let them know if you don't)
- If interest is returned, make concrete plans



Part Three: Handling Rejection & Intimacy



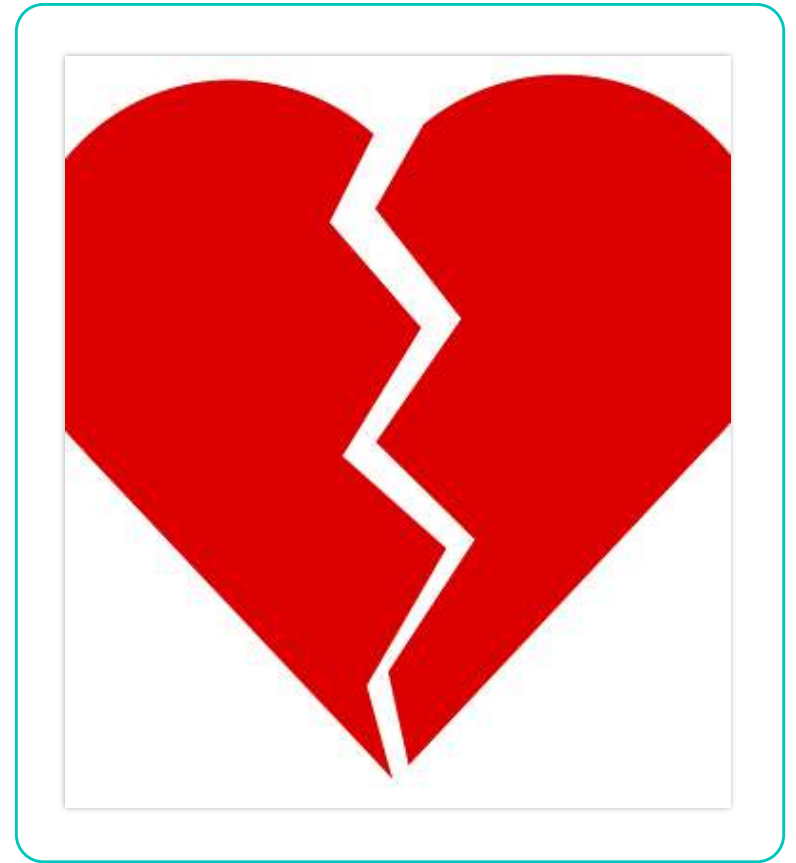
Handling
Rejection



Making Decisions
About Intimacy

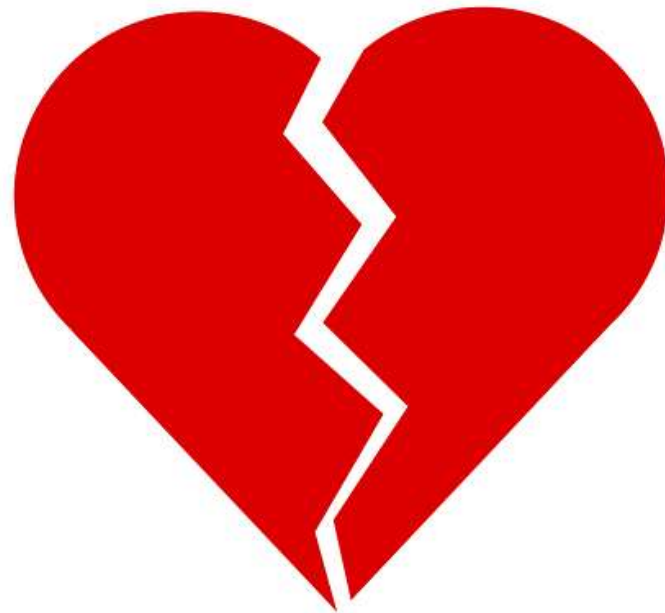
Handling Rejection

1. If it's not a yes, it's a no.
2. Make space for grief
3. Love them like a fish



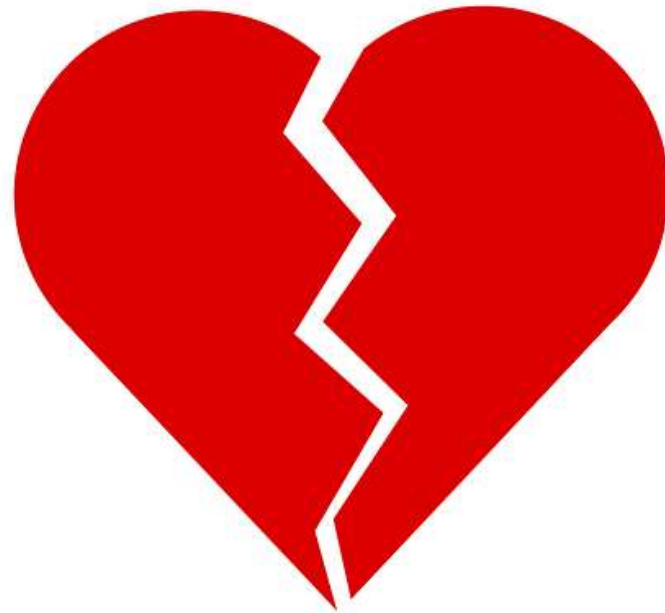
Getting the Hint

- If they say no, respect their choice.
- If they say maybe (or don't respond), you can ask one more time
- There are many reasons for someone to say maybe when they mean no
- Someone saying no does **not** mean
 - They don't care about you
 - You are unattractive
 - You will be unable to find a partner



Making Space for Grief

- It's okay for rejection to really hurt
- It's not okay to take your hurt out on the person who rejected you
- Let yourself feel, preferably around people who care about you.
- If someone else is grieving, respect that it feels big to them.

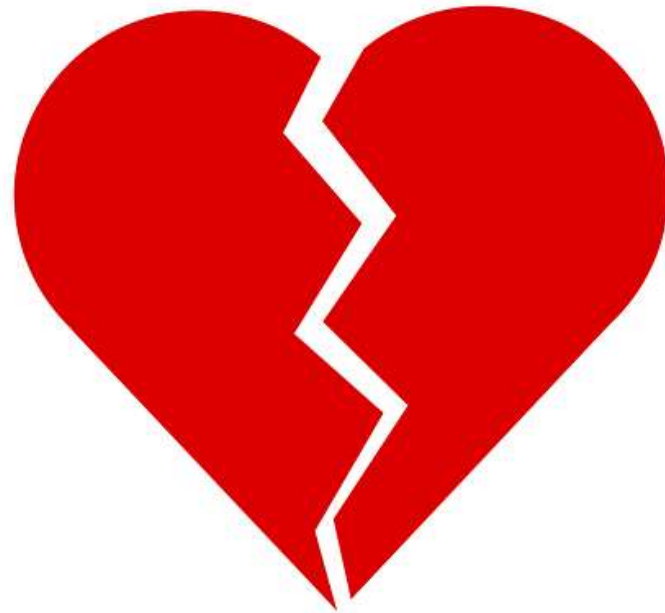


“Don’t tell me you love the fish.
You love yourself
and because the fish tastes good
you took it out of the water and ate it.”

-Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski

Love Them Like a Fish

- Love means doing what's best for them, not you
- It's never loving to harm someone or violate their boundaries
- If you can't love someone by letting them go, you're not ready to love someone who wants to stay



Physical Intimacy

1. Explicit communication is sexy
2. Respect whatever choices they make
3. Let yourself make the right choice



Explicit Communication

- Ask out loud
- Check in periodically (for consent and enjoyment)
- No means stop, and maybe or silence means no.
- You can be disappointed in a no and still glad someone stated their boundary



Respecting Their Choice

- It's not a real yes if they can't say no
- It's not a real yes if you kept asking
- It's okay if they change their mind
- Love them like a cookie



Making Your Own Choice

- It's okay if you want different things than other people
- Set your boundaries ahead of time
- Can set new boundary any time
- Someone who ignore a small boundary will ignore a big one



