AUTISM IN THE CLASSROOM
My story...
Why am I so interested in autism?
Do you know the clues?

- Have you ever had a student who.....
  - Tends to avoid communicating during class
  - Turns in assignments late or not at all
  - Brings up the same topic over and over again
  - Has difficulties if they can’t sit in the same seat every class
  - Comes across rude or indifferent
  - Appears to not be paying attention in class because they are doodling, or not looking at you
  - Interrupts others in class, or makes excessive comments
What did those examples have in common?

- These can be clues that your student has autism
- Often those behaviors get misinterpreted and may create a bias
  - *They doodled through my whole lecture, they weren’t paying attention in class*
  - *They didn’t turn in their assignment, I guess they don’t care*
  - *Students with ASD may react in ways that are unfamiliar to you*
Why Learn About Autism?

- Your impact on the student is critical because you are the most direct and consistent contact students have.
- Autism is an invisible disability SUPERABILITY - that means it isn’t easily recognized.
- Many people with autism can live functional lives, but may require some support.
- Helping students succeed can happen in simple ways, you are probably already doing.
- The techniques that help with autism, help all students.

What sorts of things do you do that you think may help with students with ASD... and therefore all students?

Story #2: Anthony and the sub
A Different Perspective

Autism is diagnosed through the Diagnostic Criteria and is considered a disability... but I still call it a superability!

In many ways, autism provides a unique or different perspective. What sorts of things do you see ASD folks hyper-focus on?
Someone with autism may have different needs when it comes to:

- *Communication*
- *Social Interactions*
- *Sensory Experiences*
- *Routine and Repetition*
- *Intense Focus and Interests*
Communication

- May not be able to express needs or ask questions to increase understanding
- Verbal instructions are sometimes difficult to understand
- Not understanding sarcasm
- Face to face communication can be highly fatiguing and sometimes overwhelming
- Some students may be speaking up in class too often, or interrupting others.

Story #3: Kale and paper.
The total cost of a rectangular box is $325. The length is $25\times10=250$. The width is $10x$. The height is $2$. The cost per square inch is $3.95$. Find the height.

\[3.95 	imes (250 	imes 10x)/2 = 325 \Rightarrow 3950x = 650 \Rightarrow x = 1/6 \]

The height of the box is $3$. The volume is $325$. The length plus the width plus the height is $650$. Find the height.

\[25 \times 10 \times x = 325 \Rightarrow 250x = 325 \Rightarrow x = 325/250 = 13/10 \]
Social Interactions

- A person’s ability to relate to others and how someone understands and responds to the communication. It includes:
  - Interpretation of other’s feelings and thoughts
  - Social reciprocity (give and take or the back and forth of interactions)
    - May have a hard time interacting with other students or faculty (can be incredibly overwhelming or intimidating)
    - May experience social anxiety
    - Have difficulty reading social cues- unable to recognize when to join or maintain a conversation
    - Not reading social cues (recognizing when others are bored with a certain topic, or annoyed because of being interrupted.)

Story #4: Austin and marriage
Sensory Experiences

- May have a more intense experience with the environment due to sensitivities,
- May hear fluorescent lights buzzing,
- Find some lighting makes it hard to concentrate
- Loud noises and sounds are often described as painful
- May become overwhelmed in unexpected situations or environments

Story #5: Cory and the lights
Routines and Repetition

- Routines and repetition can provide a structure which can really help
- “when something doesn’t go the way I expect, I shut down sometimes”
- Unsure what to do when a routine changes- this can be simple, yet significant
Intense Focus and Interests

- Can become an expert on special interests and know everything about that subject
- Intense focus can make it difficult to think of other things
  - Roll up a paper activity and look at something with that tube, now take it down, can you see the difference?
Tips and Techniques
See handout

- If possible, include written instructions along with verbal. Many students report they do better when they can hear and see the instructions
- Delineate when sarcasm or a figure of speech is being used
- There are many different ways to communicate, any of these could be incorporated into student interactions
- It could be appropriate to discuss what participation in class should look like, but this should be done positively outside of class
- Determine a gesture or word code between student and faculty to use as a gentle reminder
- Establish classroom rules as needed
  - “I will only listen to comments today if you raise your hand first, this way we aren’t interrupting each other.”
  - After class you can state: “Sam you have had a lot of comments today. You can make 3 comments in class, and then write down any other questions you have so that I can answer them after class for you. This will help me get through the information for class and it might help answer some of your questions as well.”
What’s Available at UVU?

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder can be successful with the right supports.
Passages

A program designed to help young adults with ASD during the transition into adulthood

Passages is a series of classes and activities to address:
  Career and Job Planning
  Higher Education Pursuits
  Understanding Relationships
  Creating Successful Goals
  Living with Roommates
  .....and more

Classes run for 8 weeks every semester
Cost is $300
Educational Coaching Autism Support

- Coaches meet weekly with student
- Coaches have access to student’s Canvas account
- Coaches are a recognized Accommodation through Accessibilities (one-on-one aide)
- We help with:
  - Organization
  - Study Skills
  - Self- Advocacy
  - Time Management
  - And more

Cost is $600 per semester- financial support may be available
Autism Conference

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Erik Carter, PhD

Toward a Future Flourishing:
Supporting Strong Transitions for Young People with ASD
Autism Awareness on Campus

- Athletic Events
- Sensory Friendly Plays
- Autism Art Show
- Dental Hygiene Clinic for Autism
- Summer Camps
- Uplifting Celebration for Autism
Who: We are parents, siblings, and/or children of someone diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. We have been schooled in autism by living with it everyday for a collective 282 years.

What: We want to change the way autism is perceived. We invite others to recognize the great things available through autism.

Why: Our children have taught us that success can be redefined. We have developed great tenacity by not giving up.

Where: We seek to create a safe and respectful environment in our community. A place for our children, families and neighbors, built on a foundation of awareness, acceptance and understanding.

How: We will educate and promote awareness
Autism Specific Training modules
Available through HR’s Bridge for all Staff and faculty
Thank you!

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