

# **Academic Success Strategies for Students With Disabilities**

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# Students With Disabilities:

- Can be academically and professionally successful
- Like other students, they need motivation, determination, and awareness of strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs
- Unlike other students, they may also need accommodations and assistive technology

# Topics:

- ✓ Impact of disability on academic success
- ✓ Disability categories
- ✓ Merging academic success and disability
- ✓ Practical suggestions for students

# Understand the Possible Impact of Your Disability on Academic Success!

Does your disability:

- Impact on classroom activities?
- Effect your concentration?
- Make it difficult to take notes?
- Effect your ability to see the blackboard?

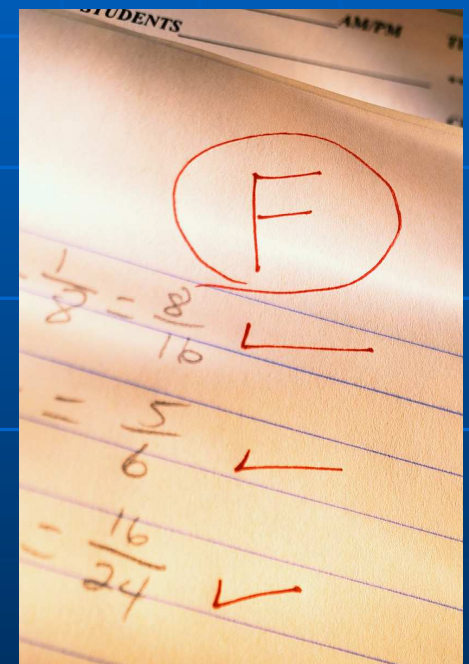
# Disability Categories

- Learning Disabilities
- Speech Impairments
- Deafness and Hearing Loss
- Blindness and Visual Impairments
- Psychological Disorders
- Mobility Disabilities
- Chronic Physical Disabilities
- Hidden Disabilities

# Learning Disabilities

## Can Impact on Your Ability To:

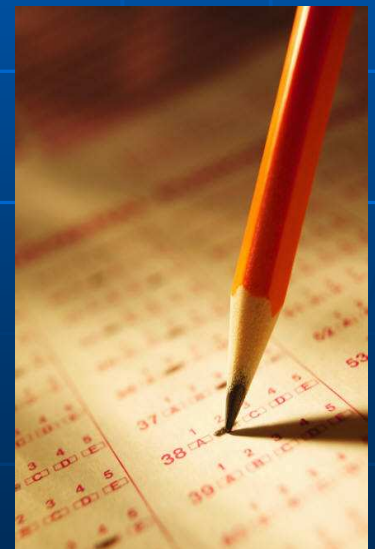
- Read, write, spell and/or understand mathematical concepts
- Read at expected speed
- Differentiate similar letters, words, or numerals
- Spell common words
- Express ideas in writing
- Comprehend mathematical concepts including calculation, time and space
- Learn a foreign language



# Learning Disabilities – Continued

## Can Impact on Your Ability To:

- Take notes and listen to a lecture at the same time
- Process information: you may need more time to respond to questions, to retrieve information or to solve problems
- Recall and integrate information presented orally
- Focus and sustain attention



Added Note: Verbal skills can far exceed reading, spelling and/or writing skills for students with learning disabilities

# Strategies for Students With Learning Disabilities

If you experience shameful feelings about your LD:

- Remember that students with LD have average or above average intelligence and can be successful in college
- Confront your negative thoughts and feelings
- Think why you need accommodations
- Understand how the accommodations help you to compensate for the learning differences

If you are fearful of failing:

- Remember that mistakes are part of the learning process
- Don't overreact to mistakes
- Understand your specific challenges and learning strategies to deal with LD



# More Strategies for Students With Learning Disabilities

If you experience feelings of low self-esteem:

- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Focus on your strengths to compensate for your disabilities
- Develop a variety of coping strategies
- Have a support system
- Build the self-esteem it takes to achieve success

Learn about your learning disability:

- The more you know about your specific learning difficulty, the easier it will be for you to find out how you learn best and the accommodations you will need to be successful
- Learn to advocate for yourself

# Speech Impairments

Comprise a broad range of communication related disabilities, which include :

- Impaired articulation
- Voice impairment
- Stuttering
- Stammering

# Suggestions for Students With Speech Impairments

- You may obtain from your Student Support counselor a request form for \*alternate assignments and present the form to your professor
- You may find that alternate format textbooks and/or tape recorded lectures are helpful
- You may require special assistive technology devices or accommodations
- You should discuss the disability with instructors to aid in proper accommodations

## Added notes:

\*Alternate courses may be implemented upon discussion with your counselor

Stuttering can be managed and treated

# Deafness and Hearing Loss

- There are different degrees of hearing loss ranging from being deaf to hard of hearing. Students who are deaf and students with hearing losses therefore use different strategies and services including technology.
- People with hearing losses use aids to assist them with their residual hearing, whereas deaf people may use a variety of sign language communication modes or may depend on lip reading.

