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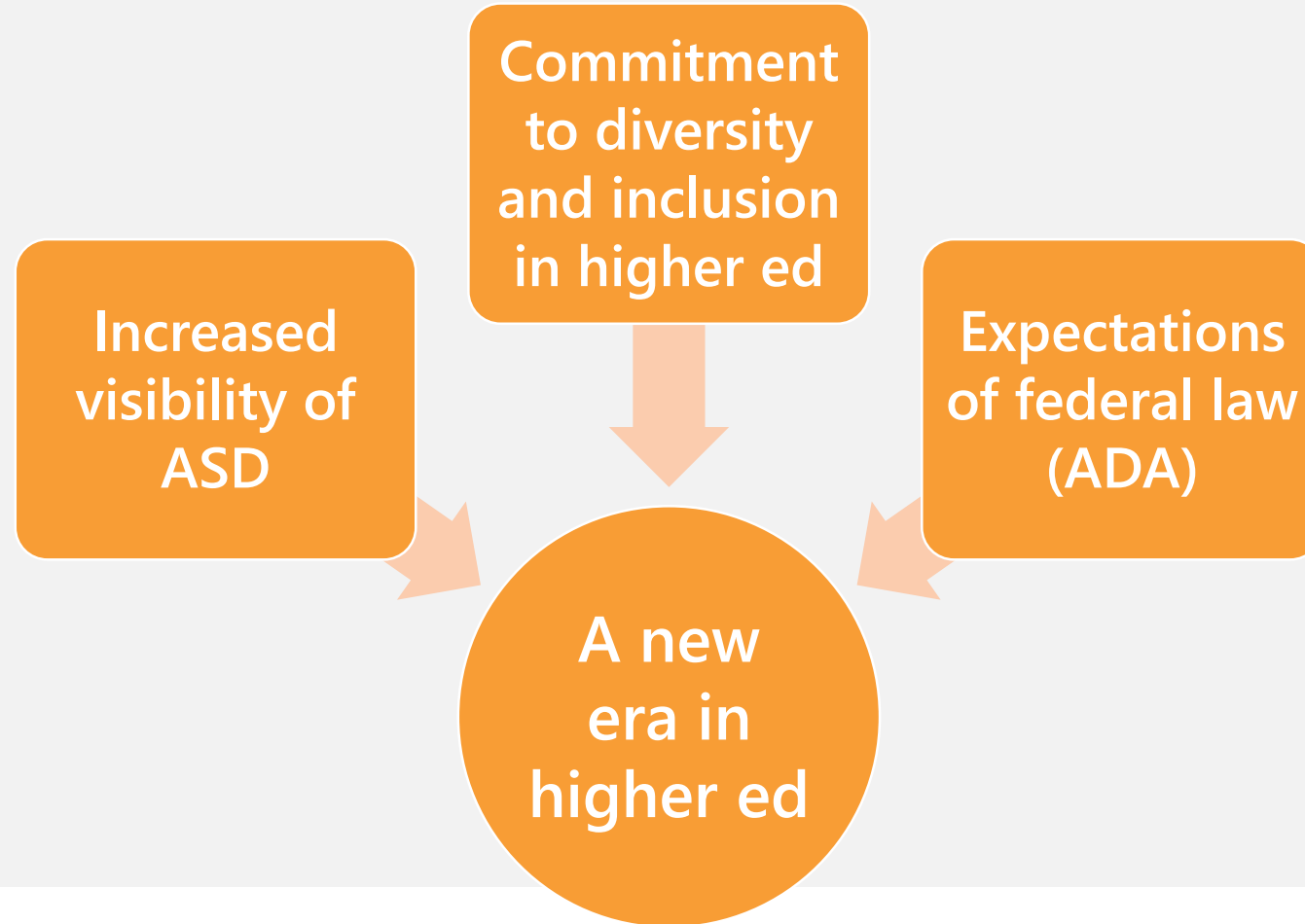
March 6, 2019

