



Supporting Students with ASD in the Classroom

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- ❖ Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties with social communication and interaction and the presence of restrictive, repetitive patterns of behavior (APA, 2013).
- ❖ The DSM-5 provides standardized criteria to diagnose ASD.
<https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/Screening%20Tools/DSM-5%28ASD.Guidelines%29Feb2013.pdf>
- ❖ Deficits of ASD are presented in two domains:
 - ✓ Social communication/interaction
 - ✓ Restricted, repetitive behaviors

Prevalence of ASD in Children

- ✓ Current prevalence is 1 in 54 children up to 8 years of age
- ✓ Four times more common among males than females
- ✓ Occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups
- ✓ Number of children with ASD has increased exponentially

Prevalence of ASD in Adults

- ✓ Descriptive epidemiology focuses on children.
- ✓ There is no surveillance system to determine the prevalence of adults living with ASD.
- ✓ Rate of diagnosis has risen dramatically, especially among 14–17-year-olds and those with average or better cognitive abilities.
- ✓ *Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2020)* estimates the prevalence of adults with ASD in the US to be approximately 1 in 45.

Individuals with ASD in Educational Settings

- ❖ Increase in the number of students with ASD who demonstrate average to above average intelligence and language in the general education setting (Wagner et al., 2006)
 - 51% graduated high school
 - 17.6% dropped out of high school
 - 23% planned to attend college
- ❖ Students with ASD have difficulties achieving their full academic potential (Smith Myles, 2005).
- ❖ Supports and accommodations are necessary to ensure academic and vocational success (Smith Myles, 2005).

Individuals with ASD in Post-Secondary Settings

- ❖ Number of students with ASD in a post-secondary setting has increased (LeGary, 2017)
 - Between .7% and 1.9% of college students could meet criteria for ASD.
 - Only 38.8% of students with ASD will graduate from an institution of higher learning.

- ❖ Students with ASD are at an increased risk for not completing university graduation requirements (LeGary, 2017)
 - ✓ Unfamiliar situations and people
 - ✓ Dynamic university life
 - ✓ Comorbid health issues

Individuals with ASD in Post-Secondary Settings, (cont.)

- ❖ Many individuals with ASD achieve academically at the same level or higher than their peers *without* ASD. When given the proper support they are most likely to succeed in college.
- ❖ Gaps between the level of support available at universities and the needs of those with ASD exists.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) & Educational Transitions

- ❖ IDEA was designed to provide students (3-21 years) a free and appropriate education and to expand their opportunities in their least restrictive environment

- ❖ Transition Process
 - ✓ Defined by IDEA as “a coordinated set of activities to move students from a secondary to post-secondary setting”
 - ✓ Included in students Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Challenges of Transitioning to Post-Secondary Settings

Systematic Challenges

- Change in law applicable to students with special education needs
 - Move from IDEA to Section 504 & Americans with Disabilities Act
- Resource: Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

Intrinsic Challenges

- Social communication skills (e.g., ToM), EF, and life skills
- Increased risk of developing &/or increased comorbid health issues (Nuske et al., 2017)

“My guidance counselor did not prepare me for anything.”; “They talked to me about that [ODS] but I don’t think they provided me with direct contact.”; “I didn’t get help in high school either.”; “The school didn’t do much for me at all so my mom had to be the disability services advocate for me.” (Her, 2021)

Something to consider.....

Because these bright, socially challenged students have been doing well academically, there's an assumption they will do fine in a post-secondary setting and beyond. (Arky, n.d.)

Many parents do not anticipate the challenges their children, without the family structure and/or the supports they were afforded in early and secondary education settings, will encounter (Arky, n.d.)

Issues Related to Disclosure

- ❖ Students with ASD may only reveal their diagnosis as needed to acquire formal accommodations
- ❖ May reveal to other students only when circumstances require this to occur

Why do you think it's difficult for students to reveal their diagnosis?

Do you think it's important that students self-identify?

Self-Advocacy

- Students with ASD lack education in self-advocacy.
- Lack an understanding of the importance of and/or how to handle disclosure.
- Causes difficulties with higher education, employment, relationships, etc.
- Variances in learning style, combined with the pace of university curriculum, may create challenges meeting course requirements.
- Student may not know how to obtain and/or advocate for needed assistance/accommodations.

How to help: <https://www.autism.org/self-advocacy/>

- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Ask the student what they need (attending to appropriate boundaries)
- ✓ Consider what you've learned; be open-minded

Self Advocacy: Challenges Knowing Where, When, Who, How

(Her, 2021)

- *“I didn’t know how to get the help I needed.”*
- *“I didn’t even realize I could ask for that type of help.”*
- *“It’s a pride thing, I don’t really like to reach out and stuff like that.”*
- *“I can’t physically take notes and listen, it’s hard to do. That’s why I requested a notetaker.”*
- *“I asked Jennifer [ODS Administrator]. I contacted her and asked how I could get extra time for a test.”*

Identity-First Controversy

- Internal tension on how ASD fits into student's sense of identity
- Public efforts to appear “normal;” private efforts to embrace ASD identity
- Most students with ASD are aware of differences
- Some use scripts/rules to avoid appearing autistic (e.g., “masking”)
- Students with early diagnoses, expressed greater comfort with themselves
- Moving away from deficit model; neurodiversity embraced; question the use of person-first language (i.e., autistic person vs. a person with autism)
- Moving away from autism as a disorder; rather, consider a condition or spectrum (recognizing autism-like traits within the general population)
(Cox, et al., 2017).

