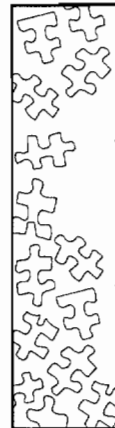


**Putting the Pieces Together:  
Managing Asperger's in College**

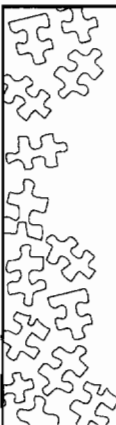
Brenda Salley  
Rachel Moore



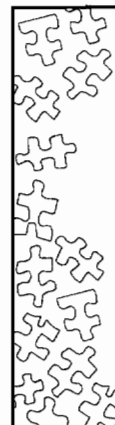
**The Puzzle...**

The typical Asperger traits of perseverance, drive for perfection, good concrete intelligence, ability to disregard social conventions and unconcern about the opinions of others can all be seen as advantageous, possibly a prerequisite for certain kinds of new thinking and creativity...

*Hans Asperger*

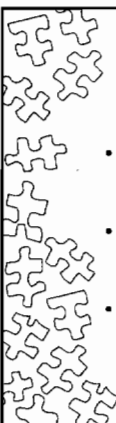


Michelangelo  
Isaac Newton  
Jonathon Swift  
Thomas Jefferson  
Vincent van Gogh  
Bertrand Russell  
Albert Einstein  
Andy Warhol



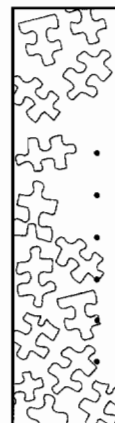
**Agenda**

- Asperger's Profile
  - General Strengths & Weaknesses
- Assessment & Diagnostic Features
- Counseling & Mentorship
- College Challenges
  - In the Classroom
  - Social Situations
  - Practical/Daily Living
- Management Strategies
- Questions



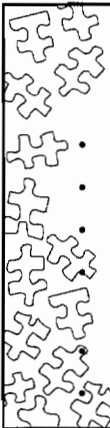
**Asperger's Profile**

- Impairments in social interaction & relationships
- Impairments in verbal & non-verbal communication
- Impairments in imagination, behavior, & flexibility of thought



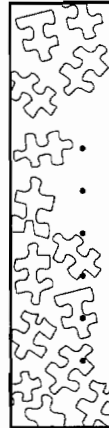
**Social Interaction & Relationships**

- Poor social understanding
- Poor non-verbal communication
- Difficulty fitting in with peers
- Easy target for bullying & manipulation
- Difficulty making & keeping friends
- Social isolation & loneliness



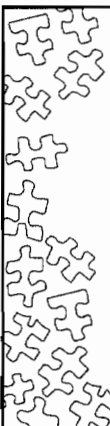
### **Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication**

- Literal interpretation of language
- Pedantic speech style
- Monotonous tone of voice
- Limited ability to understand other's emotions and perspective
- Tendency to dominate conversation
- Tendency to be argumentative & inflexible



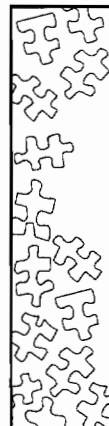
### **Imagination, Behavior, Flexibility of Thought**

- Strong adherence to rituals & routines
- Special interests, collections & obsessions
- Resistance to change
- Difficulty in trying new things
- Unusual response to sensory stimuli
- Perfectionism



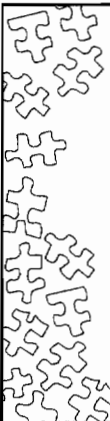
### **Strengths**

- Average or above-average intellectual ability
- Unusual and creative thinking
- Wide vocabulary
- Good visual and spatial skills
- Excellent memory skills
- In depth knowledge in specialized areas
- Honesty & loyalty
- Willingness to accept support
- Attention?



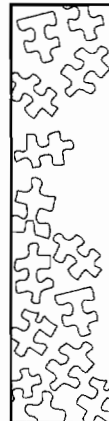
### **Asperger's Assessment**

- Psychological evaluation
  - Intellectual and adaptive functioning
- Speech, language & communication evaluation
- Diagnostic work-up
  - Health, behavioral and intervention history



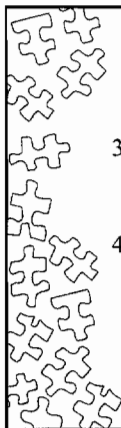
### **Diagnostic Criteria**

1. Impairments in social interaction, as manifested by at least 2 of the following:
  - Marked impairment in nonverbal behaviors
  - Lack of developmentally appropriate peer relationships
  - Lack of spontaneous sharing of enjoyment or interests with others
  - Lack of social or emotional reciprocity



