

Autism in Love Viewing Guide For Instructors

Autism in Love follows four couples as they explore love, relationships, and heartbreak. It can be found at autisminlove.com or on PBS's Independent Lens. This guide is intended to help sex educators use this movie as a teaching tool with individuals with autism. There are three clips highlighted with discussion questions and activities as well as general discussion questions at the end. The discussion questions could be turned into a worksheet. For each clip there is a question for educators to expand their own thinking.

Minute 17:30 – 22:00

In this scene, Lenny and his mom start talking about starting an online dating profile but the conversation moves to what he would like in a dating partner and how he feels about himself. Lenny talks about how he thinks the man should pay for things and how he would not want to date someone with more money than he has.

Discussion questions:

- Do Lenny and his mom agree or disagree?
 - What is Lenny's point of view?
 - What is his mom's point of view?
 - Which point of you do you agree with more?
- How would you feel if your boyfriend or girlfriend made more money than you? What if they made less money?
- Lenny says that more money means more independence. What does he mean by that?

Activity:

Create an online dating profile (either real or fake). Examples of dating profile questions: What is your hair color, eye color, height, body type, relationship status, children, religious beliefs, political views, education level, where did you grow up, occupation, salary range, smoke, drink, types of exercise that you like, languages you speak, ethnicity, favorite local hot spots, pets, favorite things, hobbies, and what you recently read. These questions could be turned into a "quiz." Answer these questions for yourself and how you would like the person you date to answer. Choose or take photos where you look attractive.

Educator question:

It is common for individuals to hold stereotypical views. How do you challenge these views while still respecting their right to their own opinion?

Minute 31:00 – 38:50

In this scene we meet Stephen's wife Gieta who is ill. We hear about when they got married.

Discussion questions:

- How does Stephen's face look when he first starts talking about Gieta?
- How do you know when you are in love?

- What do you think makes Gieta and Stephen a good match? (Either share your own ideas or what Gieta and Stephen's parents say)
- What do you think is important in a relationship?

Activity:

Later in the film, Stephen takes the producers on a tour of his and Gieta's apartment. Give a tour of where you live (maybe even film it). What is important about your home?

Educator question:

The movie is almost half over before we meet Stephen's wife. The film makers may have been trying to give time for the audience to assume that Stephen was not married. Were you surprised Stephen was married? What assumptions do we have about people with autism getting married especially comparing Stephen to Lindsey and Dave?

Minute 48:00 – 50:00

In this scene, Lenny talks about an incident he had with a woman. It is unclear at first but it appears that he paid a woman so that he could touch her.

Discussion questions:

- What did Lenny do?
- He seems upset with himself. Why?
- Is what he did legal?

Activity:

Compare these activities and decide if they are legal or not and if you would feel comfortable doing it or not (it may be helpful to label some of these as pornography): looking at pictures of naked people, looking at pictures of people touching their private parts, looking at pictures of people having sex, watching movies of people touching their private parts, watching movies of people having sex, watching a movie where people kiss in the movie but the movie is about something else (rated pg-13), watching a movie where people have sex but the movie is about something else (rated R), paying to look at naked people, paying to have naked people touch you, paying to have sex with someone. It may be helpful to print these activities on individual cards and also print labels: illegal, legal but I'm not okay with doing it, and legal but I am okay with doing it and then sort the activities.

Educator question:

Pornography and exotic dancing are controversial topics. How do you teach the controversy while maintaining sex positivity?

Overall discussion questions:

- Throughout the film we see Lenny, Stephen, and Lindsey's parents. How do your parents support you with relationships? How do you wish they would support you?
- In different points in the movie you see how much happiness love brings, but you also see the sadness. If there can be so much sadness, why do people still want to fall in love?
- Dave uses science and physics as a way of explaining love. What do you like to use to help you explain love?