

Supporting Students on the Autism Spectrum through COVID-19

Jane Thierfeld Brown, Ed.D.
College Autism Spectrum

Lorre Wolf, Ph.D
Boston University

COLLEGE



CAREER

Conference Civility Statement

We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects...

Access and Inclusion

and

Civility and Respect

...consistent with the [AHEAD Statement of Civility](#) during our conference and in all aspects of our organization.

“Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will prove best at any given moment?”

— HARVEY BLUME, THE ATLANTIC, 1998



National Statistics

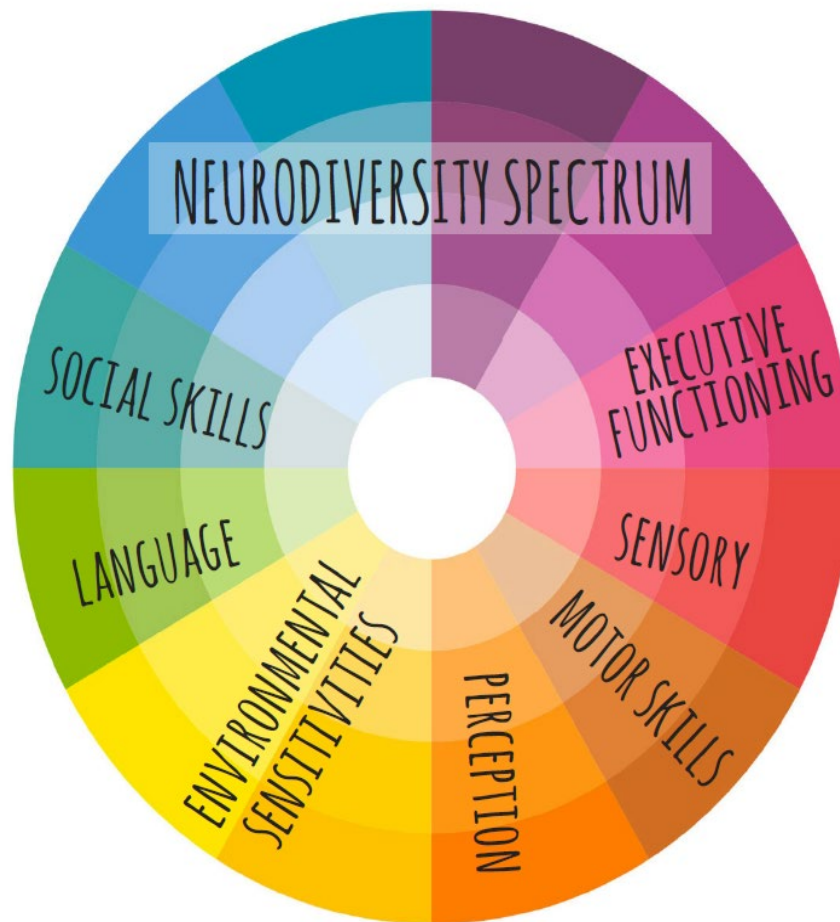
1 in 54 - 8 year olds (CDC 2020)

3 million Americans

Fastest-growing developmental disability

10 - 17 % annual growth





TRigler, Rutherford-Moody, AHEAD, 2017

Sensory Overload

“The sun is too loud....it’s as if everything I can see has a corresponding auditory of high notes and crashes. Makes it difficult to concentrate—even to walk upright”.

“it feels like everyone is talking at once and you don't know who to listen to”

Strengths

- Adherence to rules
- Loyal, trustworthy
- Reliable
- Avoids classroom politics
- Enjoys routine work
- Direct communication style
- Attention to detail

Obstacles

- Acclimating to new routines
- Campus culture
- Social expectations
- Communication
- Mastering college processes

Anxiety

- Anxiety interferes with Self Regulation
- Anxiety is a core feature of ASD
- Students need active coping strategies as part of the plan



