Towards Success in Tertiary Study Logo

with asperger's syndrome

and other autism spectrum disorders

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Contact your Disability Liaison Officer at your institution for information on alternative formats.

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WHY READ THIS BOOKLET?

This booklet has been written for students who are studying or intend studying at tertiary level and who have Asperger's Syndrome or another autism spectrum disorder. The strategies included here bring together the experiences of students, staff and support organisations. This booklet also builds on existing resources, both print and electronic media.

Studying with Asperger's Syndrome

Lorna Wing (in Attwood, 1998), who has written a great deal about Asperger's Syndrome and its effects on development, commented: People with Asperger's Syndrome perceive the world differently. They may find other people strange and baffling. Why do people say so many things they don't mean? Why do people so often make trivial remarks that mean nothing at all? Why do people get bored and impatient when someone with Asperger's Syndrome tells them hundreds of fascinating facts about ...? Why do people care about social heirarchies - why not treat everyone the same way? Why do people have such complicated emotional relationships? Why do people send and receive so many social signals to each other and how do people make sense of these? Above all, why are people so illogical compared to people with Asperger's Syndrome?

"**...I like people, but I find them most strange, illogical, petty and superficial. I can intellectually grasp, but not relate to their motives...**"

HOW DOES ASPERGER'S SYNDROME AFFECT STUDY?

Most students (including those with Asperger's Syndrome) find university study is quite different to secondary school. Studying with Asperger's Syndrome presents some special challenges, although many students will also say studying with Asperger's can also have its advantages. Most people with Asperger's have excellent rote memory which means they can absorb facts easily.

"**...I believe in many ways it's easier for me, I appear to have fewer distractions than many of my peers...**"

Here are some of the behaviours associated with Asperger's which will present particular challenges to you as a university student. Not all of these will present problems but you might find it useful to tick the box to indicate which

of these difficulties are true for you. Knowing which issues will be most challenging 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 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 don't like sitting exams in strange places.
- ❑ 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 good not good at setting long term goals.

- ❑ I am not good at getting to class on time or remembering all the equipment I need.

You may also like to provide your lecturer with an information sheet on Asperger's; you can obtain this from a peak support organisation or your Disability Liaison Officer at your campus.

> Your lecturers might find the following website helpful in helping them help you with your study.
> **Reasonable Accommodations: Strategies for Teaching University Students with Disabilities** website at:
> http://www.anu.edu.au/secretary/disabilities/book4.html

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL STUDY

Each of us is an individual, and we all learn and think in different ways. Knowing your preferred learning style, and therefore what works best for you is an excellent start to successful study. Many students with Asperger's learn **differently** and awareness of how you learn will enable you to capitalise on its advantages. Temple Grandin, a scientist and author who also has autism, talks about 'thinking in pictures'

"**...words are like a second language to me. I translate both spoken and written words into full colour movies, complete with sound which run like a VCR tape in my head...**"

Temple Grandin

> Ask your Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) for the booklet **Discovering your Learning Style** in the **Towards Success in Tertiary Studies** series.

Explore Your Options

The fact you are reading this booklet indicates you are interested in studying at a tertiary institution, but it helps to think about why you are going to study. Having a clear idea of the objectives you want to achieve will help you keep focussed. It is useful also, to remember that there can be different paths to the same goal and that sometimes alternative goals can be appealing. The process

of studying can be a goal in itself too; a degree or a highly paid job are not the only measures of success.

- Talk to other students who have completed or are studying courses which interest you.
- What are you best at? What do you enjoy doing? What do you find difficult? Talk with your Careers teacher at school so that you choose a course which capitalises on your strengths.
- Think about taking a bridging course or TAFE certificate course which can lead to a university degree. Council neighbourhood house programs or other Adult Education organisations may also have preparation for tertiary study courses which can be a useful starting point to the course you may have in mind.
- TAFE courses are much more structured than university courses; you might find it useful to start with a TAFE course and transfer to a university course part way through Another option is to do a TAFE certificate or diploma which can then be linked in to a degree course at university through special articulation arrangements which many universities have with TAFE colleges.
- Online subject delivery modes may suit your needs and this could be something to look for when choosing your course.
- When choosing courses, check assessment methods (you may prefer multiple choice to essay responses, or end of semester exams to continuous assessments.

Know What to Expect - Differences between University and School

University is quite different from secondary school. University is an adult learning environment where you will be expected to be responsible for your own learning. While there will be many people there to help, you will be expected to be much more independent than you were at school. Lecturers and tutors will be expecting **you** to be responsible for knowing when and where exams are and when assignments are due, or where a laboratory class is to be held. No-one will remind you if you fail to turn up for a lecture (some of the lectures are so large they won't even notice whether you are there or not).

Universities are usually very large institutions, and almost ALL students feel a bit lost and lonely at first. At school, your teachers will have known you very well, but at uni, lecturers will have hundreds of students in any year level and they can't get to know them all. While your tutorial sessions will be smaller and tutors will try to get to know their students, tutors are often part-time and you may have different tutors every semester. At school you may have been

known and respected for your skills; universities are bigger, more anonymous institutions and it may be harder for you to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. All this will be happening while you are in a significant period of transition (from school kid to uni student).

Ideas for Getting Started and Keeping Going

You may have no trouble at all finding the energy you need to find information on topics you are interested in, but longer term goals like completing a tertiary degree require sustained concentration and effort over a long period of time. In order to do the course you want, you may have to study subjects which you don't enjoy. You may also have to read books or journal articles on topics you find unpleasant or confronting and you will be expected to read far more and cover topics in more depth than you were used to at school.

Getting organised

At university it will be up to you to organise your time. What at first appears to be a great deal of free time (particularly in Arts or Social Science courses) quickly becomes insufficient to complete all the tasks. In courses such as Science or Engineering, your day will be organised for you in that there are a lot of classes, but you might find that you have a much longer day than you are used to. Classes can start at 8:00 in the morning and there may well be classes in the evening too.

Some suggested strategies for getting organised include:

- Try to keep your performance in perspective, monitoring your progress through a diary. Write down what you are doing well and what not so well and what things you have tried and which ones worked.
- Keep a list of equipment you'll need for classes or lab work in your diary.
- Some people say a tidy desk means a tidy mind. This is not necessarily true, but having a tidy desk **will** help you keep organised.
- Keep your work carefully organised in folders, a different folder for each subject. Have the folder organised into sections, how you organise it will be different for different subjects but an example is: lecture notes, reading, tutorial exercises, assignments. Some people find it useful to use different coloured folders for different subjects.
- Buy yourself a whiteboard or planner to put on your wall; note on it important dates such as due dates for assignments or exam dates.

- Copy out your time table and include study times on it. Put a copy on the fridge door. In this way family members (or room mates) will be able to help you keep on track without nagging you (ie the responsibility is **yours**, but your family can act as a safety net)
- If you don't understand a task set by your lecturer - ask, otherwise you may waste time doing unnecessary work.
- Some students find it useful to use a tape recorder rather than a written diary.

"**...When I was at school my teachers used to write in a communications book, all the tasks I needed to do each day. I have kept this up myself...**"

Getting started

- Organise a quiet, interruption-free zone (complete with do not disturb sign).
- Always study in the same spot, have a desk and filing cabinet for your files. Buy storage for your computer disks and make sure you **always** label disks.
- Starting on the first day of semester, read through your notes at the end of each day; take no more than half an hour, and avoid the temptation to rewrite your notes- underline, circle, add in some comments. Material you review in this way will stay in your memory more effectively but more importantly it ensures you have a regular daily task.
- Use prompts to get yourself started: ask someone to remind you, write yourself a note about when you intend to study, or use an alarm to remind you to stop an activity at a certain time and commence studying.
- Break tasks into small sections, for example read a chapter, write an introduction, do two maths problems – **always** complete at least one of the tasks you set yourself. Sometimes getting started can be the hardest part and doing a small section of work will give you the momentum to continue

Keeping going

- Draw up a semester timetable; this will enable you to get an overview of the semester's workload. Use course outlines to do this and mark in the due dates for all assessments and exams. You'll also need 'complete-by-dates' which are a few days before the actual dates.
- Use a weekly timetable to note all your study and other commitments (such as a part-time job, singing lessons or domestic chores). Use different colours to distinguish these. Look for times adjacent to lectures and tutorials that you can use for ongoing reading and preparation. In general you will need to allow at least 2 hours of study for each hour of class time, a little more for

subjects you find difficult, and more again when assignments and exams are due.

- If you become distracted easily, make sure study time is organised by task not time — make sure tasks are achievable in for example one hour (less or more according to your level of distractibility)
- Allow yourself time focusing on activities you enjoy as a reward for completing a task.
- If you can't make your mind up about something, for example a maths problem, or whether to include a piece of information in an essay:

  stop work

  ask someone else's opinion

  if you are still unsure, move on to some other work.

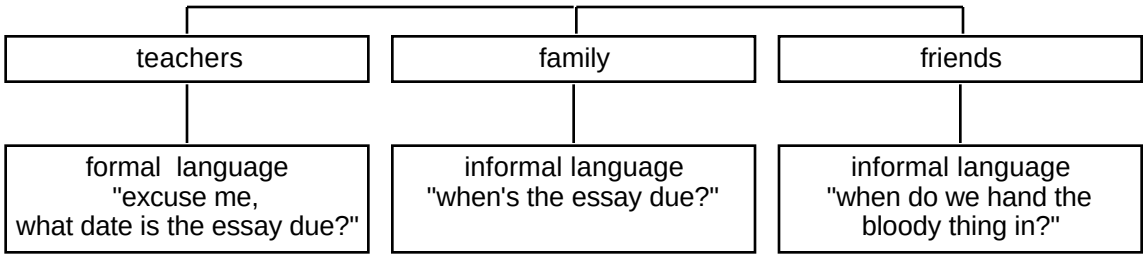
- Maintain a balance in your life between body, mind and spirit . Successful students prepare their body and spirit as well as their mind.
- Associate sitting at your desk with serious study and start work immediately. Lying on your bed to study, or sitting on the floor next to the heater may well put you to sleep.
- Ask the **Disability Liaison Officer** (the person at university whose role it is to advise and support you) if they can organise for someone to spend 10 minutes at the beginning of the day to go over essential tasks and 10 minutes at the end of the day to help you prepare for tomorrow.
- You might find it helpful to have a book in which you (or the Disability Liaison Officer) notes down the day's '**Must Do**' tasks.

Ideas for Effective Communication

Suggestions for communicating with others

A major part of studying at university involves communicating with different groups, and the language style may alter with each group. Lecturers and tutors at university would consider their language to be quite informal, but it is much more formal than the language you'd use with friends and family as the following diagram shows.

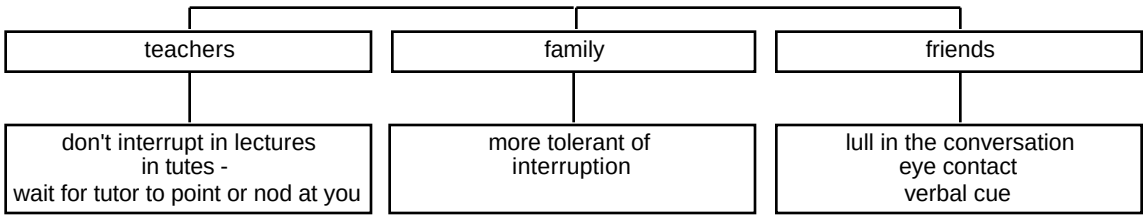
Communication



Some turntaking cues

A conversation involves people taking turns to speak, knowing the right cues can be different in different situations.

knowing when to interrupt



In tutorial discussion and when talking with friends, it is usually not a good idea for one person to dominate the conversation, even if they are the ones who may have the answers. In large group lectures the lecturer will usually do all the talking and not expect students to interrupt or comment.

Some suggestions for social interaction

Many students with Aspergers find relating to others one of the most stressful aspects of studying.

"**...Sometimes I feel as if I don't belong, I feel uncomfortable in tutes or at lunchtime when everyone else seems to know where they're going and what they're doing...** "

Students at your secondary school will have come to know you well and to tolerate and value your idiosyncrasies - at uni you may feel less understood and less valued. Other students however, have found that at uni, they meet a greater tolerance and are more likely to find others who share their interests.

" **Already I believe, if I do not deceive myself, I have developed a small, insignificant but firm place, like a bizarre species of limpit fitting into a rock** "

Here are some ways of coping when people don't seem to understand you.

- Talk it over with a university counsellor or the Disability Liaison Officer.
- Remind yourself of your positive qualities.
- Remember we are all free to choose who we like and dislike and that not everyone will like you.
- Work out what caused the feeling and whether the cause can be addressed.
- Practice relaxation and positive self-talk every day.

"**...I used to go to the library at lunchtime to read. Even if I'd had a difficult morning this would relax me...**"

Some advice for communicating in tutorials

While some people may look very confident, almost everyone reports feeling nervous about talking in tutorials for the first time. It may be hard at first to communicate among strangers, but you'll need to find a balance between contributing and listening to others.

Here are some strategies others have found useful.

- Practise role plays with your counsellor, parent or friend, try to understand the perspective of others.
- Practise knowing when it's OK to interrupt. Temple Grandin (a successful scientist and author who has Asperger's) talks about a technique of 'comic strip conversation' in which stick figures indicate different levels of communication. By using visual representations, you can learn the cues for identifying when to take your turn in a conversation (momentary pause, topic ending, body language or eye contact).
- Sit next to someone you know (from school, from an orientation day tour, from another class).
- Before the tutor arrives, talk to the person next to you; some possible conversation openers are:
  - what secondary school did you go to?
  - do you have far to travel to uni?
  - why did you choose this subject?
  - were you able to find (set reading). in the library?

  You might also comment on the context (the weather, whether the lecturer is late, how uncomfortable the seating is). Whether you ask a question or make a comment, don't forget to **wait for the response**. If the person

responds to you, take it as a sign to follow up, if they respond with only a yes or no, it may be better not to continue.

- Tutors will want to make sure all students participate so make sure you don't dominate the discussion (give others a turn too, even if you know the answers). There is usually an etiquette about tutorial participation, raise your hand slightly (not usually all the way up as you may have been used to at school) and / or make eye contact with the tutor before you speak.
- Do any prereading that is set so you are able to participate knowledgably.

Some students with Asperger's consolidate their thoughts by repeating the comment they have just heard before answering. Others students with Asperger's will vocalise or talk to themselves either quietly or out loud. Both these behaviours will be seen as odd or even rude. Practise using a phrase like '**think it don't say it**' when you're near other people.

"**...I found that people would stare at me if my clothing was in disarray so I used the following checklist each morning**

✓ **Shoes are matching**
✓ **Shirt tucked in**
✓ **Shoe laces tied**
✓ **Socks are not caught in trousers**
✓ **Hair combed...**"

Some tips for going on fieldwork placement

Some courses at university have a practical or Fieldwork component. On Fieldwork placement, you will be trying out your new knowledge and skills in a real work environment. Your employer will be legally responsible for you and your work, including your and others' safety. If you have not already done so, and you are worried about a fieldwork placement, you might decide to disclose the fact that you haveAsperger's to your fieldwork coordinator. Your Fieldwork co-ordinator may be able to suggest some accommodations to the employer (with your permission).

Remember that the first day or two are usually for observation or simple tasks.

Here are some tips.

- Don't be afraid to ask questions or repeat the question to know exactly what you are expected to do.
- Get a good mentor who can guide you through the tasks, gradually increasing the complexity of the tasks, and give you balanced feedback.
- If stressed, ask for a break or for the task to be broken down into smaller steps.
- Debrief with someone after the working day, even if on the phone.

- Identify what you find hard and whether it is necessary to carry it out that way.
- Note what you can do well and put it into words (and on paper).
- Consider asking for a substitute activity if you find staying in a placement difficult or stressful.

