



# Let's do it.... Talk About Sex Positivity Through a Disability Lens

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COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

# Land Acknowledgement



*Colorado State University acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as original stewards of this land and all the relatives within it. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, the ties Nations have to their traditional homelands are renewed and reaffirmed.*

*CSU is founded as a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And, significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost to Native Nations and peoples whose land this University was built upon. This acknowledgment is the education and inclusion we must practice in recognizing our institutional history, responsibility, and commitment.*

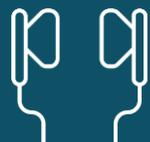
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# Who We Are

Joe Tiner, M.Ed.

*Pronouns: he/him/his*

- Accommodation Specialist, Student Disability Center
- Member, Inclusive Physical and Virtual Campus Committee



# Who We Are:



Michelle Jacoby, MSW, LSW

*Pronouns: she/her/hers*

- CSU Tell Someone Coordinator
- Licensed Social Worker in Colorado
- Sex Therapist
- Honorable mentions: cat aficionado, sushi enthusiast, beach rat at heart

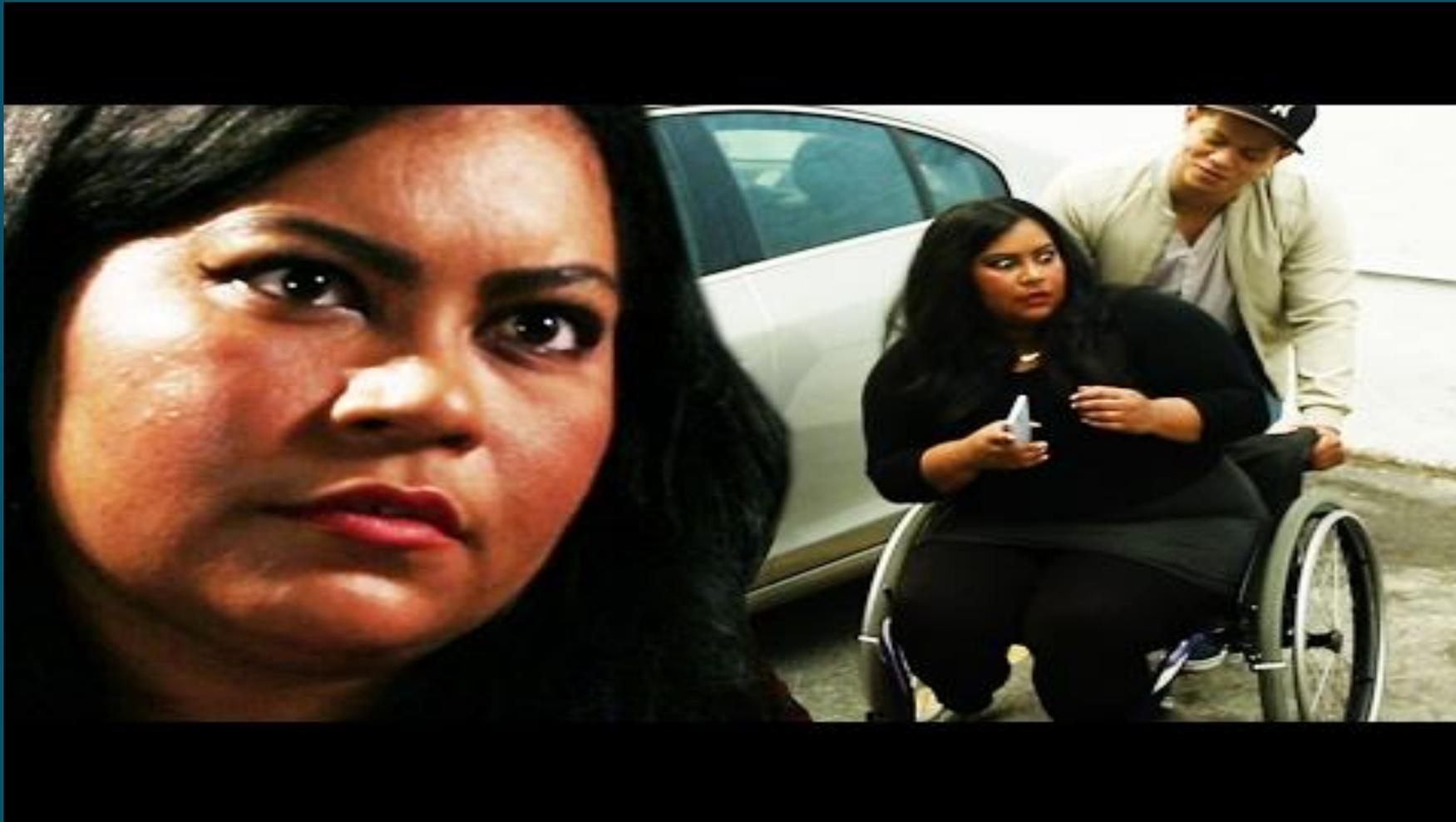
# Access Needs

- Captioning is provided
- Please ask questions as they come up. You can use the Q&A feature to ask questions
  - We may not be able to answer every question, but we will look for question themes and address them
- An accessible PDF version of these slides can be found at

# A Few Things to Note:

- We are not experts on all things sex and disability related
  - We are experts on our own experiences
- Disability, gender, sexuality, and sexual preferences are all spectrums
