



Asperger's, Autism and the Student Conduct Process

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Association of Student Conduct Administrators Annual Conference

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Agenda

- Some background on ASD/Asperger's
- Challenges on campus
- Strategies

Why serve these students?

- Economic motivations (institutions and beyond)
- Political motivations (activism and legislation are pushing us forward)
- Moral (we have always led our institutions in making our campuses more inclusive, and we must do it now as well)



The Autism Spectrum



The Autism Spectrum

High-Functioning Autism

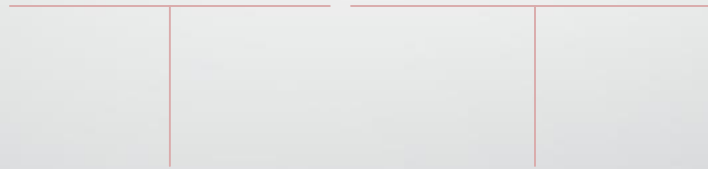


The Autism Spectrum

High-Functioning Autism

"Asperger Syndrome"

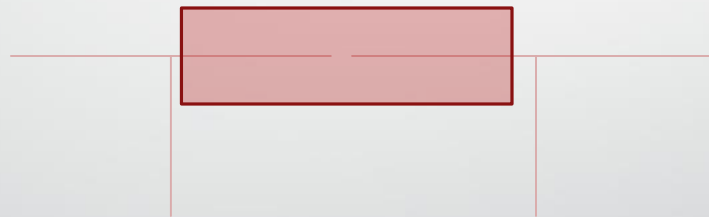
High-Functioning Autism



Mansfield Hall

On campus

High-Functioning Autism



Mansfield Hall

On campus

Understanding ASD/AS

- Increase in reported cases (“1 in 68”-CDC)
- No two students are the same
- Common IQ profile: high language, low processing
- Students with other disorders may present in some similar ways

What causes Autism?

- Brain research shows:
 - Likely genetic predisposition
 - Possible environmental influences
 - Parts of the brain “talk to each other” differently or not at all
- Diagnosis is typically by age of 5, but new research is lowering that age.

Basically...

Autism is characterized by a set of adaptive responses to the way the brain perceives the world.



Common Traits

- Social/Physical
 - Lacking “theory of mind”
 - Difficulty reading social cues and facial expressions
 - Sensory sensitivity
 - Hygiene issues
 - Repetitive motions
 - Motor deficits
- Language/Academic
 - Rigid thinking
 - Slow processing
 - Talking too fast
 - Odd prosody
 - Difficulty with metaphor, abstractions
 - Low tolerance for ambiguity, “gray areas”

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Often heard:

- “S/he just doesn’t ‘get it.’”
- “S/he can’t get out of their own way.”
- “S/he can’t see the big picture.”
- “How did s/he not know that would happen?”



Are these “traits” a problem?

Only if they impede a student’s efforts to achieve one of their goals.

Executive Function Deficits: (sometimes co-occurring, sometimes not)

- Organizational and planning abilities
- Working (short-term) memory
- Inhibition and impulse control
- Self-reflection and self-monitoring
- Time management and prioritizing
- Using new strategies

How do these challenges show up on campus?

- Roommate difficulties
- Student organization interactions
- Classroom concerns
- Marginalizing due to lack of understanding
- Extensive use of campus services (advising, counseling, disability services)



And...

- Student conduct matters:
 - Stalking/harassment
 - Disruptions of meetings, classes
 - “Bizarre” behavior
 - “Unreasonable” demands

Very important when working with ASD/AS students:

- It is not a disorder of motivation.
- It is a brain-based, hard-wired way of interpreting the world.
- Transitions take longer.
- Stress exacerbates traits and related difficulties.

Depression and anxiety rates in *ASD/AS* population are extremely high—perhaps twice what the non-*ASD* population experiences



Strategies

- Begin with understanding the rationale behind the behavior:
 - “What is the most important thing for me to know about you?”
 - “Can you tell me what you were hoping would happen when you _____?”
 - “What were you feeling when you ____?”
 - “Tell me what you are most proud of in your experience at ____ College.”

Strategies

- Anticipate rigid thinking...but don't dismiss it or counter it with your own.
- Anticipate "fight or flight" stress in the conversation; know there may be a low tolerance for this kind of interaction.

Strategies

- Be direct! Don't sugarcoat or soften the message.
- Provide "rules of engagement."
- Be patient in conversation and in effort (remember: transitions take longer).
- Don't dismiss environmental-based requests (to accommodate sensory issues).

Strategies

- Policies must include VERY detailed definitions. E.g., “unwanted attention” is unclear.
- Train staff, faculty and student leaders
- Suggest to both ASD students and the staff who work with them:
 - TRY DIFFERENTLY, NOT HARDER!

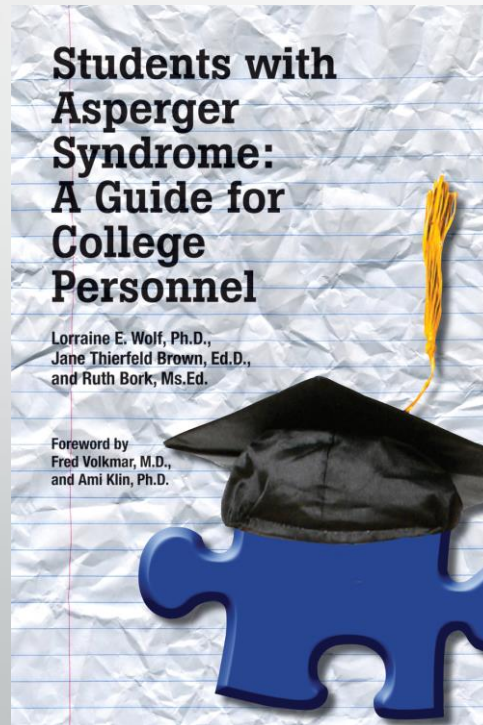


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- Suggest to both ASD students and the staff who work with them:
 - TRY DIFFERENTLY, NOT HARDER!
- Normalize, don't problematize

A Great Resource:

Collegeautismspectrum.com



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Please contact me!

Mansfield Hall Collegiate Partnerships:

- Staff and student leader training
- Resources
- Parent outreach

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www.Mansfieldhall.org

Slides available at: leeburdettewilliams.net