SENSORY DIFFERENCES:

WHAT DOES SENSORY INPUT LOOK LIKE?

Sensory input includes the five senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. A neurotypical individual is able to balance the five senses, but a common symptom with ASD is over stimulation or under stimulation in one or more of these modalities:

- Visual: things you can see
- Tactile: textures or things you can touch
- Olfactory: things you can smell
- Auditory: things you can hear
- Gustation: things you can taste

Some college related examples are:

- Loud classrooms
- Crowded Hallways
- Unassigned seating… lack of structure
- Bright lights… lighting varies from classroom to classroom
- Limited on-campus food options… certain food textures or tastes can cause overstimulation

QUICK FACTS:

What Do Sensory Differences in ASD Look Like?

Overstimulation can present itself as anxiety, meltdowns, emotional outbursts, withdrawal, or sometimes even physical pain. Sometimes emotional outbursts can involve physical aggression, so it is important to know the right precautions to take.

What can overstimulation correlate with?

Overstimulation is one of the main causes for stress and anxiety in students with autism. College can be a very overwhelming environment with a variety of different stimuli and new information.
HOW CAN SOMEONE HELP?

Below is a website and some examples of how you can help if someone is having a meltdown. Sensory information can be a main cause of meltdowns, so it is important to know an individual’s triggers.

https://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/meltdowns.aspx##what-to-do

- Find ways to gradually build a threshold to similar stimuli prior to entering college can help reduce the stress and anxiety students may otherwise experience.
- Build a sensory profile of what and how a person with ASD responds to certain sensory information. This can help establish a therapy plan that will provide the tools to overcome excessive stimulation.
- Teach how a person with ASD could self-advocate for themselves in an acceptable manner. If the notice something may cause overstimulation, they could ask to remove themselves, or if the environment could be altered.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

This website includes what should be expected while attending college and some ways to improve your college experience.

https://childmind.org/article/going-to-college-with-autism/

This website includes an article about a student with autism. He explains the difficulties he faced as a student with autism and he explains how he overcame those difficulties.

https://researchautism.org/going-to-college-with-autism/

This website discusses the transition from high school to college and the changes a student may face. There are a ton of links to other pages which give resources to help students with the transition to college.


This website explains what sensory input looks like and feels like to a person with ASD. It also helps explain precautions you can take to help.

CITATIONS:


