

# Ready for College?

## Autism and the Transition to Postsecondary Education

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Students' Transitional  
Education Program



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY™



# What is right for your student?

- Many factors, no 'one' right answer
- Goals, interests
- Academic readiness
- Self-awareness, insight into needs
- Nature of supports, structure needed
- Essential executive functions
- Essential coping & adjustment skills
- Essential self-care/daily management
- Experience driving their day



# Considering College Options

## Community College

- 2-year associate's degree
- General education requirements
- Certifications, technical training
- Less risky commitment
- 1-2 lower-level college courses/semester
- Gradual shift in responsibility, advocacy
- Explore interests and options
- Time for maturity, development
- Practice and refine skills
- Smaller scale

## University

- 4-year bachelor's degree
- Graduate degrees
- Internship opportunities
- Major commitment
- Taking 4-5 college-level courses/semester
- Abrupt shift in responsibility, advocacy
- Self-management from day one
- Less time for maturity, development
- More nuanced social demands
- Larger scale

# DIFFERENCES!

## High School v. Postsecondary Ed

High School	College
IDEA – Individuals w/Disabilities Act	<i>ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990/2008 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Ensure equal access. No discrimination</i>
IEPs or 504 Plans	<i>NO IEPs or 504s</i>
Accommodations AND Modifications ensure success; Specialized instruction, nature of assignments	<i>Accommodations only. NO MODIFICATIONS to content, curriculum, or learning responsibilities</i>
Team delivered supports	<i>NO Team. Coordinator of Disability Services</i>
Student receives supports from team	<i>Student must initiate, communicate, arrange</i>
Parents may be heavily involved	<i>Parents have no access to student's plans, grades, needs</i>
Documentation process will also change....	<i>May need to provide comprehensive evaluations, either medical, psycho-educational, or both (PLAN AHEAD)</i>



# More Differences: Accommodations v. Modifications

- **Accommodations** geared to provide equal ACCESS to learning environment
  - But do not necessarily guarantee success
  - And no change in content, curriculum, assessment, or responsibilities
  - Typical examples:
    - Extra time on tests or quizzes
    - Alternative test-taking environment
    - Note taker or audio record lectures; speech-to-text notes
    - Priority registration
- **Modifications**
  - Changes in content, curriculum, methods of assessment, or teaching approach
  - Most college opportunities do not offer modifications
  - *Exception, rather than the rule*

# General Academic Supports in College

- **NOT** individualized, specialized, or intensive instruction!
- Academic Support Services
  - General study strategies, time management, organization, note-taking, etc.
  - Might offer individualized consultations (a few sessions), peer tutoring
- Campus Writing Centers
  - Typically staffed by graduate students in English Department
  - Working to help organize or refine *drafts* of papers (not craft sentences or paragraphs)
- Departmental Tutors
  - Typically staffed by graduate students to offer additional support after lecture, for labs
  - General help reviewing material, clarifying uncertainty, etc
  - Not specialized or intense re-teaching of material

# Autism-Specific Support Programs

- Post-secondary ed students whose *primary diagnosis* is ASD
  - Degree-seeking, academically college-ready
  - Need to have supporting documentation\*
  - Over 100 across the nation, both in public and private universities
- Varied types of support, structure
  - Social structure
  - Executive function skill-building/strategies
  - Social/peer communication skill-building/strategies
  - Academic coaching
  - Housing, move-in, orientation, schedules
- May be associated with different departments or professionals on campus

# College Autism Network



College Autism Network  
ADVOCACY | RESEARCH | TRAINING

FYI

Organization dedicated to connecting individuals, shareholders, and those seeking and providing services for students with autism seeking post-secondary education opportunities

<https://collegeautismnetwork.org/>

<https://can.softtr.app/>



# Essential Skills for College Demands

*Is your student  
'university ready'?*



# University Ready? *Academic Demands*

- Careful/critical reading of complex syllabi
- No modifications to homework
- No 'test corrections' or 'do-overs'
- Write multi-page papers, complex reading
- Work at a fast pace, monitor for accuracy
- Initiate going to office hours, tutors
- Use complex language and reasoning
- Evaluate materials for relevance, relationships
- Form relevant arguments, coherent positions