" **...I think my parents and teacher were more worrried about my field work placement than I was. I didn't go on the help desk (I was in a library) but some of my ideas for online work really pleased them. I was very pleased to be asked back to work in the holidays...**"

Experiment with Different Study Techniques

Having Asperger's may mean that you can be a bit more creative in the study techniques you choose. Experiment, find what works for **you**!

Suggestions for visual learners

Many students with Asperger's learn better visually. If you are studying a subject like Biology or Chemistry when you have to remember connected ideas, draw a diagram rather than write the ideas down. If you are trying to remember important but trivial things like whether you have turned off the iron or locked the front door - take a snapshot with your mind (visualise yourself completing the task). In this way you will have a visual photograph you can retrieve when you need it.

> Investigate concept map software for example, **Inspiration** at:
> http://www.inspiration.com/

When you are working with ideas for an essay or for a exam, you might find it helpful to use the organisational chart software that most word processing packages include. It will help you link ideas and visualise how ideas relate to each other. Concept maps can be particularly helpful in organising your ideas for essays and studying.

> Visit a **Concept Map** website at:
> http://classes.aces.uiuc.edu/ACES100/Mind/

Suggestions for perfectionists

Some students with Asperger's are perfectionists, here are some strategies to help perfectionists.

1. Prioritise - decide what has to be done NOW, what can be left to tomorrow and what can be left until next week.
2. Remember, you don't have to do **everything** - generally, it's possible to **select** from the pre-reading list, the problem sheet or the list of novels.
3. Students, even postgraduate students, are apprentices at their academic trade, you are not expected to have mastered everything.
4. Remember the 80% rule; you might complete 80% of a task in the first hour, but then take four hours perfecting the last 20% – it often makes more sense to accept a slightly less than perfect outcome in the interests of meeting your deadline.
5. If you come across interesting ideas which you find it difficult to ignore or leave out, file them away (on your computer or in a manila folder). They can then be accessed later for another essay or even a journal article without distracting you from your main purpose.

Tips for oral presentations

As part of tutorial participation you may have to present a topic to your peers. Most students find this difficult but some students with Asperger's find it particularly stressful.

> A useful website for **oral presentations** is:
> **Virtual Presentation Assistant**
> http://www.ukans.edu/cwis/units/coms2/vpa/vpa.htm

Here are some tips that other students have found helpful when giving oral presentations.

- Write your talk out, leaving a column on the left to write key words and phrases. In this way you have the confidence of knowing how long your talk will take and the comfort of having something to fall back on, but you can focus on the key words when you give your talk so you avoid the pitfalls of reading.
- Dress for confidence (wear something you know you feel good in).
- Have some questions prepared to facilitate discussion.
- Use overheads or powerpoint (apart from looking professional, it will help make sure your talk is well organised. Many students find it comforting to know that the audience is looking at a screen not them!
- If you find it difficult to make eye contact with your audience, shift your gaze around slowly, resting your gaze more often on people you feel comfortable with.

Sitting for exams

The following suggestions may help you redress some of the effects of Asperger's. They will not **advantage** you, just allow you to work at the same level as your peers.

- You may be able to arrange for alternative exam formats (check with the DLO at least 5 weeks before the exam).
- If writing speed or legibility is a problem, you may be able to arrange to use a computer or to have extra time.
- You may find it easier to do your exam in an alternative environment by your self.
- **Plan** your time in exams and stick to it (for example, if you go 5 minutes overtime for each of 4 questions you may run out of time for the 5th)
- Use relaxation techniques during exams (for example, breathing and stretching exercises). Visualisation can be helpful in alleviating panic attacks; imagine yourself studying at your desk, not only will it help you relax, but the association may trigger your memory.

Using adaptive technology

Some students really enjoy using technology, but even if you don't really like computers and other technological innovations, it's worth considering how they can help you. A computer course may prove a time-saving investment.