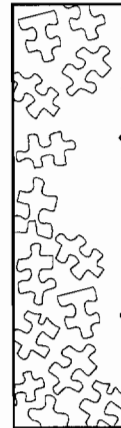
### **Diagnostic Criteria**

2. Restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities (at least 1 of the following):
  - Abnormal preoccupation with 1 or more stereotyped patterns of interest
  - Inflexible adherence to routines/rituals
  - Stereotyped & repetitive motor mannerisms
  - Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects



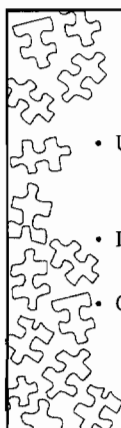
### Diagnostic Criteria

3. No clinically significant general delay in language (e.g., single words by 2yrs, phrases by 3yrs)
4. No clinically significant delay in cognitive development or adaptive behavior



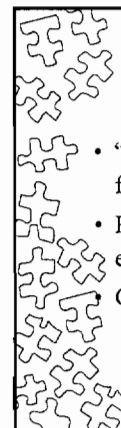
### Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Autism Spectrum Diagnoses
  - Rett's Syndrome
  - Child Disintegrative Disorder
  - **Asperger's Syndrome**
  - Pervasive Developmental Disorder, NOS
- Prevalence
  - 1 in 150 children are diagnosed with ASD



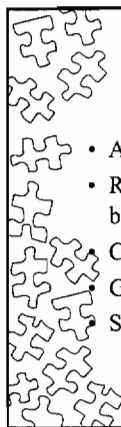
### Diagnostic Issues

- Uneven Abilities
  - High quantitative abilities, lower verbal abilities, difficulty in "socially" oriented subjects
- Likely to slip through the diagnostic net
  - Undiagnosed or Misdiagnosed
- Comorbid conditions
  - ADHD
  - Anxiety
  - Depression



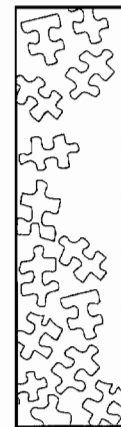
### Benefits of College

- "Supportive environment" to transition from home to independent living
- Provide qualifications for successful employment
- Outlet for special interests



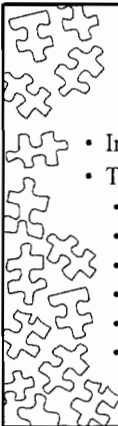
### Challenges of College

- Adjust to living away from home
- Responsibility for time management, budgeting, transportation
- Changed social roles and expectations
- Greater academic challenges
- Securing needed services



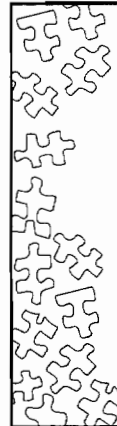
### Planning the Transition

- **Communication between parent and college is essential**
- Establish counseling services & mentoring support
- Talk to professors
- Orientation
- Balance "rewarding" and "drudgery" courses
- Pragmatic approach to grades/GPA



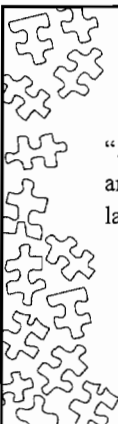
## Counseling Services

- Individual or group basis
- Target core areas:
  - Crisis management for immediate problems
  - Relationships
  - Sex
  - Alcohol or drug-related concerns
  - Homesickness
  - Anger management



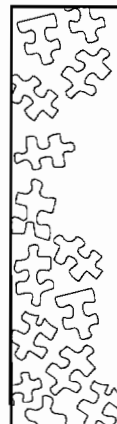
## Mentoring Services

- Natural Mentoring or Befriending
- Structured or Planned Mentoring
- Educational or Academic Mentoring
- Personal Development Mentoring



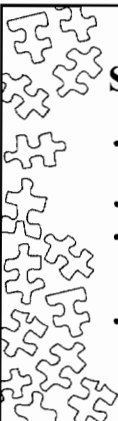
“...written language is their first language, and spoken English is their second language.”

