

Counseling Corner

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

APRIL 2016

**COUNSELING &
STUDENT SUCCESS
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LOOK FOR OUR FUTURE WORKSHOPS ON:

- Stress and Anxiety Management
- Choosing a Major and Career
- Choosing a Major Based on Your Personality
- Study/Test Taking Strategies
- Time Management Skills

IMPORTANT NEWS

Did you know as a full time employee of CCM, you are entitled to free, confidential counseling from the EAP Program through Barnabas Health? Each employee (and dependents on health plan) has access of up to 6 sessions per event. For example, if someone were to seek support for a divorce, and then later had a death in the family, the employee would be eligible for six sessions for each event; and then referred to a therapist in his/her health plan.

Call 800.300.0628 (24 hours seven days a week) to speak to a clinician and set up an appointment. Fliers for EAP can be found at HR or in the C&SS Office. Additional information can be found through HR on spider:

<http://www3.ccm.edu/spider/article.asp?thisHeadline=428&thisDept=HumanResources>

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder: Insight from the Dean of Students

Have you ever had a student you just didn't know how to manage in class? You know the student that I'm referring to. He's the one who is constantly looking over his shoulder at another student and never at the board. Or the student who won't stay behind to speak to you but sends you emails in all capital letters late at night. Or how about the student who has a question or comment every class but is never quite on topic? Usually by the third or fourth week of the semester other students are starting to complain about this student's behavior. Perhaps you've tried to engage the student in conversation about proper classroom etiquette with little or no change in behavior. You might label the student as being rude, defiant, socially awkward, uninterested, etc.

If you take a moment and think about the students who make up your classes, past and present, you'll begin to realize that you are seeing more and more of the 'odd' student. These students generally can handle the academic requirements expected of them but struggle with social skills we expect this age group to have when they enter college. Who are these students and what are you as college professors required to know about them? Autism Spectrum Disorder- ASD, refers to a group of complex neurodevelopment disorders that are characterized by repetitive and characteristic patterns of behavior and difficulties with social communication and interaction. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, published in 2013) includes Asperger Syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) as part of ASD rather than as separate disorders. This may seem confusing, but all this really means is that just like every human being in the world, every student with a diagnosis of ASD will present differently in your classroom.

ASD is not a disorder of motivation. These students have a strong desire to learn as well as ability to learn. Unfortunately, the landscape in higher education is often so drastically different from what many students with ASD expect and are prepared to handle independently. Students with ASD come to college after years of being supported in the classroom to help them in controlling executive functioning skills we expect our students to demonstrate in the college setting. Without this support, these students may struggle and may be difficult to manage or deemed as having behavioral problems that go on for weeks that may result in a call to my office- Student Development and Enrollment Management. It may seem overwhelming, but there are some very effective steps that professors can employ to manage the ASD student and maintain control.

First, make an effort to speak to the student as soon as the unwanted behavior is noticed. Students who have handed you an accommodation letter have opened the door for conversations to take place. Use concrete language; be direct about what you expect. Students with ASD struggle with figurative language and aren't always perceptive of other peoples' feelings.

For the student who "high-jacks" the class with eagerness to participate, establishing ground rules for how many questions are permitted in the class can be helpful. Let the student know that his/her participation is valued, however you as the instructor must also give other students an opportunity to speak in class. You can let him/her know that you will answer any other questions during your office hours; being sure to give a specific office day and time that you wish the student to adhere to.

Some students with ASD may fidget or rock when seated. This behavior may become exacerbated when the student is feeling stressed. Often the student is unaware that their movements could be distracting to faculty or their classmates. Again, a simple conversation could do the trick. "I've noticed that you rock a lot in your seat. This is distracting to me. How can I make you aware so that you can control it, if possible?" Most students have learned strategies and techniques they can employ to regulate certain unwanted behavior once they are aware of them. They will need your help as the professor to discreetly alert them when the unwanted behavior expresses itself.

College campuses will continue to see an increase in students who fall under the Autism Spectrum Disorder over the next several years. These students contribute greatly to the learning environment. However, when minor classroom behavior issues are allowed to go unchecked for far too long, bigger problems can arise. Take time to speak with the student as soon as the behavior is noticed and seek assistance from the Office of Disability Services who may be able to offer additional insight.



