

Next article (http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Womens_Colleges/)

Home (<http://www.education.com/>) > **Learning and Your Child** (<http://www.education.com/topic/child-learning/>) > **Special Needs** (<http://www.education.com/topic/special-needs/>) > **Autism Spectrum**

Disorders (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-spectrum-disorders/>)

print (#) add to favorites (http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612)

ShareThis ([javascript:void\(o\)](http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612))
(<http://www.autism-society.org>)



A College Structure for Students with Asperger Syndrome

by **Michael Carley** (<http://www.education.com/profile/MichaelJohnCarley>)

Source: **Autism Society** (<http://www.education.com/partner/articles/autismsociety/>)

Topics: **Choosing a College** (<http://www.education.com/topic/choosing-a-college/>) , **Autism Spectrum Disorders** (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-spectrum-disorders/>) , **Asperger's Syndrome** (<http://www.education.com/topic/aspergers-syndrome/>) , **Autism Spectrum Disorders and Special Education** (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-special-education/>)

It's a giant oversimplification to assume that autism spectrum disorders, including Asperger Syndrome (AS), and neurotypicality are really about two worlds trying to understand one another—the spectrum universe and everyone else—but there is some truth to it too. Each side spends infinite amounts of time, money and resources attempting to figure out what the other world is thinking. This is wise, as such progress enables desperately needed communication. Mistakes made in misinterpretations between these two worlds can be infinitely more damaging than those brought on by an actual diagnosis of AS.

One arena within “normal” life that is making great strides in understanding individuals with AS (though it's not “there” yet) is the world of postsecondary university life. Partially out of the desire to move mankind forward, and because “there's gold in them thar hills,” many colleges are paying more attention to students who need some accommodations. College personnel are working to alleviate the misperceptions that their students with AS have, and in return, professors and other college staff are listening more to their students.

The Federal Mandate to Offer Support

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 paved the way. Under this legislation, colleges not run by religious organizations must have an Office of Student Disabilities, or an ADA Compliance Officer. Within these offices, students can seek assistance in a variety of forms, including counseling or

tutoring, that will help them succeed.

Granted, families need to do their research. Some colleges take this responsibility very seriously, while others do not. That is, they may have an Office of Student Disabilities that has ill-trained personnel and limited resources or offer resentful lip service to federal law.

Families also need to understand that what makes the average young adult with AS attractive to universities is the fact that these individuals usually have no shortage of brainpower. This is crucial knowledge because colleges that guide the student through to academic success while paying no attention to the social demands of campus dorm life do not usually graduate a student who enjoys career success. The social portion of university life should always be treated with equal importance. Nobody goes to school solely for scholastic growth.

Characteristics of the Best Programs

So what do the best programs offer? The best support for professors can be found with the ADA Compliance Officer. In the old days, many students with AS were treated as obstinate, argumentative or just “a pain” with all their special demands, and ill consequences often followed. Without a proper and organized chain of communication between staff and faculty, those old days can resurface very quickly. Mandatory, one-time presentations to faculty on the nature of their student’s diagnosis are the easiest and most effective solution to prevent the recurrence of misunderstanding of students with AS.

- « prev page
- 1
- **2** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/?page=2>)
- **3** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/?page=3>)
- **next page »** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/?page=2>)

Reprinted with the permission of the Autism Society.

Take Action

- **Share** ([javascript:void\(0\)](javascript:void(0))) this article with friends and family.
- Have a question about **Choosing a College** (<http://www.education.com/topic/choosing-a-college/>) ? **Ask it here.** (<http://www.education.com/question/ask/>)
- **Publish** (http://www.education.com/get_published/) your work on education.com.

Related Articles

Next article (http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Womens_Colleges/)

Home (<http://www.education.com/>) > **Learning and Your Child** (<http://www.education.com/topic/child-learning/>) > **Special Needs** (<http://www.education.com/topic/special-needs/>) > **Autism Spectrum**

Disorders (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-spectrum-disorders/>)

print (#) **add to favorites** (http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612)

ShareThis ([javascript:void\(o\)](http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612))

ShareThis ([javascript:void\(o\)](http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612))

(<http://www.autism-society.org>)



A College Structure for Students with Asperger Syndrome (continued)

by **Michael Carley** (<http://www.education.com/profile/MichaelJohnCarley>)

Source: **Autism Society** (<http://www.education.com/partner/articles/autismsociety/>)

Topics: **Choosing a College** (<http://www.education.com/topic/choosing-a-college/>) , **Autism Spectrum**

Disorders (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-spectrum-disorders/>) , **Asperger's Syndrome**

(<http://www.education.com/topic/aspergers-syndrome/>) , **Autism Spectrum Disorders and Special**

Education (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-special-education/>)

The best representatives of the Office of Student Disabilities also share this same knowledge with dorm supervisors (and, if applicable, athletic coaches). The peer isolation that may have existed in high school does not automatically disappear simply because said peers are older, or because there is a new set of peers with whom the student with AS can interact. The behavioral differences that AS can present can stigmatize a student as “the weird kid” for their entire stay in college, or worse, can be misinterpreted as a threat, causing bigger problems than mere friendlessness.

The best Offices of Student Disabilities create as much work for themselves as they can. Superior Compliance Officers always help students identify needed accommodations that will help them succeed on campus.

Personal Considerations of the Student

The monkey in the wrench is the student himself. For while there are certainly things to be learned through a generalized study of the diagnosis, no two students with AS are alike. Not only does AS encompass a broad range of functional ability, but there are sometimes varying degrees of anxiety, depression and, to a lesser degree, anger. These are not diagnostic characteristics of AS. They are instead the sometimes by-products of living life in the behavioral minority—in a world that they do not understand, and that too often does not understand them.

