

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN THE CLASSROOM

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OBJECTIVES

- Identify characteristics of individuals with HFA/Asperger's Syndrome
- Identify barriers that may inhibit learning for students with HFA/Asperger's Syndrome
- Identify strategies that promote learning for young adults with HFA/Asperger's Syndrome

AUTISM: WHAT IS IT?



“After all, the really social people did not invent the first stone spear. It was probably invented by an Aspie who chipped away at rocks while the other people socialized around the campfire. Without autism traits we might still be living in caves.”

Temple Grandin

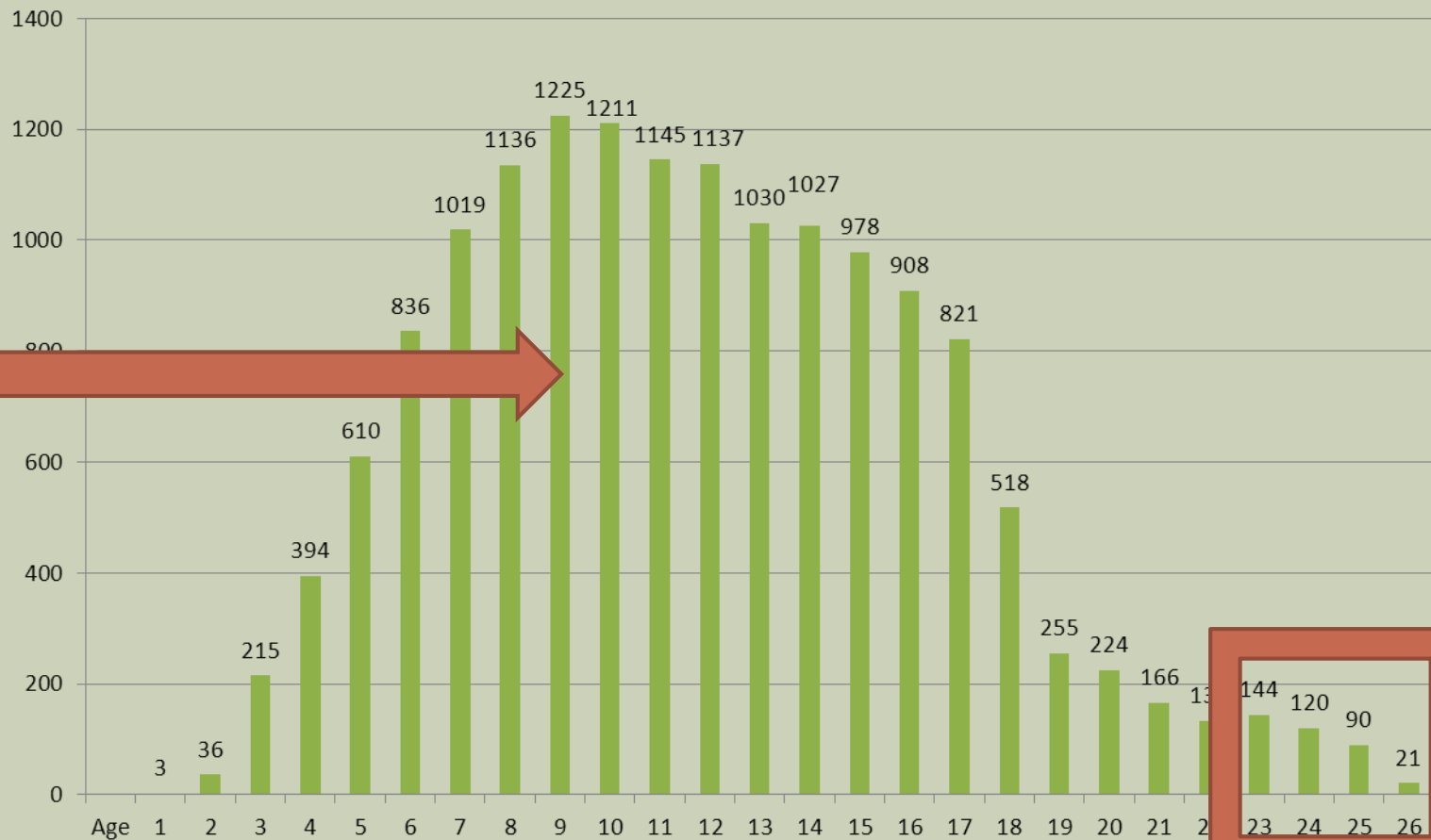


PREVALENCE

- Autism Society of America reports an increased frequency and is reporting that autism is the fastest growing developmental disability with estimates of:
 - **1 in 68 live births (CDC, March 2014)**
- The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry estimates the incidence of AS at between 0.024 and 0.36 percent
- Primarily seen in males (4 out of 5)

