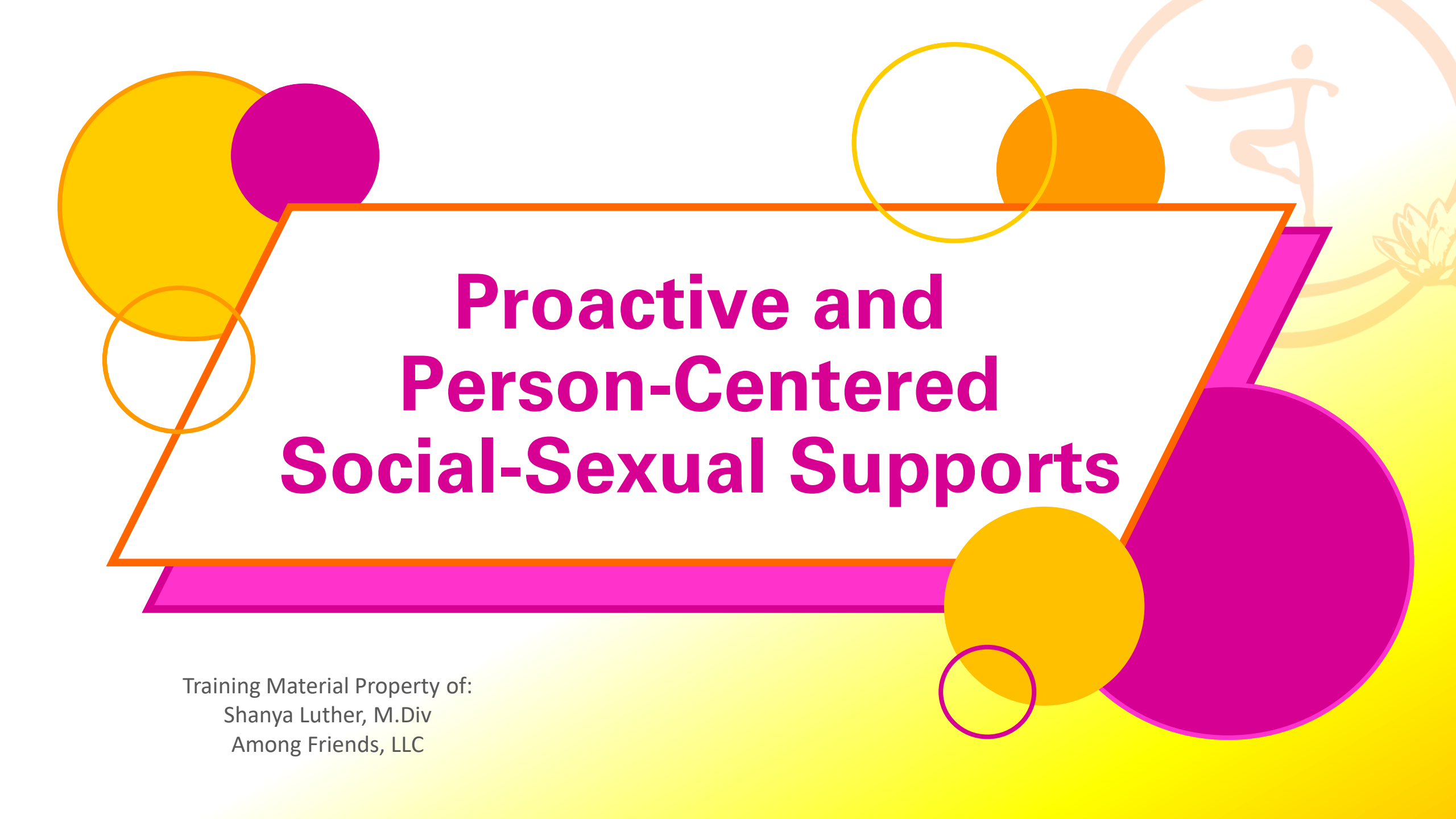




Proactive and Person-Centered Social-Sexual Supports

Training Material Property of:
Shanya Luther, M.Div
Among Friends, LLC



Introducing Your Trainer

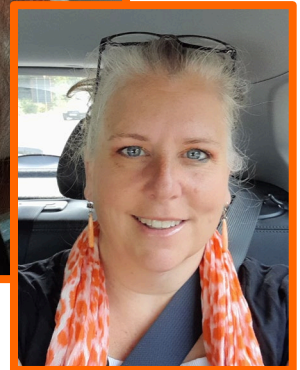
Shanya Luther, M. Div

[Link to Shanya's training bio](#)

