Students on the Autism Spectrum Moving Online

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COLLEGE

CAREER

"Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will prove best at any given moment?"

– HARVEY BLUME, THE ATLANTIC, 1998

National Statistics

1 in 54 - 8 year olds (CDC 2020)

3 million Americans

Fastest-growing developmental disability

10 - 17 % annual growth

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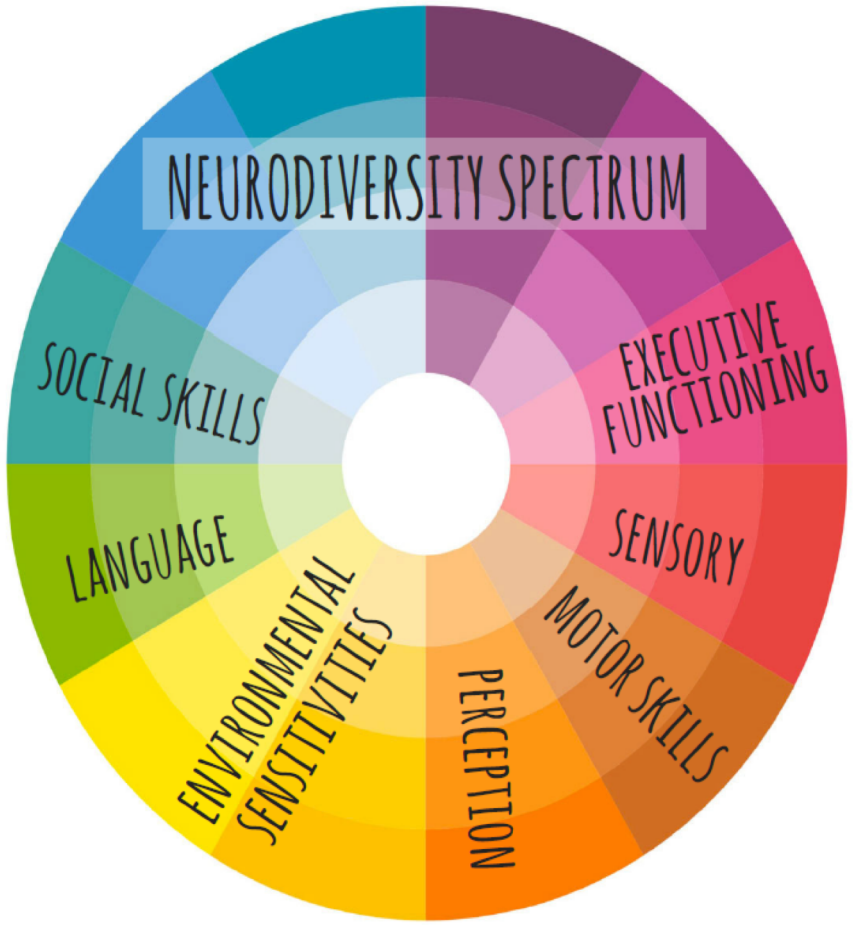

TRigler, Rutherford-Moody, AHEAD, 2017

Sensory Overload

“The sun is too loud….it’s as if everything I can see has a corresponding auditory of high notes and crashes. Makes it difficult to concentrate—even to walk upright”.

“it feels like everyone is talking at once and you don't know who to listen to”

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Strengths	Obstacles
• Adherence to rules • Loyal, trustworthy • Reliable • Avoids classroom politics • Enjoys routine work • Direct communication style • Attention to detail	• Acclimating to new routines • Campus culture • Social expectations • Communication • Mastering college processes

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Anxiety

- Anxiety interferes with Self Regulation
- Anxiety is a core feature of ASD
- Students need active coping strategies as part of the plan

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Change

Barrier

- Students on the spectrum may react poorly to change in routine.
- students with autism may be **anxious** to know the **plan** for the coming weeks of class.

- **Accommodations**
- **reassurance** (when possible) **to quell anxiety**, is necessary for all students.

Course Work and Motivation

- **Barriers**.
- Are students motivated to complete work **independently, initiate** assignments and study.