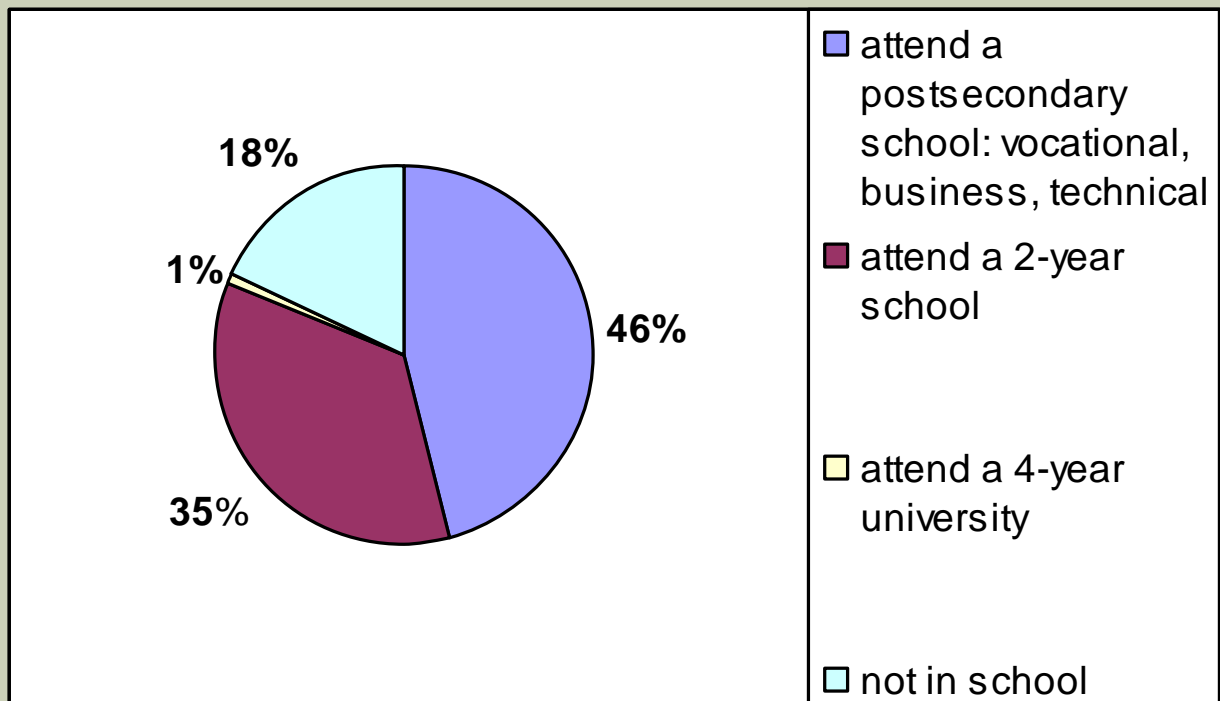
Where are the students in Michigan ?

Number of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder by Age - 2010



Source: Annual Special Education Child Count

WHERE ARE ALL THE YOUNG ADULTS WITH ASD? (NLTS-2)



“STEM” PARTICIPATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ASD

- **NLTS-2 (Wei, Yu, Sattuck, McCracken, Blackorby, 2013)**
- **Science, Technology, Engineering, Math**
- **Students with ASD have the highest STEM participation rates**
- **At the same time, their college enrollment rate was the third lowest among 11 disability categories and students in general population**
- **What are the educational implications?**

PERCENTAGE EXPECTED TO....

Complete 2 yr. college

Definitely will 24%

Probably will 37%

Complete 4 yr. college

Definitely will 20%

Probably will 33%

(NLTS-2)

PERCENTAGE EXPECTED TO....

Be financially self supported...

Definitely will be 34%

Probably will be 43%

Live independently without supervision...

Definitely will 45%

Probably will 31%

Probably won't 22%

(NLTS-2)

PREVALENCE: STUDENTS IN COLLEGE

- There are no *clear* statistics on the number of people attending college who have been diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of students with AS continues to grow rapidly.
- It is clear that many students with AS have been present on college campuses but their disorders simply went unrecognized.
- Despite the ADA, many students with AS are falling through the cracks (many decide NOT to self-disclose!)