# University Ready?

## *Social, Verbal Communication*

- READ AND RESPOND TO EMAIL DAILY
- Communicate with faculty, staff, peers, classmates
- Communicate in different contexts, situations
- Initiate strategic, timely communication
- Notice and clarify misunderstandings
- Share essential details to reduce confusion
- Request confirmation, clarification
- Read situations, perspectives, nonverbals
- Discern sarcasm, sincerity, joking, bullying
- Understand boundaries and types of friendships, dating
- Evaluate self for ability to adapt, regroup, repair





# University Ready? Technology Demands

- PHONE! LAPTOP!
- CHARGE ELECTRONICS DAILY
- READ EMAIL. GRASP MESSAGE. DO & RESPOND
- Save, scan, convert, upload files and documents as needed
- Navigate online learning and teaching platforms – NO GOOGLE CLASSROOM!
- Shift between Word, PowerPoint, Excel, pdfs, course-specific tools
- Transition between cloud storage, online document sharing platforms
- Set and respond to alarms, apps, reminders
- Use electronic planners if desired – but USE THEM



# University Ready?

## *Managing Daily Needs*

- DAILY ROUTINES ARE ESSENTIAL
- Take meds reliably, consistently
- Manage sleep hygiene consistently
- Turn off devices, charge them, take them with you
- Get yourself up and prepared
- Manage and respond to alarms
- Wash, dry, and keep track of clothing
- Manage debit card and wallet
- Notice trash, crumbs, debris on floor
- Execute basic cleaning skills
- Make food, nutrition, exercise choices





# University Ready?

## *Coping and Adjustment*

- Everything is different....
- Evaluate self/emotional regulation ability of student
- Evaluate daily supports needed
- Anticipate unexpected situations and demands
- Anticipate uptick in anxiety or depression
- Need solid and consistent coping strategies
- Put these in place BEFORE you get to campus
- Counseling? Plan for continuity
- Communication? Plan for regular interactions
- Understand implications of self-harm statements



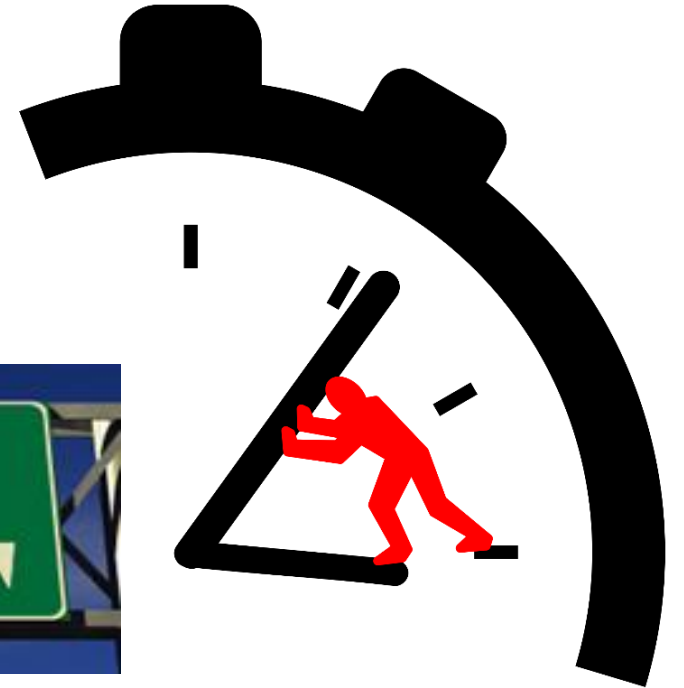
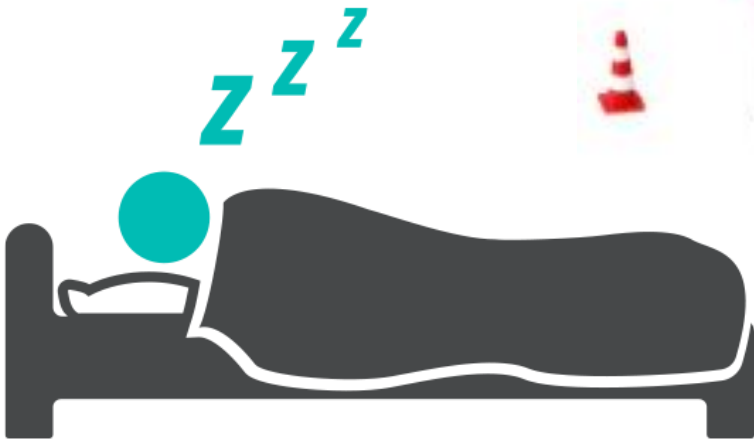


