

LIVING WITH ASPERGER'S SYNDROME – AN OVERVIEW

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Introduction

- Bachelor's degree in Applied Math, Masters degree in Physics/Oceanography
- employed for eight years in Chemical Engineering Department at Royal Military College
- diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome at the age of 26
- Asperger's Syndrome didn't have a name until 1981
- What do you think of the removal of "Asperger's Syndrome from the diagnostic manual?"

Part One – Swimming Across Lake Ontario

- inspired by Jenna Lambert
- website: www.swim4aspergers.wordpress.com
- 41 hours to complete crossing
- "Does this lake even have an "other side"?"

Part Two – Overview of Asperger's Syndrome

- Asperger's Syndrome in general
 - average to above-average intelligence
 - struggle mainly in the social realm
 - good memory
- How Asperger's Syndrome affects me
 - require specific instructions
 - take words and phrases literally
 - get "sidetracked" by one sentence
 - perseverance
 - very focused but cannot multi-task
- The Problem is Recognizing the Problem (why the "problem" is difficult to detect)
- my opinion of the question "How are you?"

Part Three – School: Academic Experiences

- above-average in math
- difficulties in history and reading comprehension

Part Four – School: Social Experiences (school life, as a child)

- my experiences in elementary school
- one-on-one attention with social worker vs. being sent to principal's office
- what helped me (Mom was a stay-at-home, close enough to walk to school, small town, never moved, big sister)
- problems with peers tend to happen in unsupervised areas (e.g. on the bus, at recess, in the cafeteria, in the washroom, or in the locker room) as opposed to the classroom
- bullying
 - other students know how to stay below the teacher's radar
 - common denominator problem

Part Five – Day-to-Day Experiences (adult life)

- job interviews
- asking questions
- information overload

Part Six – Concluding Remarks

- When dealing with an Aspie
 - be aware (that Aspies are different)
 - #1: BE FIRM!! (may require 3 or 4 tries)
 - instructions may need to be repeated
 - #2: be careful asking open-ended questions
 - Aspies often want to be left alone
 - when asking questions, don't appear "forcing"
 - give advance warning
 - be careful when issuing orders
 - show that you care (it will take time)
 - make sure a reprimand is warranted
 - there is no "quick fix" solution

Part Seven – Additional slides (if time avails)

- theory of mind
- things that throw me off
- how to close a car door
- changing lanes/learning to drive a car
- (pressure to) eat sugar
- answer questions with as little energy as possible
- What is a GIS
 - GIS = gruelling interrogation session
- How's work?
- Can we not have this discussion?
- Shakespeare

REFERENCES

Attwood, Tony. *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007.

Pyles, Lise. *Hitchhiking through Asperger Syndrome*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002.

QUOTES

“The really frustrating thing is that our kids often don’t display their social deficits in the doctor’s office. As wrong-footed as our kids are among their peers, they frequently are able to hold wonderful conversations with doctors, who often find our kids charming. It’s almost funny (or it would be if it weren’t an expensive time-waster) that many inexperienced doctors reject a diagnosis of Asperger’s Syndrome because the child is too sociable and talkative. In my mind’s eye, I picture a doctor saying, ‘He seems fine to me’ and then I picture the doctor’s own young son spending a few minutes with the patient, tugging at his daddy’s sleeve and whispering, ‘What’s up with that kid?’ Our kids can be quite sociable, just ineptly so. It’s just one reason why you should make sure that any doctor who sees your child really understands Asperger’s Syndrome.” [Pyles, 2002, pg. 37]

“Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are good is like expecting the bull not to charge because you are a vegetarian.” – Dennis Wholey

“The school curriculum was not designed for people with Asperger’s Syndrome.” – Jay Serdula