



Fostering Healthy Relationships for People with Disabilities & Autism

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Virginia Commonwealth University
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*Bridging Gaps,
Improving Lives*



Thank you



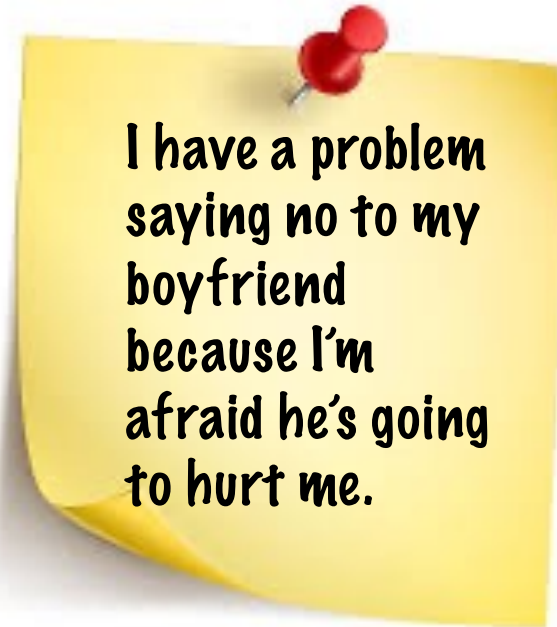
Agenda & Objectives for Today

- *Quick*: The scope of the problem
- *Quick*: Some reasons why children and adults with autism and other developmental disabilities experience such high rates of abuse
- Dynamics, prevention and responding to abuse
- Learn outcomes of research on LEAP
- learn at least two behavioral changes that can be immediately implemented to promote healthy relationships.
- discuss future considerations to further promote positive outcomes for people with IDD and the people who support them.

Everyone sees the world differently....



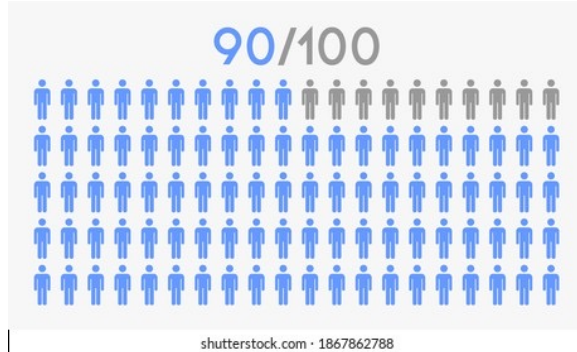
Bethany's story





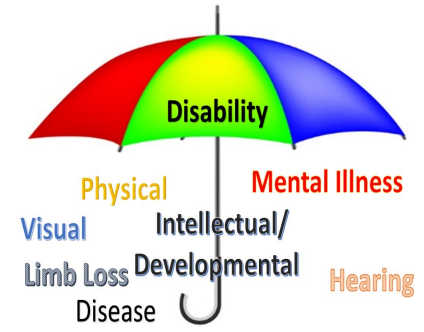
The SCOPE of the PROBLEM

Abuse, violence, neglect of people with IDD



90% women 86% of men

90% of women and 86% men have experienced abuse



Intellectual Disability

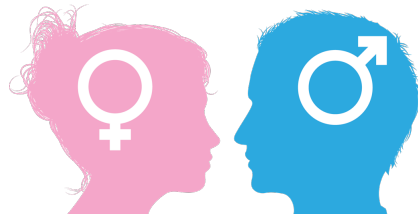
- People with **intellectual disabilities** had **highest victimization rate** among the disability types measured for total violent crime. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017)



Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities are **at least three times more likely** to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities (Jones et al., 2012), and they are more likely to be **seriously injured or harmed** by maltreatment (Sedlak et al., 2010).

Epidemic of Sexual Violence for people with IDD



83%

32%

83% of women and 32% of men are victims of sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.

(Johnson & Sigler, 2000)



49%

49% of people who are victims of sexual violence will experience **10 or more incidents**

(Valenti-Heim & Schwartz, 1995)



Sexually assaulted at a rate 7 times higher than the typically developing population.

(US Dept. of Justice data by NPR, 2017)

Children with disabilities are



2x as likely

experience abuse in
their lifetime

US Dept. of Health &
Human Services



4x as likely

to be victims of crime

Sedlick et al., 2010



10X more likely

Children with **behavioral health conditions** who were maltreated before age 3 were **10 times more likely** to be maltreated again

Jaudes & Mackey-Bilaver, 2008

Autism +IDD or Only Autism





do kids with
disabilities
experience
abuse
at such
**EPIDEMIC
RATES?**



Skewed Boundaries



Isolation





Power and Control Issues





Abusers *are* able to control their behavior, they do it all the time!

- Abusers pick and choose who they abuse
 - Abusers carefully choose where and when to abuse
 - Abusers are able to stop their behaviors when it benefits them
 - Violent abusers usually target their blows in a place where they won't show
- Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. Last updated: April 2012 •

“They think if you have a disability, that means you lie.