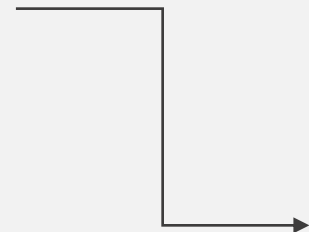
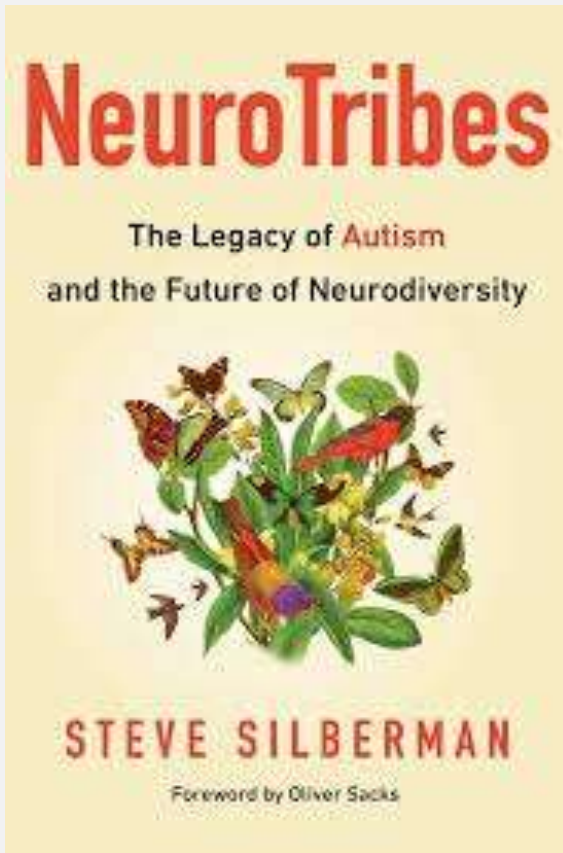


***Serving Students with Autism:***

***Inclusion Begins with Understanding***

# *Where we are now:*





“The Future of Neurodiversity”



# *Learning Outcomes*

Understanding the college and national landscapes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asperger Syndrome (ASD/AS)

Increased familiarity with ASD, related diagnoses and common characteristics

Use of this knowledge to provide programs and services that will be more inclusive of ASD-diagnosed students

Increased confidence to interact with ASD-diagnosed students one-on-one



# *Today's plan*

Understanding the college and national landscapes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asperger Syndrome (ASD/AS)

Increase familiarity with ASD, related diagnoses and common characteristics

Discuss strategies known to make a difference for students with ASD



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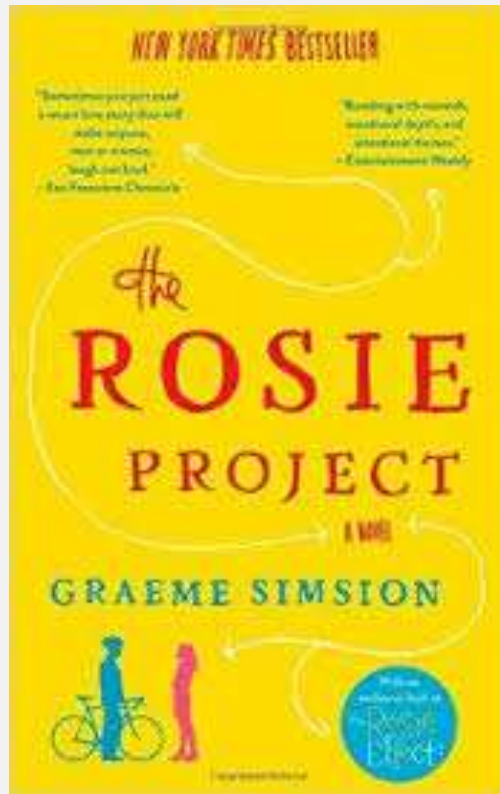
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# *Sesame Street's Newest Character, Julia*



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**AUTISM \$PEAKS**  
has ZERO autistic leaders

Autistic Self Advocacy Network: 100% autistic leadership

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered:  
100% leadership with intellectual or developmental disabilities

National Down Syndrome Society: 7 leaders with Down Syndrome

Autism Society of America: 5 autistic leaders

**Autism \$peaks: ZERO autistic leaders**



# *Is it a disability?*

- There are many people who meet one or more of the criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- They live, learn and work without formal accommodations.
- Autism characteristics are a problem when they impede a person from achieving their goals, or disrupt others in a way that impedes their pursuit of their goals.