What's Heating Up In Career Counseling?



According to the National Center for Education Statistics, approximately 80 percent of students change their major throughout their college experience, with students changing their major an average of three times. Students often struggle with making confident decisions about their future, but the Counseling & Student Success office is here to help! We offer various services and resources to help students at every stage of career development. Counselors can assist students with self-exploration, choosing a major, learning about the world of work and careers, and developing educational and career-related goals and plans. Self-assessment is the starting point for major and career exploration, and the Counseling & Student Success office encourages all CCM students to take advantage of the free self-assessments that we offer. Career assessment tools help students discover their personality, skills, abilities and values to guide them toward appropriate academic majors and careers. Some of the assessment instruments offered through the Counseling office include the *FOCUS-2*, *Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator*, and *Strong Interest Inventory*. While learning about oneself is a good start, not all students possess the knowledge, experience, or maturity to easily relate self-knowledge to major and career options. This is why it is important that students collaborate with a counselor to obtain proper guidance. Students are encouraged to meet with a counselor individually as well as attend the various workshops that are offered each semester. Topics addressed in the workshops include introduction to career planning, linking your personality to appropriate majors /careers, and discovering and developing transferable skills. Appointments and workshops are free and open to all students.



NEED RESOURCES?

Counseling & Student Success comprised a thorough resource packet filled with 41 pages of many versatile resources that are appropriate for various populations

<http://www.ccm.edu/Media/Website%20Resources/pdf/CounselingServices/Resources.pdf>



FACT OR MYTH

Meet Tommy

Tommy is in his second semester at CCM, taking two classes and working part time. Tommy's class attendance is almost perfect and is always arrives to class early. Tommy frequently interrupts the class by asking questions irrelevant to the topic at hand. He consistently makes noises with his hands or feet throughout the class, often not noticing that this may be a distraction for others. When confronted about discontinuing this behavior, he often forgets, and finds it difficult to stop these disruptive mannerisms. Tommy usually comes to class wearing sunglasses, and when asked if this is "appropriate in-class attire" he nods and sits at his desk. When Tommy does not wear his sunglasses, he often stares at one or two people throughout the entire class time. However, when someone is speaking to him, he rarely makes eye contact. Occasionally there are times when the class is asked to separate into groups. When it becomes loud in the classroom, Tommy usually becomes agitated and either starts speaking about his favorite topic louder than anyone else, isolates himself in the corner of the room, or storms out. When approached about his behavior during class, Tommy looks out the window and responds flatly stating, "I need to go home to ride my bike" and leaves.

THE EASY EXPLANATION:

The simple explanation would be that Tommy has no courtesy for others, is inconsiderate, ego-centric, and disrespectful. He is not giving class, or college in general, the effort required in order to succeed and needs to dedicate more time and respect to his professor, peers, and the class overall.

OTHER EXPLANATIONS:

Even though these behaviors can easily be misconstrued for a student not caring or being self-righteous, they are often also symptomatic of a student suffering from a number of other life stressors or disorders. Many of Tommy's characteristics mimic traits of someone who may be diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. Common traits include overstimulation by light or sound, being overwhelmed in group situations, not being able to hold conversations, having poor eye contact, inability to understand sarcasm or societal norms, and verbalizing personal thoughts inappropriately. Since it is common for those diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome to also experience symptoms of anxiety or depression, it is important to keep in mind that these can also play a role in how Tommy is acting. Anxiety and depression alone, can inhibit individuals by making it difficult for them to interact appropriately or deal with daily life stressors.

THINGS TO ASK/ THINK ABOUT:

- Speak in very concrete terms. When asking questions, try to be straight-forward and stick to the facts at hand. Those who are diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome often interpret words or phrases very literally, do not understand sarcasm or figurative language, and lack interpersonal skills.
- Contact Disability Services to get more of an understanding about the possible strategies, accommodations, and resources that could benefit Tommy.
- Get resources from the office of Counseling & Student Success to assist the student's individual situation.
- Approach Tommy differently. Rather than ask about school work, ask how he is doing as a person and student. He may answer you differently and make more of an attempt to ask for help.
- Think about setting up a Retention Alert.