

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH ASPERGERS / AUTISM STUDENTS

- Every student with an Asperger's or Autism diagnosis is different. The syndrome affects each person in unique ways.
- Avoid demanding or expecting the student to maintain eye contact with you. In American culture, we assume a person is giving us their attention if they look at us. The Asperger's student experiences difficulty with eye contact. Limited eye contact is a part of their disability.
- Asperger's students are frequently visual learners. Often they cannot take in oral language quickly. Presenting information visually may be more helpful.
- "Showing work" is often difficult for a student with Asperger's and can often cause the student to react negatively. Since many are visual learners, they picture how to solve problems in their head. To "show" how they obtained the answer seems quite illogical and a waste of time to them.
- Do not assume the student is not listening or paying attention if they are doodling or staring in a fixated manner. This may be their way of maintaining focus on what is being presented. Asking the student a question is a good way of checking on their understanding.
- Distractions, noises, and abrupt changes are difficult for this student to process smoothly through and can in fact be very upsetting. Predictability, clear structure and routine work best with this student.
- This student is often extraordinarily intelligent. Their way of processing is different than other students. Difficulty with social interaction can be a major stressor in their day to day functioning.

*If you have never had any experience with a person who has a disability then it is easy to feel uncertain, intimidated or frightened. It's OK to have these feelings; it's not OK to do nothing about them. Talk to people: people with disabilities, parents or siblings of people with disabilities, people who work with people with disabilities. Glean information: read, investigate disability information on the internet, get in touch with organizations, community groups, etc.