- Sex/uality can be really hard to talk about!
  - Trauma, negative messages, and stigmas
- The content of this session includes sexual language, visuals, and themes
  - Trigger warning: sexual assault will be briefly discussed
- This may be a good session to listen to through headphones

# Let's Get Started



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# What is Disability

- A disability is a physical or mental condition that substantially limits one or more major life function
- Major life functions include
  - Moving
  - Talking/communicating
  - Learning
  - Eating
  - Sleeping
  - Sex
  - Etc.

# Types of Disabilities

- Physical Disabilities
  - Cerebral Palsy, paraplegia
- Sensory Disabilities
  - Blind, Deaf, Autism, etc.
- Learning Disabilities
  - Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, etc.
- Mental Health conditions
  - Anxiety, Depression, Bi-Polar, etc.
- Chronic Health Conditions
  - Asthma, Autoimmune Disorder



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# About Disability

- Disability is a spectrum
  - Acquired v. congenital
  - Visible v. invisible
  - Short-term v. long-term
  - People can have multiple disabilities
- Anyone can become disabled at any point in life
- Disabled people are the largest minority group in the world
  - Over 22% of adults in the U.S. reported having a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012)
    - Likely an under-reported number

# Medical Model v. Social Model

## Medical Model

- Disability is a medical condition
- People are disabled by their bodies/conditions.
- People should seek treatment/cure for their conditions.

## Social Model

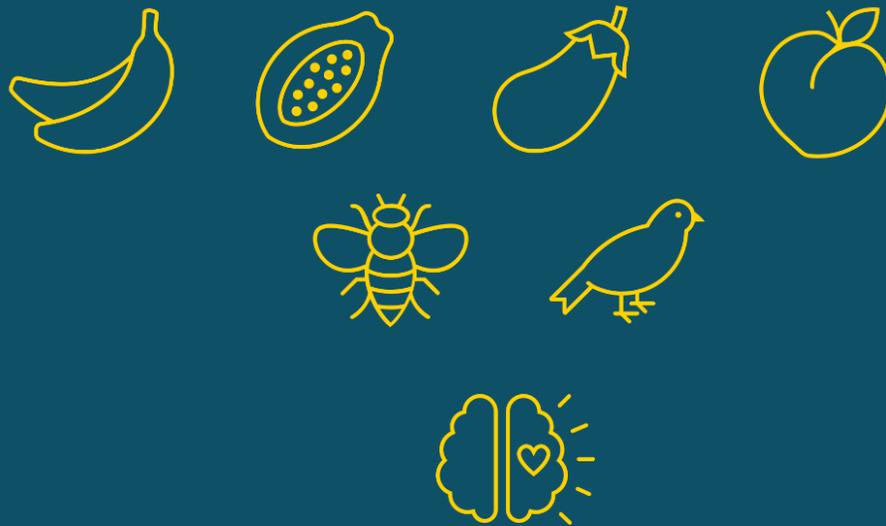
- Disability is a social construct
- People are disabled by the environment
- We should create social change to enhance access for everyone
- Disability is a social identity