That you can't tell the truth or you don't know what the truth is.”

Young boy who was assaulted by deacon at church

Trained compliance

(Tharinger, Horton, & Millea, 1990)

“When you have a disability, people are always telling you, ‘Do as this person says! Do as this person says’ and all this other stuff.”

Thomas Mangrum – Washington, DC

Sorry, we thought we were doing the right thing at the time....



Following One-Step Directions
Welcome to Speech- Stefanie Ruth
Graphics by myohagraphics.com

Touch nose	Touch socks	Sit down	Touch shirt	Touch mouth
Wave	Open mouth	Touch eyes	Touch ear	Stand up



Cultural Myths and Attitudes



Supporting People with Disabilities



What we know now

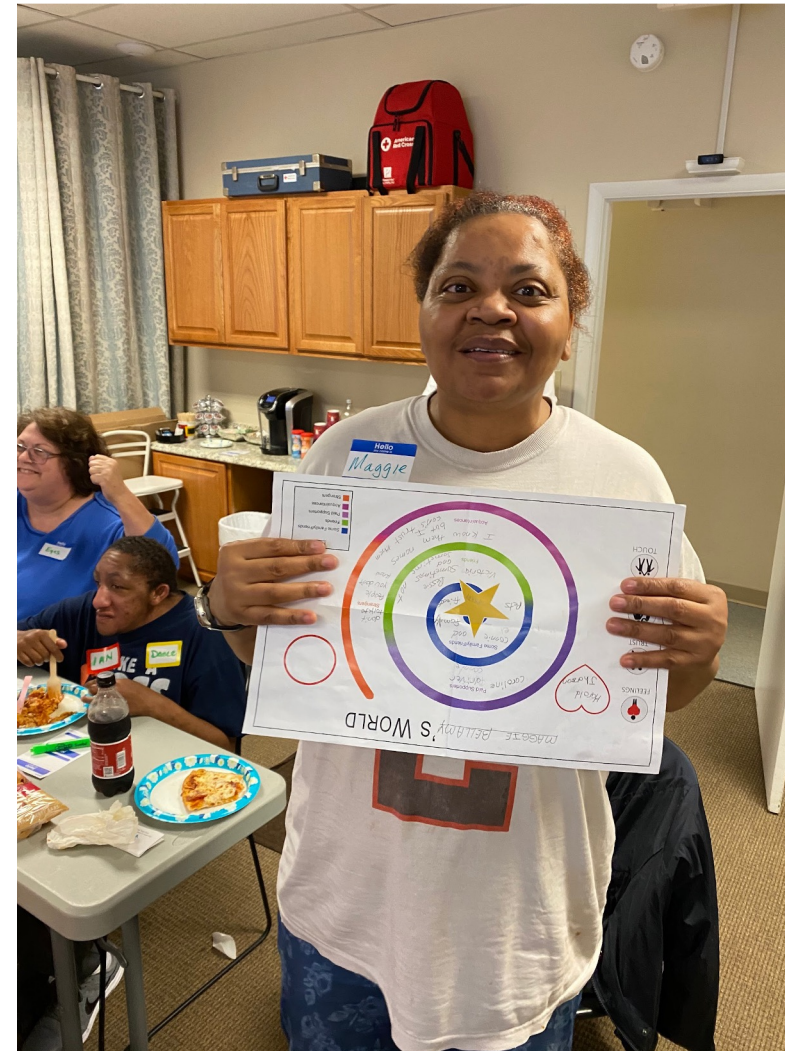


If not
me, then
WHO??

LEAP and other Prevention Strategies



LEAP: Leadership for Empowerment and Abuse Prevention





- 4 sessions, 90 minutes each
- Taught by a person with a disability + a co-trainer
- Designed to meet needs of people ages 18+ with mild, moderate and severe support needs
- Developed with input from family members, people with disabilities, experts from health, domestic violence, social services, child abuse

Power Statement



I am strong.



My feelings are important.



I deserve to feel safe.



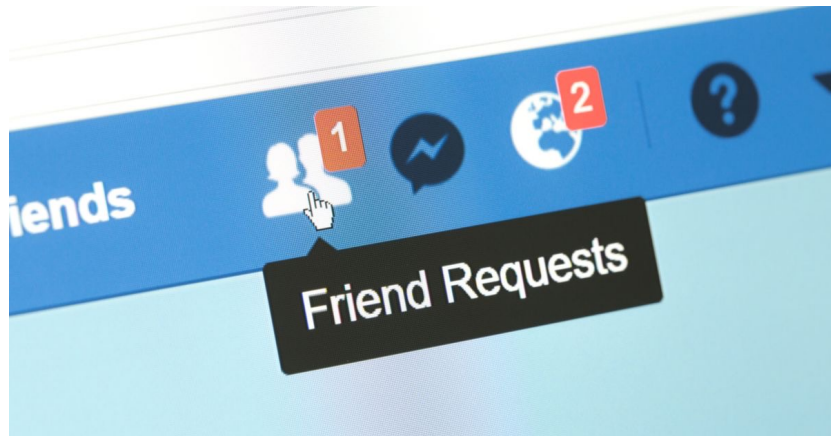
I deserve respect.