- Accessibility - Self Description
- **Social-Sexual Ecologist** (sexual health educator) with more than 25 years of experience

I incorporate **other important topics:**

- attachment theory (how people connect to others)
- trauma informed care (care that understands past hurt)
- social-emotional learning (learning about feelings and relationships)
- neurobiology (how the brain works)
- intersectionality (how different life experiences affect people)



This Training is presented by



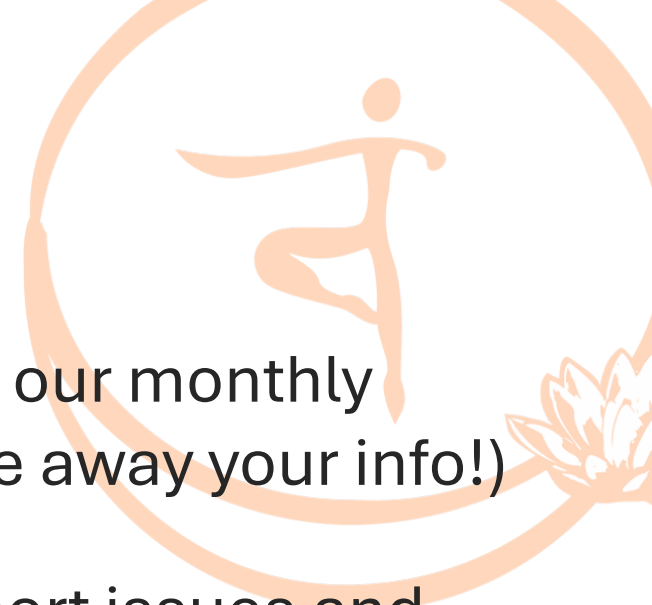
www.among-friends.org

Learn More!

Add your name and email to our [contact list](#) to SCORE! our monthly newsletter with tips and resources. (we never sell or give away your info!)

Our specialty is helping parents and professionals support issues and behaviors related to: **Bodies, Gender, Sexuality, Relationships, Communication, Rights, and much more!!!**

Among Friends works with people with different backgrounds and life experiences. Therefore, these trainings use language, such as **a person who lives with cognitive challenges, vulnerable populations, people with disabilities and disorders, someone needing long-term care, and a supported person.**



Important Things To Know

- To prevent harm, abuse and being taken advantage of exploitation **it's necessary to promote healthy options and remove unfair barriers**; for example: to prevent abuse in relationships and sexual abuse, we must promote healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.
- **Social services are responsible* for supporting people to make their own choices and have independence**, which requires education and skill building related to sexuality and relationships!
- **People have a right to take risks in their life**... Our job is to help them get enough information to really understand the risks.
- **People have legal rights to explore and express their sexuality.** We cannot respond to any incident or behavior in a way that prevents or interferes with a person's sexuality altogether.

Key Reminders As We Get Into The Content



- In our work, we speak directly and clearly about sexuality and bodies and functions. Please know that this is not to be rude or to offend or harm you.
- Because many people have experienced sexual trauma, these topics can be difficult for many people; I will do my best to help create a comfortable space for the material and discussions. But... we don't have the ability to work through past difficult experiences together; please take care of yourself.

For Everyone's Safety – Disclaimer

- **When addressing sexuality, gender and relationships, it is extremely important to work as a team, create a plan, and have everyone sign off on it! And then write down progress and changes!**
- Ask for clear guidance from your organization for rules, boundaries, and expectations.
- Document who is providing what supports and how to respond if a supported person asks you for something that's not in your role.
- Address sexuality with two or more people present in addition to the supported person – such as family, staff, case manager, etc.
- Contact the departments that look into reports of abuse and notify them of the plans you are working on in advance. (and if they argue...)