Response to the Challenges

Research has aimed at determining what supports and accommodations are needed for adult students with ASD from the *perspective of specialists, university personnel, parents, and researchers*. Now is the time to listen to *our students* and respond accordingly.

The Spectrum of ASD

- ✓ “Spectrum” describes the psychological and physical variability observed in this disorder (Blenner et al., 2011)
- ✓ Literature continues to describe individuals with ASD as those who function on a continuum (low to high)
- ✓ Diagnostic Statistical Manual-5 (DSM-5; APA, 2013)

****Autism 211: In Our Own Words: A Panel of Adults with Autism Spectrum:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gD_qru9rYHQ

Which of these are common characteristics of ASD?

(Select all that apply)

- Poor eye contact
- Unusual appearance
- Challenges with self-regulation
- Inappropriate body language
- Unable to express emotions
- Make unusual sounds
- No desire to have friends
- Difficulty initiating conversations
- Intellectually disabled
- Difficulty asking for assistance
- Lack of functional speech
- Difficulty working in groups
- Challenges with anxiety
- Only affects children
- Knowledgeable about specific areas of interest
- Communication challenges that mask intellectual abilities
- Heightened sensory perceptions (e.g., flickering lights or outside stimuli) which may interfere with learning



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Common Characteristics of ASD

**Note: This is not an all-inclusive list.*

***Note: Not all individuals with ASD demonstrate the same characteristics.*

- Poor eye contact
- Challenges with self-regulation
- Inappropriate body language
- Make unusual sounds
- Difficulty initiating conversations
- Difficulty asking for assistance
- Lack of functional speech
- Difficulty working in groups
- Challenges with anxiety
- Knowledgeable about specific areas of interest
- Communication challenges that mask intellectual abilities
- Heightened sensory perceptions

Theories Associated with ASD

❖ Psychological and Social Cognitive Theories

- Theory of Mind (ToM)
- Theory of Executive Function (EF)
- Theory of Central Coherence (CC)

❖ These theories help professionals better understand the relationship between mind and behavior within a social context.

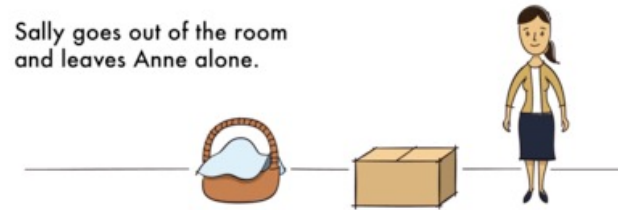
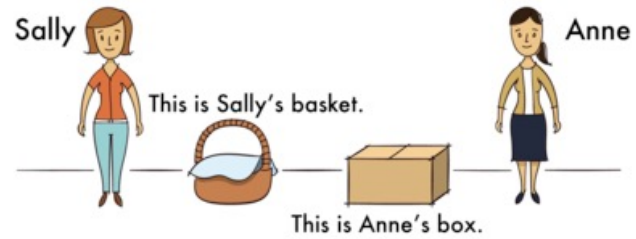
Theory of Mind

Function of ToM

- Ability to assign mental states (i.e., perspective, beliefs, desires, intentions) to oneself and those around them (Premack & Woodruff, 1978)
- Helps individuals predict human behavior

What ToM looks like in ASD

- Challenged to understand others' perspectives, particularly in on-going dynamic social communication situations
- Difficulties recognizing people have different solutions and/or more than one way to solve problems
 - Compensatory strategies are more evident in adolescence and adulthood