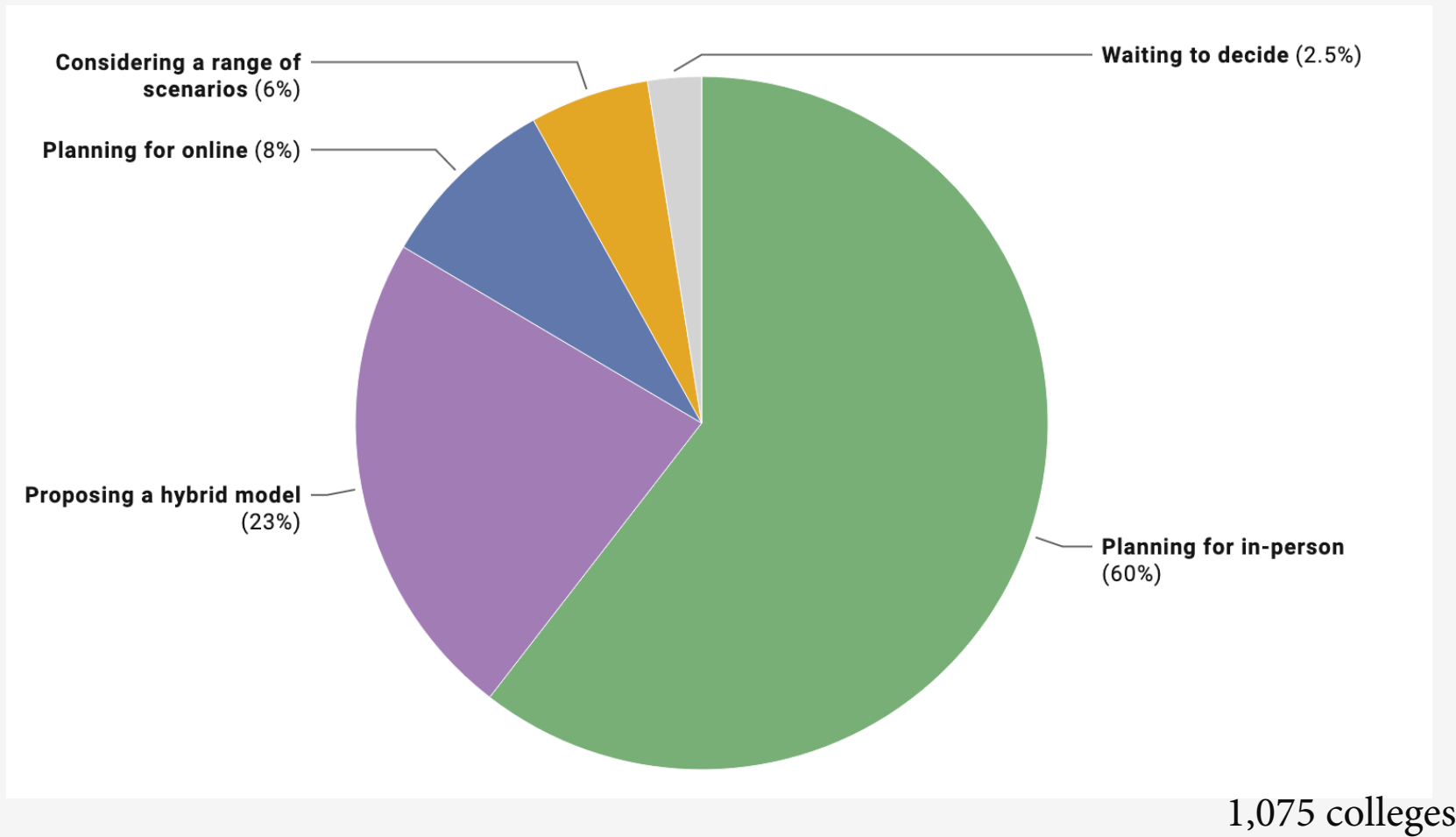
Zoom fatigue

- [“Zoom Fatigue” Gives Neurotypicals a Rare Glimpse Into the Experience of Autistic Adults](https://planetnd.market/articles-and-videos/zoom-fatigue-gives-neurotypicals-a-rare-glimpse-into-the-experience-of-autistic-adults)

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Chronicle of Higher Ed 7/5/2020



Challenges

- 1. Unpredictability**
- 2. Lack of Flexibility**
- 3. Anxiety**



Anxiety Action Points by Nick Dubin

- Consciously use healthy compensation to reduce anxiety levels. Feeling inferior is not a reason to compensate.
- Accept yourself for who you are and there is no need to overcompensate.
- True growth occurs when you put yourself in situations that are slightly beyond your comfort zone, creating slight stress. Try to challenge yourself.



Con't Nick Dubin

- Find appropriate outlets for your stress without falling into the trap of developing unhealthy addictions.
- The parasympathetic nervous system's job is to help you relax. Learn to let it do its job.
- P. 41 Asperger Syndrome and Anxiety: A Guide to Stress Management



Change

Barrier

- Students on the spectrum may react poorly to change in routine.
- students with autism may be **anxious** to know the **plan** for the coming weeks of class.
- **Accommodations**
- **reassurance** (when possible) **to quell anxiety**, is necessary for all students.



Course Work and Motivation

- **Barriers.**
- Are students motivated to complete work **independently, initiate** assignments and study.
- **Accommodations**
- Assisting with **structure** and **schedules**



Isolation

- **Barrier**
- **forcing isolation** with “social distancing.”
- **Accommodation**
- Encourage students to **keep up social contacts** online with skype or facetime. Study groups can meet online and multiplayer games can be suggested for social continuity. However....



Social Activities

- Group Netflix movie
- Virtual Cooking
- Psych
- Board Games (Life, Monopoly)
- Pictionary
- Cards Against Humanity



Screen and Game Addiction

- vulnerable to screen and game addiction with moving classes online
- **Barrier**
- even more screen time
- **Accommodation –**
- use a timer to take screen breaks, getting outside, eating, sleeping all are even more important now than ever (and for us too!)



Residence Halls

- Students may like the independence college has afforded them and not want to return to a restrictive home life where a variety of food and entertainment options are negligible and parents may be intrusive.
- Remind students of the temporary nature of the current crisis, they will be returning to their residence halls (at least in the fall.)
- Students may report a decrease in symptoms since moving to college. Ask them how they can continue a healthy lifestyle at home.

Adjusting your study habits during COVID

- **We'll get through this together.**
- From the Center for Academic Innovation
University of Michigan

<https://ai.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/student-disruption.pdf>