- **Accommodations**
- Assisting with **structure** and **schedules**

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Structure

- **Students often thrive with structure**
- **Barrier**
- Loss of Routine

- **Accommodations**
- Making a schedule to structure the day.

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Isolation

- **Barrier**
- **forcing isolation** with “social distancing.”
- A**ccommodation**
- Encourage students to **keep up social contacts** online with skype or facetime. Study groups can meet online and multiplayer games can be suggested for social continuity. However….

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Screen and Game Addiction

- vulnerable to screen and game addiction with moving classes online
- **Barrier**
- even more screen time
- **Accommodation –**
- use a timer to take screen breaks, getting outside, eating, sleeping all are even more important now than ever (and for us too!)

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Residence Halls

- Students may like the independence college has afforded them and not want to return to a restrictive home life where a variety of food and entertainment options are negligible and parents may be intrusive.

- Remind students of the temporary nature of the current crisis, they will be returning to their residence halls (at least in the fall.)

- Students may report a decrease in symptoms since moving to college. Ask them how they can continue a healthy lifestyle at home.

Adjusting your study habits during COVID

- **We'll get through this together.**

- From the Center for Academic Innovation
  University of Michigan

https://ai.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/student-disruption.pdf

Use this resource as a starting point.

Things may feel out-of-control right now.

Unknowns and disruptions.

Try to be patient with yourself, your classmates, and your instructors during this time.

Take care of your wellbeing first.

Making a plan and adjusting your studying may help you feel even a little sense of control.

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Your study habits may need to change.

- While more of your coursework and teamwork have to be online and remote, here are some strategies to keep in mind:

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1. Staying organized

- With so many things changing in your courses, you might be reliving that first-week-of-class confusion at finals-week pace.

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2. Avoiding multitasking

- If you're doing more work on your own and your time is less structured, you might be more tempted to multitask.
- But research shows us that only about 2% of the population can multitask. Even if you feel like you're multitasking, you're probably not… really, you're switching between tasks very quickly (some call this "micro-tasking").

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3. Making the most of video lectures

- Stick to your instructor's schedule as much as you can. Staying on a schedule will help you have a feeling of normalcy and prevent you from falling way behind.

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4. Setting a schedule

- As the situation unfolds, you may have fewer social commitments, group meetings, or work hours.
- Setting a schedule for yourself can help provide structure and keep you motivated.
- Include time for exercise and self-care.

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5. Trading your strategies for new ones

- Your routines may have to adjust during this time. Look for ways to adapt your usual habits or form new ones.

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6. Working with a group or team

- Remote collaboration will look a little different, but it is definitely possible.