# COMMON CHALLENGES AND THREATS TO SUCCESS

# Threats to Success

- Unable to manage sleep routine
- Forget to take meds
- Miss/late to class(es)
- Time floats away
- Unable to set a daily agenda
- Lose their stuff
- Isolate in room
- Drift off in class
- Emotionally exhausted
- Overwhelmed
- Lack of practice
- Miss details of assignments, requirements
- Assume that all classes operate the same
- Too many classes first semester
- Not ready for reasoning, critical thinking
- Lack insight, self-awareness
- Underestimate level of need/support
- Do not want supports or assistance
- Avoid, escape, deep-dive into screens
- Comorbid learning disabilities
- Comorbid psychiatric disorders, unmanaged





# Who is Driving This Bus?

- What kind of help is being provided?
- How much help is being provided?
- What is the goal of this help?
- What would happen if supports were removed?
- How aware is the student of needs, help, structure?
- How concerned is the student when they overlook, forget, misplace?
- Does the student have or use any compensatory strategies?
- Are these strategies self-directed? Or other-directed?
- How often does failure happen.....?



# Parent Academic Management Scale (PAMS)

*Sibley (2017) Parent-Teen Therapy for Executive Function Deficits and ADHD: Building Skills & Motivation*

Parents: IN a typical week, how often do you...	0 days	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days
Use academic contract/daily rewards to reward academic habits						
Communicate with the student's teachers						
Help your child organize school materials						
Check to see if your student wrote in a daily planner						
Check the grade portal						
Help student plan what to do during homework time						
Help student do their homework						
Check to see if student had taken notes in class						
Monitor whether student studying/doing HW when supposed to						
Use calendar to help student plan for upcoming project						
Check student's homework for errors						
Make checklist or To-Do list with student						
Do some of the student's homework for them						