- If your handwriting is not easy to read, a computer will ensure others are able to read and therefore value your contributions.
- Think about how you can use files and folders on the computer to help sort ideas for an essay.
- A notepad computer may be useful in arranging your notes.
- Investigate software like **Endnote** to simplify potentially time consuming tasks like referencing.
- Would voice activated technology reduce fatigue associated with writing?
- See if you can access your e-mail account from home. Contact your campus Computer Centre or the Information Technology centre.

Explore **Dragon Dictate software** at:
http://www.dragonsys.com/marketing/dragondictate.html

and other **Voice Recognition software** at:
http://www.iglou.com/vrsky/index.html

Dealing with Stress

Study **is** stressful! Unexpected situations often seem to happen when you least expect them.

Some of the things that can contribute to stress include:

- The lecturer may not be sufficiently flexible with timelines or assessment.
- The assignment or essay may be extremely hard to write to your satisfaction.
- The feedback or marks from tutors may seem unfairly critical
- The course may cover topics that you find unpleasant or uninteresting, or the course might go at a pace that's too fast.
- The tutor may be late or absent, leaving times with no apparent structure.
- Your computer might crash at a critical moment and you may lose your assignment if you haven't backed it up.
- You may miss some classes and fear you are falling behind and can't catch up.

Here are some suggestions for building your resilience to stressful situations:

1. If you find yourself becoming upset during a conversation, you might find it useful to end the discussion rather than let it escalate into an argument.
2. Soothe and calm yourself by using controlled breathing exercises or visualising yourself in pleasant situations.
3. Try utilising a disassociative technique such as imagining you are behind a glass screen.

Here are some suggested strategies to avoid stress:

- Find out ways that calm you best and practise these.
- Find a quiet retreat or safe space you can go when you need it.
- Take time off when feeling especially vulnerable.
- Try to rearrange your situation to minimise stress (for example if you find a particular tutorial distressing you can arrange to transfer or if you find it hard to get to early classes you may be able to reschedule them).

Where to Look for Help and Advice

There are many staff at university whose job is to provide support for students Here are some of the useful people and services at your university you should know about.

- Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) can act on your behalf and arrange accommodations and equipment to suit your needs.
- Learning/Study Skills Advisers usually offer workshops at the beginning of each semester. These include: effective reading techniques, how to research and write assignments and exam preparation. They also provide individual help with any aspect of learning that concerns you.
- Library staff offer introductory sessions on using the library efficiently as well as assistance in accessing information and using library adaptive technology.
- University Health Service staff are familiar with university procedures and may be able to provide supporting documentation for your disability.
- Counsellors can help you with personal problems and other difficulties such as exam anxiety and motivation.
- Chaplains offer pastoral care and personal and spiritual support.
- Student Union Welfare/Education Officers can answer questions about a range of campus matters.
- Career and Employment Advisers can tell you about the career outcomes of various courses, give information and advice on job seeking and can help link you to part-time jobs. They also assist new graduates find employment.

The first year at a campus can be lonely for many students, including those with Asperger's. It takes time to feel comfortable on campus, to get to know other students and to find out which staff are available and understanding. It can be hard for any student to reach out and introduce oneself to others, but it may be harder for students with Asperger's. It is important to make use of the structures that universities have in place to help students feel at home and feel part of the university.

It is useful to remember that studying at university is about developing your social and professional skills as well as your academic skills.

Universities will have many clubs and societies which bring together students with common interests. Find out about these during the orientation period at the beginning of your first year. There may be chess clubs, environmental groups, chorale groups, Arthurian societies, archaeology societies - if you can find a group to join it will help you find a group of people you feel comfortable

with. Lectures are so large, finding a smaller group is an excellent way to begin to find a sense of belonging.

"**...I have to say it was quite gratifying to come across others as interested in Arthurian legends as I was...**"

Many students find 'virtual' discussion groups on the internet another good way of linking with others. The advantage of internet discussion groups is that you can communicate at any time of the day or night and because they are relatively 'anonymous' many students with Asperger's find it easier to make initial contacts.