# Adaptations for Students With A Hearing Loss

Accommodations vary greatly among students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Academic accommodations may include:

- ✓ Sign language interpreters
- ✓ Oral interpreters
- ✓ Notetakers
- ✓ Preferential seating
- ✓ Assistive listening devices (FM loop system) to improve hearing and understanding speech in noisy environments
- ✓ Real-time captioning or remote real-time captioning

# Blindness and Visual Impairments

- Visual impairments impact on seeing, which can effect academic performance
- Categories:  
Totally blind, legally blind, and visually impaired

# Adaptations for Students With Blindness / Visual Impairments -1

- ✓ Talk with your Student Support counselor before each semester about the accommodations you will need
- ✓ Submit request forms early to receive your alternate format books on time
- ✓ Get oriented to campus prior to your first semester
- ✓ Use notetakers in classrooms
- ✓ Think about using tape recorded lectures and preferential seating
- ✓ Use your testing accommodations
- ✓ Utilize Student Support's Lab to learn about assistive software (such as JAWS, ZoomText, E-Text Reader)

# Adaptations for Students With Blindness / Visual Impairments -2

- ✓ You may need screen readers, text enlargers, voice recognition software, or print conversion into Braille
- ✓ You may benefit from other assistive technologies such as talking tactile tablet (ask staff in the Student Support's Lab)
- ✓ You should affiliate with the NY State Commission for the Blind if you are legally or totally blind
- ✓ You should affiliate with VESID (The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities) if you are visually impaired



# Psychological Disorders

Covers a wide range of conditions and may include:

- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Generalized anxiety & panic disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Social phobia

# Myths and Facts About Psychological Disorders

## Myths:

- Psychological disorders prevent individuals from succeeding in college or work
- Psychological disorders reflect personal weakness
- Psychological disorders are a result of bad parenting
- No hope exists for people with psychological disorders

## Facts:

- People with psychological diagnoses can lead productive lives
- Diagnosis is not related to a person's character or intelligence
- There is a chemical/biological/genetic cause
- One in four adults suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year - National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- Psychological disorders are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. for ages 15-44 (NIMH)
- The treatments today are effective: medication and/or psychotherapy

# Suggestions for Students With Psychological Disorders

- Develop coping mechanisms by developing life skills such as stress and time management
- Keep a mental health support network (such as psychiatrist, therapist, and a college counselor)
- Discuss with your doctor how the disability is impacted by the academic setting
- Understand side effects of medication, and the possible need for academic accommodations
- Set realistic academic goals

# Mobility Disabilities:

- May be caused by conditions present at birth or may be the result of an illness or physical injury
- Can be temporary or permanent
- Can limit coordination due to muscle weakness
- Can cause decreased flexibility, loss of balance, limited ability to walk

## Added note:

**Orthopedic disabilities** can affect only upper extremities (hands/arms). Individuals usually require classroom notetakers and may need assistive software.

# Adaptations for Students With Mobility Disabilities

- Arrange for transportation (for example Access-A-Ride)
- Meet with your Student Support counselor early each semester to make necessary preparations
- Schedule enough time to travel from class to class
- Don't carry unnecessary items on campus; ask for a locker
- Talk with your counselor if you require textbooks in electronic format
- Seek the advocacy of Student Support to ensure building access

Added note: Accommodation needs of students with mobility disabilities vary greatly by individual

# Other Chronic Physical Disabilities and Hidden Disabilities

AIDS / HIV

Allergies

Arthritis

Asthma

Cancer

Cardiac disorders

Cerebral palsy

Cystic Fibrosis

Diabetes

Epilepsy

Hemophilia

Multiple sclerosis

Muscular dystrophy

Rheumatic fever

Sickle-cell anemia

Spinal diseases

Traumatic brain injury

Tuberculosis

etc.