The Goals for This Training

- Understand our basic human needs for connection and sexual expression
- Explore the cross between safety, dignity of risk, and supported decision-making
- Understand the importance of, and need for, social-sexual support strategies and services that are planned for in advance
- Learn how to help someone explore other similar safe, healthy, and legal behaviors

Our Related Training Topics:

1. Sexual Health Advocacy
2. Sexual Self-Determination & Supported Decision-Making
3. The Intersection of Sexual Development & the Need for Direct Care





**Near the end of the material
I have an activity planned
to help illustrate the material,
so please hold your questions
until the end of the training.**

One Person's Story

Tina, 22

- Announced she wanted to have a baby, but didn't know how intercourse works.
- Had many cognitive challenges... such as tying her shoes and making a lunch.
- Tina lived with her mom and her mom did not want to raise a child if Tina couldn't.
- My job was to work with Tina to try to achieve **her goals** – and figure out if she could have and care for a baby in a safe, healthy, legal way.





Basic Human Needs

Pyramid of Basic Human Needs

Self-
Actualization

Meaning, Purpose

Esteem Needs

Achievement, status,
responsibility, reputation

If we know relationships, sexuality, and nurturing touch are extremely important basic human needs, why do we often fail to support people with disabilities and/or disorders to meet these needs?

Physiological Needs

Air, food, water, shelter, sleep, sexual/reproductive drive,
nurturing touch





The Safety Argument

But *It* Might Be Dangerous!!!

- As a parent and/or provider, which one is your job?
- Which one is more important?

No Risk =

‘No’ New Learning =

Less Brain Activity (fewer chances to learn and grow)

Many disabilities and disorders stem from problems in the brain... so we definitely want to support people's continued brain development.





Making Safer Decisions

Supported Decision-Making

We aren't born knowing how to make safer & healthier decisions... it's is a skill we need to teach. There are lots of ways to help people make decisions, and lots of tools on the internet, ...but the ultimate goal is for someone to **learn how to make *their own* informed decisions.**

Supported Decision-Making is a legal option instead of guardianship in some states. But we're talking about it as a way to support people in making their own choices... anytime and in any state!

- It's all about helping people figure out the decision they're facing
- Identify possible choices they could make or actions they could take
- Consider positive, negative and possible unexpected results
- **And then they decide and move forward with our support!**



Key Proactive and Preventative Supports

1. Help Build Someone's Community



A Sense of Belonging



Why do you want your family and friends in your life?

Remember, we have a basic need for love and belonging

- Help people build friendships and relationships that happen naturally because they are more welcoming and secure
- Provide options and access to groups and activities where people can meet and interact with other people
- Teach social skills (introducing yourself, eye contact, personal space, etc.) so people can build unpaid relationships
- Teach skills for being involved in the community (using a calendar, planning rides, using a phone or the internet, budgeting)



Ideas for Meeting People

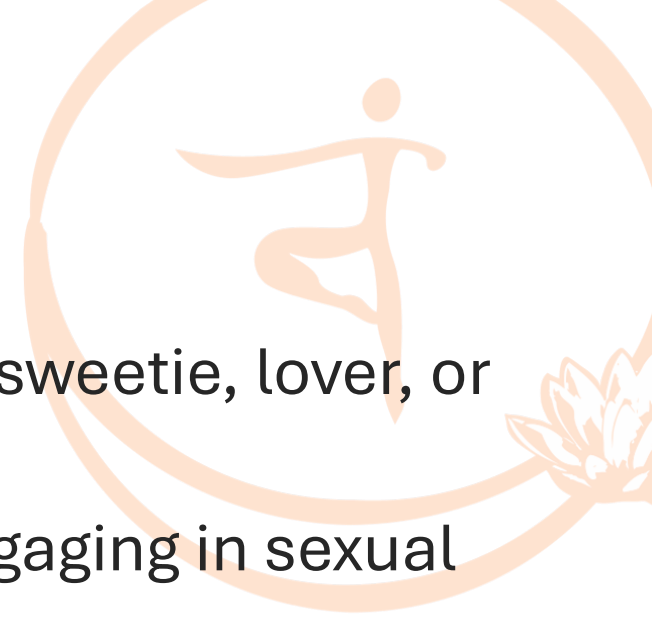
A few ways to find and build natural, un-paid relationships:

- School / Community Classes
- Hobby Events (photography, geocaching, knitting, video games, crafts)
- Sports Teams or Training Groups (triathlon, hiking, weightlifting)
- Meetup.com or Local Community Groups (places of worship, Rotary, dance groups, book clubs, Regional Burning Man, etc.)
- Volunteer Opportunities (providing meals, animal shelters, day care)
- Festivals or Conventions (disability related, comic con, music)
- Civic Engagement – running for a board, city council, etc.