Part Four: Building A Love That Lasts



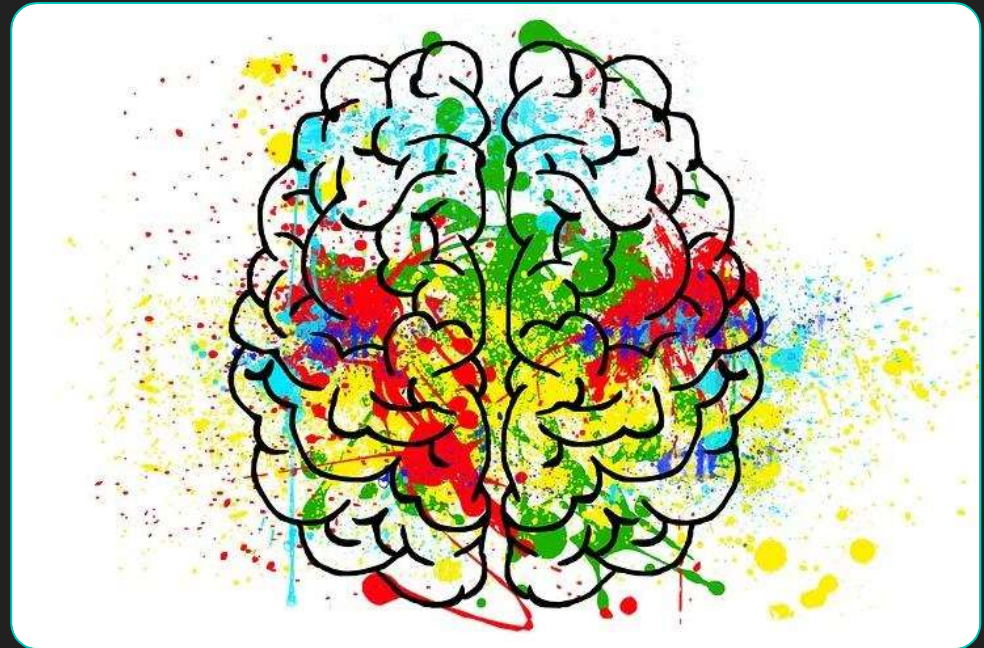
From Masking
To Kindness



From Conflict
To Connection

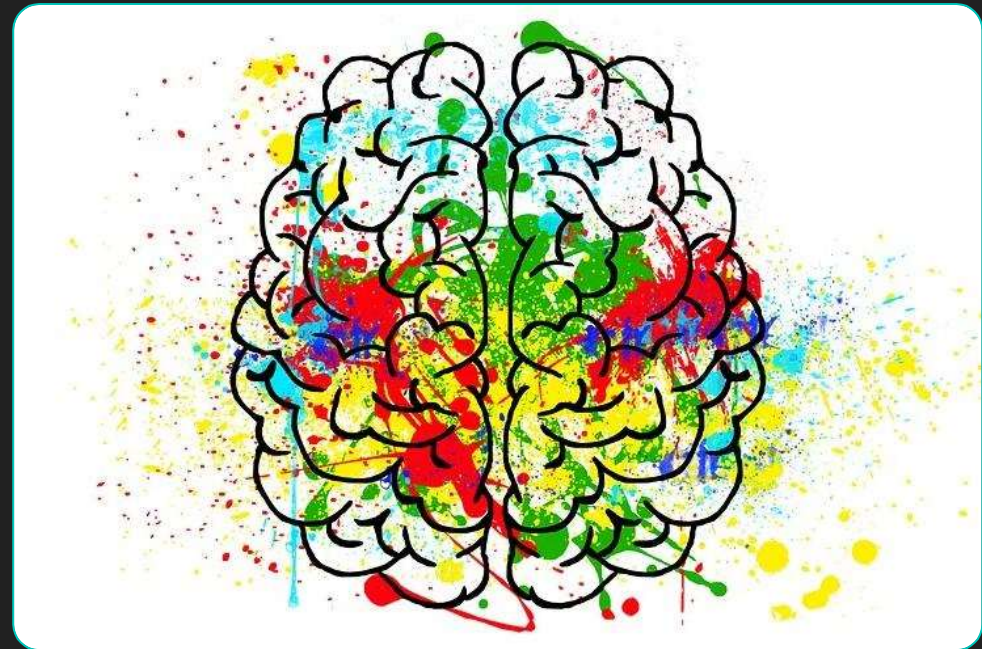
Being Kind without Masking

- **Masking** – Changing behavior to hide or suppress natural autistic traits
- Masking changes behavior that doesn't hurt anyone; it's just different.
- Masking is draining, stressful, and creates loneliness



Being Kind without Masking

- **Kindness** – Changing behavior due to an awareness of how your actions will affect others
- Kindness changes behavior that would cause a negative effect even on someone who understands and accepts you
- Everyone has a responsibility to be kind to others.