Core Concepts of LEAP

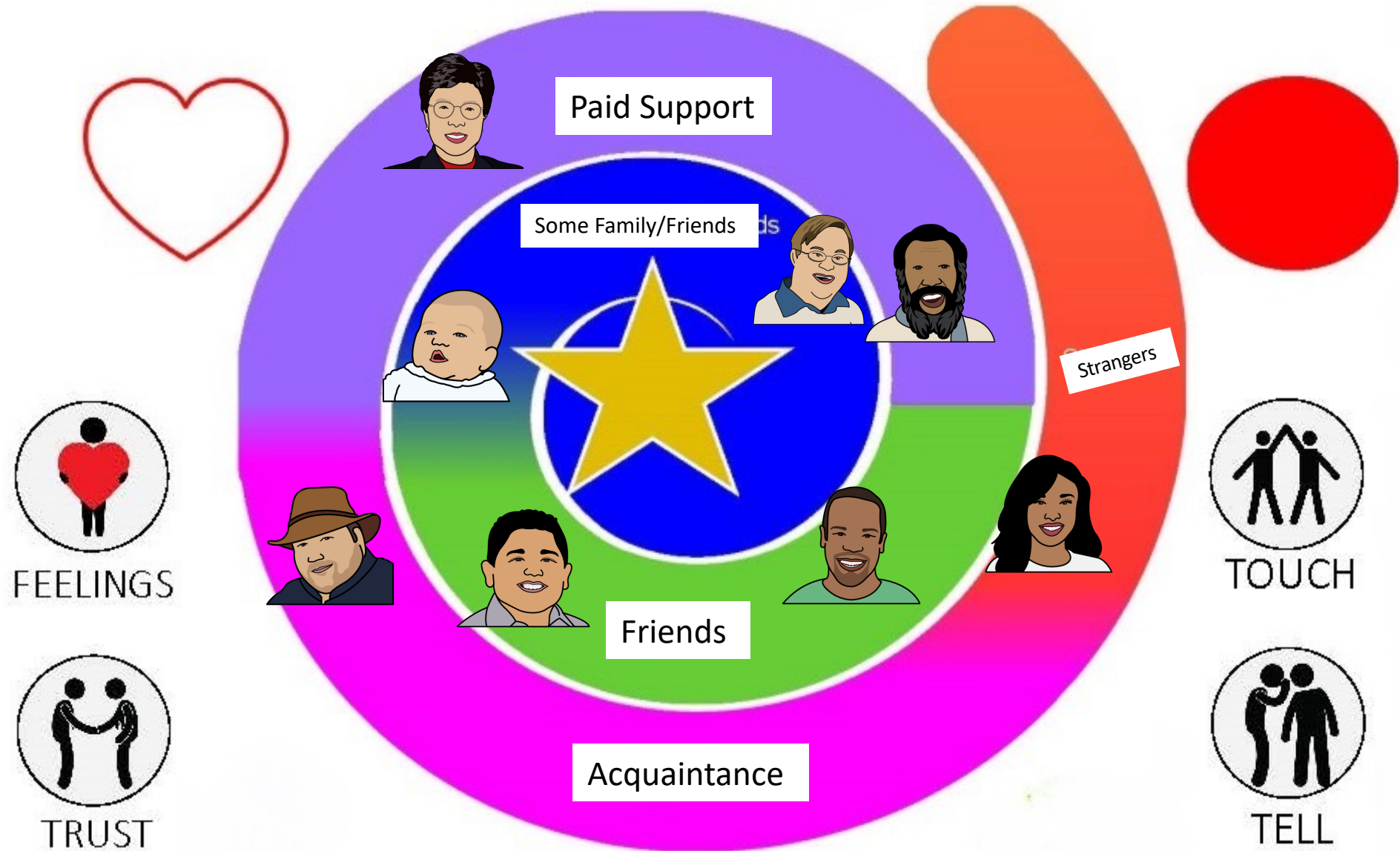
- Trust - You CAN change your mind about who you trust!
- Respect - Everyone deserves respect. Your feelings are important
- Boundaries - roles of paid support
- Paid staff vs. Friends
- Consent and permission to touch



What is a friend?



