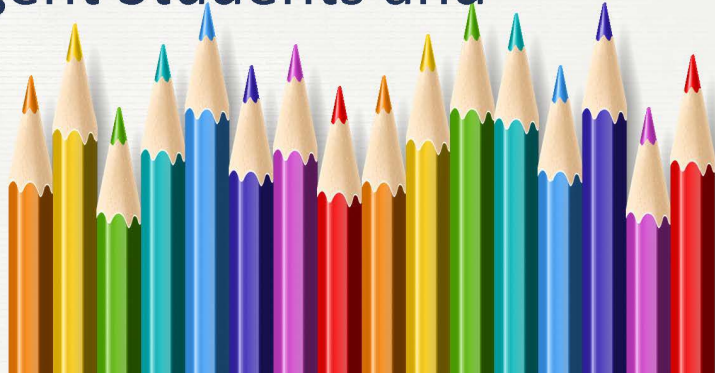


A Different Kind of Magic: Reimagining our Work with Neurodivergent Students and Advisors

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Presentation available at

<https://toddspinner.com>

Academic advising is a critical component of the college experience for all students, but it can be especially important for neurodiverse students. Neurodiverse students may have unique needs and challenges that require academic advisors to be knowledgeable about neurodiversity and how to provide effective support.

What is neurodivergence?

Neurodivergence is the term for when someone's brain processes, learns, and/or behaves differently from what is considered "typical."

What are the unique needs and challenges of neurodiverse advisors and students?

Neurodiverse advisors and students may face a variety of challenges, including:

- Difficulty understanding and following social cues
- Difficulty communicating their needs and thoughts
- Sensory sensitivities
- Anxiety and stress
- Executive functioning challenges

How can you support neurodivergent colleagues?

- Include your autistic colleague
- Be a support for your colleague at professional functions and social events
- Be sensitive to sensory sensitivities
- Don't speak in riddles or innuendo
- Respect your autistic colleagues' routines & rituals
- Educate yourself and be an ally

How can academic advisors provide effective support to neurodivergent students?

Academic advisors can play a vital role in supporting neurodiverse students by:

- Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment
- Being patient and understanding
- Providing clear and concise communication
- Offering flexible and individualized support
- Connecting students with appropriate resource

Tips for creating a welcoming and inclusive environment:

- Be aware of your own biases and assumptions about autism.
- Use inclusive language.
- Avoid making assumptions about a student's abilities or needs based on their diagnosis.
- Be respectful of a student's communication style and preferences.
- Suggest students pursue accommodations as needed, such as a quiet place to take exams or breaks during meetings. Make sure to give them step-by-step directions on where to inquire about accommodations.

Tips for being patient and understanding:

- Autistic students may need more time to process information and respond to questions.
- Be understanding if a student needs to take breaks during meetings.
- Be patient if a student has difficulty communicating their needs or thoughts.
- Be patient if students keep coming back for help, support, or clarification.

Tips for providing clear and concise communication:

- Avoid using jargon or technical language.
- Provide written instructions whenever possible.
- Break down complex tasks into smaller steps.
- Be clear about your expectations.

Tips for offering flexible and individualized support:

- Be willing to meet with students at a time and place that is convenient for them.
- Offer a variety of communication and support options.
- Be willing to adjust your teaching and advising style to meet the individual needs of each student.

Tips for connecting students with appropriate resources:

- Familiarize yourself with the resources available on campus for neurodiverse students.
- Talk to students about their needs, interests, and connect them with appropriate resources.
- Be proactive in reaching out to other professionals on campus who can support neurodiverse students, such as disability services counselors, mental health professionals, and tutoring.

See presentation at <https://todds spinner.com> for sources and more information.