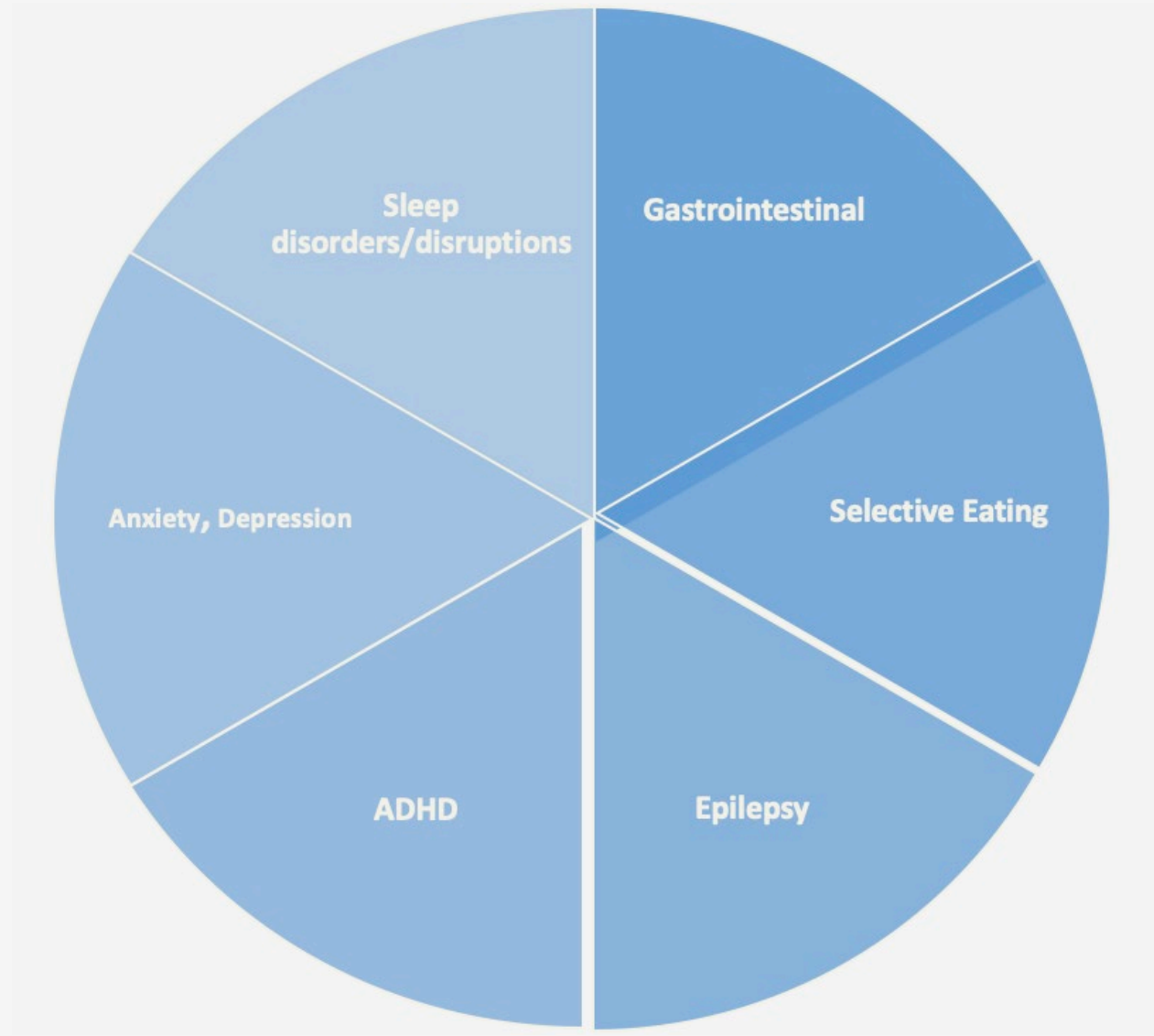


1. Staying organized

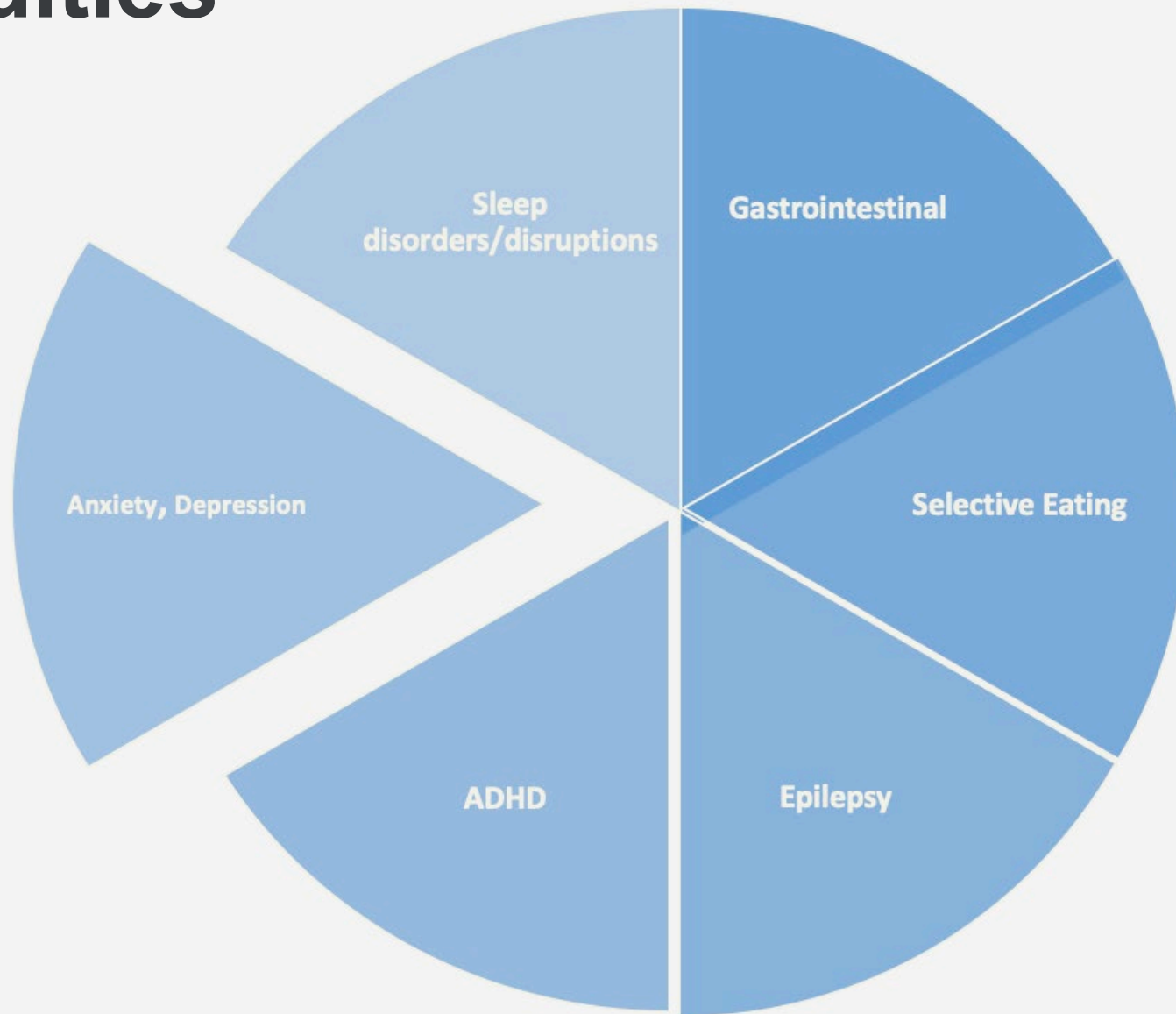
- With so many things changing in your courses, you might be reliving that first-week-of-class confusion at finals-week pace.
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Comorbidities