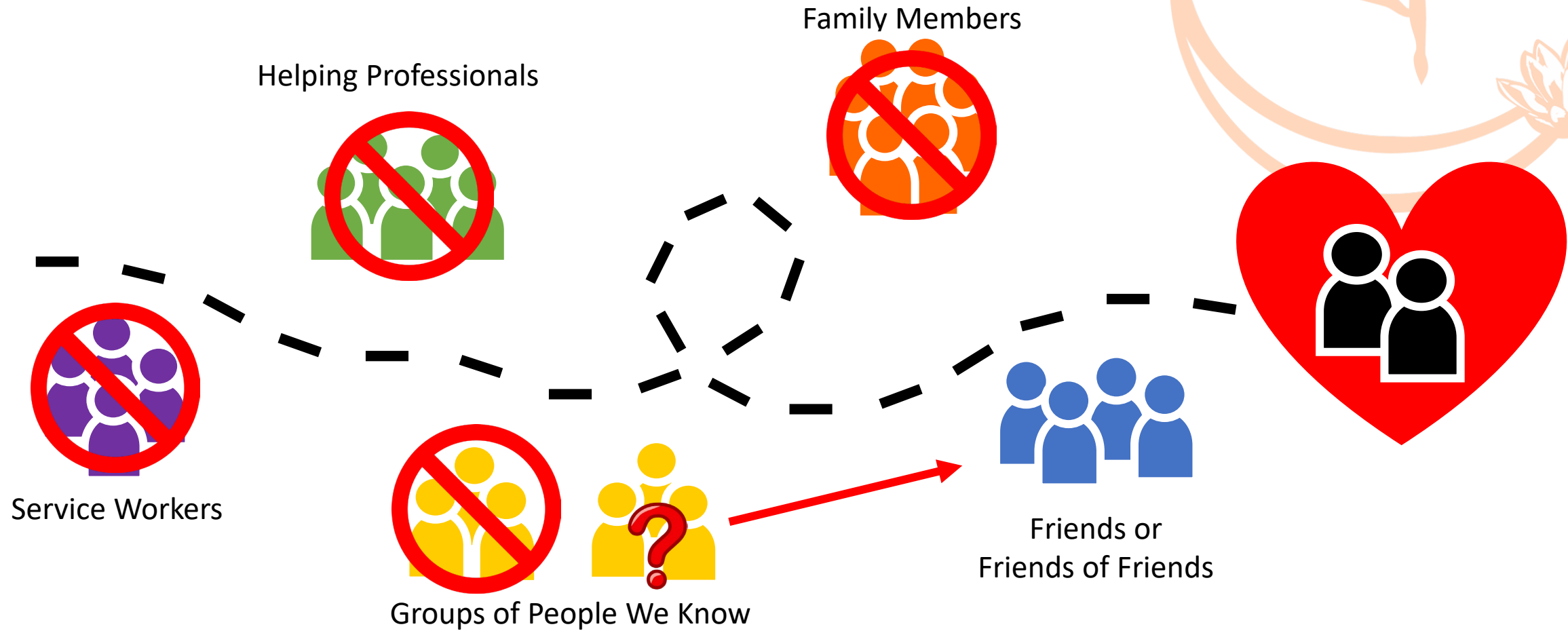


Finding Someone Special

- Most people want to find someone special to be their sweetie, lover, or partner.
- Most people also desire cuddling, making out, and engaging in sexual activities.
- But a lot of people with disabilities and disorders don't understand who can be their romantic or sexual partner, or how to find one. This can lead to a lot of problems and getting in a lot of trouble.
- We can help them avoid these problems by helping them understand who can and cannot be a romantic or sexual partner and how a romantic or sexual relationship grows.



How to Find Romantic/Sexual Partner(s)



2. Help Someone Get Nurturing Touch



Manage Skin Hunger

We have a natural (biological) need for touch from birth to death

- Nurturing touch improves our health and well-being and helps us calm stress and manage our feelings
- It only takes 20 seconds before caring touch gives health benefits
- Caring touch can help heal from painful experiences
- Touch is on the Pyramid of Basic Human Needs (same level as...)
- Even if someone doesn't want skin to skin touch or touch from a human, they still have needs related to touch.

What are some of the different forms of nurturing, affectionate, loving touch professionals can engage in with clients?