"**...On the internet there is always someone who'll talk to me and I find it easier to talk when people aren't looking at me...**"

> For information **about e-mail discussion groups, lists and resources** try these websites:
> http://www.webcom.com/impulse/list.html
> http://tile.net/

Many faculties and departments will have **Mentor**, **Buddy** or **Host schemes** and these can often be great ways to link socially and academically with students or staff.

"...I took the first step to approach relevant services early even though I was anxious about this...all this help is available, but if you want to be successful at tertiary level, find a supportive staff member who understands Apserger's who can facilitate communication strategies for you...and help you become more proactive..."

Negotiating to Meet your Needs

While you were at school, your parents would have been responsible for making sure you received any additional help, as an adult, this responsibility is now yours. There will be many people willing to help you succeed at uni, but it will be up to you to take responsibility for finding them and making sure you get the help you need to optimise your chances of doing as well as you can. Be an active participant in how your life and work at university are managed.

- Learn how to influence your environment to better suit your needs (see below for a list of suggested alternate accommodations).
- Develop your assertiveness skills. Investigate available training programs through the Student Union. Remember **you** are your own best advocate!

HOW CAN YOUR UNIVERSITY HELP?

Accommodations

You have a right to ask for **accommodations** which will make it easier for you to study with Asperger's. The accommodations or adjustments a college can make will depend both on your individual needs, and on the nature of support available at your university. A better understanding of the impact of Asperger's on study and some careful thought, will assist you to negotiate your specific needs. Here are some accommodations (or course adjustments) that other students have found useful:

- waiving attendance requirements
- extended course completion time
- additional examination time
- notetaking or taping of lectures
- regular meetings with a counsellor to talk through concerns
- assistance with application and selection processes
- quiet retreat area
- technology aids (for example, computer software, hardware, calculators, tape recorders)
- alternatives to group task requirements
- a 'minder' or 'buddy' who can go with you to classes
- allocated 'organisation time' with the DLO to ensure you are up-to-date with assignments know when exams are held.

Think about how **YOU** are affected by Asperger's and be creative in the solutions (not all solutions are complex or expensive!).

Do I have to Disclose my Condition to Receive Help?

Many of the suggestions in this booklet can be implemented without disclosing. However, your faculty or department will need to understand you and the nature of Asperger's Syndrome if they are to provide **'special consideration'**. Most of your lecturers will know very little about Asperger's Syndrome and disclosing will help them understand you. An alternative is to **'partially disclose'** by talking to your DLO. The DLO can then facilitate special consideration or accommodations.

Here are some of the advantages of disclosing that you have Asperger's.

- You can obtain access to services such as accommodations, adjustments to course, facilities and services.
- You should be better understood and accepted.
- You could get more emotional support.
- Staff could show greater interest, care, and follow-up.
- It will make it easier for staff to act appropriately in difficult situations.
- It will help make sure you are not discriminated against because you have AS.
- Lecturers will have a context for understanding you.

Students who have chosen to disclose, give reasons such as:

> "**...I find help in exams useful, I sit in a room by myself...**"
> "**...I think it's a way to help people understand me...**"

It is a far from perfect world, however, and universities are microcosms of the societies they are part of. Disclosure has not always resulted in increased understanding, nor have students always received the support they felt entitled to.

"**...Some lecturers felt obliged to make decisions for me and treated me differently once they knew...**"

> "**...Because people seem to associate autism with intellectual disability, some people treated me as if I was stupid...**"

Despite the potential problems, by disclosing your condition you can gain access to many supports which would otherwise be unavailable to you.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you have a disability, you have rights under the **Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act** and **State Equal Opportunity** legislation. This means you are entitled to ask for **accommodations** so that you can participate in your chosen course.

Make sure that you provide feedback to your lecturers or your DLO if you feel that your needs are not being met. If you are still not satisfied with what is being provided, you should enquire about how you can make a complaint through your institution's internal procedures.

If you have gone through this process and are still not satisfied, you can take the matter to the **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission** (HREOC). **HREOC** has a web page at:

> **http://www.hreoc. gov.au/**
> You can access the **Disability Rights** section at:
> **http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/index.html**

The Disability Law Advocacy Service can assist you as well, (**Ph: 03-9602 4877** in Victoria).
The publication: **A User Guide to the Disability Discrimination Act** can be obtained from Villamanta Publishing Service (**Ph: 03-5229 2029** in Victoria).

