STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE LEARNING

AS THE FALL ACADEMIC TERM MOVES FORWARD AND STUDENTS AND FACULTY CONVERGE INTO THE UNCHARTED TERRITORY OF UNIVERSAL ONLINE LEARNING, STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES SHARES SOME TIPS FOR ONLINE LEARNING AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACULTY WHEN THEY ARE TEACHING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER. HENCE, STUDENTS AND FACULTY NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT LEARNING ONLINE CAN PRESENT DIFFERENT CHALLENGES FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE, INCLUDING HOW TO STAY MOTIVATED, NAVIGATE TECHNOLOGY, MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS, AND POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH.

STUDENTS

CREATE BOUNDARIES
Try to create a dedicated study space with few or no distractions. A distraction-free environment helps to maintain and enhance focus and strengthen learning.

JOIN A COMMUNITY
Positive environments enhance learning. Find a group with people with whom you are comfortable and create an online study group. These people do not have to be taking the same classes as you - a study group has different functions, namely to hold all members accountable to stay on track.

DEVELOP A PLAN AND FOLLOW IT
Online learning requires more of a lot of self-discipline! To remain focused and motivated, create a set schedule. Use this schedule to complete your readings, complete homework, exercise, sleep and eat!

NURTURE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE
A positive attitude creates a positive learning environment, which helps to achieve goals and academic success. A positive attitude also leads to better health, an increase in productivity and produces more energy and positive interactions.

ASK FOR HELP
Whether you are new or familiar with online learning, everyone needs help at some point. Your professors and instructors are here to assist you. They will post virtual office hours. Use these hours to consult professors with questions.

References

FACULTY

PROVIDE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS
This may seem like common sense for all students, but students with ASD particularly benefit from and thrive with clear and often visual instructions. An additional benefit to helping students succeed through explicit instruction is that Faculty develop an additional skill set that benefits all students and helps minimize the number of clarification requests from students.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING
Universal design for learning (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on research into how people learn (CAST, Inc., 2019). By adapting to the strength of learners, professors tap into effective best practices from which all learners and Faculty benefit.

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY
Engage, encourage, excite! Online classrooms represent a wealth of opportunity for Faculty and students to collaborate and engage in new ways through cutting edge online tools and unique activities!

FLEXIBILITY & PATIENCE
Students on the spectrum can struggle significantly with scheduling - either creating one or following one (after they have designed it). Student Accessibility Services offers free academic skills coaching to registered students with ASD. Even with a coach in place, students may struggle in the beginning and with getting things in on time. Unlike any student who might struggle with these challenges, students with ASD are competing with many additional challenges that neuro-typically developed students do not experience. For more information on this, please see our Faculty Guide for Supporting Students with ASD at York University.