Other considerations to be looked include: Are college students aware of their diagnosis? If so, are they comfortable with it? And are they comfortable sharing it?

Students who are unaware of their diagnosis should be made aware of it. Without this knowledge, they will always wonder why everyone else is handling things differently from them and will almost always arrive at the conclusion that they are second-rate human beings. They will interpret those differences as faults. Students who know that their wiring is simply different can handle the challenges of life on the spectrum with infinitely greater success.

Who should tell the student? Ideally, the parents if the opportunity to hear it from the diagnostician has since passed. Parents who do not disclose may have had their reasons for keeping this secret from their child, such as the old “Why do you want to put a label on him?” attitude, which is now known to be even more harmful than what they initially were scared of. Not sharing the “label” with the student almost never has good results.

Whoever tells the student about the diagnosis must approach it with the idea that they have good news to tell the student, not bad. This is not a feel-good approach; it is the truth. Reasons for the student’s challenges can be attributed to neurology, replacing personal fault or weakness.

For the student who looks upon himself as a lesser person because of the diagnosis, the best help is to get the student involved in peer support groups (i.e., with other kids on the spectrum) or urge the student to read the myriad of books that emphasize the positives that (believe it or not) the diagnosis can bring. Talking with a therapist who understands AS can also be beneficial.

- **« prev page** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/>)
- **1** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/>)
- **2**
- **3** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/?page=3>)
- **next page »** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/?page=3>)

Reprinted with the permission of the Autism Society.

Take Action

- **Share** (`javascript:void(o)`) this article with friends and family.
- **0** Have a question about **Choosing a College** (<http://www.education.com/topic/choosing-a-college/>) ? **Ask it here.** (<http://www.education.com/question/ask/>)
- **Publish** (http://www.education.com/get_published/) your work on education.com.

Next article (http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Womens_Colleges/)

Home (<http://www.education.com/>) > **Learning and Your Child** (<http://www.education.com/topic/child-learning/>) > **Special Needs** (<http://www.education.com/topic/special-needs/>) > **Autism Spectrum**

Disorders (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-spectrum-disorders/>)

print (#) **add to favorites** (http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612)

ShareThis ([javascript:void\(o\)](http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612))

ShareThis ([javascript:void\(o\)](http://www.education.com/?__module=AddBookmark&type=content&id=28612))

(<http://www.autism-society.org>)



A College Structure for Students with Asperger Syndrome (continued)

by **Michael Carley** (<http://www.education.com/profile/MichaelJohnCarley>)

Source: **Autism Society** (<http://www.education.com/partner/articles/autismsociety/>)

Topics: **Choosing a College** (<http://www.education.com/topic/choosing-a-college/>) , **Autism Spectrum**

Disorders (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-spectrum-disorders/>) , **Asperger's Syndrome**

(<http://www.education.com/topic/aspergers-syndrome/>) , **Autism Spectrum Disorders and Special**

Education (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-special-education/>)

Nondisclosure to Others

For students who wish that others not know of their condition, two rules apply:

1. The Office of Student Disabilities has to know. It is their job to help that student, and they cannot do this without knowing about the student's exceptionality. And the student must understand why they must know.

2.

The student's wishes that other students not know must be honored. In cases where it would really help if other students knew, attempts should be made to show the student why it is in his or her best interest to disclose, but the decision should always be the student's.

The student who wants to "tough it out" and not treat himself any differently must be monitored more carefully. While staff members may be relieved at the lesser workload such a student imposes on them, very often (in fact, most of the time) this is a student who is running from something rather than "toughing out" anything. Very often, the student who wants to pretend that he's "just like everybody else" has experienced trauma related to his diagnosis.

It is important to show, rather than tell, the student with AS that people on campus really are not as

annoyed, discriminating or threatened by the diagnosis as he (perhaps rightfully) fears. This sales pitch, when pulled off, characterizes a school that I would recommend to anyone.

- **« prev page** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/?page=2>)
- **1** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/>)
- **2** (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/college-structure-students-asperger/?page=2>)
- **3**
- **next page »**

Reprinted with the permission of the Autism Society.

Take Action

- **Share** ([javascript:void\(0\)](javascript:void(0))) this article with friends and family.
- Have a question about **Choosing a College** (<http://www.education.com/topic/choosing-a-college/>) ? **Ask it here.** (<http://www.education.com/question/ask/>)
- **Publish** (http://www.education.com/get_published/) your work on education.com.

Related Articles

- **Social-Emotional Issues in Autism Spectrum Disorders**
(<http://www.education.com/reference/article/social-emotional-issues-autism>)
- **Living With Autism: Life After High School**
(http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Living_Autism_Life)
- **Childhood Disintegrative Disorder**
(http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Disintegrative)
- **Fever May Cause Temporary Changes in Autism Symptoms**
(http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Fever_May_Cause)
- **How to Teach Reading to Individuals with Asperger Syndrome**
(<http://www.education.com/reference/article/teach-reading-individual-asperger-ASD>)

Related Topics

- **Autism Spectrum Disorders** (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-spectrum-disorders/>)
- **Autism Spectrum Disorders and Special Education** (<http://www.education.com/topic/autism-special-education/>)
- **Asperger's Syndrome** (<http://www.education.com/topic/aspergers-syndrome/>)
- **Choosing a College** (<http://www.education.com/topic/choosing-a-college/>)