3. Plan Ahead! Don't Wait for a Crisis!



Be Proactive!

We don't wait until someone is...

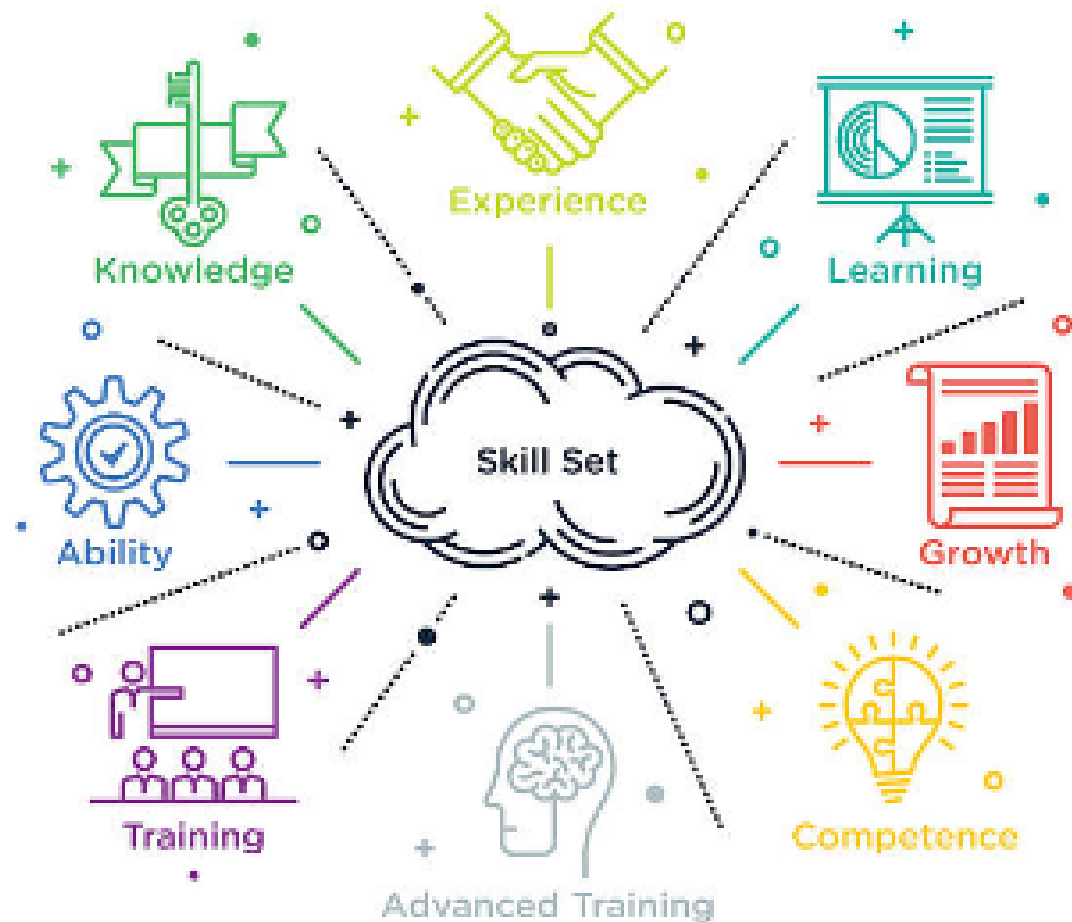
- ...driving before teaching them road safety
- ...doing laundry before teaching them how to use the washer
- ...assembling furniture before we teach them how to follow instructions

So why would we wait to teach...

- ...healthy relationship characteristics?
- ...about periods, wet dreams, and orgasms?
- ...how to go on a date?
- ...safer sex practices?



4. Teach Information and Build Skills



Educate About Relationships & Sexuality



Just like any other thing in life, people need help learning about relationships and sexuality; and a supported person may need more than someone else.

They also may need help with everyday skills that can be embarrassing or difficult for staff, but are *very important* for health and wellness, quality of life, and increased independence.

Listen to what someone *wants* and the deeper human needs beneath what they say; let them know you also want that for them – *and* your job is just to help them be safe and healthy.

