

Autism and sexual assault: The truth



app2vox 

Sexual violence is a serious problem, and although everyone is at risk, a recent study has revealed that autistic women are three times more likely to experience it than non-autistic women.

Let's take a look at how rape and sexual assault affect the autistic community, as well as the ways we can recognise and prevent abuse.

What is Denim Day and how did it start?

In 1992, a girl was raped by her driving instructor, and the case went before the Italian Supreme Court. Shockingly, they let the driving instructor go free, their reason being that the girl "must have consented" because her tight denim jeans would have been too difficult to remove forcibly. In protest of this outrageous ruling, women in the Italian Parliament began wearing denim jeans, and so Denim Day was born.

Over 30 years later, rape and sexual assault are still major issues in society. Current statistics show 1 in 4 women, 1 in 6 children, and 1 in 20 men are victims of either crime. Every year on the 26th of April, people all over the world wear jeans to support survivors, raise awareness, and improve education on all forms of sexual violence.

Over 30 years later, rape and sexual assault are still major issues in society. Current statistics show 1 in 4 women, 1 in 6 children, and 1 in 20 men are victims of either crime. Every year on the 26th of April, people all over the world wear jeans to support survivors, raise awareness, and improve education on all forms of sexual violence.

Why are autistic people more at risk of sexual assault?

Sexual predators can look for opportunities wherever they might find them. They may see autistic people as easier targets for a couple of reasons:

Understanding of social situations:

People with autism often find social situations difficult to read, and the way sexuality/courtship works in society is often very indirect. Abusers will use this to their advantage.

Wanting connection:

Because social life can be tough to navigate, autistic people can sometimes be too quick to trust others who are nice to them. They want to create connections and feel accepted by their peers, and predators know this.

Recognising and preventing abuse

It's important that autistic people are aware of the risks and learn to spot signs of potential abuse before it happens.

Prevention comes in lots of different forms:

Body education:

For children, in particular, they should know all about their 'private' parts, the names of those parts, and that it's not appropriate for others to touch or look at them.

Remember that most sexual assaults are by someone close to the person, so they must apply the same rules to everyone.



Asking direct questions:

Saying “no” outright can sometimes make a situation more dangerous, but asking direct questions can have the same effect with much less risk. Asking “what are you doing?” or “what are we doing here?” highlights to the abuser that the autistic person is aware something isn’t right, and it could be enough to make them stop.

Implementing a buddy system:

Establish a trusted friend or family member that the autistic person can have open conversations with about dating or sexuality. Their buddy can guide them on their journey and intervene if they sense the beginnings of abuse.

