

Autism in the Classroom

Information and Strategies for Faculty

What is Autism?

- Autism is a neurodevelopmental disability; many view autism as an identity trait associated with positive gifts and strengths.
- Many experience challenges with organization, planning, focused attention, time management, task initiation, and regulating stress or emotion
- Students with ASD may experience differences with social communication, repetitive behaviors, and heightened sensations (e.g. lights, sounds, smells) from neurotypical students
- Many college students with ASD have learned to hide (or “mask”) and may be reluctant to discuss their experiences due to stigma or fear of differential or ableist treatment

What you might see in class...

- Different communication patterns, including non-verbal communication (e.g., eye contact, posture, or gestures)
- Sensory hypersensitivity (lights, sounds, smells)
- Needing or requesting extra time for processing in class or exams/assignments
- Class discussion may look different (e.g., monopolizing discussion or withdrawn from discussion)
- Strong, focused, impassioned interests
- May use calming or focusing strategies such as rocking, tapping, pacing, fidgeting

On-Campus Resources

- [Emory Oaks](#)
- [Department of Accessibility Services \(DAS\)](#)
- [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [Student Health Services: Psychiatry](#)
- [Office of Undergraduate Education \(OUE\)](#)
- [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\)](#)
- [Center for Development and Faculty Excellence](#)

Support Strategies

- Build **positive relationships** with your students and provide **active outreach** to them.
- **Provide clear instructions/expectations** for all course activities
- **Utilize syllabus.** Note/update any changes ASAP
- **Supplement instructions multimodally** e.g. provide oral in-class instructions alongside written instructions
- **Explain the purpose** of assignments and course policies
- Provide **direct feedback**; set clear boundaries, rules and expectations
- **Allow breaks** during class
- **Avoid “cold-calling”** in class
- **Provide options** for course engagement
- **Provide multimodal learning tools**, such as visual examples when possible (pictures, charts, etc.)
- **Design group work conscientiously** e.g. consider assigning group roles and monitor/mediate group activities
- Embrace principles rooted in [Universal Design for Learning](#) pedagogies



If you have any questions regarding ASD and how to support students, please contact Emory Oaks:

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