

Handout 1—College vs. high school

This handout describes some basic differences between college and high school and why college is important for teens and young adults with HFA/AS.

College	High School
Professors have classes ranging from 20 to 200 students—less individual attention	Teachers have classes of 20–35 students—more individual attention
You will be responsible for most decisions	Parents and teachers provide direct guidance with decisions
You choose your classes	Classes are mostly chosen for you
You may have several hours between classes	Classes run on a consecutive schedule—one follows right after another
You will have to pay for books and other basics	Books and other basics are provided
You are expected to know due dates of assignments, and professors will not always collect and check your work	Teachers will remind you when assignments are due and will check and collect assignments
Many classes are based solely on exams, which often cover a lot of material	Classes are based on several aspects besides exams, such as participation, in-class assignments, etc.
Disability services will only contact professors if given permission from the student	Teachers know in advance if one their students has a disability and what they will need
Student with disabilities must self-advocate to receive accommodations in class.	Teachers know in advance if one their students has a disability and what they will need

Reasons why college is important:

- College trains students to think critically, improve knowledge, and acquire skills needed for a career
- With a college degree, you improve your chances of getting a job with a higher salary
- You will also learn how to become independent, improve social skills, and gain experience

Handout 2—Campus visit tips

This handout offers tips for when teens/young adults with high-functioning autism (HFA) or Asperger syndrome (AS) visit a college campus. The tips provide recommendations and things to keep in mind and/or do while you are on the visit. Remember, these are only suggestions to help you make the most of your time during your campus visit.

Tips

- Pay attention to your comfort level when you are on campus. Do you feel comfortable there? Does the campus overwhelm you? Write down your impressions of how comfortable you feel while you are visiting.
- Sign up to take a tour of the campus. Most likely, you can coordinate a tour through the Admissions office. Call the college or visit its Web site to find out how you can participate in a tour.
- When you schedule your campus visit, ask the Admissions office or Disabilities Support Services personnel if they could schedule a time for you to meet with a couple of current college students. In this way, you can ask these students any questions you may have about the college. You may want to ask what they like about the college, what they don't like, and what they think the benefits of the college are. Take a few notes on what they say, and then thank them for their time.
- Schedule a meeting with someone at the Disabilities Support Services center on the campus. You probably will need to call ahead and make an appointment in order to meet with someone in person. Bring a list of questions. The most important thing is to see what types of services and accommodations they offer to students with HFA/AS, what programs they may have, and what requirements they have to receive services.
- Ask your tour guide if you can visit the dorms. See what a typical dorm room looks like. Ask about the different types of living accommodations the college provides.
- After your tour, visit the community and area around the college. Is the college in a large city? Are the areas surrounding the college welcoming? Are there restaurants or other forms of entertainment? Is the college in a safe area?
- Take pictures on your tour. This will help you to remember different areas of the college. You can then print these pictures out and include them in your file on the college.
- If you are interested, you could sit in on a class during your visit. You will need to coordinate this through the Admissions office. You can then see what a typical Freshman-level class would look and feel like.

Things to Bring on Your Visit

- Campus map
- Schedule of days activities/goals of visit
- Camera
- Notebook/paper
- Pen
- Comfortable shoes
- Questions
- Contact information for Admissions counselor/Disabilities Support Services person (if you have scheduled meetings)

Potential Questions to Ask or Think About During the Visit

- Do I feel comfortable on campus?
- What do other students like and dislike about the college?
- What Disabilities Support Services are offered?
- How do I receive these services?
- What types of extracurricular activities are available?
- What are the dorms/living areas like?
- What is the area surrounding campus like?
- What is the average class size?
- Will I need to bring my own computer?
- What is the food like? Where would I eat?
- What are the most well-known programs at the college?
- Are students taught by full-time professors, graduate assistants, or both?

Handout 3—Myths about sexuality and developmental disorders

Myth

Individuals with developmental disorders are not sexual or have no interest in sex.

- **Truth:**

Individuals with developmental disorders are sexual. All children are social and sexual beings from the day they are born.

Myth

Individuals with developmental disorders do not mature physically or sexually at the same rate as their typical peers.

- **Truth:** Individuals with developmental disorders mature physically and sexually according to normal development. Their development in other areas, such as social understanding and interactions, can be impaired or delayed.

Myth

Teaching individuals with developmental disorders about sexuality can create problems.