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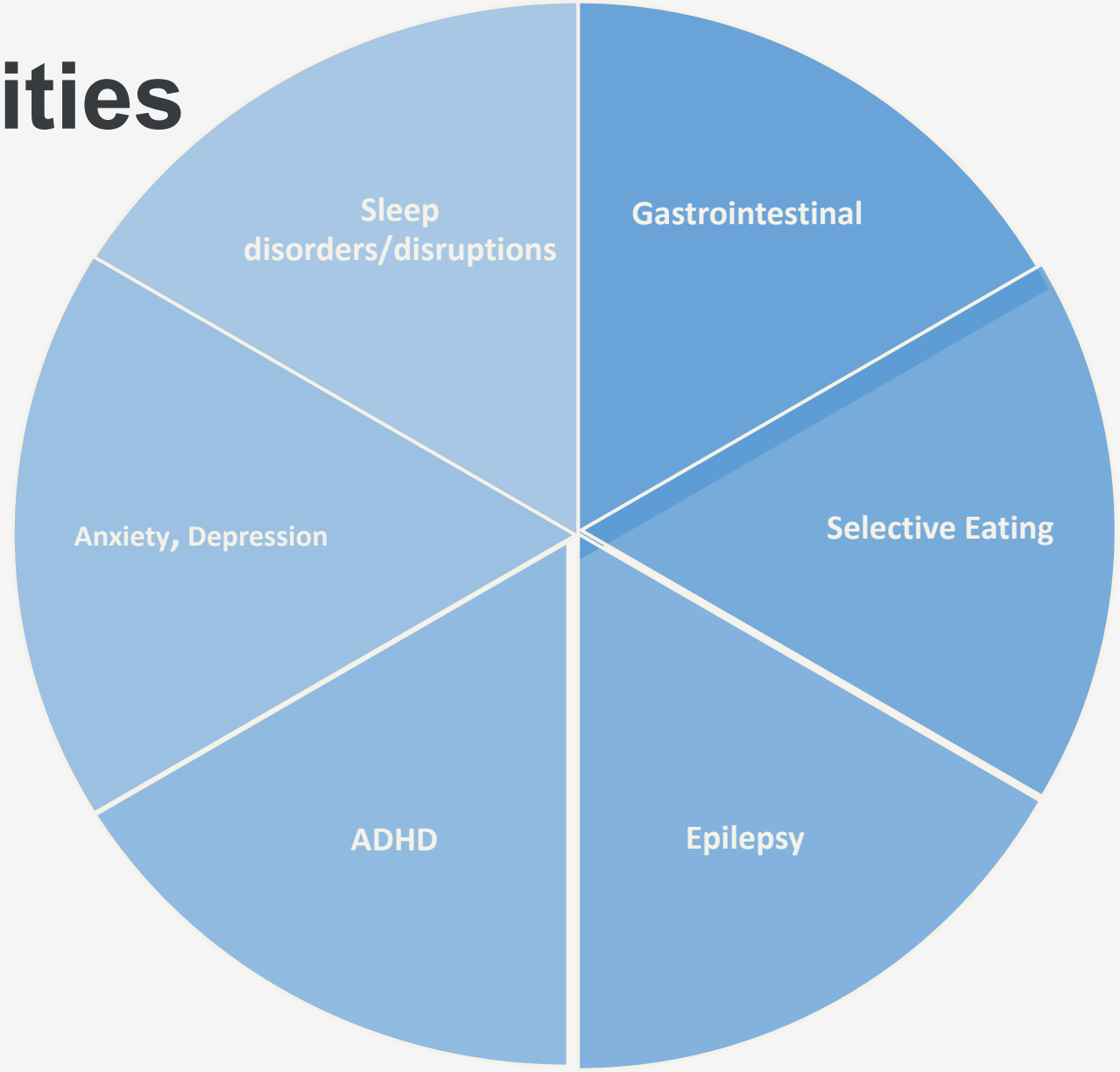
Comorbidities