Comorbidities



The opposite of anxiety isn't calm
it's trust



Autism is a Disability of Trust



Prizant, B. M., & Fields-Meyer, T. (2015). *Uniquely human: A different way of seeing autism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

When we return to our typical life:

- **Remember the trust issues**
- **Be sensitive to PTSD**



Parents

- **This is a new role for them.**
- **Change in family dynamic.**
- **Family is worried about... everything!**



Guide Parents

- **Info from Parent Group last week**

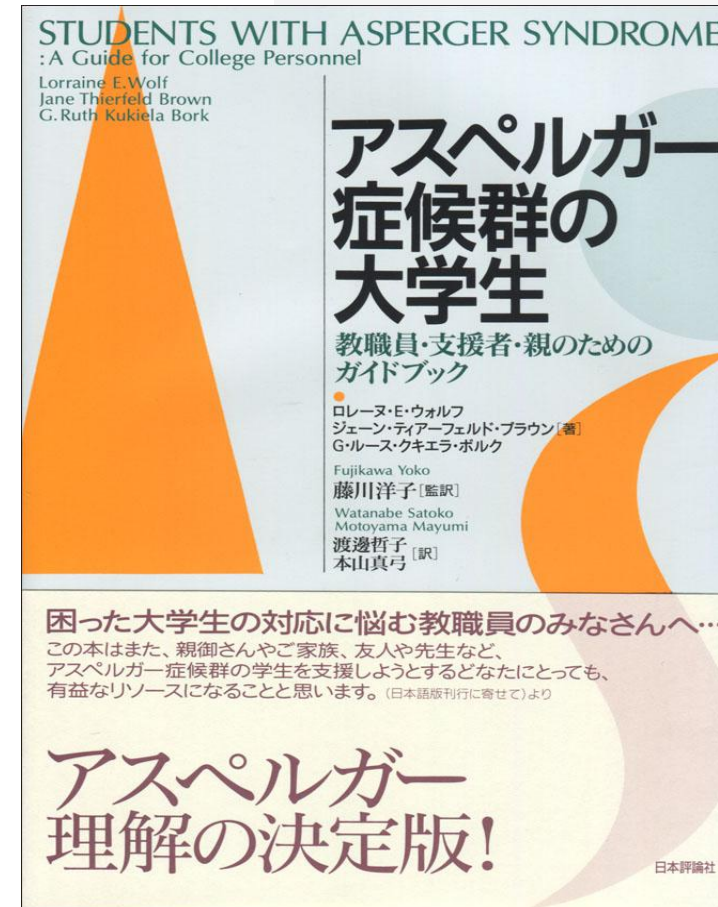
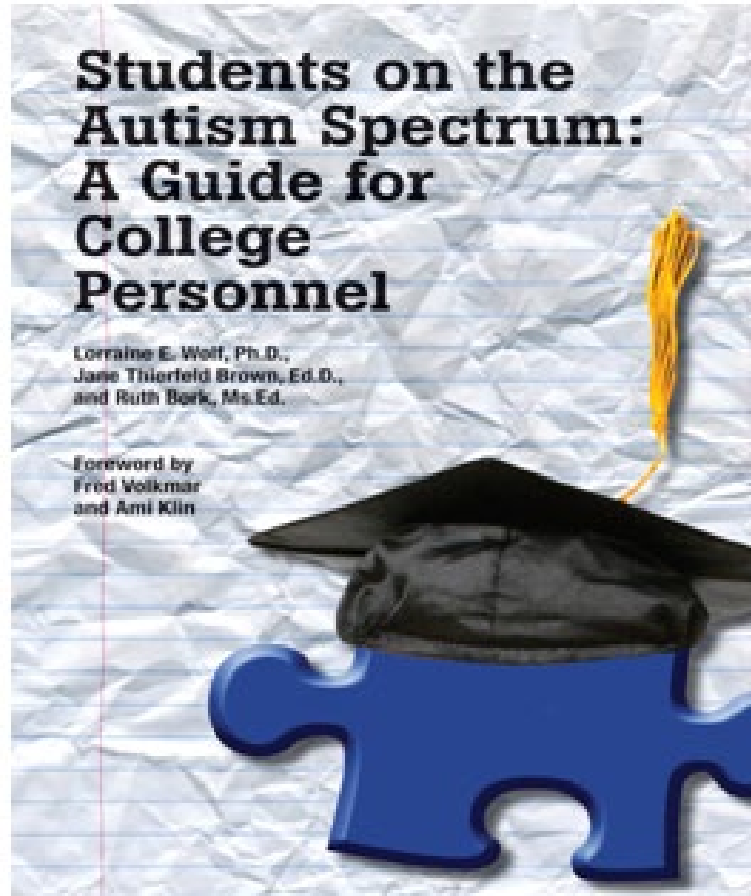