RESOURCES

Electronic Resources and Support Organisations

Many students find online resources very useful and easy to access. This list should help you to get started in using electronic resources. Ask your librarian for assistance too.

> To help you get started using the Internet, you may wish to try out:
> **Surfing the Net Tutorial** at:
> http://www.macarthur.uws.edu.au/ssd/Idc/Nettute.html
> and
> **Some Hot links for Online Research** at:
> http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/Isu/researchonline.html

Asperger's Syndrome Support Network Home Page
This is an Australian-based page.
http://www.vicnet.net.au/vicnet/community/asperger

Asperger's Disorder Home Page
Prepared by Kaan R. Ozbayrak with links to other sites.
http://www.ummed.edu.8000/pub/o/ozbayrak/asperger.html

OASIS - Online Asperger's Syndrome Information and Support
Comprehensive information (both practical and research based) with links to other pages.
http://wwwudel.edu/bkirby/asperger/

Website maintained by people with autism and associated syndromes
This is a good site for peer support, forums and self-help strategies.
http://amug.org/na203/index.html

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)
Provides advocacy, education, training and information for people with disabilities from non-English speaking backgrounds.
Ph: 03-9388 1613

Alternative Assessments for Students with Disabilities
http://www.anu.edu.au/secretary/disabilities/book1.html

Association of Graduates who have a Disability
Ph 03-5227 1427

The Directory of Disability Information and Resources for theEducation Community - Tertiary (DIRECT)
http://direct.deakin.edu.au

Disability Information Network Australia (DINA)
http://avoca.vicnet.net.au/~dina/

Friends Health Connection
Online one-to-one customised peer support
http://www.48friend.org/index.htm

OZADVOCACY
Information dissemination and discussion list for people interested in disability rights in Australia
To subscribe send a message to **listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu**
and in the body write:
subscribe OZADVOCACY your name
If you have any problems contact Ria Strong (strong@infoxchange.net.au)

RDLU (Regional Disability Liaison Unit)
http://www.deakin.edu.au/extern/rdlu/
Ph: 03-9244 5437

Tertiary Initiatives for People with Disabilities (TIPD).
http://www.qut.edu.au/pubs/09other/tipd/tipdhome.html

Study Skills

- ***Unilearning: Learning Resources for University Students***
  http://www.macarthur.uws.edu.au/ssd/unilearning/welcome.html

- ***Resources for Writers***
  Owl Handouts: An Outline of All the Documents
  An excellent resource for study and writing topics
  http://owl.english.purdue.edu/writers/by-topic.html

Books

Asperger's Syndrome

Attwood, T. (1998). **Asperger's syndrome: A guide for parents and teachers.** London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Grandin, T. (1993). **Thinking in pictures**. New York: Doubleday.
Temple Grandin is a scientist and writer who herself has autism.

Friendship

Mathews A. (1990). **Making friends: A guide to getting along with people**. Singapore: Media Masters.

Marquis M.A. (1990). **Pragmatic language trivia for thinking skills.** Arizona: Communication Skills Builders.

Gabor, D. (1983). **How to start a conversation and make friends**. London: Sheldon Press.

Study Skills

Bates, D and Sharpe, P. (1996). **Writer's handbook for university students.** Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Buzan, T. (1995). **Use your head** (updated ed). London: BBC Books.

Clanchy, J. & Ballard, B. (1991). **Essay writing for students: A practical guide.** Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Orr, F. (1997). **How to pass exams**. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Studying at tertiary level

Birch, N. A., Rothery, M. & Waltrowicz, C. (eds) (1998). **Making it happen: A resource book for people who have a disability and who are considering post-school options.** Melbourne: RDLU.

Marshall, L. & Rowland, F. (1993). **A guide to learning independently.** Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Turney, C. & Teo, R. (1994). **A guide to successful transition to university: You can make it!** NSW: Sydmac Academic Press.