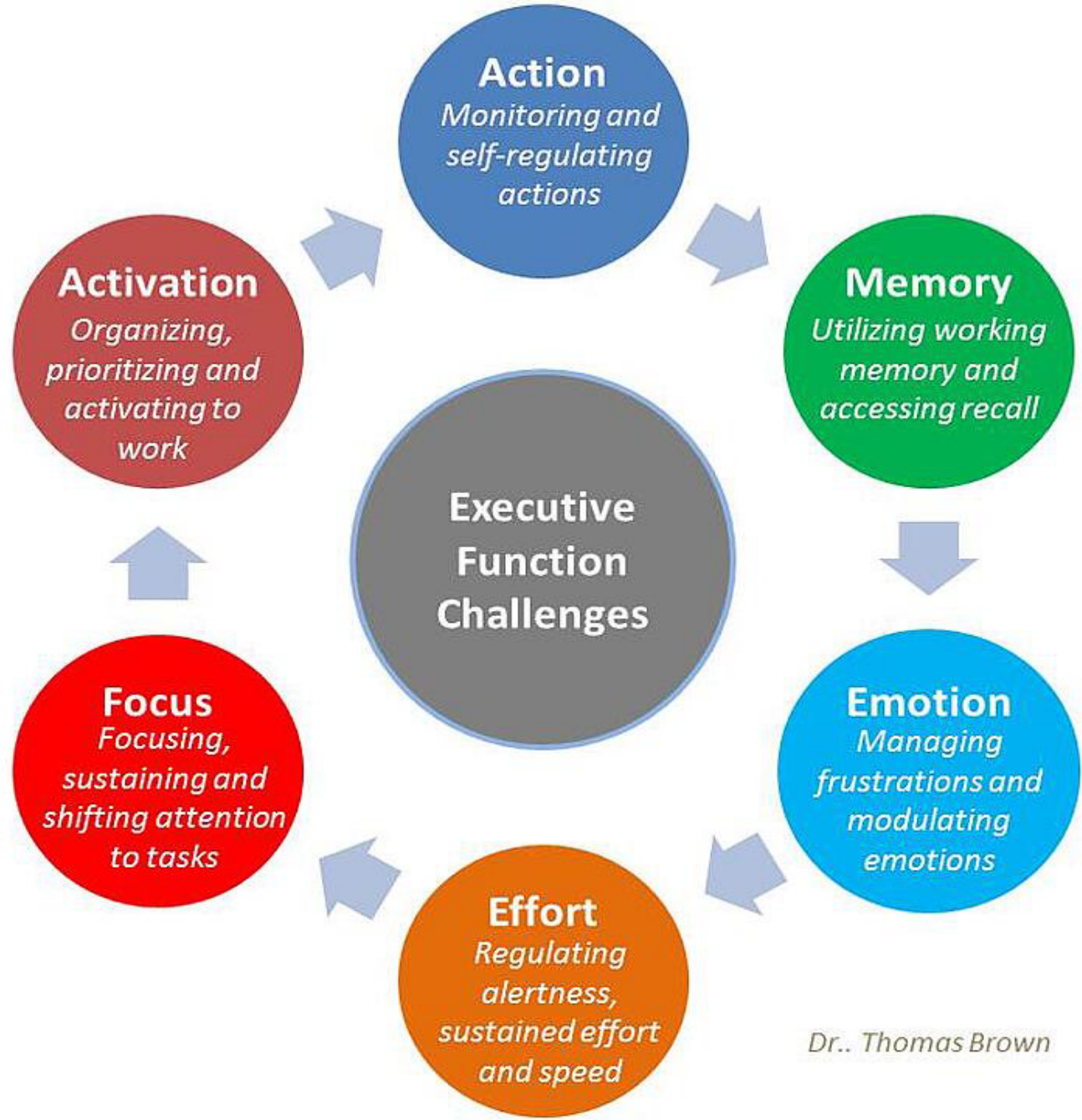
Theory of Executive Function

Function of EF

- A higher order skill that assists us to perform complex skills in changing environments (Juardo & Rosselli, 2007)
- Provides the ability to control cognitive actions like impulsive task responding and manipulating and organizing complex information while holding it active in working memory (Richland & Burchinal, 2013)

What EF looks like in ASD

- Inability to plan, think flexibly, and self-monitor behaviors
- Need for sameness
- Difficulty task switching
- Difficulty using information to solve problems of everyday life
- Difficulty integrating information into other experiences



Dr.. Thomas Brown

Theory of Central Coherence

Function of CC

- The ability to process information within a certain context to create a higher-level meaning (Hill & Frith, 2003)
- Helps gather small details to recognize/understand the “whole picture”

What CC looks like in ASD

- ‘Weak coherence’ or the preference to attend to small details rather than the whole
- Attention to detail results in the inability to process information
- Difficulty sorting relevant from irrelevant information
- Giving equal value/weight to all information stored



Challenges of Students in the Post-Secondary Setting

Non-Academic challenges

- Social communication and interaction
- Lack of self-awareness/self-advocacy skills
- Inability to manage time and assignments
- Campus knowledge about ASD/
Heterogeneity of ASD

Academic challenges

- Poor student/faculty relationships
- Inability to complete assignments appropriately/efficiently
- Delay in seeking supports and accommodations/disclosure
- Inappropriate supports and accommodations



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University Students' Most Significant Concerns

- ✓ Academic requirements
- ✓ Mental health issues
- ✓ Sensory sensitivities

WSU Students with ASD

Most Significant Concerns Experienced at WSU

- ❖ Academic Requirements ($n=6$)
- ❖ Mental Health Issues or Social Requirements ($n=4$)

**Participant $n=15$ (out of 37)*

One student commented (during student focus group session):
“They’re [listed concerns] definitely all large concerns, I think the academic requirements and mental health issues are my largest concern, another commented, “The fact that I am from out of state and know no one.”

(Her, 2021)

WSU Students with ASD, (cont.)

Strengths, Difficulties, and Concerns

❖ Most Common Strengths:

- ❖ Ability to attend to details ($n=15$)
- ❖ Maintain an intense interest in the subject they were studying ($n=14$)

❖ Most Common Difficulties

- ❖ Staying on task ($n=10$)
- ❖ Time management ($n=10$)

- One student commented, *“Time management, staying on task, and motivation are huge problems I struggle with.”*
- Another student stated, *“If you have a job outside of campus you can get a \$1,000 scholarship, but I can’t hold a job while I’m in school so I can’t get that scholarship. It’s frustrating because I can’t afford to be here basically, but I’m trying.”*

WSU Students with ASD, (cont.)

Non-Academic Issues Students Experienced at WSU

- ❖ Loneliness ($n=9$)
- ❖ Feeling isolated at WSU ($n=9$)
- ❖ Quality of sleep ($n=9$)
- ❖ Romance ($n=9$)
- ❖ Lack of friends and structure ($n=8$)
- ❖ Anxiety ($n=8$)

One student commented, *“Connecting with other students is difficult for me. I haven’t made many friends,”* another commented, *“I have a hard time socializing with others.”*

WSU Students with ASD, (cont.)