Kindness Vs Masking Examples

Masking examples

- Choosing an uncomfortable sensory environment for your date
- Forcing yourself to make eye contact even if you don't want to
- Pretending to like a "normal" hobby instead of your special interest



Kindness Examples

- Using good hygiene, even if a shower is unpleasant for you
- Finding other ways to show that you are paying attention to your date
- Asking questions about your date's interests, even if you don't share them.

Helping Your Partner Unmask

- Say explicitly that it's okay
- Help them realize when their behavior is unkind (not autistic)
- Celebrate their weirdness



The Power Of Compassionate Curiosity



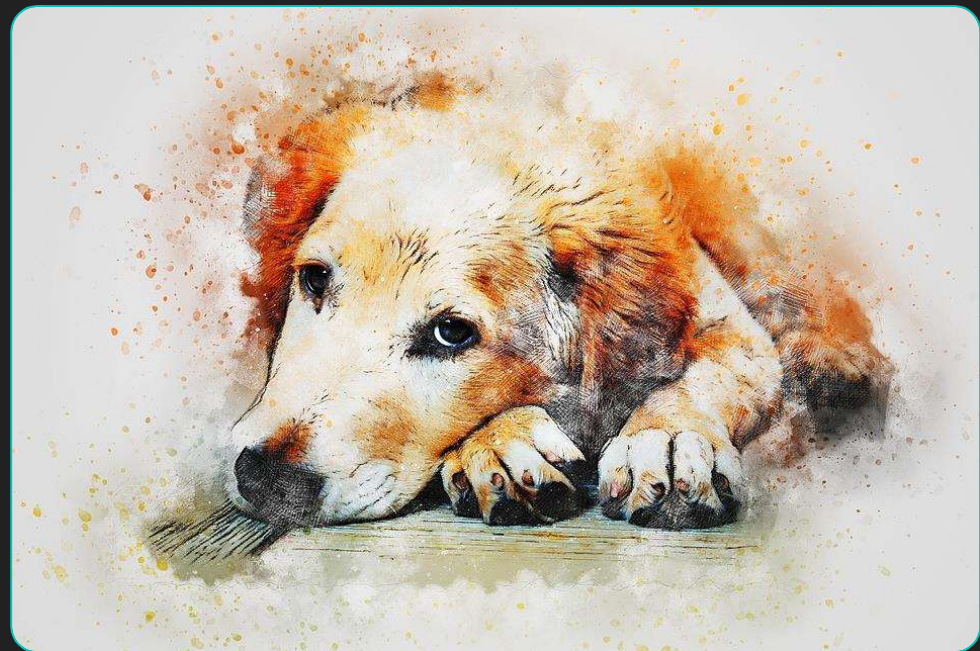
It's our commitment to being
curious rather than correct
that allows us to turn toward one another
in the moments of disagreement

Dr. John Gottman

Compassionate Curiosity

Is your dog a bad dog for chewing up your socks?

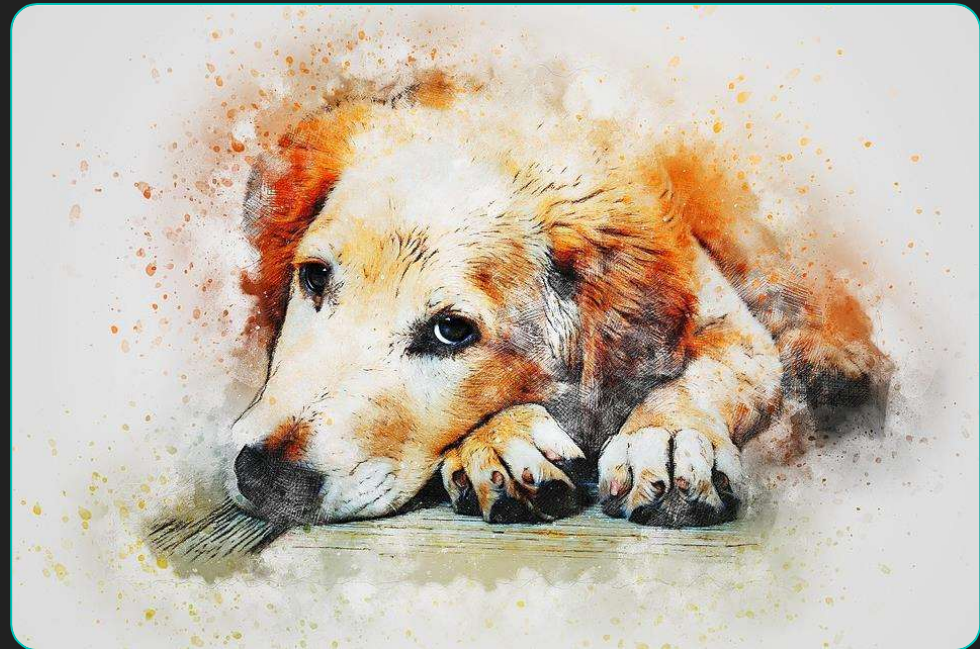
1. No - all dogs are good dogs!
2. Ask, "Why would a good dog do this bad thing?"
3. Answer: They have an important need and don't know how to meet it any other way, or they don't understand it's bad
4. Solution: Discover the need or source of confusion.