PREVIOUS DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

DSM-IV



Pervasive Developmental Disorder

Autistic disorder

Asperger disorder

Childhood disintegrative disorder

Rett's disorder

PDD-NOS

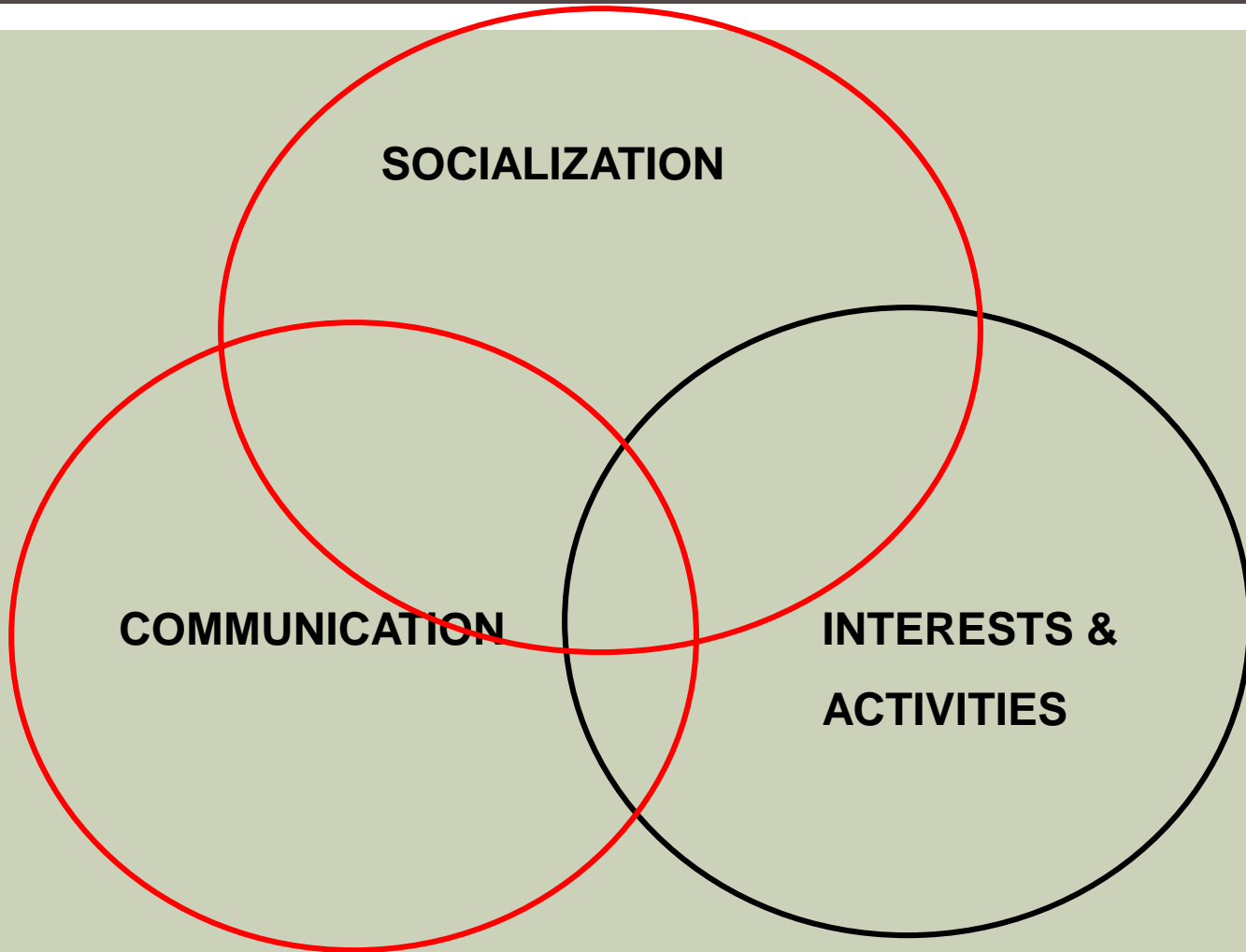
***PRESENT* DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA**

DSM-V



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

TRIAD OF CORE DEFICITS IN ASD



SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION DEFICITS\REPETITIVE BEHAVIORS

**What have you seen in the college
classroom?**

What have you seen on campus?

