

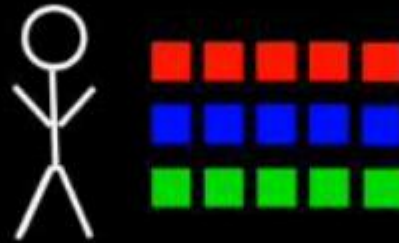
It Takes a Village: Supporting Students on the Spectrum

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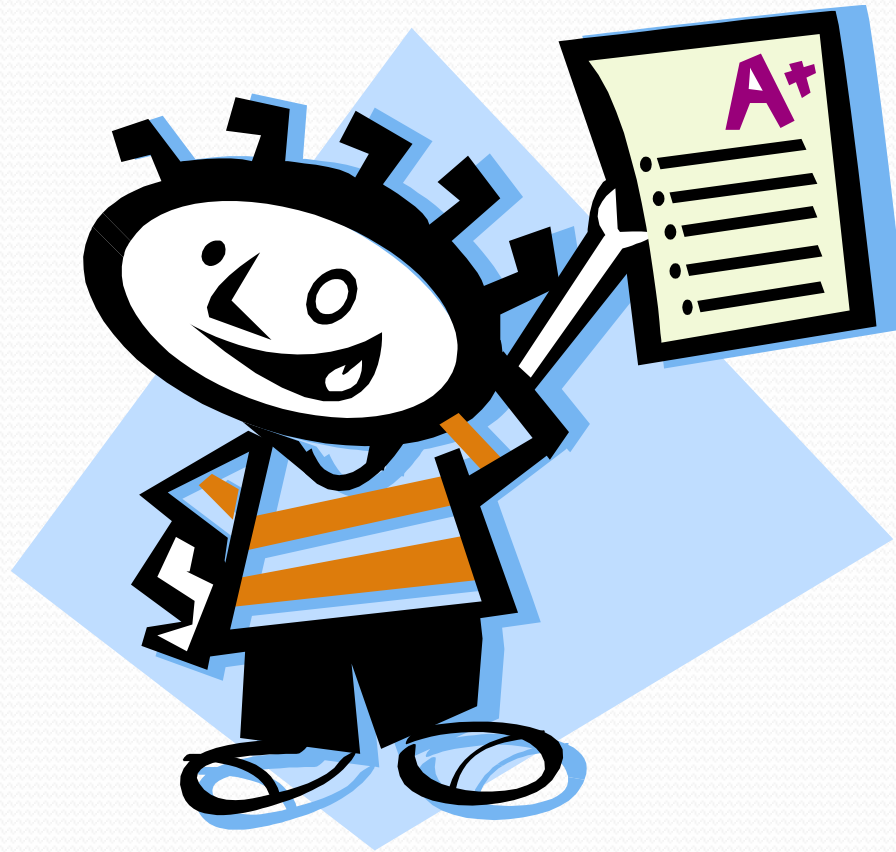
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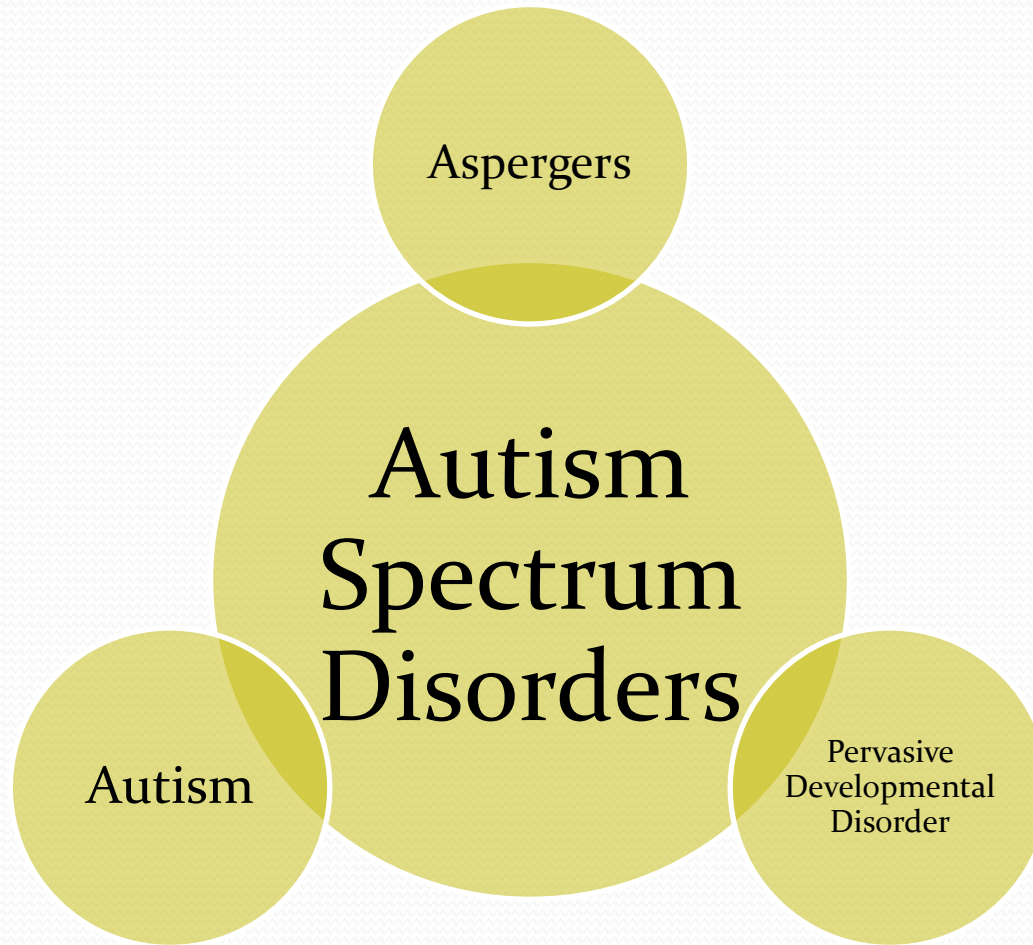
Being Green