# Disability Language

- People First Language
  - "Person with a disability"
  - Focuses on the person not the disability
  - Separates the person from their disability
- Identity First Language
  - "Disabled Person"
  - Focus on disability as part of a person's identity
- Can be used interchangeably
- Everyone has their own preference
  - Ask a person which they prefer

# What is Sex Positivity?

All explicitly consensual sexual expressions and activity (and lack thereof!) are legitimate and healthy human

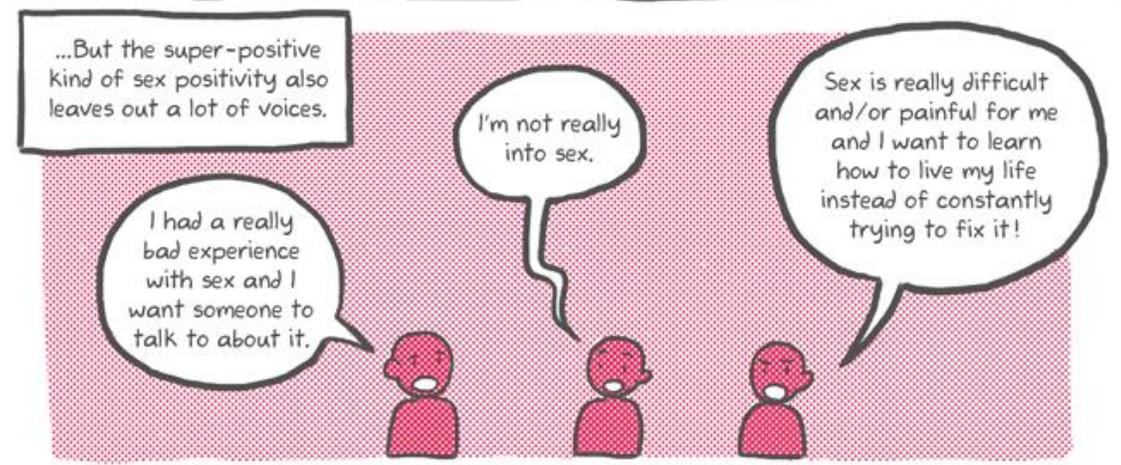


# What Does Sex Positivity Look Like?

- Access to comprehensive and inclusive sex education
- Centering pleasure as a basic human right
  - Erotic potential > sexual functionality
- Inclusive and Accessible
  - Space for neurodiversity, disability, queerness, body diversity, and gender
- Shifting the narrative from orgasm and penetration as goals

# What Does Sex Positivity Look Like?

- Being rid of moral judgment (slut shaming, who should or should not have sex, etc.)
- Recognizing sex work as legitimate
- Centering consent, choice, and voice
- Actively reducing shame and oppression around sexuality
- Reframing natural body functions and processes as human
  - Periods, body fluids, pregnancies, nursing, & nakedness
- Creating supportive environments for survivors



# Why Does This Matter?

- Body Autonomy Violations
  - Mass institutionalization to control the numbers of people with disabilities
  - Forced sterilizations (Roy, Roy & Roy, 2012)
    - Early 1900s- American Eugenics argued that forced sterilization of people with intellectual disabilities was the best way to protect society
    - 1927- *Buck v Bell* in 1927 legalized eugenic sterilization
    - By 1963, over 60,000 people were sterilized without consent
  - Policing sexual and pleasure freedoms
    - Residential facilities and group homes often "manage" sexual behavior
    - Electric shocks and lemon juice
    - "Sex can wait, masturbate" programs as an attempt to reduce behavioral issues

# Why Does This Matter? (continued)

- Sexual ableism: able-bodied standards that deny the ability for individuals with disabilities to be sexual (Gill, 2015)
- Disabled people are sexually abused at 7x higher rates than non-disabled people (Shapiro, 2018)
- Sex-negative myths around sexuality and disability (Kaufman, Silverberg, & Odette, 2007)

# Myths About Sex and Disability

- People living with disabilities are not sexual
- Or disabled people who are having sex must be perverted and or overly-sexual
- People with disabilities aren't desirable and would not make a good sexual partner
- People with disabilities have more important things to worry about than sex
- People with disabilities can't have "real sex"