LEAP: Map of People in Your World



Friends vs. Paid Support Staff

Paid Supporters

- Help you problem solve:
Listen
- Celebrate your successes
- Provide you with
necessary assistance
- Advocate with you for a
better quality of life
- **Receive Payment**

Friends

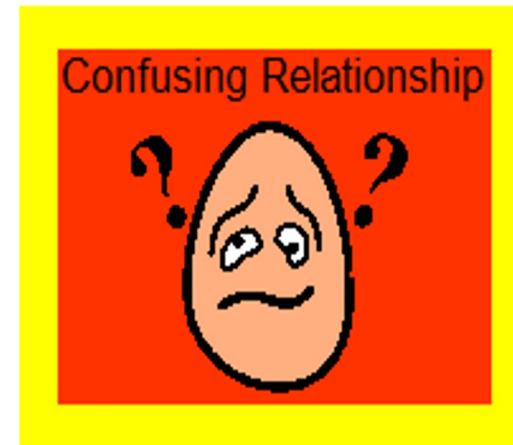
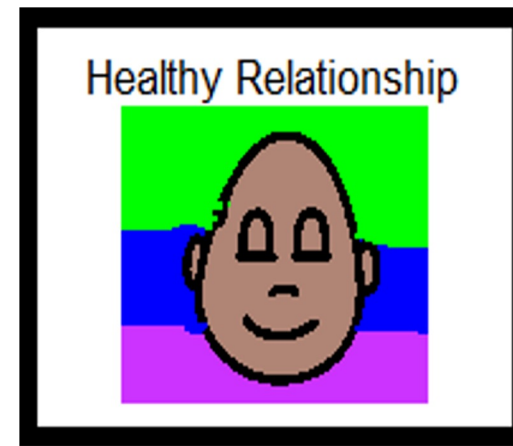
- Help you problem solve:
Listen
- Celebrate your successes
- Provide you with
necessary assistance
- Advocate with you for a
better quality of life



“Do you love me? Are you still my friend?”

- “I am not your friend but I love working with you”
- “You don’t know me well enough yet to hug me.”
- “I’m not your boyfriend/girlfriend, but let’s talk about how you can find one.”
- “I have so much fun with you I can’t believe I’m getting paid to do this!”
- “I love everyone in the world and you are part of that world.”

Types of Relationships
Types of Touch



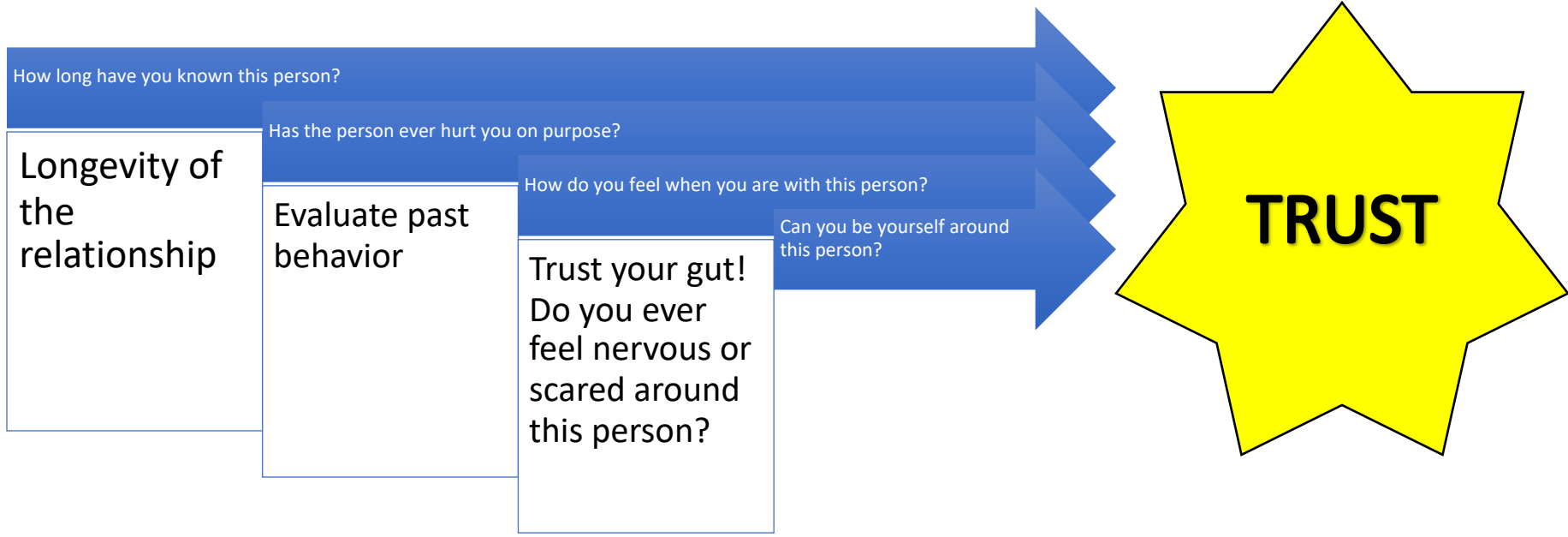
How do you feel when you are around someone?