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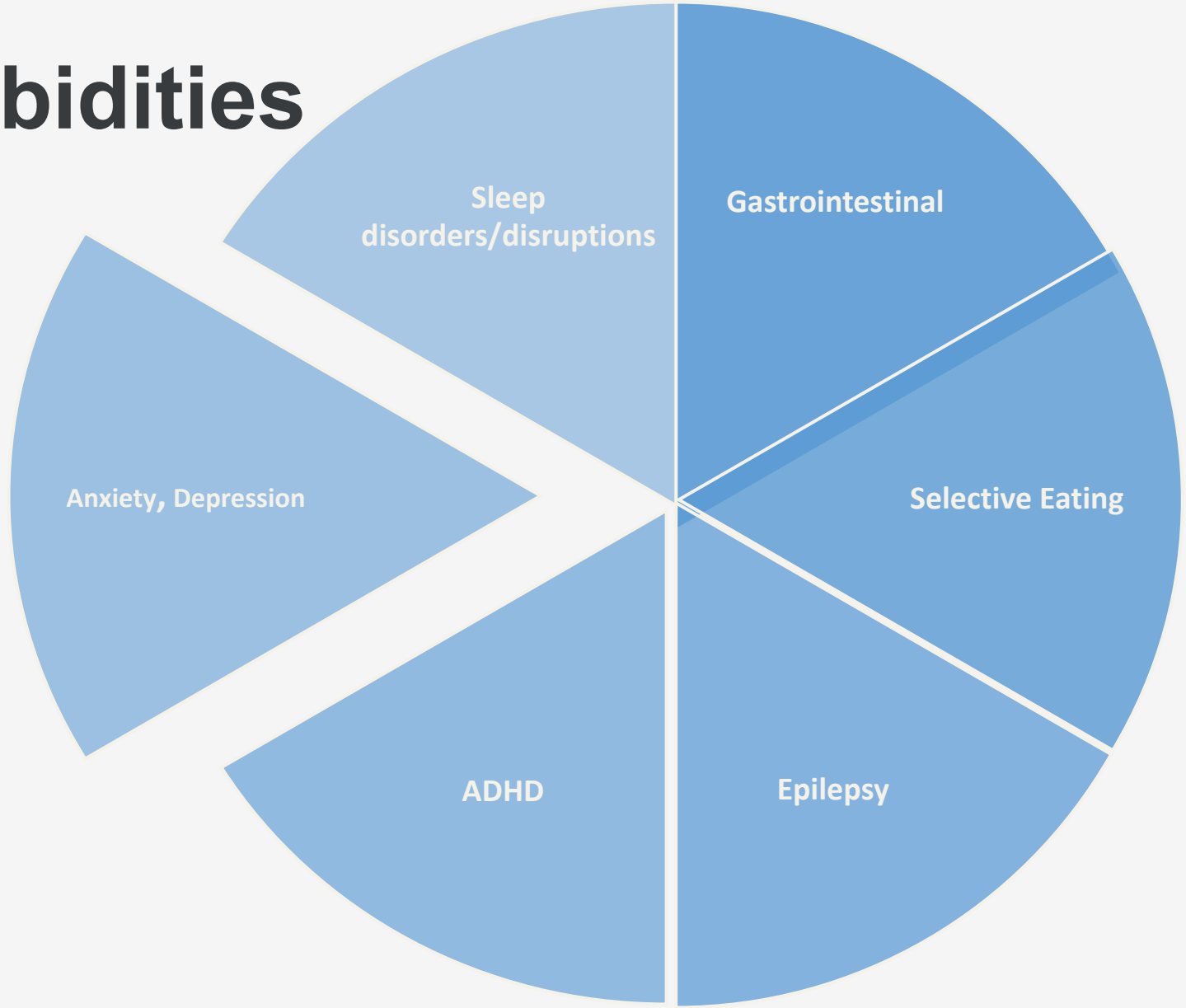
Comorbidities



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The opposite of anxiety isn’t calm it’s trust

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Autism is a Disability of Trust

Prizant, B. M., & Fields-Meyer, T. (2015). *Uniquely human: A different way of seeing autism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

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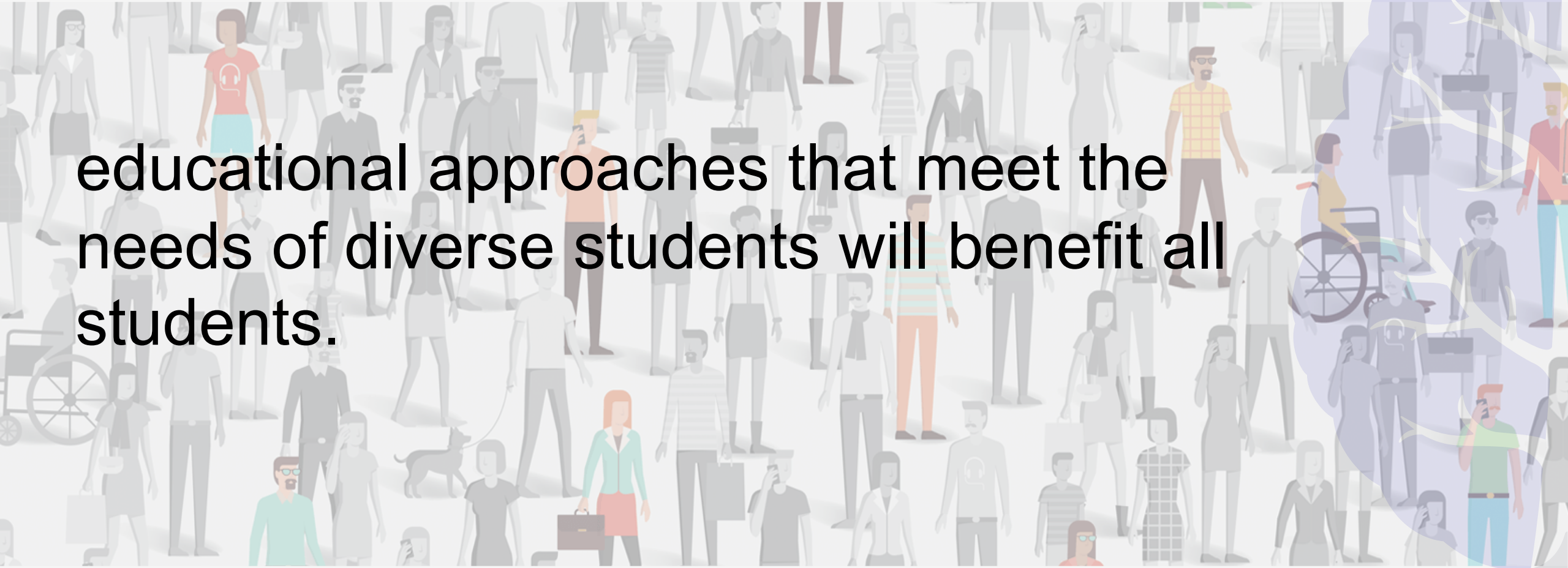
When we return to our typical life:

- Remember the trust issues
- Be sensitive to PTSD

Faculty

- Many are attempting to take in person classes and put them online.
- They are as or more stressed than the students about this change.
- We need to support them and the students as we move to this new reality.

Universal Design



educational approaches that meet the needs of diverse students will benefit all students.

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General UD Tips

- Very clear syllabus with schedule of assignments
- Detail changes to syllabus in writing
- Provide progress reports
- Individual meetings with student
- Allow interim deadlines (possible accommodation)
- Referral to support services

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Tips for Classroom Discussions

- Everyone shares once before anyone shares again
- One at a time (talking stick)
- Time limits
- Indicate off-topic (refocus on big picture)
- Participation expectations are detailed ahead of time

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Tips for Classroom Discussions

- Indicate length of discussion
- Expectation of wait time
- Points docked for poor citizenship
- Visual cues

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Parents

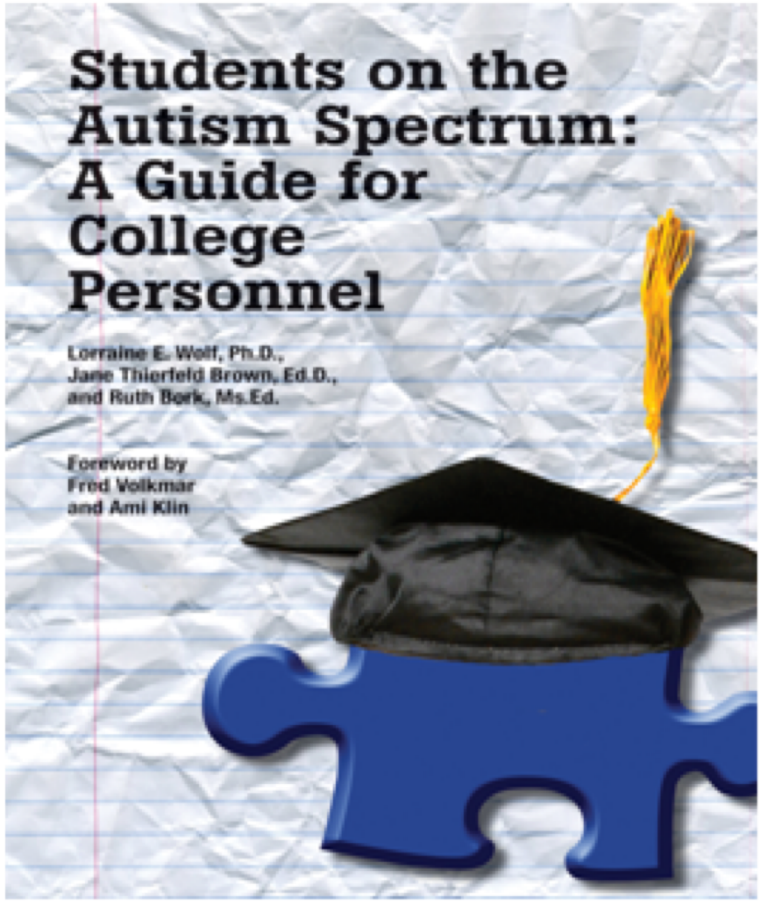
- This is a new role for them.
- Change in family dynamic.
- Family is worried about… everything!