*Temple Grandin*



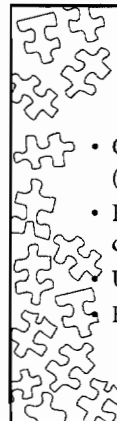
## Classroom Challenges

- Taking notes
- Classroom discussion, activities, group work
- Difficulty speaking in public without notes
- Difficulty with instructions and requirements
- Time management/studying
- Test-taking
- Overly literal interpretation
- Getting feedback



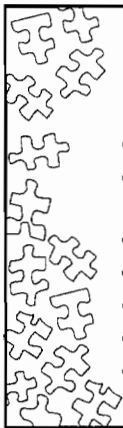
## Strategies for the Classroom

- Copies of notes/handouts before the lecture
- Open exit policy
- Preparation for group work:
  - responsibilities, disagreements, roles, clarification
- Source for clarification of instructions/requirements



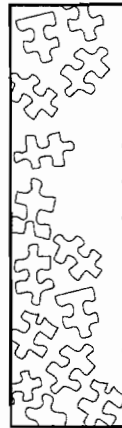
## Getting Started

- Organize a quiet, interrupt free zone (include a do not disturb sign)
- Read through your notes at the end of each day
- Use prompts to start studying
- Break tasks into small sections



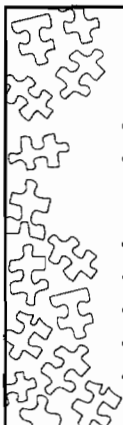
## Study Skills

- Attention
- Relevance & purpose
  - Finding the 'bigger picture'
- Audience
- Memory (benefit from visual aids)
- Difficulty generalizing
- Prioritizing what to study
- Writing skills (lose overall coherence)



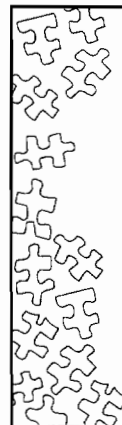
## Have a Study Plan

- Time - best time for private study
- Place - bedroom, public place
- Objectives - set goals (draft essay plan, getting library books, reading certain number of books & taking notes)
- Sound - earplugs?
- Breaks - set alarm on cell phone/watch



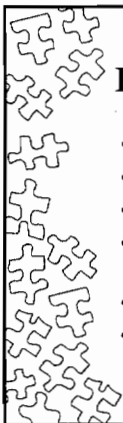
## Test-Taking

- May need to arrive early
- Individual instructions
  - Key content/words highlighted (e.g., *discuss, explain*)
- Permission to leave if needed
- Separate exam room
- Timer as prompt
- Extra time
- Earplugs



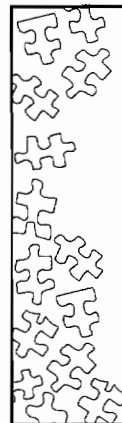
## Social Challenges

- Forming & maintaining friendships
- Desire to make friends
- Free time
- High levels of anxiety and vulnerability to stress
- Accessing support
- Expressing emotion



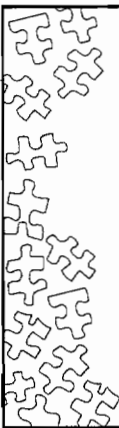
## For the Asperger Student...

- Don't expect too much too quickly
- Don't jump to conclusions
- Try to make eye contact
- Consider joining social skills groups, other clubs/organizations
- It's OK to be alone sometimes
- Recognize differences between friends & acquaintances



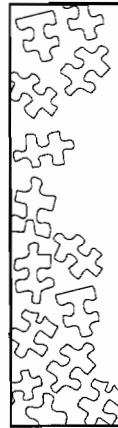
## For Everyone Else...

- Fellow students can act as "social navigators"
- What seems 'rude' may just be honesty
- Be open about concerns
- Have reasonable expectations (negotiate for change)
- There's a reason for the inflexibility/lack of spontaneity
- Avoid using irony & sarcasm
- Recognize when boundaries are necessary



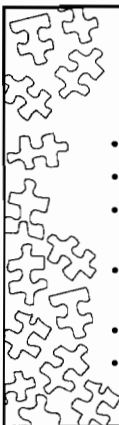
## Practical Challenges

- Abrupt change in support system
- Living arrangements
- Organizational difficulties
- Self-care
- Finances
- Transportation



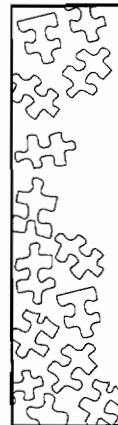
## Strategies for Practical Challenges

- Create a “safety net”
- Consider a “check in” system
- Use lists and tables to remember/manage behavior
- Create daily/weekly goals