# Desexualizing Disabled People

- The assumption that:
  - Disabled people are not sexual beings or do not want to have sex
  - Disabled people cannot physically have sex or that their sexual organs do not work because of their disability
  - It is wrong if a disabled person is sexually active
  - Having sex with a disabled person is wrong
  - If someone is having sex with someone who has a disability, they are taking advantage of them
  - No one wants to have sex with a disabled person
    - If they do, the disabled person should be thankful for it

# Example: Glee



# Oversexualization of Disabled People

- Seeing disabled people as sexual objects
- Being attracted to someone's disability, not the person
  - Also known as being a "devotee"
- Thinking it is "hot" to have sex with a disabled person
- Wanting to take care of or control someone with a disability because people with disabilities can be perceived as weaker or powerless

# Example: Family Guy



# Consent

- The State of Colorado defines consent as:
  1. Cooperation in act and attitude
  2. Exercise of free will
  3. Knowledge of what's happening
  4. Those involved are over the age of 17
- You must have all four things from your partner(s) to have their consent
- Consent can be revoked at any time
- Sexual acts without consent is sexual abuse

# Disability and Consent

- Disabled people CAN give consent
- Consent can look different for different people
  - Is not always spoken!
- Communication is key
  - Needs, boundaries, triggers, etc.
- People with disabilities are often only given "stranger danger", sexual violence prevention, or harm reduction information
  - Does not recognize the agency for individuals to actively choose sexual partners or activities (Gill, 2015)

# Sexual Abuse of Disabled People

- Disabled people are sexually abused at 7x higher rates than non-disabled people (Shapiro, 2018)
- This data can be difficult to track because sexual assaults on disabled people often go unreported
- *"Structural violence—historical or cultural processes that constrain agency and choice—not the manifestation of impairment, renders people with disabilities more likely to experience abuse."* (Gill, 2015).

# Exploring Sex/uality

- Challenging the traditional narrative around "sex"
  - What is sex, *really*?
  - Masturbation can be sex
  - Sex isn't always spontaneous
  - Sex isn't always mind-blowing
  - Sex can be with or without penetration (or erections!)
  - Pleasure as the goal instead of orgasm
    - Erotic potential > sexual functionality

Use a “yes/no/maybe” list to broaden the scope of what sex/uality can be

# Exploring Sensuality

- Read, listen to, or write erotic literature
- Create or enjoy erotic art
- Listen to sensual/sexy music (120 bpm)
- Try a burlesque or pole dancing class
- Try different aphrodisiacs (chocolate, wine, cinnamon, honey, avocados)
- Schedule a boudoir photography session (Groupon \$20)
- Set the mood for yourself (light a candle, make a bath, etc.)
- Mindfully pay attention to sensations that are pleasurable