- **Truth:** Educating children with developmental disorders about sexuality will provide them with the correct information, resources, and skills necessary to be safe, respectful, and mature adults.

Myth

Individuals with developmental disorders cannot/do not want relationships.

- **Truth:** Individuals with developmental disorders can and do want relationships. They desire friendships as well as sexual relationships.

Myth

Individuals with developmental disorders often display “deviant” sexual behavior.

- **Truth:** Some behaviors may be misunderstood as being “deviant” because individuals with developmental disorders have the potential for fixating on certain aspects of sexual drive. They may develop ritualized behaviors associated with their sexuality. With proper education and skills training, these individuals can express their sexuality in appropriate ways.

Myth

Individuals with developmental disorders cannot understand sexuality or sexual development.

- **Truth:** While the social components of sexuality may be more difficult for them to understand, all individuals with developmental disorders can be taught about sexual development, albeit on their own level. It is important to use the appropriate language and teaching methods in order to effectively communicate this information.

Myth

Social interactions are so difficult for individuals with developmental disorders that sexuality education is not important.

- **Truth:** While social interactions can be difficult for individuals with developmental disorders, sexuality education encompasses all aspects of sexual development, including physical, emotional, and social issues. As part of sexuality education for individuals with developmental disorders, perspective taking, understanding relationship boundaries, and other social interpersonal skills should be focused on.

Myth

Sexual development education should be taught at school.

- **Truth:** The first and best place for children with developmental disorders to learn about sexual development is at home with their family. They can learn their family's values about sexuality, in addition to being able to learn and communicate in a safe environment. School teachers and others (e.g., counselors) can provide information and education secondarily.

Handout 4—The impact of HFA/AS on learning about sexual issues

This tip sheet provides information on various areas that potentially affect how an individual with high-functioning autism (HFA) or Asperger syndrome (AS) understands and learns about sexual issues. These tips and techniques provide you with potential solutions and ideas on educating your child in the most effective manner.

1. Difficulty with how information is presented and understood

Individuals with HFA/AS learn best with concrete examples and/or rules that are presented in a step-by-step process.

Tips

- Present information about sexual development in small amounts. Have regular, short conversations about sexuality.
- Use simple, concrete, and basic terms when discussing sexuality with your child. Give specific examples and avoid abstract or overly detailed examples.
- Use visual aids, such as pictures, diagrams, or videos to help your child understand certain points.
- Role-play certain scenarios with your child to help him/her understand the information.
- Find examples from everyday life that can be used to reinforce a point.

2. Generalization

Individuals with HFA/AS often are unable to apply a skill they have learned in one specific situation to another similar situation by integrating the learned material and experiences.

Tips

- Ask questions in order to clarify what your child has understood. Discuss the topic in relation to different situations.
- Encourage your child to ask you questions during the initial conversation and in daily life as situations arise.
- Share as much information as possible to fully inform your child.
- Develop a list of key points on a specific topic. This list can serve as a reference for your child in different situations. Be sure that your child understands that not all situations or environments are the same and that different rules may apply.

3. Learning to communicate

Individuals with HFA/AS have difficulty knowing how to effectively express their needs, wants, and desires.

Tips

- Use the learning method that is most appropriate for your child in school (such as pictures, drawings, etc.) to communicate about sexuality issues.
- Role-play scenarios, such as facial expressions used when flirting, or potential conversations to have with a person they want to have a friendship with to increase your child's comfort in different situations.
- Have your child continually practice watching for nonverbal cues during daily life, such as at the grocery store or at the movies. Have a continual discussion with him or her about these nonverbal behaviors and what they mean.
- Role-play ways that your child can approach a group of peers and start a conversation.
- Help your child develop pictures or visual aids that can help them appropriately express how they are feeling in a given situation.

4. Sensory issues

Many individuals with HFA/AS are hypersensitive or hyposensitive to one or more of their senses. This interferes with how they interact within the environment and how their bodies function within an area.

Tips

- Teach your child techniques, such as muscle relaxation or visualization, that will help him or her relax in certain sensitive situations.
- Discuss with your child why a particular situation or environment is uncomfortable for them. Brainstorm possible ways to combat this discomfort.
- Develop creative solutions to manage the sensitivity, such as politely excusing themselves from a room or taking a deep breath to calm themselves and explaining the situation to a peer.
- If your child has a specific interest, relate this interest to methods of coping with sensory issues.