

Faculty Guide: Understanding Students with Asperger's Syndrome

Generalized Characteristics:

- Individuals with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) often have very strong interests with large amounts of knowledge in certain subject areas or topics. They will often think and talk about these things to the exclusion of other topics. Through this interest they can become experts on certain topics or subjects (geology, motors, music, rocks, science, etc)
- Have average to above average intelligence
- Generally want to be included in social settings and have an interest in socializing, but often do not know how to go about doing it
- Have difficulty understanding typical social protocol, such as; understanding non-verbal and body language cues, allowing for reciprocity in conversation versus carrying on a one-way conversation, using proper personal space when talking with someone, and having different inflections and intonations in their speech than what we are typically used too hearing
 - Plays on words, sarcasm, subtle hints, etc., can be very difficult for them to understand
 - Typically think in a very direct and literal way
- May often have sensory, coordination, and grapho-motor difficulties, which could include:
 - Ultra-sensitivity to certain stimuli to the point of not being able to think about anything else.
 - Distracted by things such as fluorescent lighting, electrical hums, smells, specific tastes
 - Lack of coordination skills and have a noticeably awkward gait
 - Difficulty writing, drawing, etc.

Suggestions for classes:

- Offer clear guidelines and expectations of class – both academically and behaviorally. Try to be as detailed as possible.
- Avoid sarcasm when speaking directly to student
- Work with the student to find out best place to sit in class to minimize sensory distractions (noises, lights, smells, etc.)
- Understand that the academic standards and expectations for the class should not be lowered, but be open to academic accommodations or alternative ways to communicate to student – for example, student may prefer to communicate via email, student may prefer to use computer to write-up homework as handwriting can be difficult
- Typical accommodations provided: notetaker, quiet test room, extended time on exams, books in alternative format, assistance in communicating with instructor.

Other Resources:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/aspergers-syndrome/DS00551>

http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/asperger/detail_asperger.htm

http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=life_aspergers