CHALLENGES: SOCIAL ISSUES

(BELLINI, 2006)

- Social initiation
- Terminating conversations
- Topic changes
- Social anxiety
- Social withdrawal
- As a college student: wants friends/close relationships with others but does not recognize how to build them
- Unable to speak with Instructors/ lack of eye contact
- The “culture” of autism

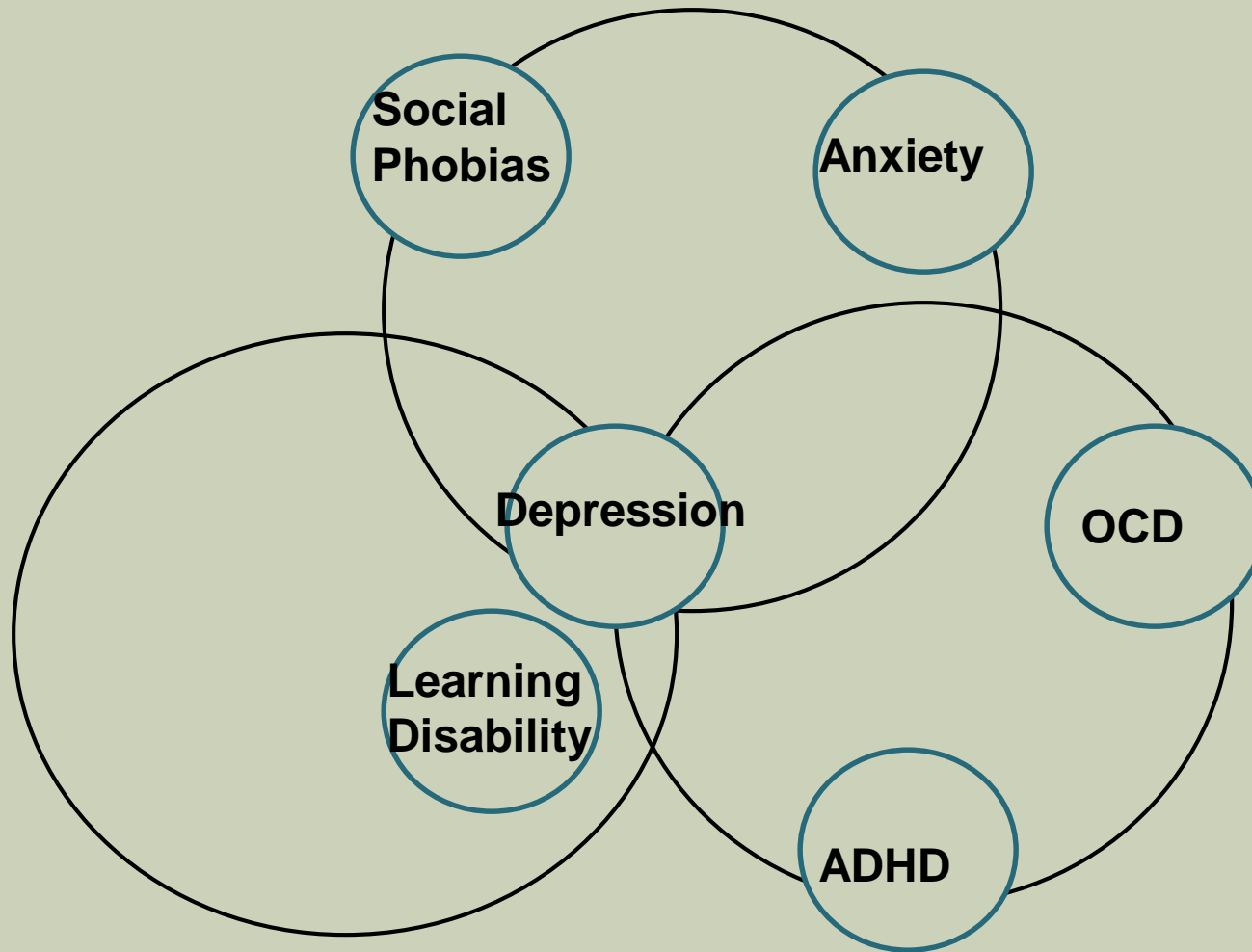


CO-MORBIDITY WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

- Anxiety disorders
- Mood disorders (depression)
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Tourette's syndrome
- Eating disorders

(Mohammad Ghaziuddin, 2005)





Co-Morbid Conditions.....

CHALLENGES: SENSORY ISSUES...



ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES IN ASD (FOR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN): COGNITION

CENTRAL COHERENCE

(not seeing the whole; they have attention to detail but fail to see the big picture)

THEORY OF MIND/PERSPECTIVE TAKING

GENERALIZATION

(unable to move past special interests)

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

(taking in information, organizing it; multi-step tasks; unable to set goals)

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT?

- Deciding whether or not to self-disclose
- It is their responsibility
- Who needs to know?
 - My roommate?
 - DSS personnel?
 - Professors?
 - Career Counseling Office?
 - Academic Advisor?

Knowing what supports are available

Knowing the conduct rules still apply to you!!

WHAT MAY I SEE IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM?

A student who...

- Doesn't understand nonverbal/social cues
- Avoids eye contact
- Has a flat affect
- Exhibits poor reciprocal conversational skills
- Has unusual prosody
- Has sensory sensitivity/sensory integration problems
- Exhibits an unusual, awkward gait
- Is a loner
- Has concrete thinking
- Is verbose on focused issues
- Has central coherence difficulties



WHY WE SEE SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS...

**Specific
Behaviors**

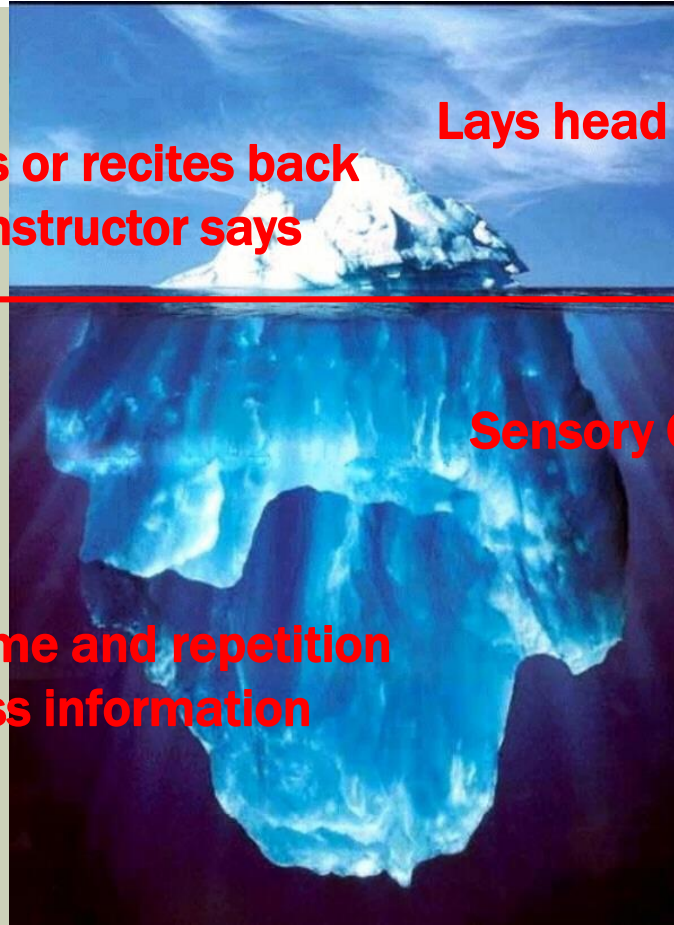
**Mimics or recites back
what instructor says**

Lays head on desk

**Underlying
Characteristics**

**Needs time and repetition
to process information**

Sensory Overload



WHAT YOU MAY ALSO SEE: SOMEONE WHO IS DEPENDENT ON PROMPTS/OTHERS



WHAT TO DO: REMEMBER THEIR STRENGTHS AND SKILLS

- **Reliability**
- **Punctuality**
- **Attention to detail**
- **Good memory**
- **Staying on task**
- **Unique perspectives**
- **Devoted interest and curiosity**
- **Intelligent humor**
- **Use of reason & logic**
- **Resilience & courage**

WHAT CAN I DO?

MANAGE THE ENVIRONMENT...

