

Friends, Partnerships, and Sexuality

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This session focused on **fostering authentic connections**, both friendships and romantic relationships, for individuals with **Prader-Willi Syndrome (PWS)**, while ensuring **safety, dignity, and respect**.

Key Themes:

Relationships & Theory of Mind:

- Individuals with PWS often struggle with **Theory of Mind**, making it difficult to read **social cues**, understand others' emotions, or navigate **relationship dynamics**.
- This leads to **misunderstandings** and **inflexibility** in social settings, especially when forming **romantic** connections.
- **Support staff play a critical role** in helping individuals recognize social nuances and develop healthy, respectful relationships.

Caregiver Role:

- As caregivers, the goal is to **support, not suppress** to help individuals safely explore connections while **educating and guiding** them through unfamiliar social and emotional territory.
- Caregivers should model respectful language, **respond thoughtfully**, and promote **self-awareness** in relationships.

Interactive Scenarios:

Participants reviewed **four real-life scenarios**, each covering:

- **Sex, consent, and safety**
- **Understanding boundaries** using tools like the *Circle of Relationships*
- Recognizing the **importance of language** used by staff when discussing relationships

Core Takeaways:

- **Effective education** is essential, individuals must be taught in clear, accessible ways about **boundaries, consent, and safe behavior**.
- Encourage conversations that reflect **what matters to the person**, not just what staff, or society, deems as important or “expected.”
- Promote the **dignity of risk** allowing individuals the right to explore relationships and make choices, with appropriate support.
- Lean into their interests when discussing complicated topics, and consider the entire environment around them.