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Teaching whom to trust



Your tango

**TRUST IS
EARNED WHEN
ACTIONS MEET
WORDS**

It's time to fill out your trust card.



THIS IS MY TRUST CARD

**IF I NEED HELP,
I CAN CONTACT THIS PERSON:**

Name:



Or I can contact any doctor, nurse, policeman, firefighter, lawyer, social worker, teacher, or counselor.



LEAP

POWER STATEMENT

I am strong.

My feelings are important.

I deserve to feel safe.

I deserve respect.

Evaluation: Pre, Post and 3 Month Postpost

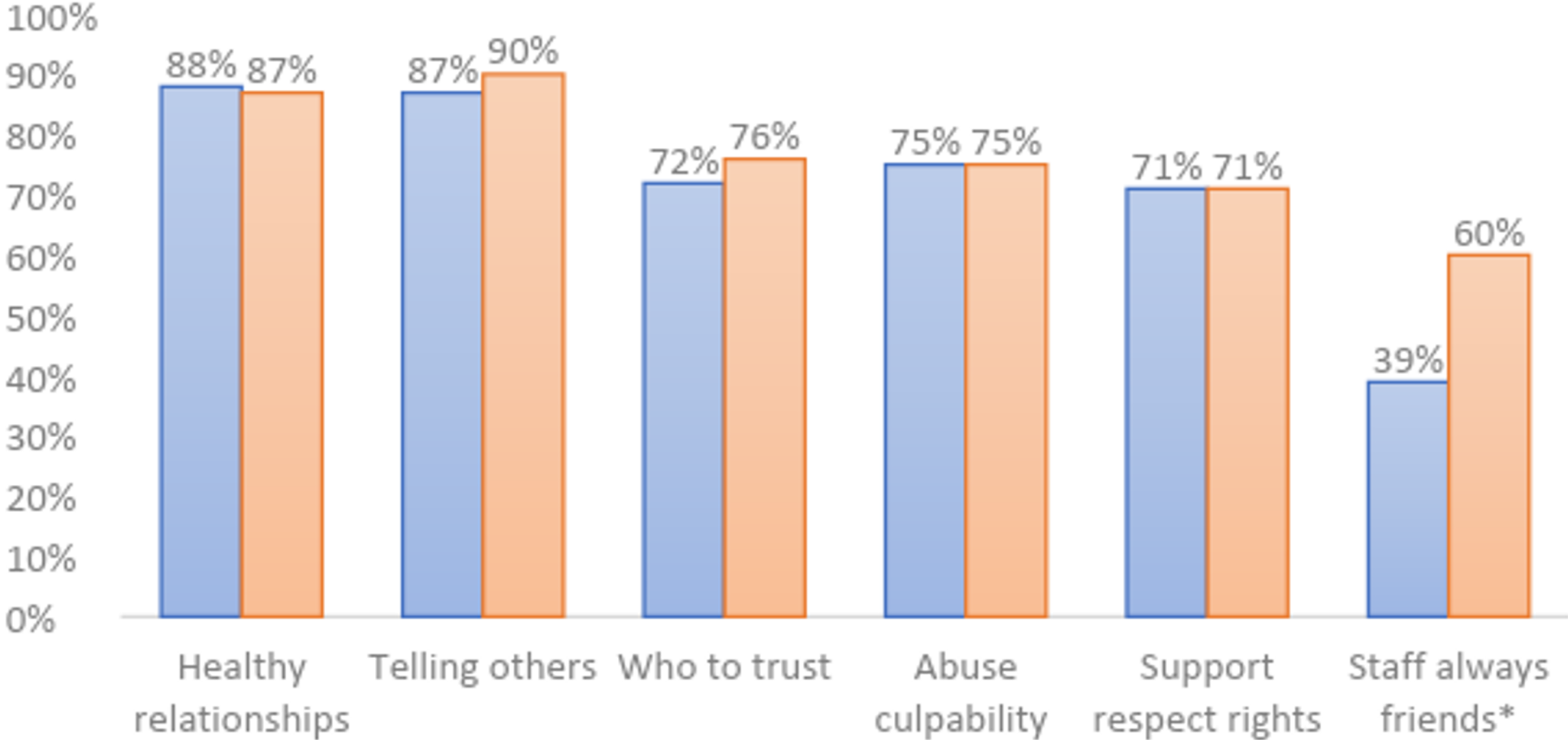
1. Could the participant ***discriminate*** between healthy and unhealthy relationships?
2. Could the participant explain ***why*** a relationship was healthy or unhealthy?
3. If the relationship were unhealthy, could the participant suggest ***what to do next?***