# *Students with Autism Coming to College*

- Estimates range from 16,000 to 400,000 (depending on “diagnosis”)
- Around one-third of these students graduate
- College support ranges from *none* to comprehensive programs



# *Are there more ASD/AS students on campus?*

- Absolutely...but not more people with Autism.
- More people diagnosed with ASD:
  - Clearer criteria, improved testing, more experienced diagnosticians
- Services available to children with this diagnosis are significantly better



# *Steady improvement*

- Funded research on infants and children with ASD, neuroscience breakthroughs
- Pre-kindergarten and K-12 services responding to the IDEA
- IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans) in K-12 settings



# *ASD/AS Students Coming to College*

- The “service cliff”
  - IDEA v. ADA, the end of the IEP
- What parents hear vs. what we say
  - “Small, personalized, we know our students,” etc.



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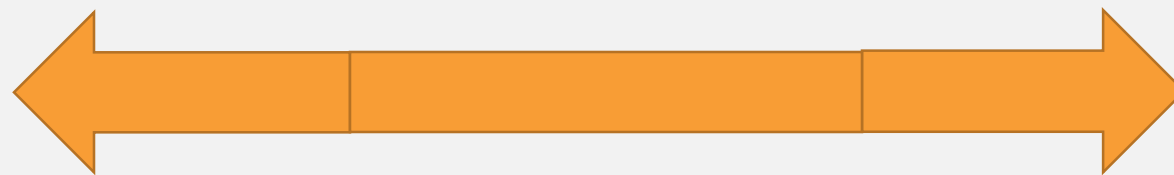
# *What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?*

“Autism” generally refers to a developmental disorder that is most commonly characterized by certain traits that affect:

- Social interactions
- Language
- Behavior

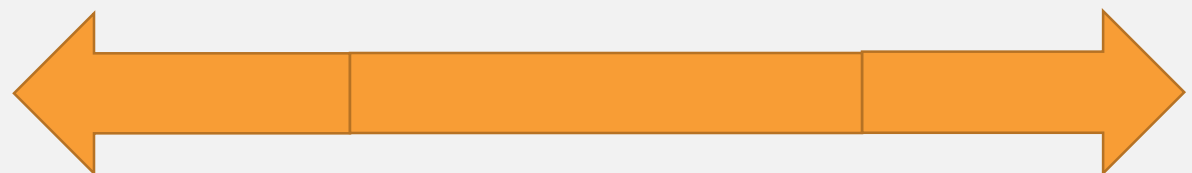
It is a set of *adaptive* responses to the way the brain sees the world.





# The Autism Spectrum





# The Autism Spectrum

High-Functioning Autism





# The Autism Spectrum

High-Functioning Autism

"Asperger Syndrome"