5. Focus on Self-Determination

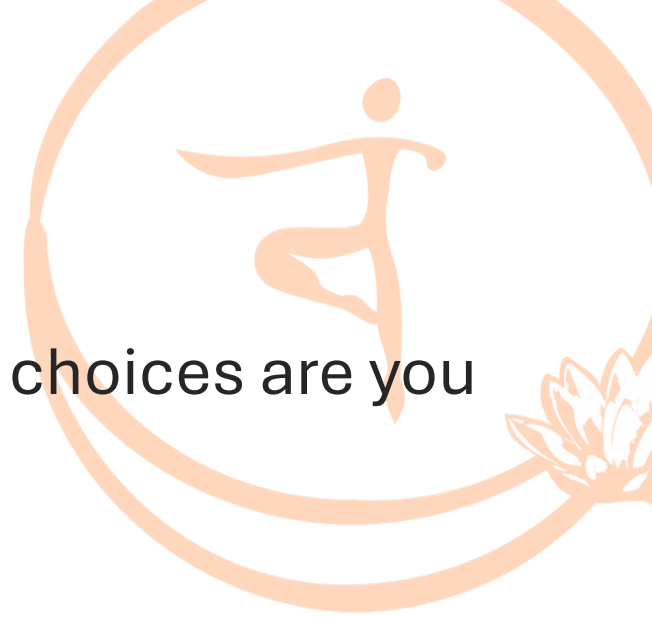


Offer Choices and Alternatives

If you want someone to say no to some behaviors, what choices are you actively supporting in place of those behaviors?

For example:

Touching without permission	>>>	Lots of touch with permission
Risky dating choices	>>>	Healthy dating options
Upsetting sexual talk	>>>	Safe space to talk about sex
Watching violent porn	>>>	Respectful/safe adult content
Risky sexual encounters	>>>	Healthy sexual encounters



Don't Forget These Important Pieces



Remember:

- **BE A PARTNER** – share an enthusiastic YES! Explain that you want to help them have experiences they want - while being safe / healthy / legal!
- **HELP THEM CONSIDER** – help them think about their beliefs, as well as their family's beliefs to be sure they consider different results
- **DON'T BUBBLE WRAP** – outline mild, moderate, and serious/dangerous consequences (and then remember it's still their choice)
- **IDENTIFY TRUSTED ADVOCATES** – coordinate people they can trust for advice, but who will also support ability to make their own choices
- **INCLUDE THE GOOD** – Don't just talk about bad / dangerous / scary things; be sure talk about what could be great / fun / pleasurable

The background features a large orange parallelogram in the center. Surrounding it are several circles in shades of orange and yellow. Some circles have thin purple or orange outlines. In the top right corner, there is a faint, stylized illustration of a person in a yoga pose (Tree Pose) within a circular frame. The text "Let's Practice!" is centered within a large purple circle that overlaps the central orange parallelogram.

Let's Practice!

Practice Exercise

- I have two slides coming up.
- For the first one, I will walk you through different ways we might support or respond to a general behavior that is unsafe, unhealthy, and/or illegal.
- For the second one, I will be asking different participants to decide if the social-sexual behaviors I put on the screen are unsafe, unhealthy, and/or illegal and how they would support or respond to it.

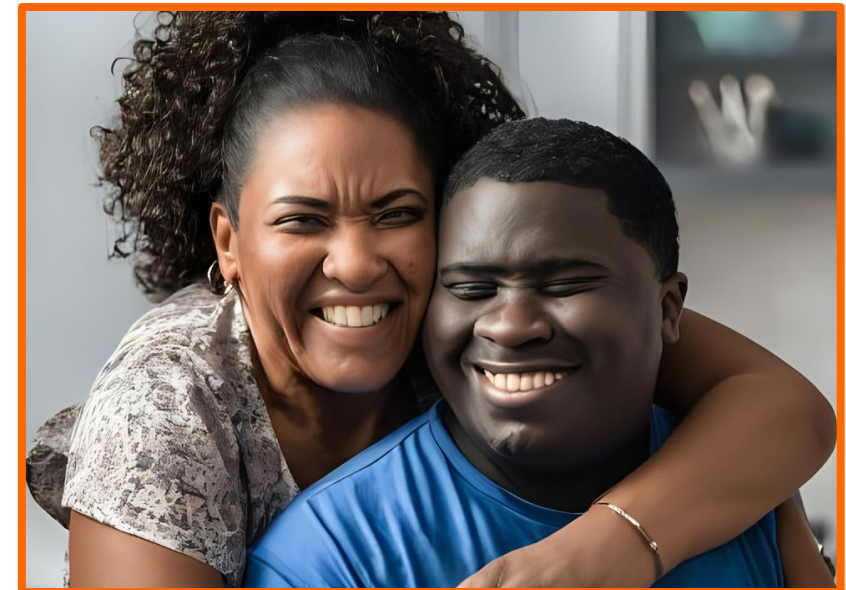


Responding to Problematic Behaviors

As someone paid to help someone else build the life *they* want for themselves, here are some examples of how we need to respond if the person* we're supporting is doing the following behaviors:

1. Overeating / eating junk food, and not wanting to exercise
2. Wanting to take a walk at 11pm
3. Stealing from a store
4. Refusing to take medications
5. Buying numerous lottery cards
6. Threatening people online

*If the person is a legal adult. Our responses may need to be different if someone is not yet a legal adult.



Responding to Social-Sexual Behaviors

1. Which category does each behavior fall into? (unhealthy, risky/unsafe, or illegal)
2. As someone paid to provide support for a vulnerable person, and how should you respond to them if they are engaging in this behavior?
 - a) Watching porn for hours and hours each day
 - b) Wanting to meet an online friend/sweetie in person
 - c) Sexting with a co-worker who is underage
 - d) Having unprotected sex with multiple partners
 - e) Paying for a sexy chat website on the internet
 - f) Touching other people's butts



One Person's Story

Tina, 22

- Wanted to have a baby, didn't know how intercourse works, had many cognitive challenges, her mom did not want to raise Tina's child
- We were trying to figure out why she came home and suddenly wanted to have a baby...
- We worked on a plan to teach and support her...



Resources

- You can utilize our [ever-growing list of resources](#). And you can submit resources for it, too!
- You can use the OHSU UCEDD [Resource Hub](#).
- Here is a [list of a few resources](#) specific to this topic.

NEW SOCIAL-SEXUAL ASSESSMENT TOOLS!

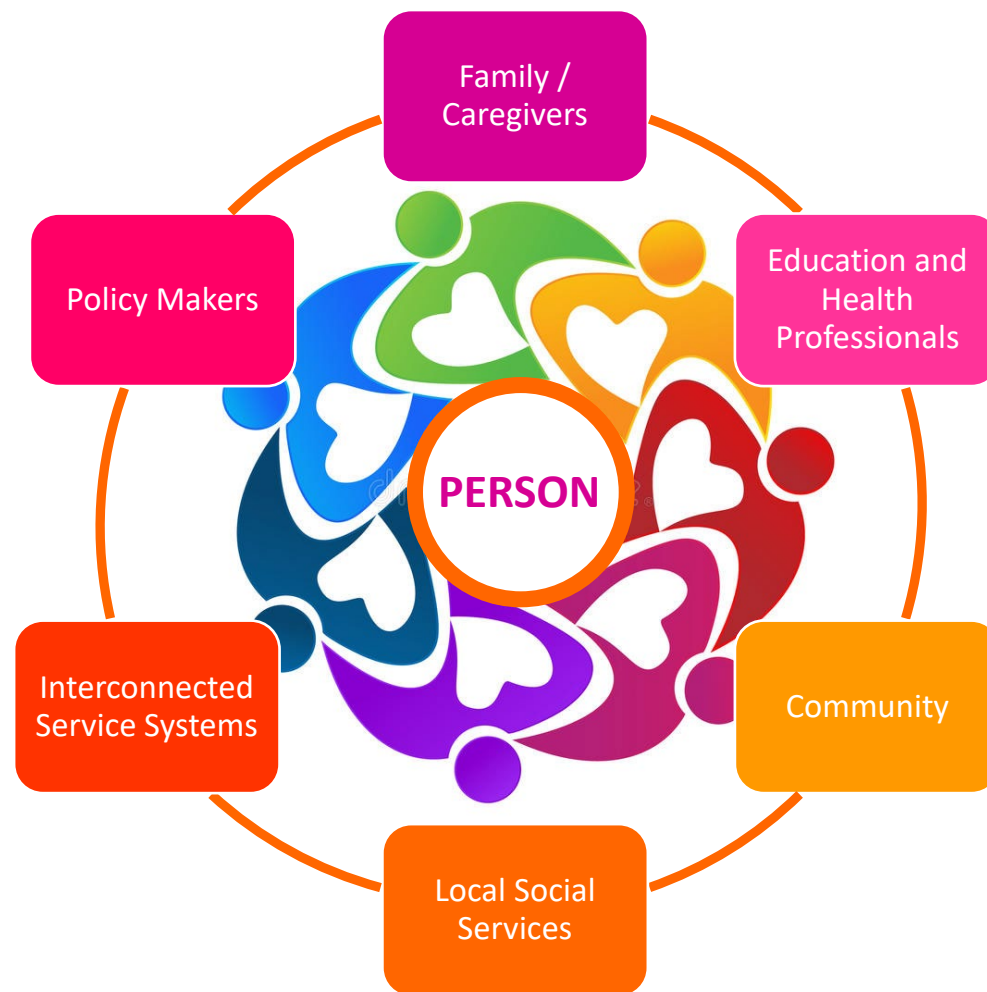
Shanya Luther has developed TWO different social-sexual assessment tools that qualified professionals can [purchase](#) to use with their client(s), or [hire Among Friends to conduct](#) on behalf of their client(s).