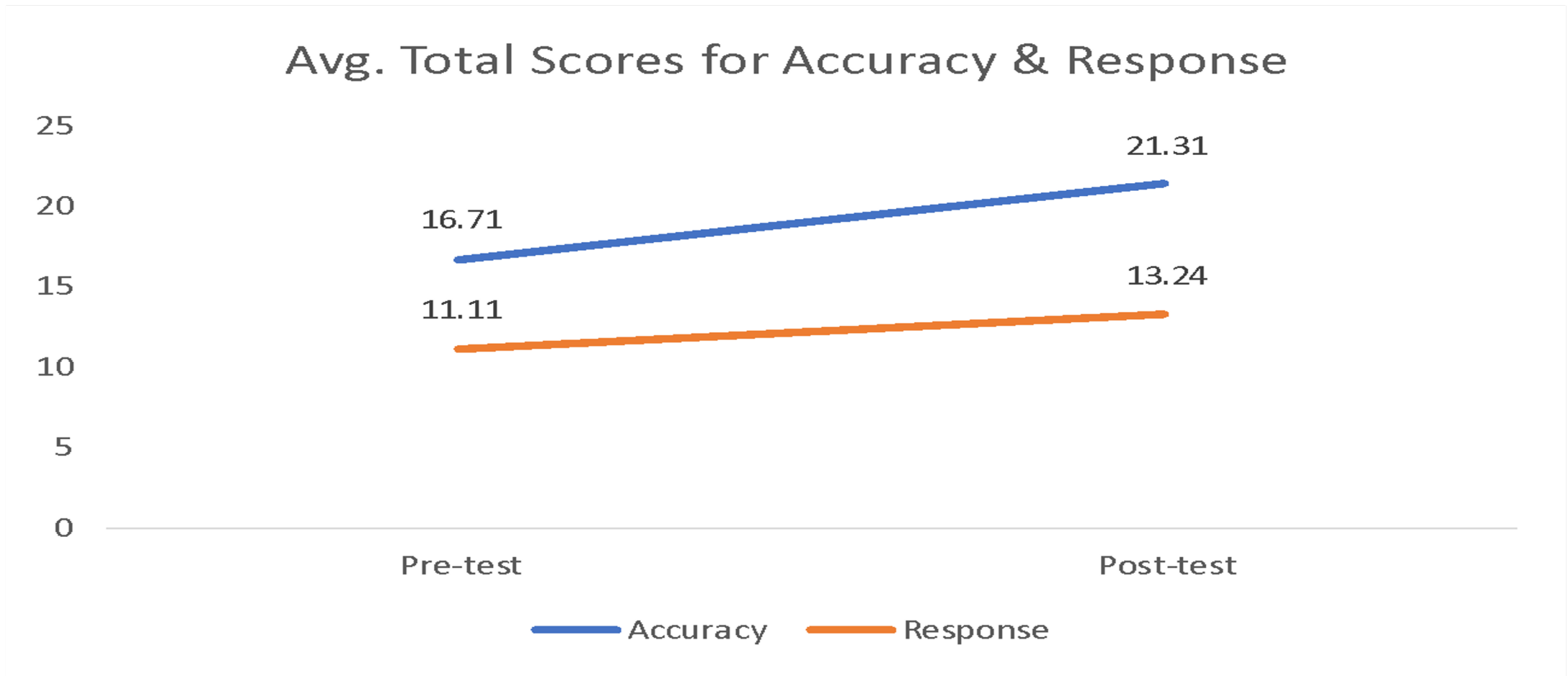
Results: Pre-test Yes/No Questions

Figure 1. Percent Correct at Pre-test & Post-test



■ Pretest ■ Posttest

Results: Accuracy of “Why is the relationship healthy/unhealthy?” and Response of “What should the person do next?”





Healthy People have Healthy Relationships



Body parts! They have names!





CAN'T I JUST SHAKE
WITHOUT YOU MOVING IN
FOR A MAN HUG?

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VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities Dellinger-Wray



Rules for Healthy Touch

- YOU decide who touches you
- YOU can change your mind
- Intimate touch of private body areas are okay as long as both people agree and it takes place in a private place





A quick guide to identity & person first language.

I AM AUTISTIC.