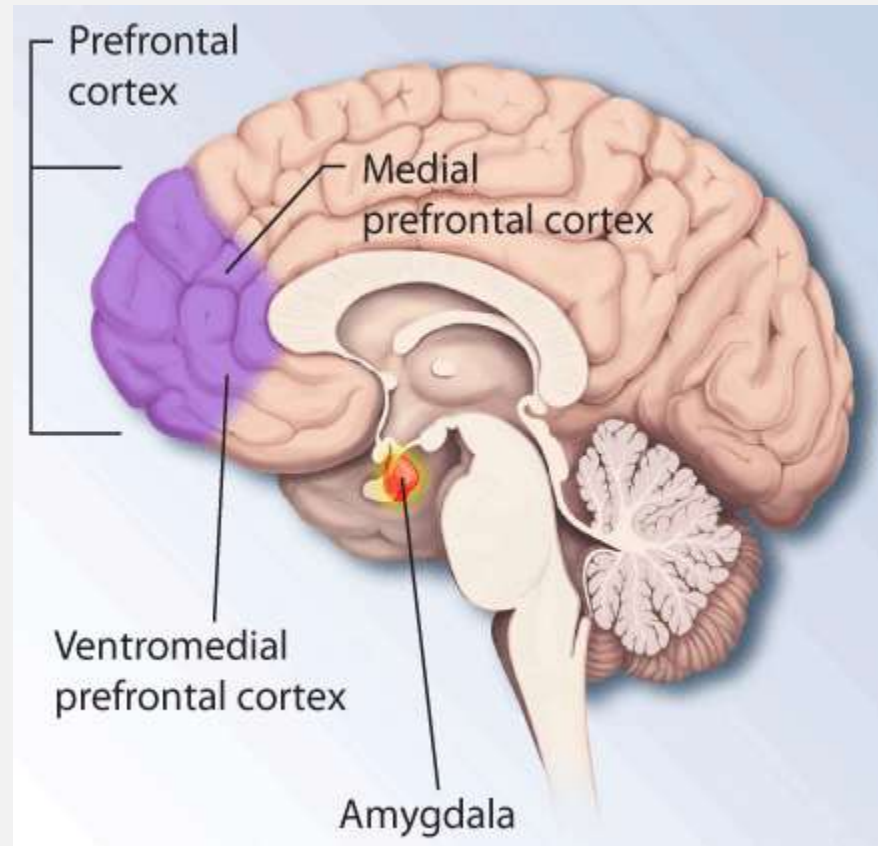


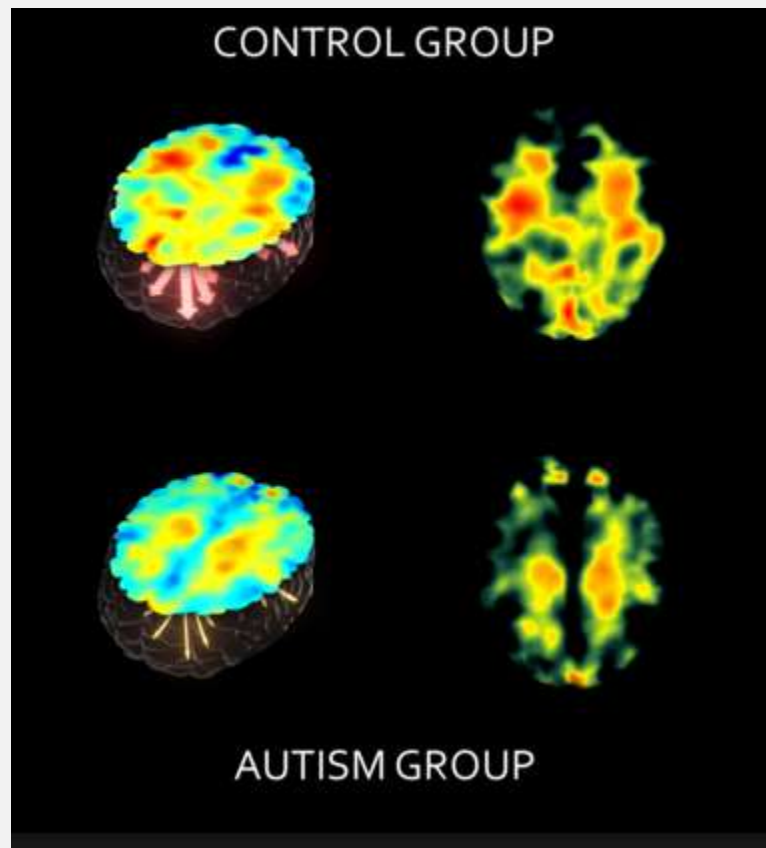
# *What Causes Autism?*

- It is brain-based and hard-wired (physiological differences are visible in the brain)



# *Basic brain anatomy*





# *What Causes Autism?*

- It is brain-based and hard-wired (physiological differences are visible in the brain)
- It may be evident at birth or shortly after
- Genetic predisposition is likely, but does not explain all cases
- It cannot be “cured” in the conventional sense, but early intervention makes a difference in later experience





# *Two critical things to understand:*

- Autism doesn't "cause" these characteristics. "Autism" is a label used to group them together.
- These characteristics are a result of brain wiring.



# *Two critical things to understand:*

- Our brain-wiring determines our response to the environment.
- Our brain-wiring is not a moral choice.
- The common characteristics of ASD are not moral failings.