Mental Health: Described as the varied conditions affecting students' moods, behavior, and thinking (e.g., anxiety, low self-esteem, confidence, being overwhelmed, loneliness, fears, and stress).

- *“When it is time to worry about things generally, I melt down or I just shove everything to the side and I’m like, I don’t care.”*
- *“I’m worried about having to take three classes that I’m not confident I’ll be able to pass the first time...I get overwhelmed easily.”*
- *“Name something and there’s a chance I might be afraid of it. I get skittish and jittery around bugs, especially if a bug flies past me...I’m [also] deathly afraid of escalators,” the same student added, “I’ve also noticed I’ve had mild difficulty with stairs recently too, like just going up and down them...it’s mildly concerning.”*

Graduation



Researchers asked students
“how do you define success
as a college student?”
Their answers suggest
students seek
accomplishment both inside
and outside the classroom.

Grades



Employment



Social Life



Self-Efficacy

CAN'T



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Accardo, A. L. (2017). College-bound young adults with ASD: Self-reported factors promoting and inhibiting success. *DADD Online Journal: Research to Practice*, 4(1), 36-46.

College Success Means More than Just Grades

Students also identified several factors which can influence college success:

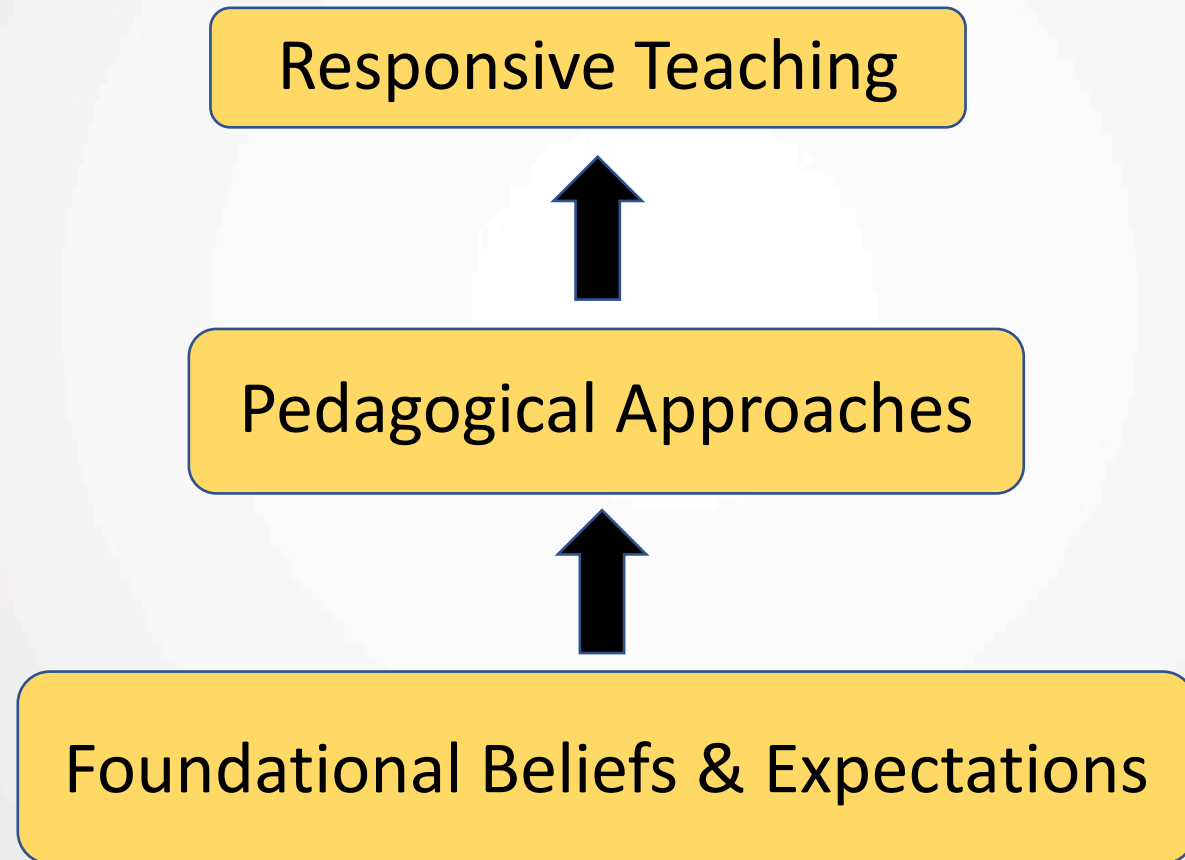
- Parental expectations, support, and motivation
- Self-determination
- Goal of employment
- Resources and accommodations
- General support

Additional Resources

- Fast Fact #6: Family Matters
- Types of supports for students with autism
- [Lit Review] A spectrum of support: Current and best practices for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at community colleges
- [Lit Review] Transition from School to Adulthood for Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder: What we Know and what we Need to Know