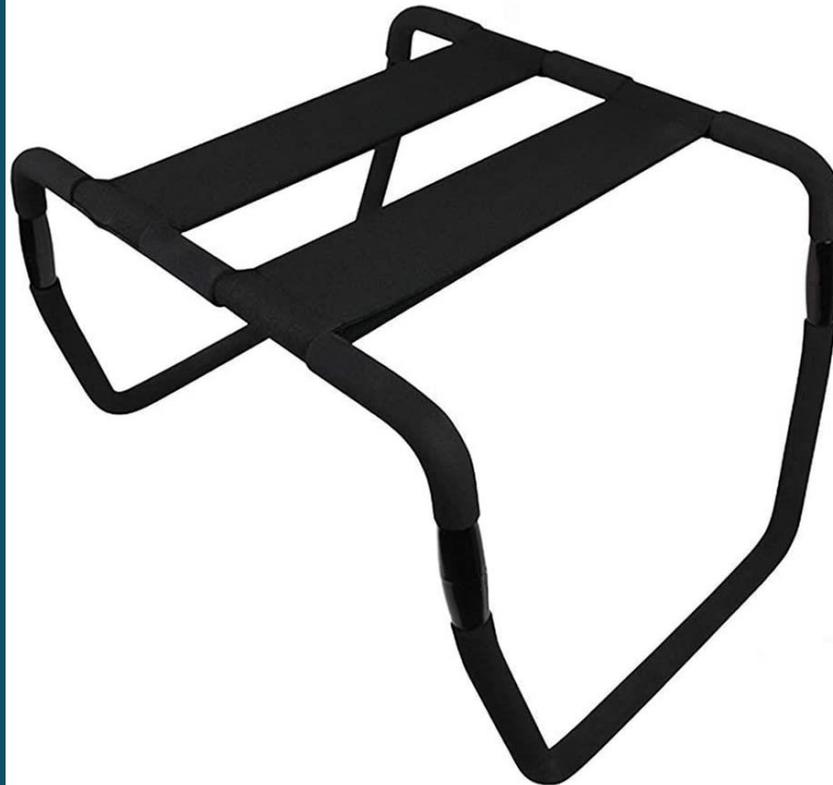
# Accessible Sex

- Porn/erotica
  - Accessible websites, closed captions, etc.
- Different sexual positions
  - Think beyond missionary or doggie-style
  - Well-placed mirrors
  - Lying on side, using furniture
  - Using supports & wedges
- Using sex toys
  - Dispelling the myth that sex is always supposed to be "natural"
- Be creative!

# Wedges and Bolsters



# Sex Stool



# Sex Swing



# Bondage tape



# Hot Octopus



# Magic Wand



# Hip Harness



# Thigh Harness



# La Palma



# Tantus- long handle



# We-Vibe



# Vibrating Penis Ring



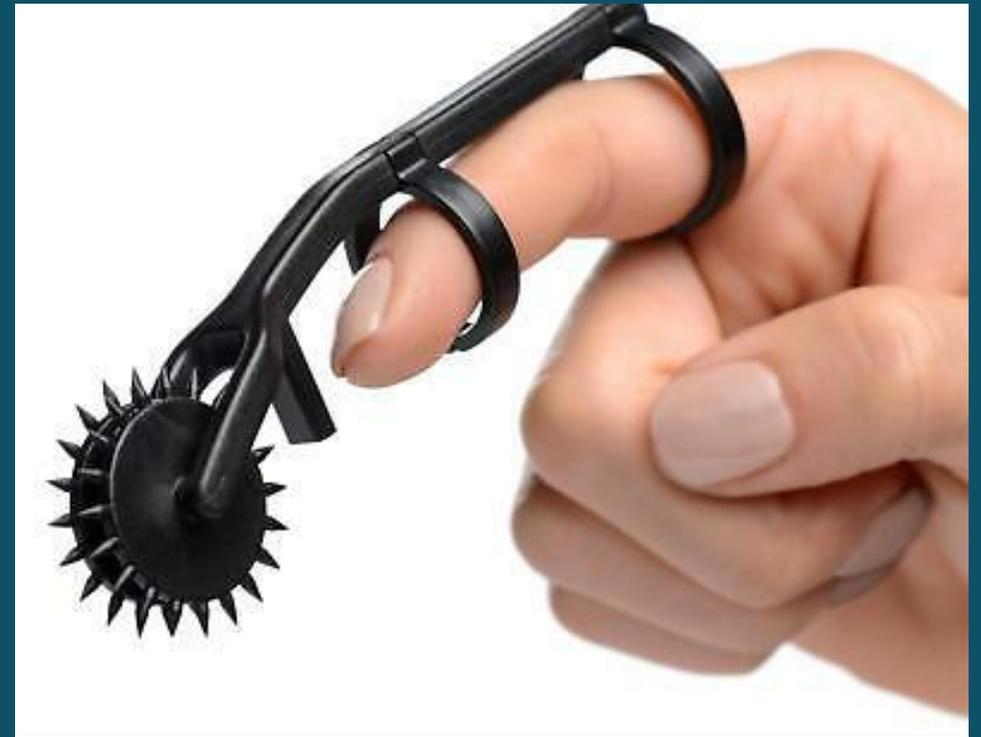
# Penis rings & pump



# Suction toys



# Sensation Play



# Takeaways

- Disability, sexuality, gender, etc. are all on spectrums
- Disabled people can have sex, do have sex, and should not be shamed for being sexual
- There are a lot of myths and stereotypes about people with disabilities and sex
- Sex positivity actively rejects harmful and oppressive systems, while promoting inclusivity of marginalized groups
- There are different ways for people to express and explore their sexuality

# References

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# Q&A

# Thank you!

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# EVALUATIONS

**Monday, October 19** Sessions:

<https://col.st/JyReY>



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