# *Common Traits of "Asperger Syndrome"*



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# *Dan's List*

1. Finger-flicking
2. Change in routine is hard
3. Very particular about food
4. Smells can cause anxiety, nervousness
5. Noises, too

6. Hyperfocus on a subject
7. Likes to wear the same thing
8. Doesn't always get sarcasm
9. Doesn't tolerate crowds well
10. Talks really fast



# *Don's List*

1. Finger-flicking
2. **Change in routine is hard**
3. Very particular about food
4. Smells can cause anxiety, nervousness
5. Noises, too

6. Hyperfocus on a subject
7. Likes to wear the same thing
8. **Doesn't always get sarcasm**
9. **Doesn't tolerate crowds well**
10. Talks really fast



# *Common characteristics...and how they show up on campus*

- Difficulty reading body language, facial expressions, “reading the room”:
  - Awkward social interactions leading to social isolation
  - Misunderstanding with peers, roommates, authorities
  - Poor boundaries and apparent lack of response to limit-setting
  - Classroom disruption



# *Common characteristics*

- Difficulty with any change in routine:
  - Heightened anxiety, anger, “acting out”
  - Fear of trying something new
  - Roommate difficulties (roommates can interrupt routines)



# *Common characteristics*

- Literal, concrete thinking; hard to recognize sarcasm:
  - Misunderstandings with peers
  - Vulnerable to bullying and deceit
  - Difficulty with abstract concepts





# *Common characteristics*

- Sensory sensitivity (sounds, light, smells, touch, taste):
  - Hygiene issues
  - Residence hall conflicts over noise
  - “Unreasonable” requests
  - Dining hall issues



# *Common characteristics*

- Odd speech mannerisms; “hyperfocus” or obsession with singular topics:
  - Social isolation
  - “Blurting” or interrupting others
  - Annoyance of peers, faculty can lead to dismissive response, anger, conflict



# *Two key challenges*

## Perspective

- Students on the spectrum often have difficulty seeing “the big picture” and sometimes get bogged down in the details.

## Proportion

- Students sometimes have an unreasonable reaction to a situation.



# *What challenges do ASD/AS present on campus?*



- Roommate difficulties
- Conduct issues
- Student organization interactions
- Classroom behavior concerns
- Marginalizing by other students due to lack of understanding
- Extensive use of campus services (advising, counseling, disability)
- Attrition



# *What does this look like in the classroom?*

- Communication can seem odd or different:
  - Talks too much, goes on and on about a topic
  - Struggles with abstract concepts and different perspectives
- Can be challenged by assignments
  - Seeks very specific instructions, is challenged by vague or flexible tasks
  - Work may not be turned in on time, or at all
  - Generalizing skills and concepts is difficult



# *What does this look like in the classroom?*

- The social aspect of class may be stressful or difficult to manage
  - Working in small groups
  - Presenting in front of class
  - Critiquing others' work, or being critiqued



# *What does this look like outside of class?*

- Residential living challenges
  - Sensory sensitivities
  - Social cues and unspoken rules of social life
  - Roommate challenges/floor and hall interactions can be difficult
- Student activities
  - Seeks social interactions through organizations and activities, but communication and social differences cause conflicts



# *What does this look like outside of class?*

- Student conduct
  - Often accused of stalking or other unwanted attention
  - “Meltdowns”
  - Gets into arguments with peers or authorities over seemingly small issues





# *The Psychic Impact of ASD/AS*

Co-morbidity rates of depression and anxiety are extremely high due to:

- Environmental rigidity and difficulty processing social information
- The impact of peer rejection
- Social anxiety may *increase with age* for high-functioning ASD youth compared to neurotypical controls
  - Pinder-Amaker, S. (2014)



# *Stress leads to anxiety and depression*



# *The Good News is:*



We can change the environment



We can change our own behavior



We can help students with ASD adapt, learn and succeed



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# *How we respond can make all the difference*



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*Because...*

Typical accommodations are not enough.  
They may not even be that useful.



# *Some strategies that may help:*

- Focus on the behavior, but...
- Never assume you know the rationale behind the behavior.
- Understanding that rationale is often the key to unlocking the problem.
- Lying is difficult (but not impossible) for someone with ASD.