Classroom accommodations:

- 1. Priority seating
- 2. Use of audio recorders
- 3. Use of volunteer note taker
- 4. Access to power point presentations or instructor's notes (preferably in advance)
- 5. Lab chairs without backs (postural tone)

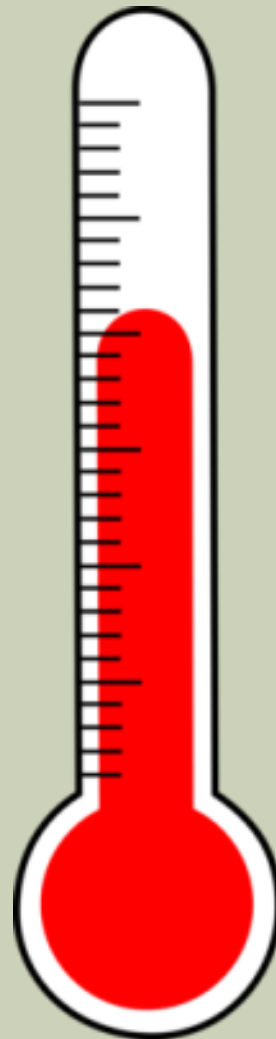
WHAT CAN I DO?

PROVIDE BEHAVIORAL GUIDANCE

Behavioral guidance (not code of conduct issues)

- Non-verbal cues from the teacher
- Subtle signals
- If becoming overwhelmed, allow for a 'graceful exit'
- Do allow for a break in case of sensory overwhelm or distracting behaviors.

BEHAVIORAL THERMOMETER



Rage

Rumbling

Calm

WHAT CAN I DO?

PROVIDE SPECIFIC SUPPORTS

- **Use visual and auditory modes together.**
- **Provide PP or notes when appropriate.**
- **Access to notetaker**
- **Plan for extra clarification about expectations and specificity on assignments via email or via scheduled appointment within office hours.**

WHAT CAN I DO?

PROVIDE SPECIFIC SUPPORTS

- **Consider alternate mode of demonstrating mastery of material (if it does not diverge from the required rigor of the material)**
- **Identify multiple forms of class participation (you may allow e-mailed comments after class or brief office hours check-ins, participation to discussion boards to count toward class participation)**

WHAT CAN I DO?

PROVIDE SPECIFIC SUPPORTS

- **Follow predictable classroom routines**
- **Have clear classroom/course expectations**
- **Clear deadlines**
- **Extra notice about upcoming deadlines**
- **Make explicit implied or non-literal communication**
- **Task Analysis & time lines for academic projects/papers**
(where to begin and what to do and in what order)

WHAT CAN I DO? DEALING WITH PERSEVERATIVE QUESTIONING....

“What’s the answer? What’s the answer???
What’s the answer?”

**Give the student question cards...he surrenders one
each time he asks a question...**

WHAT CAN I DO? PROVIDE SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT IN GROUP WORK

- Do be prepared to wait for slower responses as HFA/AS students' process information from a reason vs. intuitive process.
- Do assign HFA/AS student to a group vs. self-selecting.
- Do attend to pacing of social interaction in a classroom to help the student with 'catching' all that is happening.
- Do make explicit what is expected in a group or in classroom participation.
- Do assign student to group rather than let them pick.



WHAT CAN I DO? PROVIDE TESTING/ WRITING ACCOMMODATIONS

- Testing accommodations:
 - 1. Extended testing time
 - 2. Testing in a distraction-reduced environment
 - 3. Use of computer with word-processing
 - 4. Use of organizational software such as Inspiration for writing down ideas
 - 5. Use of noise-reducing devices such as white noise machines and head phones

WHAT CAN I DO:? PROVIDE SUPPORTS FOR HOUSING/REGISTRATION

- Single/private dormitory rooms (??)
- Pair with a known roommate
- Educate RAs about ASD
- Assistance of dorm staff in emergency situations
- Priority registration

WHAT CAN I DO? PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE

- This may be a lounge, someone's office
- Train individuals who are part of the "Safe Place"
- What could be your safe place(s)?
- Keep a mental list of empty classrooms, quiet offices (Gobbo & Shmulsky, 2012)



IS THERE A THREAT OF VIOLENCE??

- Research to date has noted that individuals with AS are not at any higher rate of intentional acts of violence than the general public
- Their reaction? Usually quick and a result of misunderstanding

- Bjorkly (2009) reviewed cases of violence and AS. The main finding of his review was that “despite anecdotal reports of increased violence risk in people with AS, little systematic research about its frequency and character has been published. That being the case, the review suggests that (a) there is no empirical evidence to support a claim that there is a link between Asperger's syndrome and violence, and, at the same time, (b) because of the paucity of studies on this issue, there is no evidence to preclude the claim that there is an increased risk of violence in persons with AS.”

REMEMBER...

- Many individuals with AS feel marginalized
- Many individuals with AS are victimized
- Many individuals with AS compare themselves unfavorably to their peers
- They feel a sense of frustration

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