Compassionate Curiosity

Your dog chews your socks. Why?

- Possible needs:
 - Play & fun
 - Attention from you
- Possible misunderstanding
 - "This is my toy"
 - "You're chasing me – this must be fun for both of us!"



Compassionate Curiosity

1. Assume they're a decent person with good intentions (compassion)
2. Ask, "Why would a decent person do this bad thing?" (curiosity)
3. Find the need or misunderstanding
4. Meet the need or resolve the misunderstanding



Compassionate Curiosity

Your autistic partner doesn't plan anything for your anniversary. **Why might this be?**

- Possible needs:
 - Anxiety about planning
 - Dislike of traditional romantic experiences
- Possible misunderstanding
 - "An anniversary is just another day"
 - "If you wanted me to plan something, you would tell me"



Compassionate Curiosity Exercise

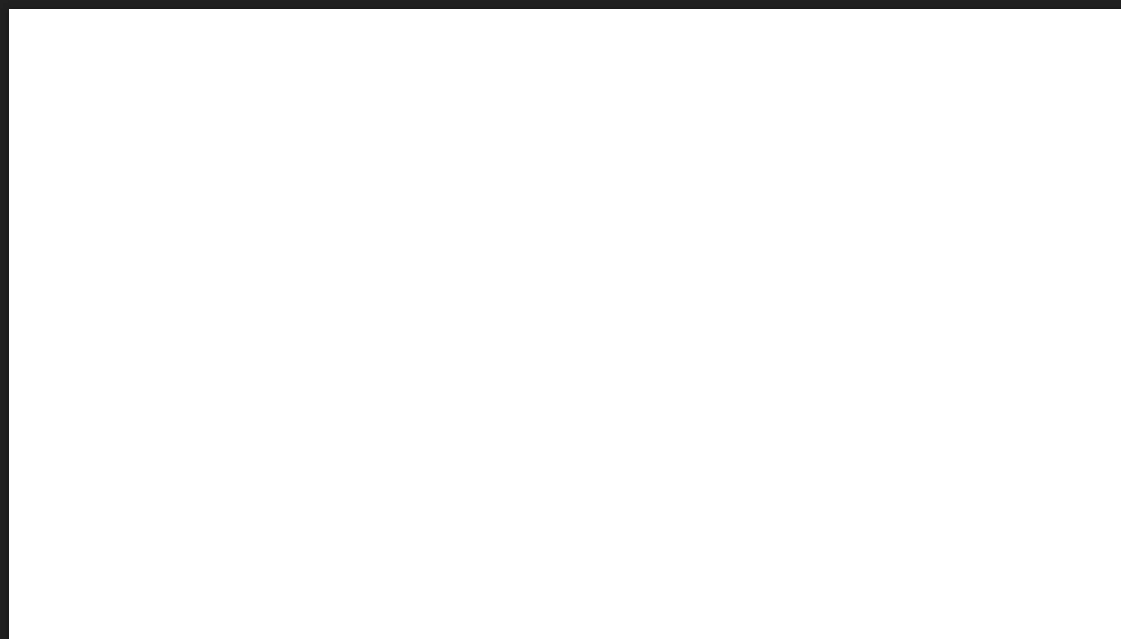
1. Think of something a friend or loved one does that annoys you
2. Identify some possible needs or misunderstandings that might fuel their annoying behavior
3. Discuss some ways you could show understanding & help reduce the annoying behavior



Part Five: Launching Your Love Story



Love video



Stay Connected

- DanielWendler.com
- AslingerConsulting.com



Questions?