# Chronic / Hidden Illnesses

- Cognitive functions (such as concentration, memory) may be adversely impacted
- Motor functions (mobility) may be impacted
- Acute phases requiring bed rest or hospitalization may surface
- Functional abilities and limitations vary
- Chronic conditions are often associated with fatigue
- Hidden disabilities are not readily apparent to others

Added note: There may be periods of remission in which the student seems to have no impairment of function. Sometimes progression of illness is unpredictable.

# Adaptations for Students With Physical and Other Health Impairments

- ✓ Be aware of side effects of medications
- ✓ Adapt for chronic medical conditions
- ✓ If you have seizures, plan for them and inform your professors
- ✓ Plan for fatigue, severe pain and other health related problems
- ✓ Establish emergency procedures
- ✓ Use your exam accommodations





# Develop an Understanding of Your Disability

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- How does the disability impact on your studies and your life?
- What accommodations work best for you?
- How is the disability connected to expectations from family, friends, and employers?
- How is your motivation: Is it your choice to attend college? Are you in the right major? What are your goals for life?

# Merging Academic Success and Disability - 1

- Understand your strengths and learning needs
- Develop an understanding of your disability and how it effects your learning
- Identify the accommodations and the academic support services you need
- Understand and use technology
- Consider assistive technology to compensate for specific disabilities
- Set realistic goals
- Develop helpful life skills such as stress management
- Learn time management and study skills
- Learn to accept constructive criticism

# Merging Academic Success and Disability – 2

- Know that higher education requires some degree of self-advocacy
- Self-identify to Student Support Services: communicate the nature of your disability and provide documentation of your disability
- Maintain open and positive communication
- Learn to be comfortable about describing your disability so you can advocate for yourself to faculty
- Know that self-advocacy increases your personal independence

# Practical Suggestions - 1

- Use a daily planner to keep a record of assignments and exams
- Attend Student Support Academic Workshops to learn time management and study skills
- Attend Student Support Technology Workshops to learn how to efficiently use computers and other technological aids
- Sit in the front of the classroom so you can hear and see well
- Think about using a tape recorder to record key points of lectures
- Get to know your professors and your counselor
- Do not hesitate to seek assistance

# Practical Suggestions - 2

- Attend all classes
- Use your accommodations
- Utilize tutoring
- Get your book list 4-6 weeks before classes begin if you require electronic textbooks
- Meet with the Student Support Financial Aid Advisor
- Utilize Student Support Priority Advisement and Registration
- Select new classes very carefully, and consult with the Student Support Academic Advisor

# Practical Suggestions – Create a Study Schedule

- Plan a weekly study schedule
- Make a realistic study plan for each upcoming week
- Build a to-do-list and list your priorities
- Identify your high energy time of the day
- Study at a regular time in a quiet place without distractions
- Review notes as soon after the lecture as possible
- Preview new material and review the previous lecture before class
- Use free periods between classes for studying
- Break your study task into smaller chunks
- Study difficult or boring subjects first
- Take breaks
- Double your study time estimates

# Practical Suggestions – How to Get the Most From Tutoring:

- Be on time: Absence and/or lateness will take time away from your tutorial session
- Before your tutorial session: Think what kind of help you want from a tutor
- Write down your specific questions
- Bring relevant assignments, papers, or books to your tutoring sessions
- Before your tutorial: Run spell check for your draft documents
- Participate actively: Ask your tutor questions and take notes to help you remember any suggestions from your tutor
- Keep in mind that improvement takes time: Be patient and keep positive attitude about the subject and your potential to excel
- Remember it is your effort and willingness to work that will contribute the most to your success



# Practical Suggestions – Test Preparation

## Before the test:

- Find out as much as possible about the upcoming test
- Start early: make a study schedule
- Read and review
- Re-write and summarize notes
- Test yourself to discover what you have and have not learned
- Be well rested and eat well before the test



# Practical Suggestions – During a Test

- Read test directions carefully
- Look over the test and estimate how much time you have
- Begin by answering the easiest questions
- Underline key words in questions, if allowed
- Review all answers before turning in the test
- Use the time you are given

# Bottom Line

- You can achieve your educational and professional goals and learn important skills necessary for success
- You need to become an expert on how to plan your academic success, which is a process of building self-insight, self-advocacy, and resourcefulness

