WHAT IS ASD?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a group of developmental disorders that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. The group of disorders includes Asperger Syndrome and Autism with different degree of severity resulting in behavioral manifestation. Students with ASD show impairment in two main concerns from early childhood and limit or impair everyday functioning:

Persistent deficits in social communication and interaction:
Difficulties in social-emotional reciprocity, problems in nonverbal communicative behaviors, as well as challenges in developing, maintaining and understanding relationships. The symptoms presented are persistent across multiple contexts and settings.

Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities:
Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, insistence on sameness and inflexible adherence to routines, highly restricted or fixedated interests, as well hyper- or hyperactivity to sensory inputs.

Researches suggest there may be about 1% of the world population has ASD and many will also have a learning disability. Different sub-groups within the spectrum have been described, for example:
- Asperger’s syndrome
- High functioning autism
- Classical autism
- Kanner’s syndrome

There are no specific treatments for the main symptoms of ASD, although there are strategies to help reduce the difficulties linked with symptoms. These aim to improve the quality of life for individuals with ASD and their families. Helpful strategies vary greatly between individuals, so it is important that a care plan is tailored to a person’s specific needs. Treatments can include behavioral, educational, and psychological components to improve social, learning and communication skills, as well as emotional management.

Medication is not routinely prescribed for ASD, but there are circumstances in which it may be appropriate to do so.

WHAT DOES SEN MEAN?

A Special Educational Need (SEN) refers to an individual student’s learning needs while facing academic challenges and difficulty in adjustment to learning environment due to a disability or an impairment, that can be a temporary or permanent condition.

SUPPORT SERVICES AT HKUST

The SEN & Diversability Team (DA) of the Counseling and Wellness Center is the primary contact with students who declare their SEN with the University. DA supports students from the very first step of the SEN declaration through completion of study at HKUST. DA officers meet with each declared student individually to map out a reasonable academic accommodation plan (aka IEP / Individualized Educational Plan) and to assess the needs for available resources and suitable support services.

The data collected will be handled with strict security and confidentiality and in compliance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance of Hong Kong. The below lists out some of the possible accommodations to address the special needs of students with ASD:
- advance notice to new assignments, field trips and readings
- preferential seating to minimize distraction
- supports to group projects or assignments that need students to pair up, without altering course objectives
- testing in a semi-private, quiet or separate place
TIPS TO COMMUNICATE WITH A PERSON WHO HAS ASD

- make your conversation clear
- stick to a defined topic
- avoid touching without warning
- expect interruptions in the conversation
- give time to answer
- be prepared that people on the spectrum may miss nonverbal cues, like body language and facial expression

HELPFUL QUOTE

“The thing about being autistic is that you gradually get less and less autistic because you keep learning, you keep learning how to behave. It’s like being in a play; I’m always in a play.”

- Temple Grandin
Animal Science Professor with ASD

DIVERSABILITY, ADVOCACY, RESOURCES & EQUITY

DARE is a group of enthusiastic students who want to empower the HKUST campus community to positively impact the support to students with SEN. The role of the ambassadors is to cultivate a campus where everyone’s diverse abilities are appreciated and where everyone feels accepted and nourished.

No matter how much you know about SEN, where you are from, and who you are, you can be a part of DARE if you want to contribute to campus inclusion!

(Special thanks to DARE for the great contribution to the production of this leaflet series!)

CONTACT US

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