# **What Our Research Says! What Self Advocates Said!**

Self advocates (persons with diversabilities) told us, **“Relationships are important!”** They described relationships as **“a source of joy,”** offering **“love and friendship,”** and providing **“someone who I can trust and go out with.”** Previous research tells us that others agree!

**Self advocates want the right to *Romance, Relationships and Rights!***

**BUT,** participants told us that **sexual health education** is falling short. Sexual health education primarily focuses on biology and sexual health (i.e., body parts, puberty, pregnancy, STIs) and prioritizes **safety and consent**, of which self advocates agreed were super important.

**So, what do self advocates want?** Ourparticipants wanted more information about “boyfriend and girlfriend relationships.” They told us that sexual health education is not inclusive of people with disabilities. They wanted **information presented in an accessible, simpler way with more visuals.** They wanted the education to represent them with content focused on **puberty, consent, sexuality, and pregnancy.** They also told us that sexual diversity, such as discussion about **LGBTQ+ identities**, was frequently not addressed. They also wanted sexual health education and information about sexuality after high school, for adults.

**AND,** when prompted about where they learned about sexuality and sexual health, self advocates expressed that parents/caregivers were often **uncomfortable** talking to them about sex. They expressed frustrations with the unwillingness to discuss these topics. In contrast, self advocates desired, as one person stated, **“open dialogue.”**

**So**, where did participants say they learned about sexuality and sexual health? Participants described learning about sexuality and sexual health through **television** and **online** platforms.

**Overall,** self advocates indicate that **sexual health education is important** to them. And, they desired a more accessible, inclusive, and relationship focused curriculum that extends into adulthood as they navigate *Romance, Relationships, and Rights.*

Again, these findings align with other research. **Humans are sexual beings**. Many self advocates want **consenting, healthy, respectful relationships.** But, our efforts to provide meaningful sexual health and relationship support and resources are lacking.

**Self advocates have a *right* to *romance and relationships*. How can we support them?**

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