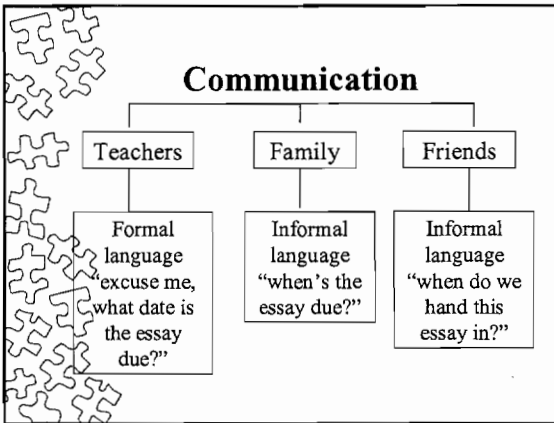
## Organization

- Throw things away when not needed
- Clearly marked storage
- Keep essential/important items in single designated place
- Keep diary/list of items needed for the day
- Buy a whiteboard or planner for wall
- Pack backpack the night before



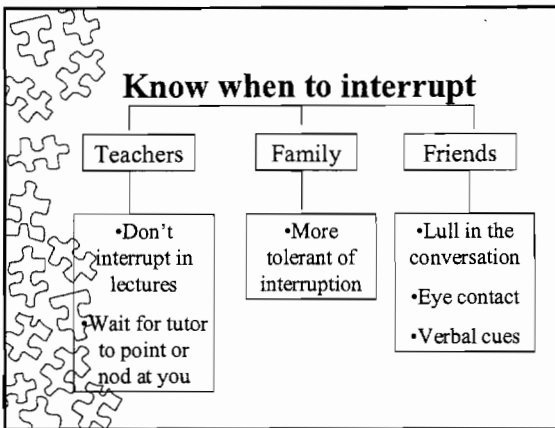
## Self-Care

- Know when showers/other self-care is necessary
- Know what products to purchase (e.g., soap, shampoo, toothpaste)
- Prepare for shared bathroom situation
- Change clothes daily
- Laundry responsibilities




## Communication Strategies

- Practice role play
- Practice knowing when okay to interrupt
- Comic strip conversation
  - Visual representations
- Provide conversation openers



### Finances

Create a simple chart for tracking money

	Food	Rent	Travel	Books	Clothes	Extras	Total
Week 1							
Week 2							

### Time Management

- See Handout

- ### Securing Services
- Americans With Disabilities Act requires educational institutions and employers to provide the disabled with "reasonable accommodations"
  - Special accommodations must be requested through the disabled student services
  - Counseling Services
  - How much to disclose to professors?

- ### Preparing for the Next Stage
- Prepare/plan early for transition to college
  - Transition after college

Thank You!

## Questions?

Asperger Syndrome: Letter of Introduction for [Name].

We are the parents of [name of child]. Our adolescent has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (AS), a neurobiological disorder on the autism spectrum. Young adults with AS may have difficulty using and understanding nonverbal behaviors and developing peer relationships. Our adolescent sees and experiences the world differently than people who do not have AS. He may seem to "overreact to nothing" or become very emotional "for no reason." We have learned that in most instances, there is a reason for why our adolescent responds the way that he does. And it is a reason that "makes sense" once you understand AS. We have also learned that there are things we can do to help him. The first and most important is accepting that many of his behaviors are not under his control.

People with AS often have a unique and at times unusual mixture of abilities and deficits. They may appear to be more capable than they actually are. AS is a pervasive developmental disorder, and it can affect virtually every facet of an adolescent's academic, social, and emotional life, sometimes in ways that may seem unusual. Right now, there is no "cure" for AS, but research and new interventions are moving ahead quickly. We will be happy to share with you whatever information that we find that may be helpful to you in helping [name of child] have a positive, productive experience in college. Please feel free to call us anytime at [phone number].

Our adolescent's main strengths are: [list strengths].

The praise he values most is [list: being told that he is bright, wise, fun to be around].

The most effective rewards would be: [list].

The strongest disincentive would be: [list].

Like many people with AS, our adolescent has special interests: [list special interests]. You may find it helpful to allow him to indulge his special interest by talking about it for a limited period of time as a reward.

AS affects numerous areas. Below is a list of the difficulties [name of child] faces and what we and his high school teachers and therapists have discovered works and does not work.

### **General Personality and Behavior**

[name of child] is [list of positives: warm, loving, has a great sense of humor, etc.].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are: [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do



not work for our child and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Social Skills with Adults**

[name of child] is [list the positives: warm, loving, has a great sense of humor, etc.].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges: has difficulties following multi-step directions, a tendency to ask for help with things when he does not necessarily need it.] We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful: breaking all oral directions down into short, simple steps; gently encouraging him to do those things you now he can do.] Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child: repeating complex instructions several times; forcing him to do things he feels inept at] do not work for our child and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior: anxious, dumb]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action: calm and comfort him to regain control].