# *When planning programs and services*

- Assume some participants are on the spectrum
- Consider sensory issues (volume, lights, touch) and allow students to opt out
- Explain things...and explain them again. Use multiple means of explanation
- Be alert for students who remove themselves or are exhibiting anxiousness
- Prepare! Make sure staff (including student staff) are informed about students of all kinds





# *Three sources of reassurance for ASD students*

- Rules
- Routine
- Prediction



# *Three sources of reassurance for ASD students*

- Rules: Rather than respond to a fluid environment, people with autism often rely on “rules” to structure their activities, so...
  - Provide “rules” for a situation, e.g. “When you eat in a dining hall, you have to wait your turn to get your food.”



# *Three sources of reassurance for ASD students*

- Routine: Predictability and stability are important; interruptions to routine can cause stress, so...
  - Support a student's routine, rather than encourage them to "be flexible."



# *Three sources of reassurance for ASD students*

- Prediction: Surprises are stress-inducing, so...
  - “We are going to have a guest speaker tomorrow who will show a short video and then discuss it, and you will have an opportunity to ask questions”



# From Aspergers 101 (Facebook group)

Latest People Photos Videos Shop Pages Places Groups

Like Comment Share

**Aspergers101**  
January 29 at 9:10am · 🌐

Tips for the Aspergers Driver When Being Pulled Over by an Officer  
<https://aspergers101.com/tips-pulled-officer-law/>

Tips for the Aspergers Driver When Being Pulled Over by an Officer

For many with Autism a fear of driving stems from anxiety that can result from being pulled over by an officer of the law. In some cases, fear of just that very...

ASPERGERS101.COM



# *From Aspergers 101:*

## **Things to remember when you are pulled over:**

- Do not panic (deep breaths)
- Do not get out of your vehicle
- Wait for the officer to approach you
- Roll down your window and listen to what the officer tells you to do
- Keep your hands on the steering wheel
- Be polite
- Wait for the officer to tell you what to do (get your license/proof of insurance) then do it
- Sign the appropriate form if the officer tells you to do so



# *When giving directions:*

- Be as objective as possible. Watch for your own “niceness bias.”
- “Chunk” directions into small pieces.
- Write things down, even what seems obvious to you.
- Ask the student to repeat back to you what you’ve said.
- Predict, or “storyboard” possible outcomes of their actions (including sanctions).



# *Your meeting agenda*

- Consider two meetings instead of one
- Give breaks more often than usual
- Invite student to bring a “translator”





# *When offering feedback*

- Be very direct; no sugar-coating
- Don't dismiss sensory sensitivities as petty or as a choice



# *“The Scholar’s Agreement”*

- Positions student and professor in appropriate (learner/teacher) roles
- Can include things like:
  - “I will only speak when called on.”
  - “I will quietly leave the class if I become upset.”
  - “I will refrain from commenting after my classmates speak”
- **IT WILL NOT BE FOOLPROOF! IT WILL TAKE PRACTICE!**



# *Working together:*

Suggest to both ASD students and the staff who work with them:

- **TRY DIFFERENTLY, NOT HARDER!**





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# *Changing the conversation*

- High-functioning Autism is not inherently a disability.
- Neurodiversity is as valuable to a college community as other types of diversity.
- It is not the sole responsibility of disability services staff to support the success of ASD students.
- Success on the Autism Spectrum is a win for everyone.



# *Useful resources*

College Autism Network website: [www.collegeautismnetwork.org](http://www.collegeautismnetwork.org)

- RA Training Module
- Videos found by Googling "Autism" and "Asperger"
- Aspergers101.com (like them on Facebook)