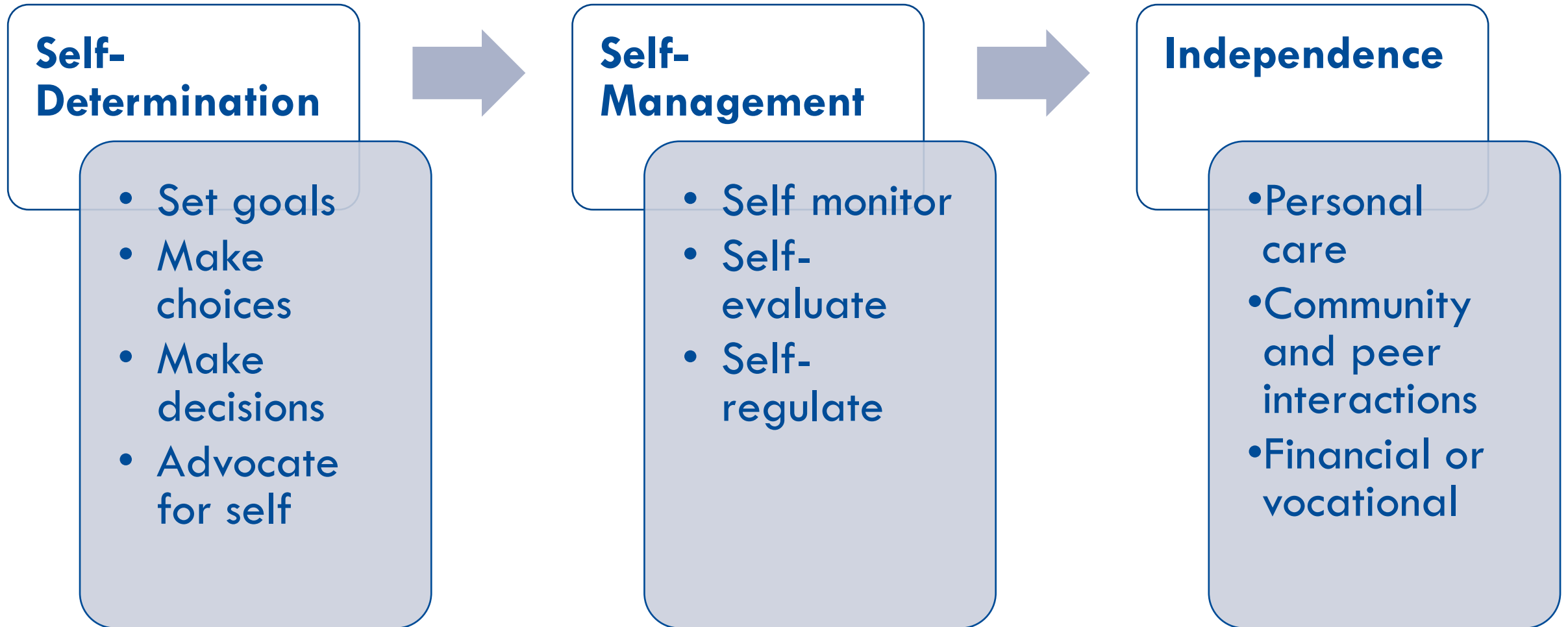


# Adolescent Academic Problems Checklist (AAPC)

*Sibley (2017) Parent-Teen Therapy for Executive Function Deficits and ADHD: Building Skills & Motivation*

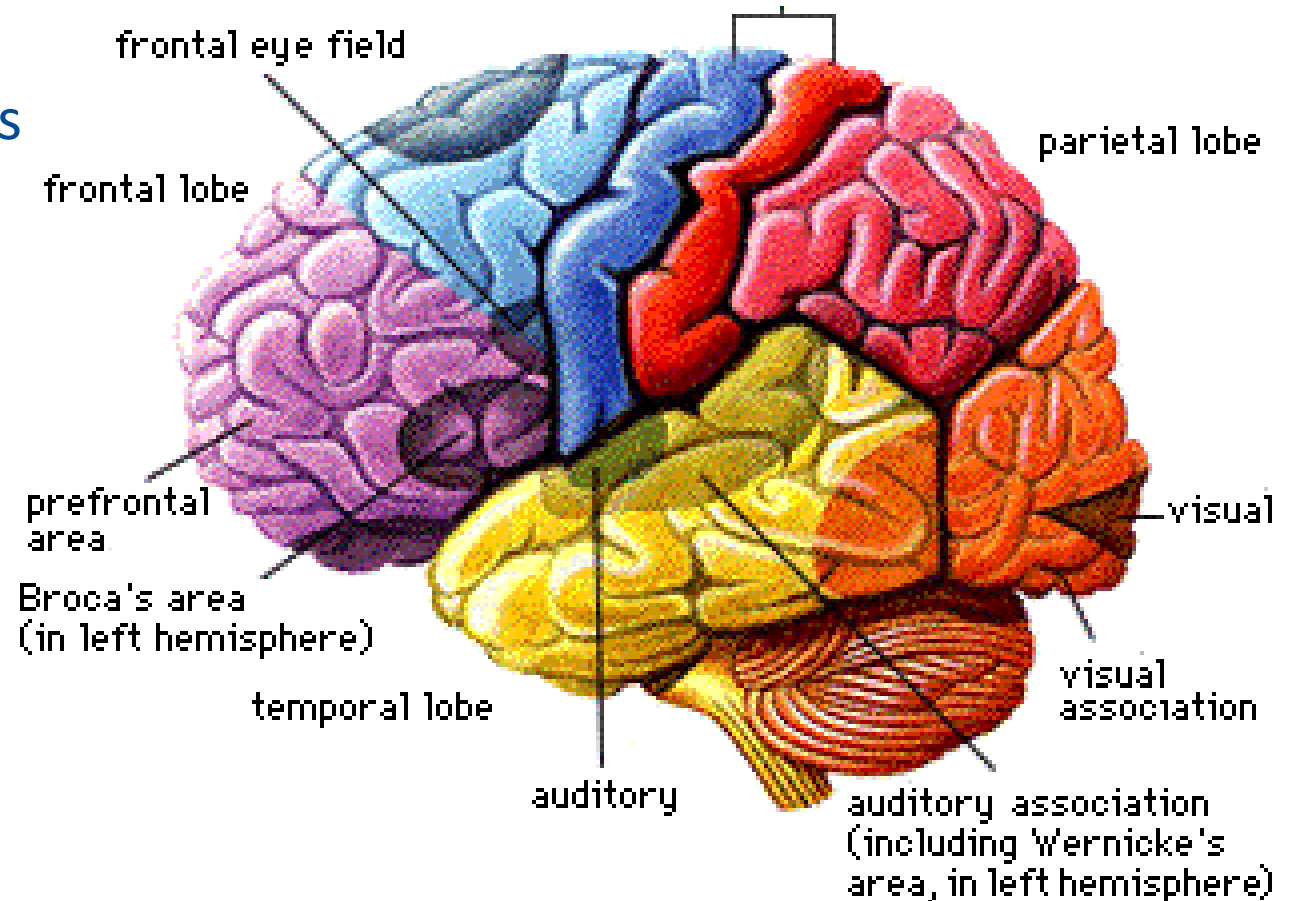
To be completed by Parent, Teacher, or Teen. Please describe the adolescent	Not at all	Just a little	Pretty much	Very much
Fails to take class notes				
Receives poor grades on tests/quizzes				
Does not follow through on homework instructions				
Is disruptive in class/Arrives late for class				
Does not follow through on instructions given in class/Makes careless errors on work				
Has difficulty organizing writing assignments				
Does not study for tests/quizzes				
Turns in work that was not completed thoroughly				
Has poorly organized folders or binders/Forgets to bring materials to class				
Fails to record homework assignments in daily planner				
Fails to turn in work already completed/on time				
Leaves longer projects until the last minute				
Poor time management/Difficulty getting started on assignments				