### **Social Skills with Peers**

[name of child] is [list the positives: interested in other people, anxious to make friends].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are: [list challenges: his inability to join in appropriately, participate in conversations, and understand how to reciprocate]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful: using Social Stories to cue and remind him of appropriate behavior; setting up situations where he can practice these new skills with other people]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior: stressed, anxious, and sad]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action: gently remove him from the situation and set up another experience that is 'rigged' for success].

### **Expressive and Receptive Language**

[name of child] is [list of positives: has a extensive vocabulary].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Auditory Processing**

[name of child] is [list of positives: can completely recall songs or poems he has heard only once or twice].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Sensory Issues**

[name of child] is [list of positives].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Fine and Gross Motor Skills**

[name of child] is [list of positives: almost at age-level with basic living skills].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Organizational Skills**

[name of child] is [list of positives].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Perseverations**

[name of child] is [list of positives: engaging in preservative behaviors less, and seems to be aware that they are stigmatizing].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved

successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Transitions**

[name of child] is [list of positives: managing to handle transitions, provided he is given clear, detailed explanations of what is expected].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Changes in Routine**

[name of child] is [list of positives].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

### **Eye Contact**

[name of child] is [list of positives: making as much eye contact as he can comfortably right now].

The areas in which he is most seriously challenged are [list challenges]. We believe that these can be most effectively addressed by [list interventions and tactics that have proved successful]. Some other approaches such as [list what does not work for your child] do not work for our adolescent and tend to make him feel [describe adverse or undesirable behavior]. When that occurs, we find that it helps to [describe action].

[Any other information you feel is important].

Every person with AS is unique. No two have the same pattern of behaviors, skills, or deficits. A technique or approach that worked for one person may not necessarily work for the next. Or what worked last month may not work today. Thank you for your time and patience in working with [child's name]!

Sincerely,  
[your name]

To be completed by college students:

Here are some of the behaviors associated with Asperger's which will present particular challenges for you at a university. Not all of these will present problems but you might find it useful to indicate which of these difficulties are true for you. Knowing which issues will make it easier to work out strategies for dealing with potential problems.

### **Social Interaction**

- I like to be left alone at times.
- I'm never sure when it's OK to interrupt in a conversation.
- I have difficulty knowing when people are joking.
- I find it quite hard to look people in the eye.
- I'm not very good at interpreting non-verbal cues.
- I'm not competitive (winning or losing is not important to me).
- I'm not good at conversing with others.
- I don't understand what is funny in many jokes.
- Others have said that my speech is odd or eccentric.
- I find it difficult to make friends.
- I'm not very good with sarcasm or metaphor, I like people to say what they mean.
- I can get impatient when people don't understand me.

### **Study Skills**

- My handwriting is too messy.
- I write too slowly.
- I don't like making decisions about what is (or is not) important when reading a book or journal article.
- I get distracted easily.
- I find it much easier when people use concrete examples, I find abstract thought quite difficult.
- I find it hard to concentrate on topics which don't interest me. I don't know what to focus on in exams (and I always run out of time).
- I am a perfectionist.
- I'm not very good at problem solving (I don't like making decisions about particular responses).
- I find it hard to be motivated about some topics (and some topics upset me).
- I'm not always able to sit still for long periods .
- I'm not good at setting long-term goals.
- I am not good at getting to class on time or remembering everything I need.

**WEEKLY TIMETABLE for week beginning:**

Time/day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							

- breakfast, lunch, dinner, shower, laundry, cleaning, paying bills, shopping
- lectures, tutorials, private study, hand-in dates for coursework
- clubs, societies, sports, cinema

**Resources:**

*An Asperger Dictionary of Everyday Expressions*, by Ian Stuart-Hamilton

*Asperger's Syndrome and High Achievement: Some Very Remarkable People*,  
by Ioan James

*Realizing the College Dream With Autism or Asperger Syndrome: A Parent's Guide to Student Success*, by Ann Palmer

*Thinking in Pictures*, by Temple Grandin

*Managing Asperger Syndrome at College and University*, by Juliet Jamieson and Claire Jamieson

*Virginia Tech Autism Clinic*  
<http://www.psyc.vt.edu/centers/psc/clinics/autism/>

*West Virginia Autism Training Center (Marshall University)*  
<http://www.marshall.edu/coe/atc/about.htm>

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