this is normal

Meet Sam





DSM-V (May 2013)

- Autism, Asperger's disorder, pervasive developmental disorder (not otherwise specified) and childhood disintegrative disorder will be consolidated within the overarching category of ASD.
- The change signals how symptoms of these disorders represent a continuum from mild to severe, rather than being distinct disorders.

Diagnostic Features of Autism Spectrum Disorders

LANGUAGE

Mute/Nonverbal

Echolia

Unusual Speech Pattern



SOCIAL

Isolated

Passive

Interested but Atypical



SELF STIMULATORY BEHAVIOR

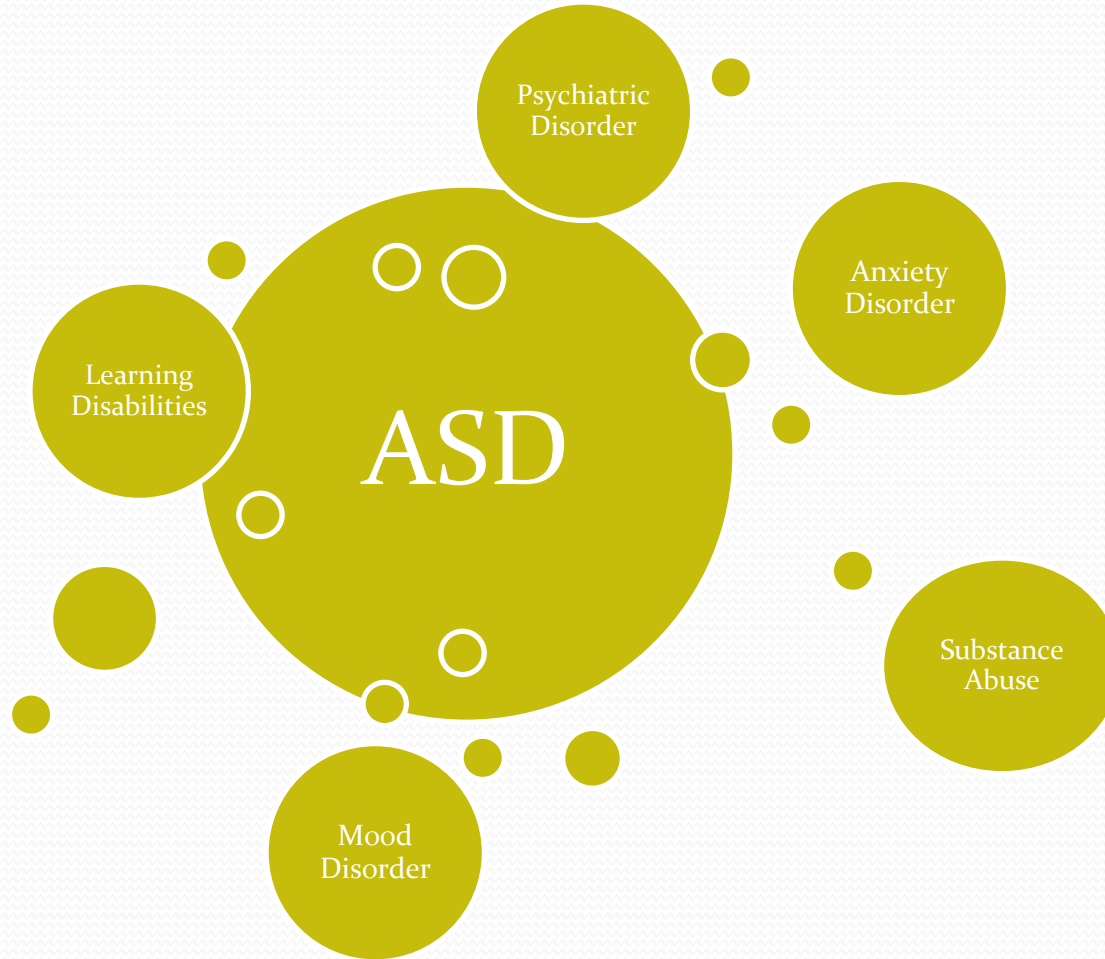
Body

Objects

Obsessions



Increasing Complexity of Cases: Co-Morbid Diagnoses



- Three or more diagnoses are becoming increasingly common among ODS students
- Anxiety (clinical or non-clinical) is almost universal among students with ASD

ASD – Neurodevelopment

- Diagnosis of an ASD is associated with suboptimal right brain development.
- Right brain functions include:
 - Nonverbal communication
 - Auditory interpretation
 - Ability to regulate one's own emotions, and interpret others' emotions
 - Empathy
 - Avoidance, fear, anger
 - Attention
 - Impulse control, inhibition
 - Sense of smell and taste
 - Spatial awareness, posture, balance, gait
 - Immune system regulation (prevents body from overreacting)
 - Digestion and heartbeat

ASD – Neurodevelopment

Presentation of right brain deficiency includes:

- Unusual social skills, making inappropriate comments (unintentionally)
- Delayed and poor gross motor skills
- Odd gait, poor muscle tone, spatial awareness, posture
- Picky eaters
- Strength with numbers, but struggles with higher level abstraction
- Adept at reading words, but not interpreting
- Poor attention, compulsive, anxious, impulsive
- Somatic and environmental complications (food allergies, poor digestion, asthma, rapid heartbeat)

ASD – Neurodevelopment

Other diagnoses associated with right brain deficiency:

- Autism Spectrum Disorders (Autism, Asperger's syndrome, Pervasive developmental disorder)
- ADHD/ADD
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Tourette's syndrome
- Oppositional defiant disorder
- Conduct disorder
- Developmental coordination disorder

Strengths

- Intelligent
- Superior knowledge in specific areas
- Friendly
- Supportive of others
- Follow rules/guidelines when set
- Excellent memory
- Pays attention to detail
- Punctual
- Reliable