IDENTITY-FIRST

OR

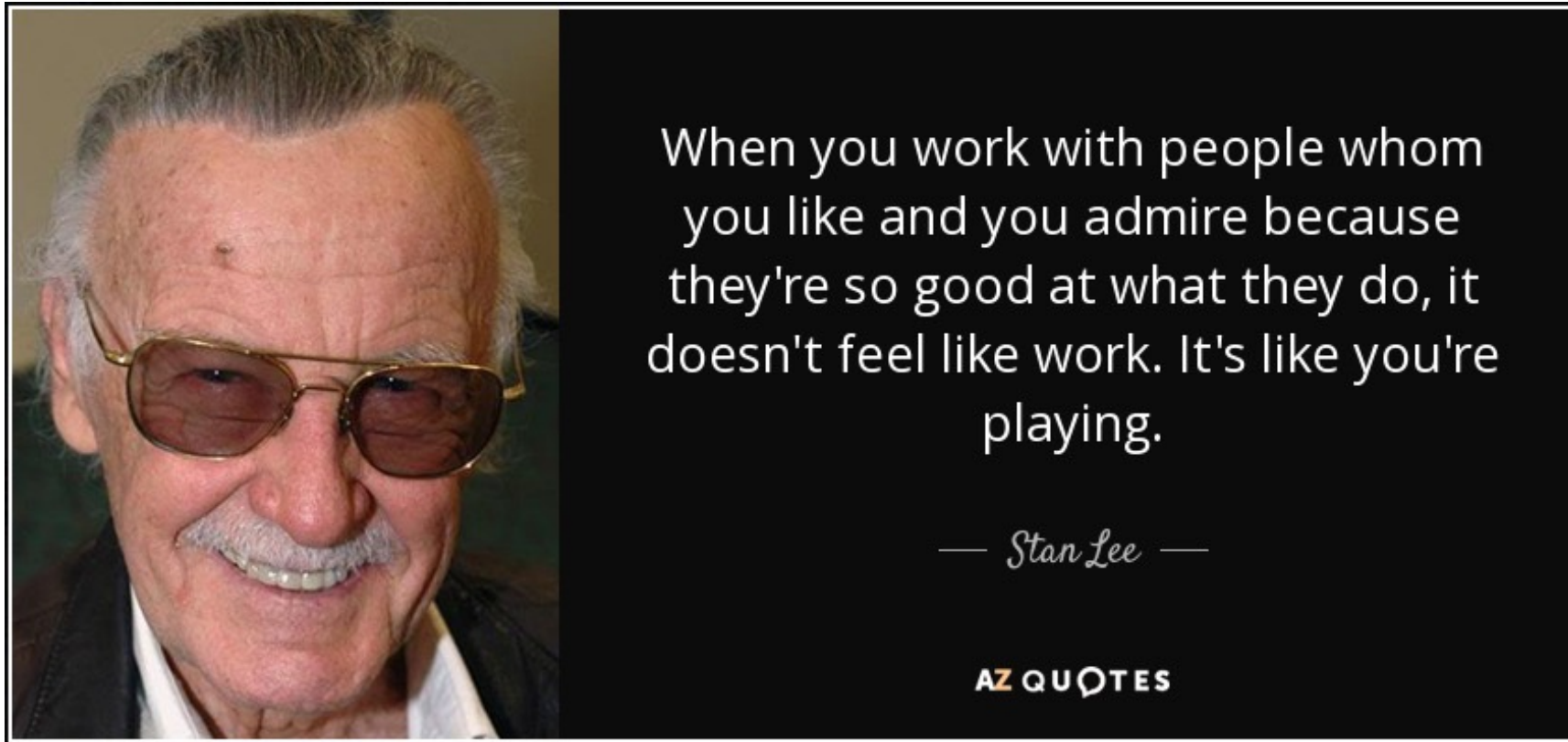
**I AM A PERSON
WITH AUTISM.**

PERSON-FIRST

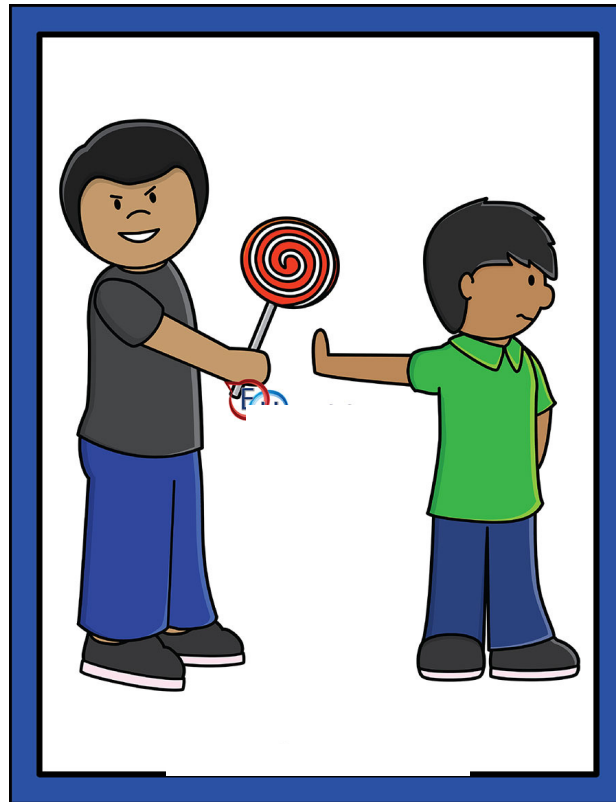
Professionals use TWO
languages



What do others really **LIKE** and **ADMIRE** about the person?



What strategies were you taught to stay safe?



Fear and Punishment



DO SAY....