Common Academic Strengths

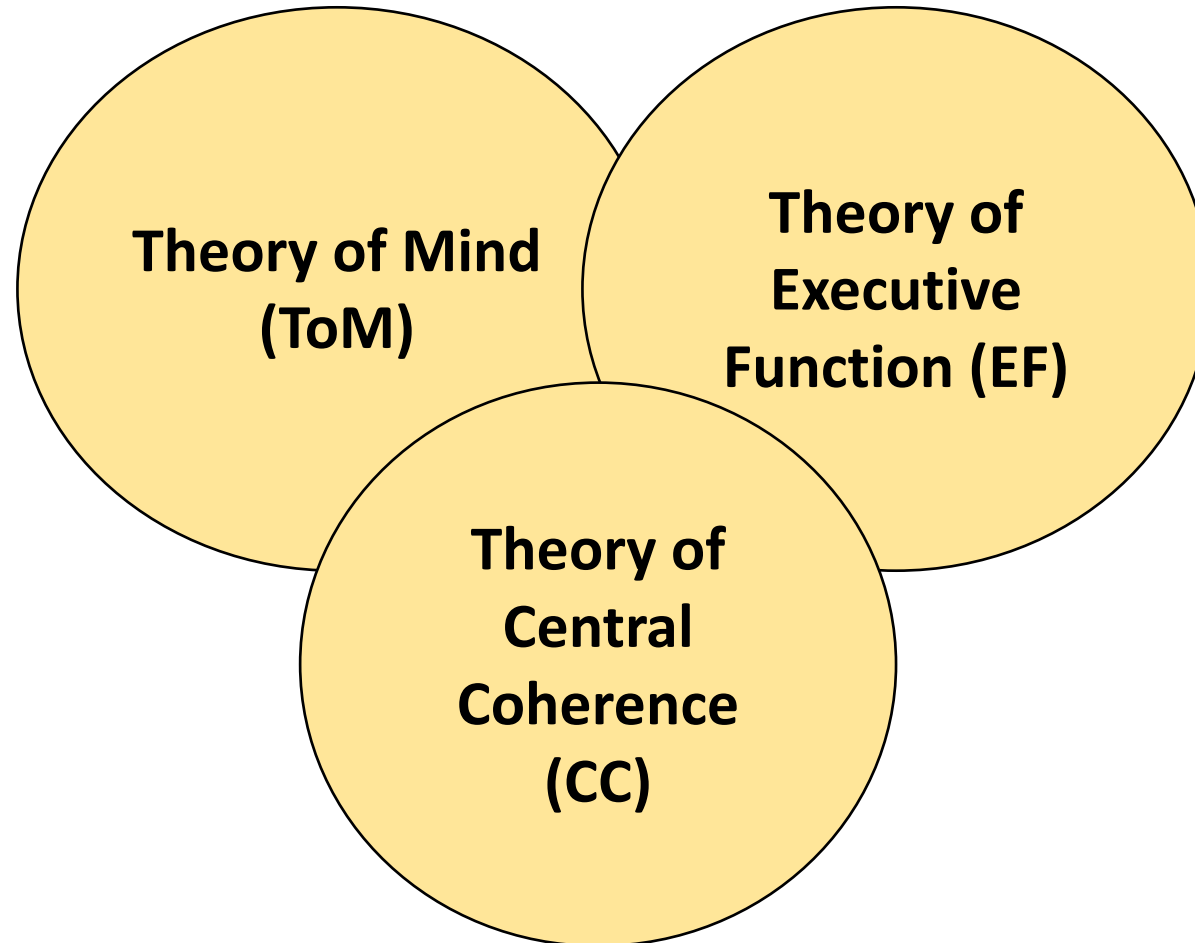
- ✓ Attention to detail, accuracy, and a memory for details
- ✓ Intense interest in particular subjects / areas of interest
- ✓ Strong logic and analytical skills
- ✓ Original and creative thoughts
- ✓ Desire to acquire accurate knowledge
- ✓ Adherence to rules when structure is provided
- ✓ Ability to concentrate for long periods of time when interested
- ✓ Ability to problem solve in unique ways



Deficits of ASD are presented in two domains:

✓ **Social communication/interaction**

✓ **Restricted, repetitive behaviors**



How Can We Support Students with ASD?

- ❖ Begin semester by specifically telling students the best strategies for self-advocating in your class.
- ❖ Provide these details to the class in writing. *[Consider offering reminders].*
- ❖ Ask the student what would help them.
- ❖ Develop a class routine. *[Indicate verbally & in writing when it changes].*
- ❖ Provide visuals whenever possible.
- ❖ Use multiple instructional modalities.
- ❖ Be mindful of sensory challenges – be proactive.
- ❖ Develop a method of on-going communication that is helpful to the student.

Common Challenges with Executive Function: Difficulty with Organization

Difficulty with Organization - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Create a syllabus that is not text heavy.
- ✓ Meet with the student prior to beginning the class to outline the course and assignments.
- ✓ Provide detailed guidance throughout the course in both verbal and written forms.
- ✓ Highlight important dates, information and/or use bold print.
- ✓ Use a First X – Then X strategy to reduce feelings of being overwhelmed.

“I don’t have the skills to balance work and school life.”

“Managing the independent aspects of life as a college student such as living in a dorm or apartment, combined with scheduling homework, maintaining proper nutrition, etc. may overwhelm the individual’s executive functioning capabilities.” (Shore, 2021)

Common Challenges with Executive Function: Difficulty Completing Assignments/Tasks

Difficulty Completing Assignments/Tasks - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Do not make assumptions about what the student does/doesn't understand.
- ✓ Provide clear expectations with details for deadlines and outcomes. Confirm understanding.
- ✓ Be flexible with communication policies (e.g., phone vs. email).
- ✓ Use structured scaffolding: Break down large assignments into smaller tasks or more manageable components.
- ✓ When appropriate, consider an alternative assignment.

"I'm a procrastinator, I have the tendency to procrastinate."