General Challenges

- Difficulty with transitions and change in routines
- Understanding non-verbal forms of communication
- Facial expressions, body language
- Poor eye contact/conversation skills
- Understanding unstated rules or expectations
- Concrete style of thinking
- Unaware of how their behavior affects others
- Self advocacy
- Making friends, setting boundaries



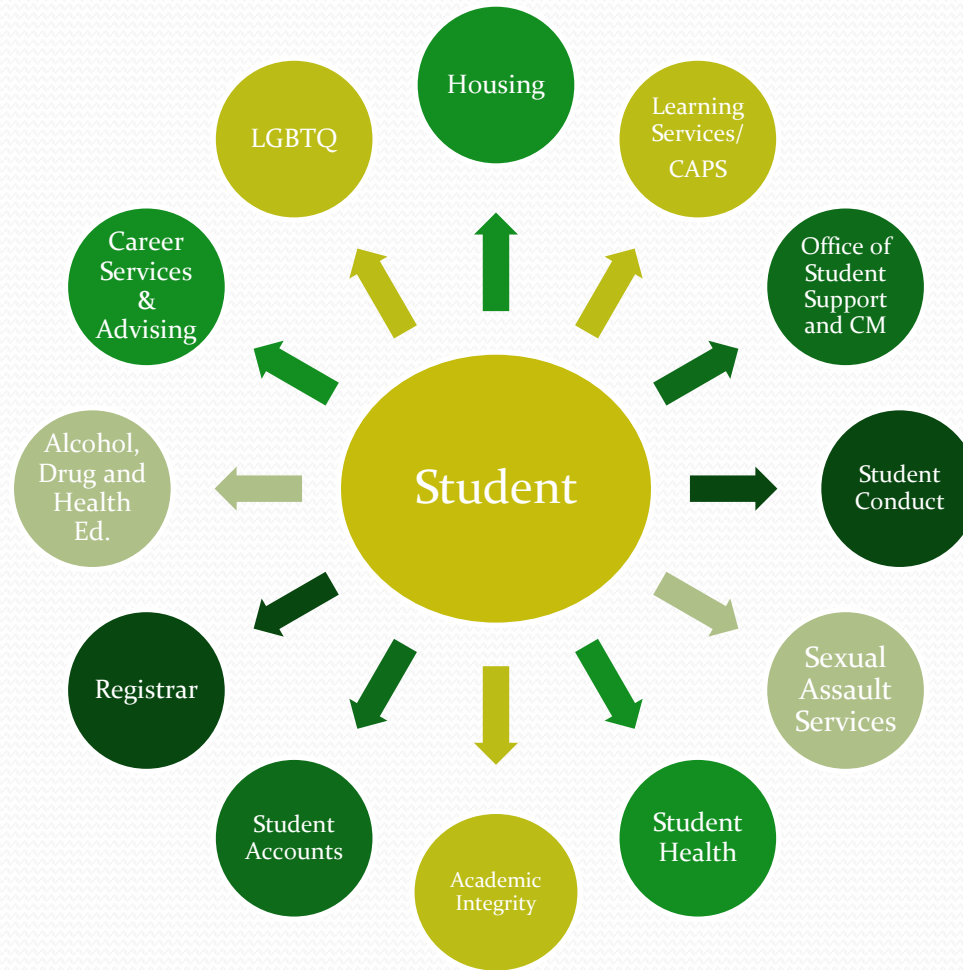
Academic Challenges

- Classroom behavior (interrupt, put head down, disruptive, leave unexpectedly)
- Self directed learning
- Group work, presentations
- Note taking and writing
- Motivation and Initiation (too focused on interests and get distracted)
- Goal setting, planning long term projects
- Time management (meeting deadlines)
- Organizing work

Support Needs in Higher Ed

- Social Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Time Management
- Communication Skills
- Self Advocacy
- Stress Management
- Campus Life
- Transition support
- Identifying Safe Zones

Who is Involved?



