

# Preparing Neurodivergent Students for the College Experience



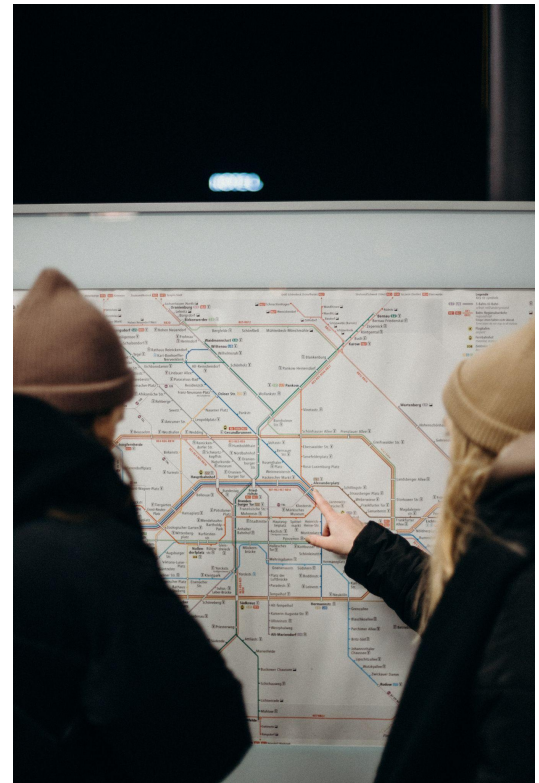
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# Roadmap

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- Who we are
- Neurodiversity 101
- College application challenges
- High school vs. college
- College readiness
- College resources
- Q&A



# About Eric Endlich, Ph.D.

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- Psychologist and Founder, [TopCollegeConsultants](#)
- Specialist in guiding neurodivergent students
- Neurodivergent adult
- Parent of ND adults
- Writer



# About Ben VanHook, B.A.

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- Bachelors in Political Science & Psychology at Mercyhurst University
- Current Master's of Public Policy Student at George Mason University
- Community Support Coordinator at the Organization for Autism Research
- Loves playing piano, visiting museums, and watching sports in free time



# Neurodiversity 101

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- The Neurodiversity Paradigm
  - Neurodivergent vs. neurodiverse
  - Diversity includes neurodiversity



# Question for *you*

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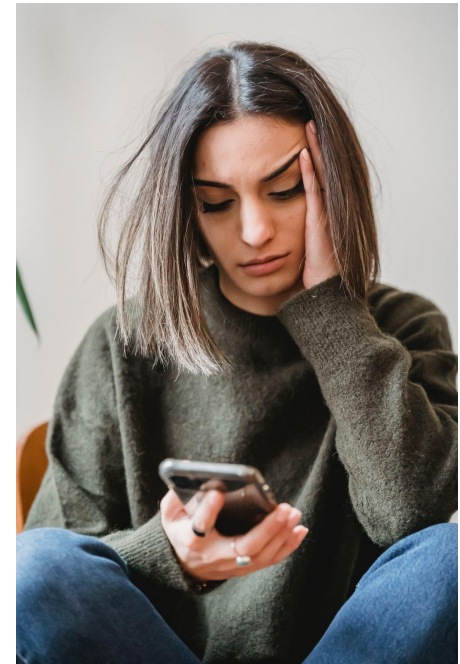
What are your main concerns about college?



# Common First-Year Fears

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- Homesickness
- Mastering self-advocacy
- Coping with the transition
- Making friends
- Handling academic rigor
- Acceptance by neurotypical peers



# Applying to college: challenges for ND students

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- Researching colleges/identifying options
- Identifying and accepting support needs
- Writing essays - anxiety, organization
- Meeting application deadlines





# Quick Tips: College Admissions & Disability

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- Reach out to disability/accessibility office *early*
- Learn about available services & accommodations
- Discuss disability in application if it explains something essential
- Obtain current documentation of your diagnosis
- Consider gap year, PG or college readiness programs



# College-capable vs. College-ready

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**College-capable:** Student can handle college-level *academics*

**College-ready:** Student can handle *independence*



# What is college readiness?

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## Students must be able to:

- *Independently* identify when they need help in any area
- *Independently* seek out services, despite obstacles
- *Independently* apply the supports they've accessed\*



\*Courtesy of Jake Weld, Mansfield Hall Director of Admissions

# What Are the Key Differences Between High School and College?

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# High School vs. College

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High School	College
Living with family	(Often) living with a roommate
More structure	Less structure
Artificial consequences	Naturally-occurring consequences
Constant check-ins	Self-Advocacy
Parents request accommodations	<b>Students</b> request accommodations

# How to Prepare Your Teen for College

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- College Transition Programs
  - [CHC's Summer Bridges program](#)
- Having open, transparent, and honest conversations
- Allow your teen to make mistakes!





# What skills do students need in college?

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- **Self-awareness:** strengths & challenges
- **Self-advocacy:** seek resources, schedule/attend appointments
- **Self-management:** time, motivation, reactions, ADLs



# Option 1: Enhance Skills in High School

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- Counseling (school or private)
- Executive function coaching
- Courses (e.g., personal finance)





# Option 2: Take a Gap Year

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- Get a job/start a business
- Complete a project
- Volunteer
- Enroll in a PG year/college readiness program
- Mature



# Option 3: Hone Skills in College

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- Learning support program
- Wellness community
- Counseling
- Advising - academic, career
- Tutoring



# Learning Support Programs

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- May involve significant additional cost
- More coordinated services
- Social component (autism programs)
- Support throughout college



# Obtain support from *outside* the college

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- Private executive function coach
- Therapy, medication
- Comprehensive support program
- Residential support program



# Know ALL of the college resources

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- Faculty office hours
- Tutoring
- Academic advising
- Mental health counseling
- Career counseling
- RAs
- Clubs (e.g., Active Minds)
- Library
- Study groups
- Disability services
- Academic support (e.g., CHC Neurodiversity Initiative)



# 10 Things We Wish We'd Known

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1. The importance of self-advocacy
2. Be kind to yourself
3. How critical the counseling center can be
4. Risk assessment
5. The interconnection between AISE domains
6. Make mistakes! And many of them!
7. Don't compare yourself to others!
8. My life, my responsibility
9. The dangers of procrastination
10. And... HAVE FUN! Don't study *too hard*



# Takeaways

- Assess college readiness
- Start working on skills in high school
- Develop a postsecondary plan



# Resources

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- [Organization for Autism Research](#) Finding Your Way
- [Asperger/Autism Network \(AANE\)](#)
- [Top College Consultants](#)
- [Navigating College](#) - Autism Self Advocacy Network





# Articles, etc.

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- Neurodiversity-friendly colleges
- 6 Reasons to Consider a Gap Year
- Should You Disclose a Disability When Applying to College?
- Are You Ready for College?
- What Questions Should I Ask the Student Disabilities Office?
- College Students and Mental Health (podcast)
- Gap Year/Post-Graduate Programs for Students with Learning Differences (webinar)
- Q&A with College Programs for Neurodivergent Students (webinar)

# Contact Us!

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**"Your development has to go at its own pace.  
It just doesn't happen to be the usual pace."**

Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*



# What Questions Do You Have for Us?