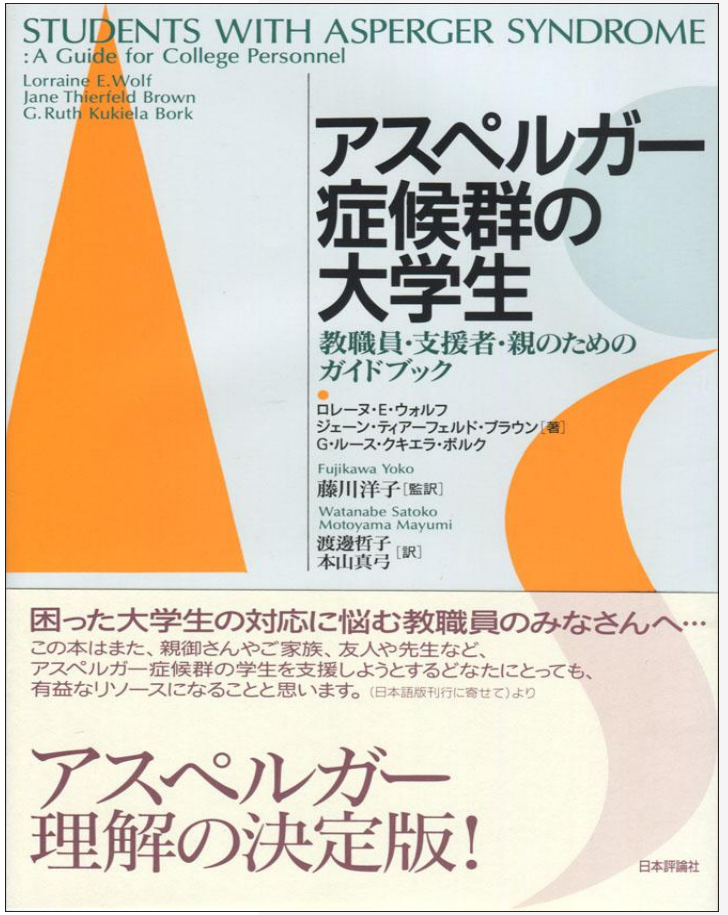
Thank you for all you do!

- For all the students
- For all the families –

especially the ones who don't, or can't say **thank you**.