Common Challenges with Executive Function: Difficulty Completing Assignments/Tasks, (cont.)

- ✓ Consider physical organization of the classroom (e.g., consistently list in-class assignments on one side of the white board & place homework/project assignments on the opposite side; if there are NO assignments, indicate this in writing).
- ✓ Any changes in the schedule should be announced ahead of time both verbally and in writing. Written reminders on the board in a different color can assist with recall.

Common Challenges with Executive Function: Difficulty Tracking/Processing Lesson Content

Difficulty Tracking/Processing Lesson Content - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Differentiated Instruction: teaching content material using multiple methods (e.g., technology, lecture style discussions, small group projects).
- ✓ Use more experiential, hands-on activities vs. traditional lecture-based methods for delivering content.
- ✓ Provide a copy of lecture notes for review/preview.
- ✓ Use visual organizers with explicit information (e.g., compare/contrast charts; problem/solution charts).

Difficulty Responding to Abstract Questions (how & why) – How faculty can help:

- ✓ Provide visual rubrics, graphic organizers, and other visual tools to signify connections between and among ideas.
- ✓ Visuals to help track, modify, enhance classroom interaction/engagement.

“I cannot participate [in class], I’m too self-conscious. I can’t answer questions, I sit there and listen.”

Frequently Answers Off Topic - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Use agreed upon hand signals.
- ✓ Rephrase the question if you think the student has misunderstood.
- ✓ Write the question on the board.
- ✓ Use the topic the student is talking about to open the discussion to new ideas.

Difficulty Understanding Non-Verbal Messages –

How faculty can help:

- ✓ Don't rely on non-verbal communication to get your message across (unless signals have been previously discussed and agreed upon)
- ✓ Use clear, verbal directions.

Difficulties with Social and Discipline-Specific Rules for Writing – How faculty can help:

- ✓ Be clear in writing expectations (provide written guidelines/rubrics).
- ✓ Provide students with resources to learn more about the format used for writing in the discipline.
- ✓ Allow rewrites, first drafts, or provide extra opportunities for individual conferencing with TA, GA, or faculty.
- ✓ Discuss the use of a peer tutor and/or University Writing Center

Common Challenges Understanding Sensory Sensitivities: Sensitivity to Sound

Sensitivity to Sound - How faculty can help:

- ✓ If the student appears annoyed, meet with the student and ask about your observation.
- ✓ Proactively create a plan for the student to be able to compensate within the classroom setting.
- ✓ Give breaks to avoid sensory overload (e.g., allow student to stand, move in the back of the room, variable seating based on instruction modes).
- ✓ Allow student to wear noise-cancelling headphones or ear plugs.

Common Challenges Understanding Sensory Sensitivities: Sensitivity to Light

Sensitivity to Light - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Dim lights (when appropriate/optional).
- ✓ Allow the student to wear sunglasses, hat, or visor.
- ✓ Work with the student to proactively plan for compensatory strategies that will not disrupt the flow of the class.

Common Challenges Understanding Sensory Sensitivities: Student Becomes Fidgety and Disturbs the Class

Student Becomes Fidgety and Disturbs the Class – How faculty can help:

- ✓ Provide pre-arranged movement breaks.
- ✓ Ensure the student is not seated near a window or door/equipment with background noise.
- ✓ Use an FM unit to amplify your voice for the student.

When Familiar Events Change - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Create a routine for conducting class (e.g., review past lecture, new lecture with visual inputs, review assignment).
- ✓ Agree on a signal the student can use to indicate stress and provide a prearranged outlet.
- ✓ Allow the student to sit in an area of the classroom where they feel most comfortable.
- ✓ Allow the student to leave the classroom when necessary.
- ✓ Allow extra time between activities when possible.

“When I’m really focusing on something, I get really stuck on it and you can’t get me off it.”

Atypical Body Movements - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Allow student to use a hand-held squeeze ball or similar object to provide sensory input or calming effect.
- ✓ Provide seating that allows the individual to move.
- ✓ Respect chosen level of eye contact.
- ✓ Display calm and welcoming body language.
- ✓ Give student extra space.

Student Monopolizes the Class Discussion –

How faculty can help:

- ✓ Respond respectfully with feedback, such as “That’s very interesting but, XX also had their hand up, so I’d like to give them a chance to speak.”
- ✓ Determine agreed upon unobtrusive hand signals in advance to help the student become aware that they have been monopolizing the discussion.

Responding Slowly to Instructor Questions, Directions, Classroom Discourse -

How faculty can help:

- ✓ Prime students with an idea that will be discussed in class. Check back in with them 10 - 15 minutes later for their response.
- ✓ Have student write their thoughts/ideas regarding topics discussed in class. Have them submit these to you after class.
- ✓ Begin the lesson with a preview statement: “Today we will be discussing...:”.
- ✓ End the lesson with a review statement: “Today we discussed...”.
- ✓ Break down complex discussions into smaller units.

Common Challenges with Understanding Person's Point of View: Takes Language Literally

Takes Language Literally - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Be direct.
- ✓ The more detail provided, the better they will understand.
- ✓ Use visuals when possible.
- ✓ Avoid using clichés, implied meanings, and/or idioms.

