

**Autism Spectrum Disorders and Sexual Behavior Problems:
Assessment and Treatment Strategies**

Daniel Rothman, Ph.D.
David Kolton, Ph.D.

Of the many types of clients that clinicians encounter, individuals with a combination of Autism Spectrum Disorder and sexual behavior problems are certainly among the most challenging. Sexual preoccupations, empathy deficits, intimacy problems, social dysfunction, and inflexible thinking are some of the characteristics that can be attributed to, or else amplified by, conditions such as Autism, Asperger's, or Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Unfortunately, the empirical literature in this area is too sparse to act as a solid guide, and clinicians often find themselves flying by the seat of their pants when working with these individuals.

This workshop reviews some of the clinical and empirical literature in both the sexual offender and developmental fields, and discusses the application of this research to the assessment and treatment of adolescents and adults with these profiles.

Practical strategies for maximizing assessment and treatment outcomes will be emphasized, including:

- Working collaboratively and effectively with caregivers and support workers
- Supporting healthy identity development
- Identifying and addressing issues related to sexual trauma
- Matching interventions to client responsivity issues (including attachment style, trauma, psychopathology, readiness to change, cognitive functioning, and learning style)
- Using nonverbal tools (including charts, drawings, and social stories)
- Establishing and maintaining effective therapeutic relationships

The intersection of Autism Spectrum Disorders and sexual behavior problems is a barely charted territory. This workshop will take an exploratory approach to finding solutions to clinical issues that surface with this population, and therefore discussion, interaction, and collaboration will be highly encouraged.