Please Stay Well





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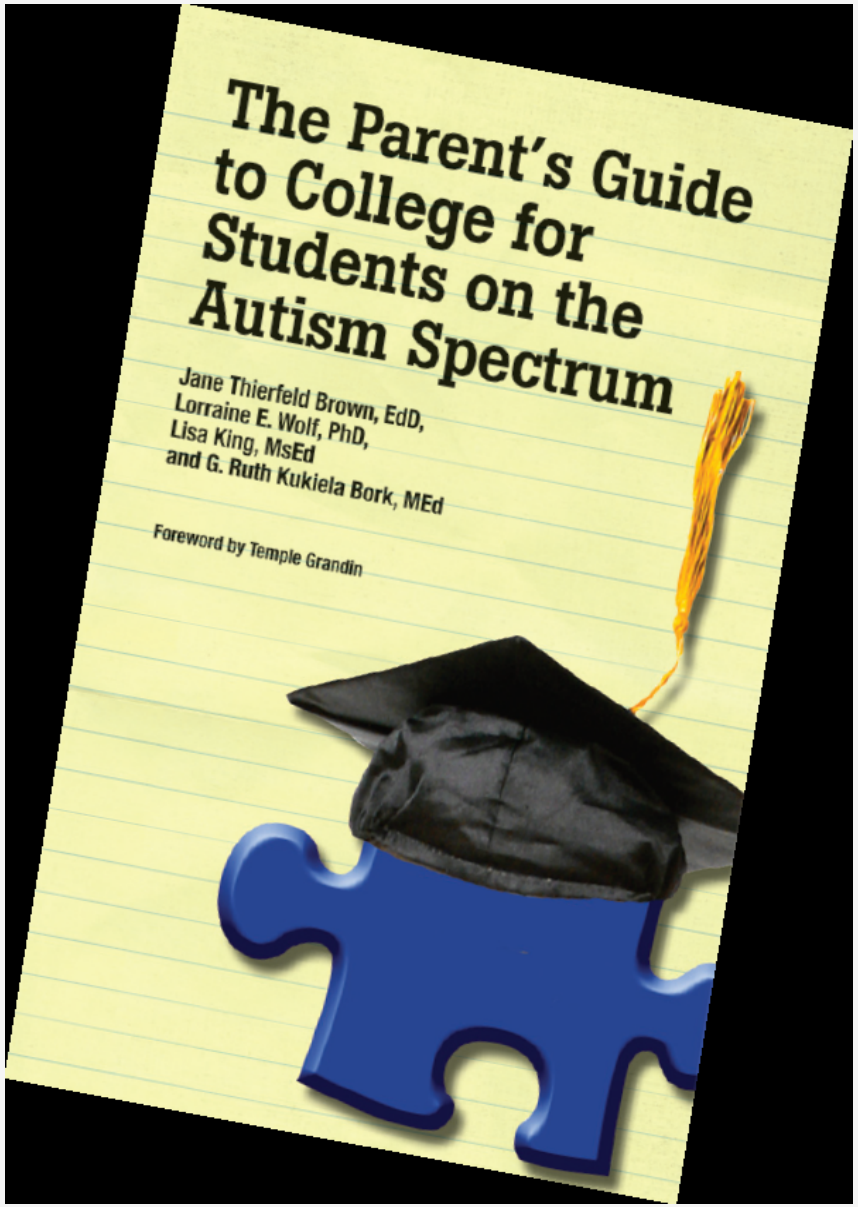

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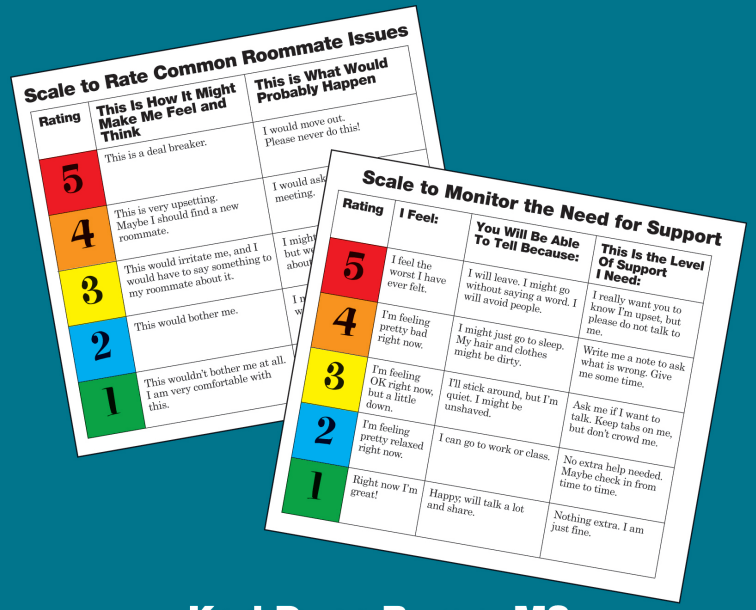
Social Behavior and Self-Management

5-Point Scales for Adolescents and Adults

This award-winning tool now expanded for adults!



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Questions and Comments

Thank you for coming.

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