Common Challenges with Understanding Person's Point of View: Make Statements that are too Honest, Unintentionally Offending Others

Make Statements that are too Honest, Unintentionally Offending Others -

How faculty can help:

- ✓ Do not take rude behavior personally; however, work directly with the student to address the issue in a positive, proactive manner.
- ✓ Meet with the student. Express your concern and how it impacts the student now and in the future. Directly state the expected behavior and problem solve alternative strategies.
- ✓ Listen to the student and learn more about their perspective, strengths, and challenges.

Common Challenges with Stress Management: Heavy Workloads & Prioritizing Tasks

Heavy Workloads & Prioritizing Tasks - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Modify assignment due dates.
- ✓ Assist with assigning priority to assignments/tasks.
- ✓ Balance instruction with an equal amount of group and individual work.

Common Challenges with Stress Management: Group Work

Group Work - How faculty can help:

- ✓ Begin working in pairs with clear outcomes for each pair; then, move into small group work.
- ✓ Lead by example. If you want other students to respect those with ASD, then acknowledge their strengths during class when appropriate and deserving.
- ✓ Assign peer-allies for in-class assignments.
- ✓ Assign and define roles within the group.
- ✓ Provide students with templates for recording their responses.
- ✓ Encourage information sharing via online resources.

Group Work/Assignments: Be Aware of Social Challenges for Students with ASD

Difficulties with Group Work / Social Challenges for Students with ASD

Statements/Perspectives of WSU students with ASD

- *“The odd one out.”*
- *“Didn’t fit in with others.”*
- *“They don’t get me at all, they don’t get my sense of humor.”*
- *“There is an inability for others to relate to us as a person on the autism spectrum.”*
- *“I get trying to figure out how to be somebody’s friend and sometimes you watch them do things and you’re like why did you do that? I don’t understand why you’re doing this secret handshake-y thing with one another. It doesn’t occur to me as the thing you do.”*

Social Challenges (cont.)

- *“Even though you can relate to others, there is a loneliness that comes with not being neurotypical when you’re interacting with neurotypical people.”*
- *“It does take a lot of time to find people that are going to understand your autism and if you do something wrong not just push you away.”*
- *“It’s hard to make friends on campus.”*
- *“They [people] don’t get what makes you, you and they don’t always have patience for it.”*
- *“I didn’t realize how difficult it was to find the right group of people, but it can be challenging.”*

Common Challenges with Stress Management: Assessment & Test Performance

Assessment & Test Performance

How faculty can help:

- ✓ Give shorter, more frequent exams.
- ✓ Use a variety of question types (e.g., multiple choice, T/F).
- ✓ Use rubrics as guidelines for grading.
- ✓ Provide detailed guidance and feedback.

Academic

- Alternate exam room
- Extended time for tests
- Recorded lectures
- Reduced course load
- Assistance with time management
- Peer Mentors
- Extension for assignments
- Alternate assessment formats

Supports to Consider in University Settings (cont.)

University-wide supports:

- Disability Support Office
- Consultation with Disability Support personnel
- Counseling

University-wide physical modifications:

- Sensory friendly spaces: quiet areas, replacing fluorescent lights, computer screens with dimming switches, removing deodorizers (e.g., smells from bathroom, rooms).

WSU Accommodations / Resources Accessed by Students with ASD

Resources Accessed by Students	
Academic Supports at WSU	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Math lab✓ Supplemental Instruction✓ TRIO Disability✓ Library Resources and Databases
ODS Supports/Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Extended Test Time✓ Room Accommodations✓ ODS Personnel✓ Printing✓ Notebooks and Digital Pens✓ Use of Computer✓ Recorded Lecture

Accommodations and Support in Higher Education: Insights from the Autism Community

Most Frequently Received Accommodations (Academic)



1. Extended test time
2. Note takers
3. Distraction free test areas
4. Flexible or extended due dates for assignments
5. Use of technology in the classroom

Supports Most Commonly Desired (Social & Sensory)



1. Increased autism awareness on campus
2. Sensory friendly spaces and practices
3. Educational practices designed for multiple learning preferences
4. A disability support group
5. More acceptance of self-stimulatory behavior ("stimming")

"Overall, participants in the current study reported mixed levels of satisfaction with the accommodations they received. Many found accommodations focused on academic needs but did not meet two primary concerns: sensory and social needs." (p. 687)

This material is based, in part, upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Number 1612090

Sarrett, J. C. (2018). Autism and Accommodations in Higher Education: Insights from the Autism Community. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48, 679-692. doi: 10.1007/s10803-017-3353-4

"Actually listen to autistic people... we all have different needs, different strengths and weaknesses." (p. 686)

Notes

"Stimming" includes self-stimulating behaviors (e.g., repetitive sounds or movements) that often help individuals with autism manage emotions and environmental conditions.

Formal academic accommodations sometimes don't get implemented fully or consistently by instructors.

Additional Resources

- Types of support available
- Institutional Initiatives for students with autism
- [Lit Review] Practices at Community Colleges
- [Lit Review] Current Practices

Accommodations: Be Mindful of Students' Perceptions of Faculty

Statement/Perspective of WSU student with ASD

A student shared, “exam help (private room and extended time) from the Testing Center as well as the staff member that I trust have helped me most, another shared, “honestly just knowing that I can ask for help from ODS is a reassuring feeling.”

“I have had a couple professors and it’s almost like they look down their nose at me kind of in a way that’s well why should you get anything different than the other students in the room...I didn’t think the things I was asking for was too much but sometimes it seems that they think that it is and I’m not trying to take advantage of anything here. I’m just trying to be able to do what I’m actually capable of.”