# What Everyone is Hoping For...

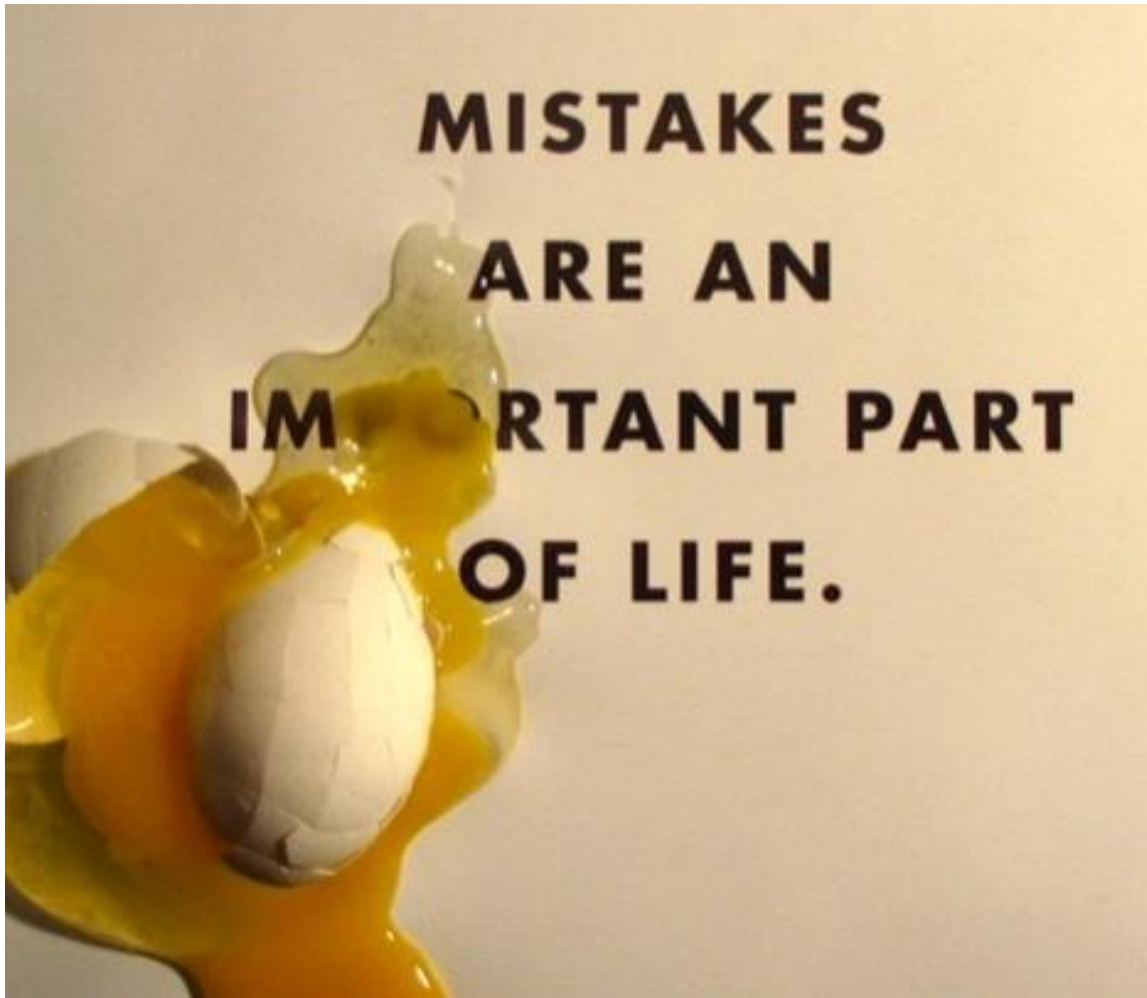


# What Makes an Adult Brain?

- Teens are consistently inconsistent
- Need practice, experience, consequences
- Ongoing neurological development
  - Attention and concentration
  - Task monitoring
  - Time management
  - Inhibition & shifting
  - Abstract language
  - Reasoning and critical thinking
  - Strategic planning & decision making
  - Social perspective
  - Flexible, nuanced communication



# Failure\* is a Learning Opportunity



## *Brains Need Practice*

- *Noticing and Comparing*
- *Strategizing and Predicting*
- *Brainstorming and Deciding*
- *Predicting and Preparing*
- *Shifting and Updating*
- *Evaluating Failure*
- *Regulating Life*

## *Practice Builds Resilience*

# Planners: An Exercise in Scaffolded Practice

1. Track information from multiple sources
2. Integrate details into 1 assignment-concept
3. Anticipate time/effort needed
4. Backtrack to determine start dates
5. Identify & confirm all task-requirements
6. Generate specific plan-steps
7. Prioritize and sort order of plan-steps
8. Check for changes or updates
9. Balance and merge non-academic tasks
10. Update given changes

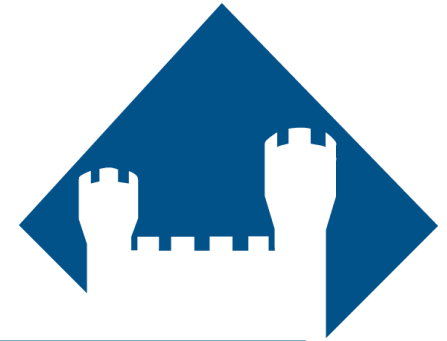
## 11. Cope with oversight

My Calendar - August 2016	To Do List
M 15	
T 16	
W 17	
Th 18	
F 19	Weekly Reflection
S 20	
S 21	Miscellaneous

# STEP

**EIU's Professional and Peer Support Program  
for College Students with Autism**

Students' Transitional  
Education Program



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# STEP Services

- Early Move-in
- Campus Navigation
- Visual Schedules
- Individual Coaching
- Small Group Skill-Building
- Peer Mentors
- Social Events & Network
- Structured Study Tables
- Triage crises
- Network with campus
- Help access accommodations

➤ Executive Functions

➤ Social Cognition

➤ Self Awareness

➤ Strategic Communication

➤ Shift to Self Regulation



# Potentially Good Match for STEP?

- Academic, cognitive preparation for college level coursework
- Realistic insight into their needs, want to participate in STEP
- Open to collaboration, learning, practice in accepting environment
- Experience and success directing parts of their day, without 1:1
- Able to use coping strategies to self-regulate on a college campus
- Must have diagnosis of ASD
- *\*this is a general list - application files are reviewed comprehensively*



# Applying to STEP

- We admit new students in the Fall term of each year
- Informational Visits are required part of application
- Applications are open Now; deadline January 31
- <https://www.eiu.edu/step/>
- Documentation you will need:
  - Documentation of ASD diagnosis
  - Recent neuropsych/psycho-educational evaluation
  - Copies of most recent IEP or 504s, if applicable
  - Application forms (online)



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# Contacts

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