# Articles by Lee

**INSIDE**  
HIGHER ED

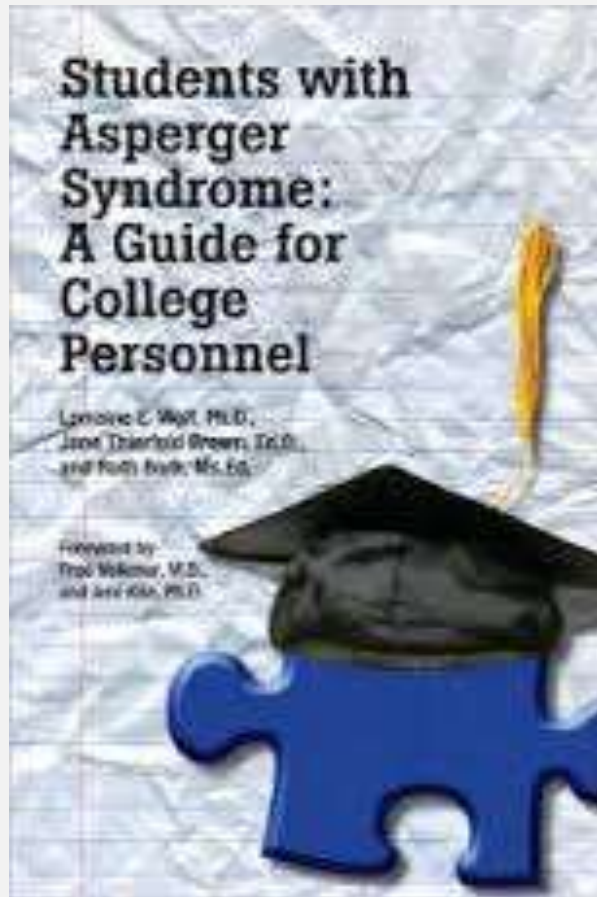
- Feb 8, 2018: [The Nexus of Autism and Title IX](#)
- Dec 12, 2014: [Rethinking Everything... Literally](#)

**ABOUTCAMPUS**  
ENRICHING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

July/August 2016: [440 Pearl Street: Autism on \(and a Block Away From\) Campus](#)



# Some useful books:



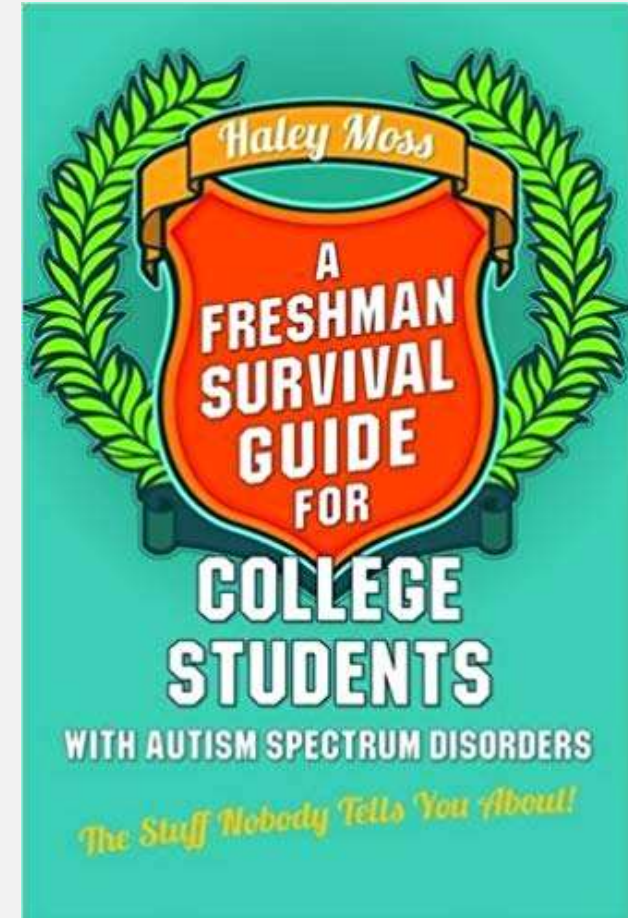
## **NAVIGATING COLLEGE**

A Handbook on Self Advocacy

Written for Autistic Students, by Autistic adults



Foreword by ASAN President Ari Ne'eman





# *Evaluation*

- Please provide feedback on this session by completing evaluation available online at :
  - Click "All Events" > "Programs, Meetings and Events" > Scroll to the correct program session> Click "Educational Session Feedback"
  - Your feedback is valuable to help ensure t hat our curriculum is meeting the needs of the attendees as well as to help presenters in their development.



*Thank you!*



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