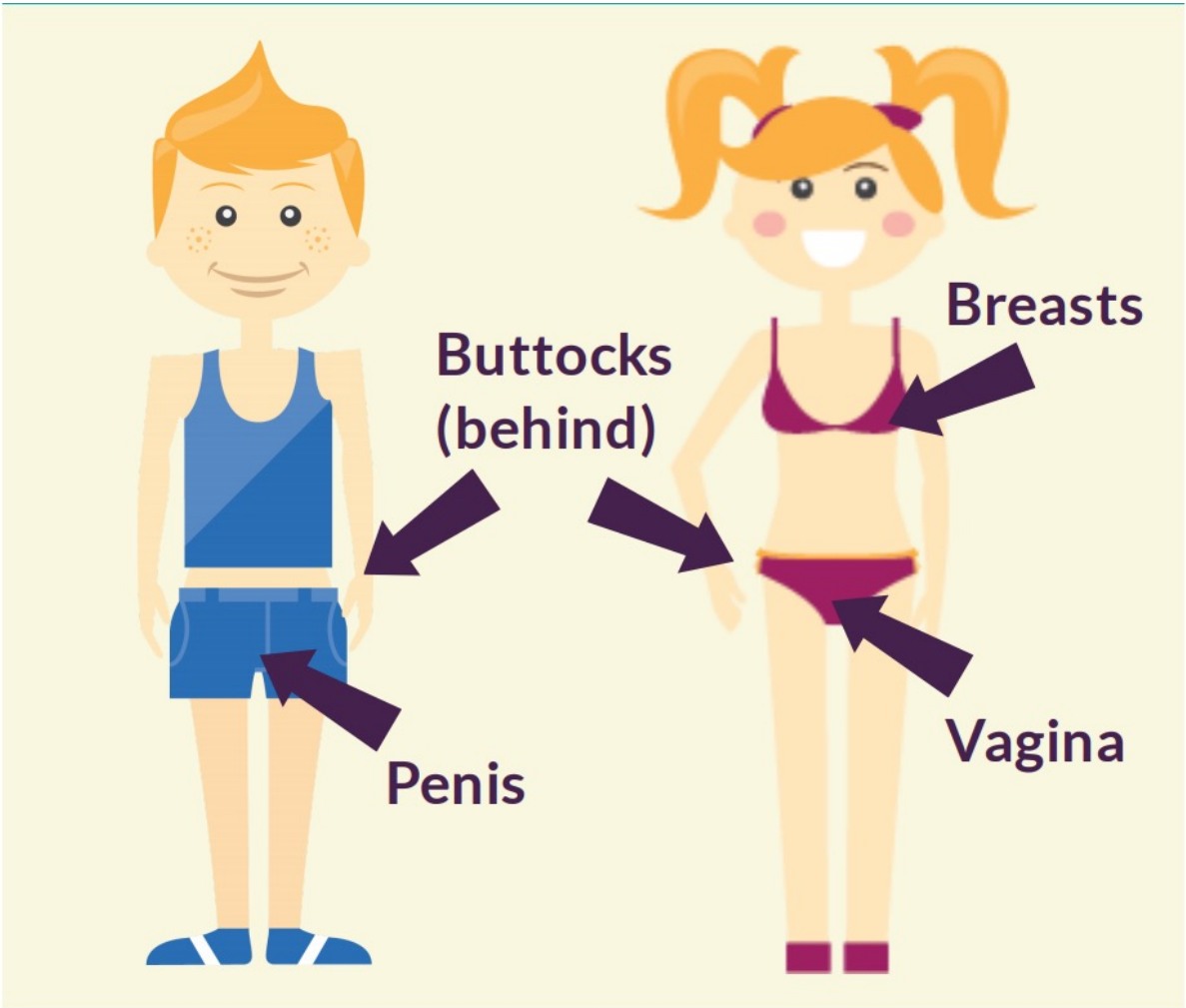
- Is there anything that made you uncomfortable?
- What would you like to change for next time?
- Some secrets were not meant to be secrets
- It's my job to keep you safe and happy and if you ever feel unsafe, please let me know
- Discuss a safety plan

DON'T SAY...

- ~~Don't let anyone touch you~~
- ~~Don't get in a car with anyone~~
- Remember that "the bathing suit rule" doesn't apply to everything....



The Bathing Suit Rule



Disclosing Abuse



Do I have to go there with you?

Disclosing abuse



Disclosing Abuse



Validate without minimizing

- "It's not your fault. You didn't deserve that"
- "You seem really upset about that."
- "Tell me about why you are sad/mad/upset/angry?"
- "It doesn't seem fair: what else could you do?"
- "It's okay to be sad/mad/upset/angry"

Responding: It's time to call an expert!



too
many
questions!



Secondary Trauma: It's real



RESPONDING

- Mandated Reporters
- Adult Protective Services
- Forensic Interviewing



Taking care of yourself



Amy Cunningham: Drowning in
Empathy: The cost of Vicarious
trauma

THANK YOU! mdwray@vcu.edu



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