

A Closer Look at ASD

CHANGING ROUTINE

Students on the spectrum may use atypical reactions to communicate when they are bothered by change (inappropriate anger or language). This is the coping mechanism they often use to process frustration. It is good to give these students adequate time to process change. If possible, make student aware of upcoming change in advance.

EMOTIONAL REACTION

Many students with autism have significant difficulty with understanding, expressing and regulating emotion. These students have limited tools to express feelings. They may have difficulty with problem solving and decision making.

UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR

Students with autism may need to engage in certain behaviors (vocalization, repetitive body movements). Harmless, non-disruptive or odd behaviors may need to be acknowledged and tolerated. However, these students are held to the same code of conduct as other OTC students. If behavior becomes abusive or disruptive, these behaviors will need to be addressed by the instructor. Disability Support Services will need to be notified as well.

SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL TRIGGERS

Some students with autism may exhibit erratic behavior. This may involve the loss of personal control. This behavior may be triggered by:

- Unexpected changes (pop quiz, change in seating)
- Sensory issues (unusual sensitivity to visuals such as carpet patterns, sounds, odors)
- Environment (room temperature, lighting)
- Stress build-up (this could even result from change in routine earlier in day)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

AUTISMSPEAKS.ORG

CDC.GOV/NCBDDD/AUTISM

Helping Students on the Autism Spectrum

OTC

OZARKS TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Disability Support Services

1001 E. Chestnut Expressway
Information Commons East 116
Springfield, MO 65802
417-447-8189 disabilityservices@otc.edu
academics.otc.edu/disabilitysupport

OZARKS TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Disability Support Services

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences. There is not one autism but many types, caused by different combinations of genetic and environmental influences.

The term "spectrum" reflects the wide variation in challenges and strengths possessed by each person with autism. Autism's most-obvious signs tend to appear between 2 and 3 years of age.

(Autismspeaks.org)

Characteristics of Students with Autism

LANGUAGE

- Abnormal response to verbal cues; may have difficulties initiating or sustaining conversation
- Limited eye contact; may look down or away when spoken to (but typically still listening intently)
- Interprets information literally; abstract concepts may be hard to comprehend
- May become preoccupied with certain ideas and need to be redirected back to subject matter

SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Difficulty mixing with peers and doing group work
- Inability to understand others' feelings or views; social cues are often overlooked
- Prefers being alone; may appear withdrawn

BEHAVIOR

- Often inflexible; resistant to change in routine
- Impulsive; sometimes unaware of danger
- Over-sensitive to stimuli
- May exhibit repetitive body movements

You can help in the classroom.

- Provide a clear syllabus. Announce changes in advance to ensure that students have time to become accustomed to new deadlines.
- Be sure that classroom rules and academic expectations are written in the syllabus, not just spoken.
- Students with ASD are also sometimes very blunt. They mean no disrespect. Do not internalize negative comments. Most often, this is the student's way of dealing with frustration.
- Maintain a consistent, well-structured environment. Allow the student to sit in the same seat during class.
- Reduce distraction as much as possible. These students are very sensitive to outside stimuli (light, noise, unexpected stimuli). Consider allowing earplugs to decrease distractions.
- Use visual aids like Power Point, charts and graphs when possible. Consider bringing a copy for students or allowing students to bring in copies that you provide access to in advance.
- Do not expect direct eye contact. Lack of eye contact does not equal lack of listening.
- Break assignments into shorter, more manageable units when possible.
- Utilize an outline to help the student understand the purpose of the discussion and the outcome.
- If a student's frustration level appears to be escalating and is disrupting the class:
 - Avoid direct confrontation. If this is not possible, try to speak to the student privately.
 - Inform the student that you understand he/she is frustrated at this time.
 - Ask if the student would like to leave class for a moment or speak to a disability counselor.
- If the student becomes verbally unruly or exhibits inappropriate behavior that cannot be tolerated in a classroom setting:
 - Calmly ask the student if you can speak to him/her privately in the hall. Remain calm and keep your vocal tone quiet.
 - Inform the student that it is college policy that he/she cannot be permitted to remain in the classroom if the inappropriate behavior persists as it will disturb others.
 - Call DSS for assistance.

Contact Disability Support Services (DSS):

- If student shows a pattern of non-attendance.
- If it is determined that the student cannot return to or remain in the class, assure the student that you will follow up with him/her at a later date. Contact DSS as soon as possible at (417) 447-8189.
 - DSS will attempt to schedule a follow-up appointment with any referred students and will give suggestions to instructors for techniques to deter further incidents.
 - Regular contact with a disability counselor will be suggested to the student as a future intervention strategy.

Brochure adapted from "Helping Students with Autism Succeed at Monroe College" from Monroe Community College in Monroe, MI