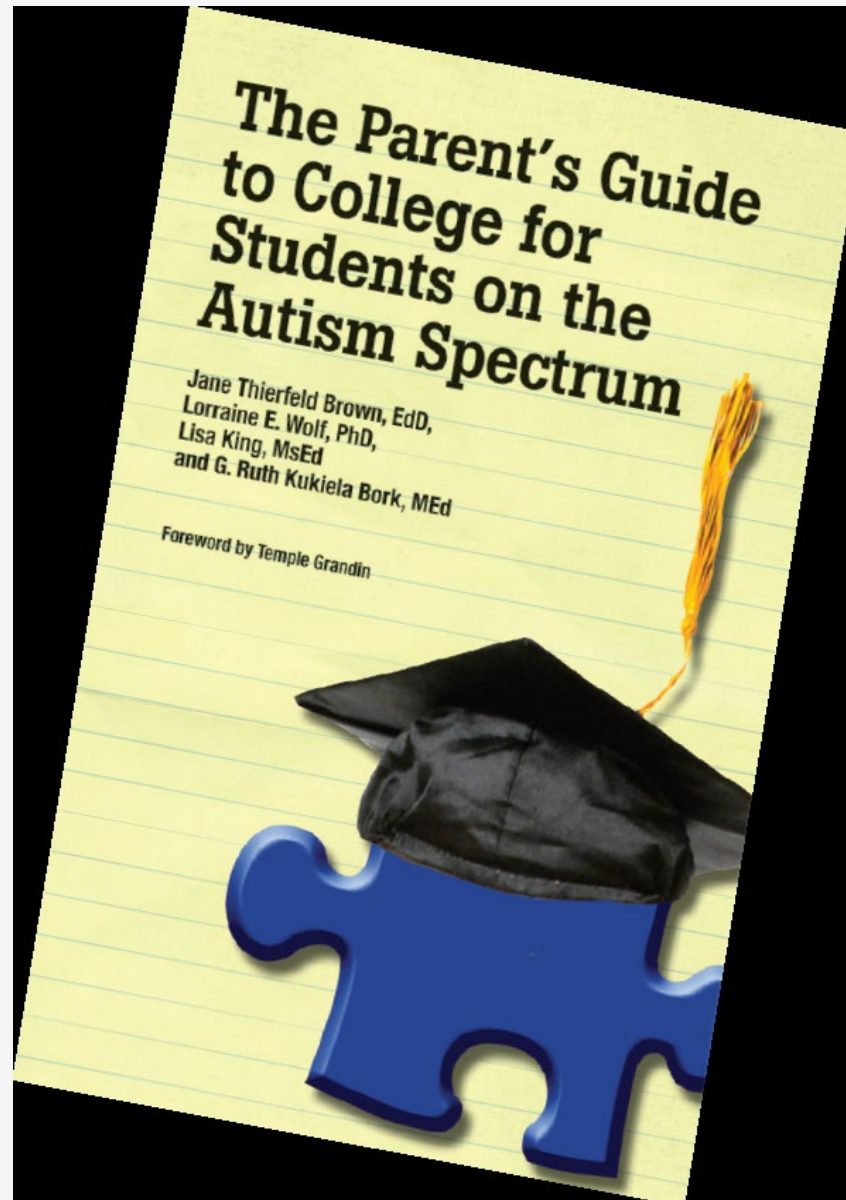
Thank you for all you do!

- For all the students
- For all the families –
especially the ones who don't, or
can't say **thank you**.

Please Stay Well



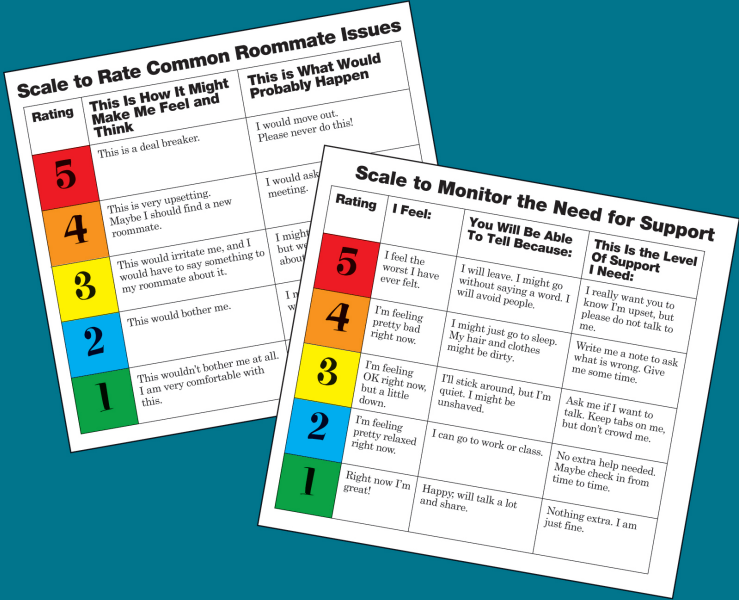




Social Behavior and Self-Management

5-Point Scales for Adolescents and Adults

This award-winning tool now expanded for adults!



Kari Dunn Buron, MS
Jane Thierfeld Brown, EdD
Mitzi Curtis, MA
Lisa King, MEd

Foreword by Stephen Shore, EdD

Session Evaluation

- [Link to Session Evaluation Form](https://tinyurl.com/AHEAD2020-SessionEval)
tinyurl.com/AHEAD2020-SessionEval
- Your feedback helps shape future programming.
- Thank you for attending!

Questions and Comments

Thank you for coming.

Jane Thierfeld Brown, Ed.D
Lorre Wolf, Ph.D

Jane@CollegeAutismSpectrum.com
LWolf@bu.edu

www.CollegeAutismSpectrum.com

