Asperger’s Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by an inability to communicate effectively and interact socially. As one student reflected, “Asperger’s is not damage or a defect or a deficiency. Contending with the world around us is the only difficulty we face."

Another student shared, “I hate having Asperger’s Disorder most of the time because deep down it makes me feel out of place, and I am ashamed and embarrassed.”

“It is hard being me because some things that come easily for others are difficult tasks for me. Following directions can be hard because sometimes rules don’t make sense. And being quiet is really hard for me."

Another student said, “Sometimes just hanging out with a group is an achievement for me because I am kind of an outsider. I try making friends but I still have a long way to go with that. I want to be like others, I want to act like them and not stand out as much, but I can’t.”

“I have trouble listening and my voice gets louder when I am anxious. And there are just so many things that make me anxious. When I come to my senses and quiet down, it makes me feel lousy."

Our students commented on the academic challenges of living with Asperger’s Disorder. “Instructors give assignments that confuse and frustrate me. Imagine how maddening it is to live in fear of a failing grade no matter how much time you put in.”

“It takes me so much longer to do assignments because I have to organize them in a way that makes sense to me. If I fall behind, I feel like a failure, and I avoid going to class and talking with my professors out of anxiety and shame."

In the majority of cases, our students shared that our Butler community has been welcoming and supportive. “I’ve made concerted efforts to mold myself to fit into a world that would not tolerate me otherwise. In a handful of brief, beautiful moments, these changes haven’t even been necessary—Butler University is gifted with dozens of wise, thoughtful professors who have enough compassion and empathy for their students that there is no pattern of learning they cannot accommodate. Professors have gone out of their way (with only a single exception) to provide me the opportunity to learn just as ably as any other student."

“Teachers at Butler have been ok, especially one of my professors. When I have been scared or nervous or upset, he hasn’t lost his cool.”

“I think it is an accomplishment for me to be a student at Butler but staying here is really tough for me. I’m just never sure what I am supposed to do.”

“Asperger’s does not go away, nor should it; as a liberal arts institution, Butler knows well the value of differing viewpoints, differing methods of learning, and different patterns of logic. At the same time, however, every impediment that Asperger’s provides is still present despite all the care, attention, and support in the world.”
When sharing what they would want the Butler community to know about Asperger’s Disorder, one student says, “Please understand: We are not antisocial, but our minds don’t come naturally to the social nuances others take for granted. We are not stubborn, but we have trouble with vague and nebulous instruction. We are not apathetic, but we express ourselves differently.”

“We are not unintelligent. We are, however, very very different.”