Tools for interactions

- Establish trust to decrease conflict
- Build rapport
- Be direct
- Be clear about times and reasons for office visits
- Be willing to re-explain information as concrete as possible
- Provide written instructions
- Limit use of metaphors, idioms, sarcasm, double meanings
- Set boundaries
- Help student adjust to college culture

Dealing with Behavioral Issues

- Sort through details to try to get the person's perspective
- Assume that the person did the best they could with the information they have
- Search for the missing information
- Be consistent and specific
- Model and role play appropriate behavior

Academic Accommodations

- Priority seating
- Audio record lectures
- Note taker
- Access to presentations or instructor notes
- Extended time on exams
- Reduced distraction environment for exams
- Use of computer with word-processing
- Assistance with group work

Student Successes

- Social Involvement
- Better understanding of social norms
- Major/Career changes that better meet their skills & talents
- Internships and work experience
- Improved communication with faculty/staff
- Retention/Graduation

Issue: Difficulty with group work

Challenges

- Struggle with developing group and rapport with team
- Rigid/inflexible
- Difficulty seeing others point of view
- Understanding unwritten rules of behavior
- Difficulty with non-verbal language
- Executive functioning deficits

Strategies

- Assigning group members
- Assigning group roles
- Clarify expectations- academic and behavioral
- Monitor group interactions and mediate as necessary
- Consider offering an alternative approach

Issue: Monopolize conversation or goes off on tangent

Challenges

- Intense narrow interests
- Inability to read social cues

Strategies

- Set clear boundaries
- Provide direct feedback

Issue: Outbursts or Argumentative

Challenges

- Hypersensitivity
- Inability to understand rules of social interaction
- Sensory Integration
- Concrete thinking
- Rigid/inflexible
- Overwhelmed
- Change in routine

Strategies

- Short break from situation
- Provide direct feedback
- Set clear boundaries
- Allow use of stress balls, ear plugs, sunglasses
- Inform ahead of time of changes

Autism Spectrum Disorder – A Guide to Understanding

Strengths

Intelligent
Superior knowledge in specific areas
Friendly
Supportive of others
Follow rules/guidelines when set
Excellent memory
Pays attention to detail
Punctual
Reliable

Characteristics in the classroom

Resistance to change
Difficulty expressing needs
Repetitive verbal behavior
Preference for being alone
May not like to interact
Little or no eye contact
Hypersensitivity to sounds
Literal thinking style
Outstanding memory in specific topics
Disruptive behavior

Challenges

Understanding non-verbal forms of communication
Facial expressions, body language
Poor eye contact/conversation skills
Understanding unstated rules or expectations
Concrete style of thinking
Unaware of how their behavior affects others

Tools for interactions

• *Personal interactions*

- Establish trust to decrease conflict
- Be clear about times and reasons for office visits
- Be willing to re-explain information as concrete as possible

• *Classroom Interactions*

- May need to set limits on participation – i.e. allow student to answer 3 questions per class period
- Limit use of metaphors as they are often misunderstood
- Safety Concerns - discuss evacuation procedures ahead of time
- Loud Noises - students may be distracted by others making noises or they may be disruptive to others unintentionally
- Group Work - student may need to be monitored by professor in order to avoid being off task or taking over group activity. Avoid having students self-select into groups. Whenever possible it may be helpful to offer an alternative approach where the student can select to work on an individual basis
- If Conflict Arises - explain to student what effect they had on others, why the conflict arose and how to behave appropriately in a group setting

• *Setting Boundaries*

- If the student is disruptive to others meet with student privately. Let the student know what behavior is disrupting others and help them understand why it's disruptive to others.
- Give reasons for your requests to help the student understand your point of view
- If student continues to get "stuck" on the topic avoid arguing, instead stick to your reasoning and let them know that the conversation is done

Resources

- Office of Disability Services
SUB I room 2500
<http://ods.gmu.edu>
ods@gmu.edu
703-993-2474
- Amy Duffey, Access Consultant
aduffey@gmu.edu
703-993-2474
- Faculty Guide on Teaching Students with Disabilities
http://ods.gmu.edu/documents/Faculty_Guide.pdf