College Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Faculty & Staff Info Session April 2019
Your Presenters

Disability Services
Berks Hall, room 209

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Goals

- Understand what Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is (and how Asperger’s is part of ASD)
- Realize the prevalence of ASD in college and at RACC
- Recognize characteristic behaviors of students with ASD
- Understand what these students experience in college
- Acknowledge benefits of ASD
- Gain strategies to learn about, support, and encourage these students
Defining Autism

Quick Facts:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); wide range
- Developmental disorder
- Neurological
- Usually diagnosed in childhood
- Lifelong
- More common in males than females (*NIMH, 2017*)
- 1 in 59 children (*CDC, 2018*)
Defining Autism

Diagnostic criteria:

 Deficits in social comm. & interaction across contexts
 Repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, activities
 Symptoms present in early developmental period
 Symptoms cause impairment in social, job, or other areas of functioning *(DSM V, 2013)*

 Asperger’s Syndrome & PDD NOS now under ASD umbrella
ASD in college:

- 81% of college students with ASD go to community college
- More likely to be in STEM programs than students with other disabilities
- Decreased graduation & employment rates compared to students with other disabilities (Wei, et al., 2014)
Numbers at RACC:

- 10% of all students getting accommodations have ASD
- 30+ of 300+
- Need more time and contact; “high touch”
- Not just accommodations: teaching social and communication skills, managing meltdowns, etc.
All students with ASD are different, but here are some common behaviors:

- Voice modulation may be flat or unusually varied
- Continually interrupts class with questions
- Corrects you in your office or classroom
- Takes your spoken and written words literally
- Walks out of class often
- Eats or drinks in class in appropriately
All students with ASD are different, but here are some common behaviors:

- Rocks, paces, moves arms, hands, body in unusual way
- Puts head down on desk
- Chews on non-food items
- Puts fingers in his or her ears
- Walks away without saying goodbye
- Is smart, but does not complete work (Wolf, et al., 2009)
All students with ASD are different, but here are some common issues:

- Dislikes group work
- May not take care of personal hygiene
- Is vulnerable because of behavior that is out of the norm; open to bullying, teasing, people laughing
- Is not adept at relationships; may approach someone and invade space; may be seen as stalking
- Often have difficulty processing information
# Students’ Experiences

Common experiences (*Van Hees, et al., 2015*):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty with large amount of new information</th>
<th>Sensory overload</th>
<th>Feeling overwhelmed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Searching for new structures and routines</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving hard to fit in</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management in fits and starts</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Resistance to disclose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many students with ASD have unique strengths:

- Strong memory
- Ability to focus on one topic in depth
- Good eye for details
- Appreciate and follow rules
- Truthful
- Dedication to academics
- Analytical skills
- Strong powers of observation (Van Hees, et al., 2015)
How can you help?

https://racc.instructuremedia.com/embed/7cd7433b-ac9f-4667-b433-4d063851d4d6
Video discussion
Thoughts?
Reactions?
Stories to share?
Suggestions for support from DS:

- Personalize support
- Have an awareness program to break down stigma
- Provide detailed explanations of what is expected
- Offer clear communication; plan for literal listening
- Accommodate students with extra time for testing in quiet location
- Listen to students’ ideas about what is useful
- Have a designated coach; consider check-in appointments
- Offer training and collaboration with faculty
Suggestions for support from faculty/staff:

- **Invite** students to your office hours
- Guide students with use of planners, schedules
- Break down assignments into manageable parts
- Be clear about assignment deadlines
- Refer to psychological support as needed
- Help students **get involved** in activities, clubs; encourage leadership *(Van Hees, et al., 2015)*
Suggestions for support from faculty/staff:

- Personalize support
- Consider the sensory environment
- Provide clear explanations of what is expected
- Write on board when possible; break up talking
- Plan for literal listening
- Listen to students’ ideas about what is useful
Suggestions for support from faculty/staff:

- Consider collaboration with DS staff
- Confront, manage, discuss disruptive behaviors
- Do not accept disruptive behaviors
- Apply your classroom rules to all students
To Recap

- Understand what Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is (and how Asperger’s is part of ASD)
- Realize the prevalence of ASD in college and at RACC
- Recognize characteristic behaviors of students with ASD
- Understand what these students experience in college
- Acknowledge benefits of ASD
- Gain strategies to learn about, support, and encourage these students
Thank you for learning about college students with Autism.
Please take a moment to complete our brief evaluation.

Suggestions for future information sessions are always welcome!
Resources


Resources