Formal accommodations may not adequately support students' academic needs. One reason for this deficiency is that **student accommodations are not always fulfilled by teachers**, which can be very challenging for students.

Here are some examples of what students may perceive when faculty don't consistently and appropriately implement accommodations.



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SOURCE: Sarrett, J. C. (2018). Autism and Accommodations in Higher Education: Insights from the Autism Community. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 48*, 679-692. doi: 10.1007/s10803-017-3353-4

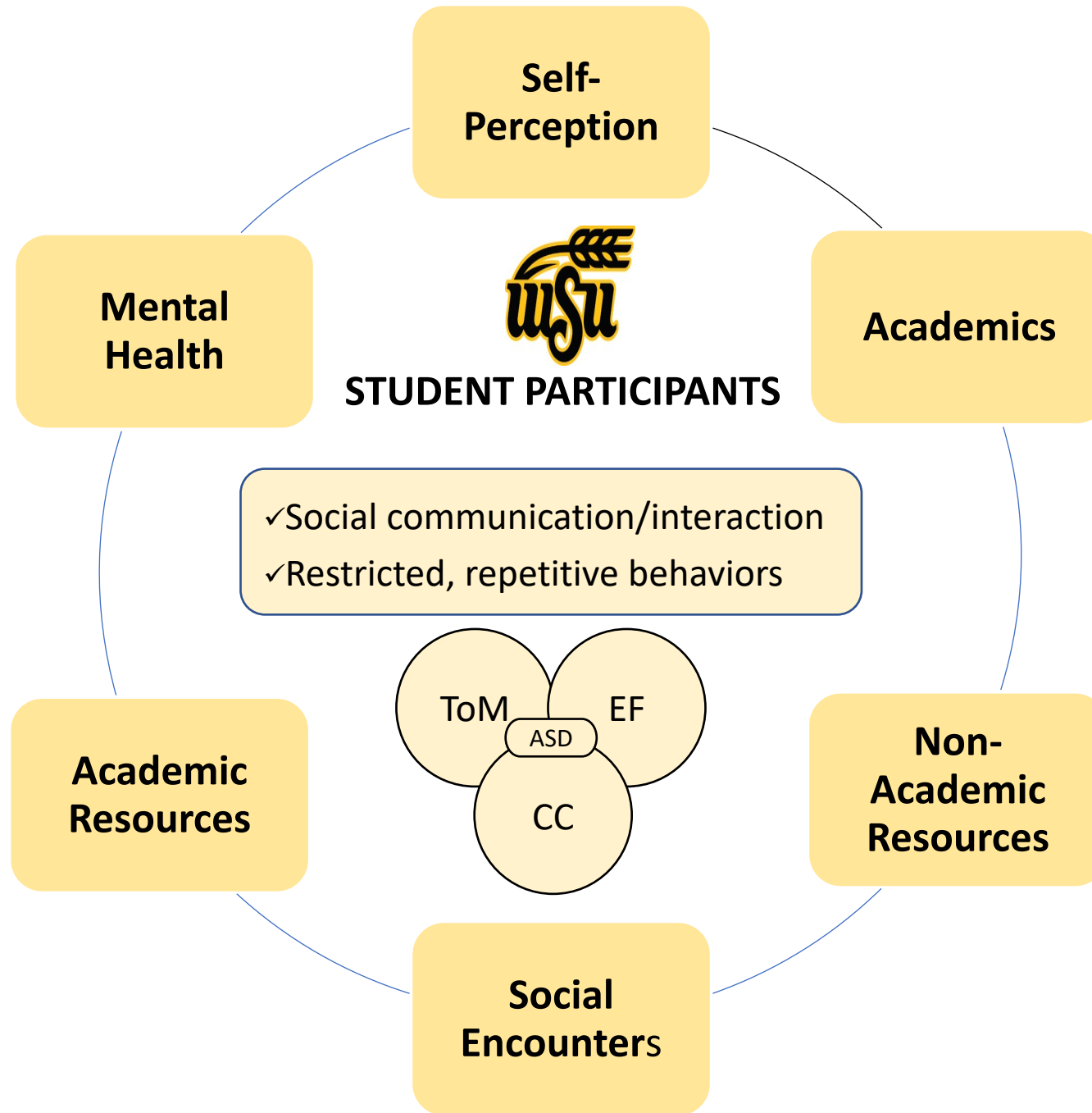
Why don't accommodations always work?

Students reported various challenges with their accommodations:

- Professors do not always understand why accommodations are necessary, or exactly how to implement them in their classrooms.
- The process to receive accommodations is often long or strenuous, usually requiring a formal diagnosis.
- Accommodations don't cover all the students' needs, such as social and sensory needs which are not as easy to accommodate for in a regular classroom.

Related Resources:

- Institutional Initiatives
- Wrong Planet
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network
- [Paper] College experiences for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- [Presentation] Building Campus-Wide Understanding of Students with Autism



How Can We Support Students with ASD?

- ✓ Begin semester by specifically telling students the best strategies for self-advocating in your class.
- ✓ Provide these details to the class in writing.
- ✓ Ask the student what would help them.
- ✓ Develop a class routine. [Indicate verbally & in writing when it changes].
- ✓ Provide visuals whenever possible.
- ✓ Use multiple instructional modalities.
- ✓ Be mindful of sensory challenges – be proactive.
- ✓ Develop a method of on-going communication that is helpful to the student.

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