The background features a large orange parallelogram. Overlaid on this are several circles: a large pink circle in the center containing the word "Closing", two large orange circles in the top corners, a medium orange circle in the bottom left, a yellow circle in the bottom right, and a small pink circle in the bottom right. There are also thin purple and orange outlines of circles. A faint white lotus flower is visible on the right side.

Closing

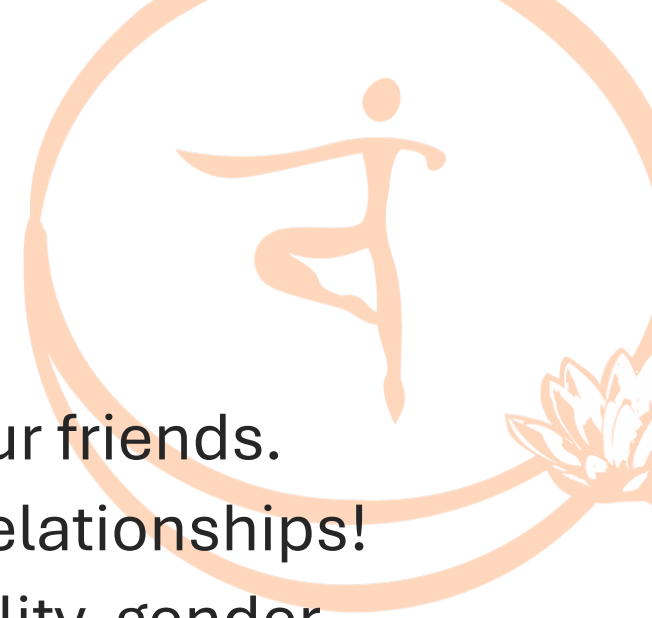
A Village Approach to Healthy Sexuality



Call To Action

Please take this information **and do more with it!**

- Discuss it with your co-workers, your family, and your friends.
- Advocate for peoples' needs around sexuality and relationships!
- Familiarize yourself with key issues related to sexuality, gender, relationships, legal rights, and trauma in your field.
- Ask for more training for your organization!
- Talk about how to change policies and procedures at your work to support sexual self-determination of people you serve.
- Sign up to receive our newsletter.
- Commit to supporting healthy sexuality!



Become a Subject-Matter Specialist!!!



There are not enough people to address the enormous needs related to these topics, so we are looking for people to train! If you feel drawn to supporting people with important issues related to relationships and sexuality, we hope you'll seriously consider becoming a 'point-person' in your agency, community or region.

Join us for our **Sexual Self-Determination Certification Program**.

The first step is signing up for **Tier 1: FOUNDATIONS**. (the next one is in...)

Earn CEU's, and become a subject matter specialist and a valuable resource!!!

Contact Information



Social-Sexual Training and Resources

Trainings & Marketplace trainings@amongfriendsllc.org

Certification Program certification@amongfriendsllc.org

Consultation & Advocacy consultation@amongfriendsllc.org

Training Evaluations and Q&A



We Value Your Feedback!!!
Please complete an evaluation to help us
continue to improve our trainings.

Among Friends Training Evaluation

or use our QR code or web link:

among-friends.org/eval-feedback



And ***Thank You*** for making healthy relationships
and healthy sexuality a priority!