

*Educational Webinar Series for Adults with
Spina Bifida*

Women and Relationships



March 2021

Meet the Panelists

- **Samantha Perez, SBA Adult Advisory Council**
- **Amie Richards, M.Ed., SBA Adult Advisory Council,
Board Member, SBA of Greater New England**
- **Elizabeth Scriven, PsyD**
- **Leslie Myers, MS, CRC, CCDVC – Vera Center on
Victimization + Safety**

Send us your questions!

- **Click on the Q&A box**
- **Type and send your question**

About me and my relationships - Samantha

- Long-distance relationships: Communication and problem-solving (conflict resolution) from afar
- How to meet someone safely online and put it into practice
- Space to grow with each other and respect each other's individualism



You're in a healthy relationship when...

- Amie

- Your needs are met and you are capable of meeting the needs of your partner/friend
 - emotional, physical (access intimacy)
- Your emotional and physical well-being is valued and respected



You're in a healthy relationship when...

- Amie



- Your connection or love is not conditional
- There is room in the relationship for each of you in times of agreement **and** conflict
 - opinions, beliefs, values, personality, interests, etc.

Know yourself and be true to yourself - Elizabeth

- What do you like and dislike?
- Don't compromise what is important to you.
- Demonstrate that you are comfortable with yourself and your disability
- How to build your self-esteem and confidence

Relationship building blocks – Elizabeth

- Be clear about the reality of how you live with Spina Bifida, and how Spina Bifida weaves into your life.
- Shared interests? Values?

Relationship building blocks, cont. – Elizabeth

- Expectations of the relationship / friendship?
- Look for safe and happy relationships – what brings you joy?
 - Having a soul mate or being in a relationship is not the end-all, be-all.

You're in an unhealthy relationship when

- Amie

- Your needs are not validated or respected
- Your connection or love feels fragile and conditional
- You are pressured to act in ways you wouldn't normally
- You feel physically or emotionally unsafe or unhealthy
- You feel responsible for another person's behavior or emotions

You're in an unhealthy relationship when

- Samantha

Someone:

- Uses your limits or your personal boundaries to control you or influence you.

Power is a concept with two very different meanings - Leslie

- 'Power to' - the ability of a person to change the circumstances of his or her life by creating and exercising options.
- 'Power over' - the ability to limit the options of others.

Power is a concept with two very different meanings, cont. - Leslie

- Having one's 'power to' make choices overruled by another person's 'power over' leads to an experience of powerlessness.
- Power over and love are incompatible.
- When an interest in power over and control is held by either partner, escalation and abuse occurs.

Warning Signs - Leslie

If your partner:

- Cuts you off from family and friends, keeps close tabs on where you go and who you see
- Keeps you from eating, sleeping, or getting medical care
- Physically and/or sexually harms you

More Warning Signs

- Leslie

- Controls all the money
- Bullies and/or threatens you
- Uses your disability to degrade you
- Uses your dependence on him/her to punish you

Signs Someone You Know Is Being Abused - Leslie

- Keep an eye out for things like:
 - Excuses for injuries
 - Personality changes, like low self-esteem in someone who was always confident
 - Constantly checking in with their partner
 - Never having money on hand

More Signs Someone You Know Is Being Abused - Leslie

- Keep an eye out for things like:
 - Overly worried about pleasing their partner
 - Skipping out on work, school, or social outings for no clear reason
 - Wearing clothes that don't fit the season, like long sleeves in summer to cover bruises

Who Can Be An Abuser?

- Leslie

- Anyone
- Some people just want to have control over others
- Some people grew up in families where they learned to treat others abusively
- Some abusers use alcohol, drugs and/or financial difficulties as an excuse for their violent behavior

But it is important to remember...
- Leslie

**There is no excuse for domestic
abuse.**

Resources

National Domestic
Violence Hotline

800.799.SAFE (7233)

National Sexual
Assault Hotline

800.656.HOPE (4673)

- If you or someone you know is experiencing violence in their lives, you might want to connect with national resources.
- Both numbers connect you with your local programs.
- Be aware that not all domestic violence and/or sexual assault programs are accessible. You will want to ask and use your self-advocacy skills to get what you need.

Your Questions

- **Send your question with the Q&A button in the Zoom webinar system**

Thank you!

- **Visit the archive of this presentation and its resources at <https://www.spinabifidaassociation.org/education/sb-you/>**
- **Questions?**
 - **Judy Thibadeau, jthibadeau@sbaa.org**
 - **Juanita Panlener, jpanlener@sbaa.org**

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