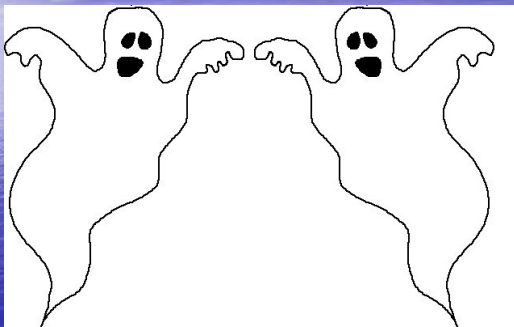


- Q. What happened when the boy ghost met the girl ghost?
- A. It was love at first fright.



- Q. What happened when the boy vampire met the girl vampire?
- A. It was love at first bite.



Jay Serdula

- born in 1972
- have Asperger's Syndrome

My education

- Bachelor of Mathematics – University of Waterloo, 1996
- Masters in Physics/Oceanography – Royal Military College of Canada, 2003

My employment

- Employed for eight years at Royal Military College of Canada
- Research assistant in the Chemical Engineering Department
- Mathematical analysis/computer programming
- Studied defective fuel rods in a nuclear reactor

My History

- unsuccessful diagnoses at age 5-6
- finally diagnosed at age 26

Asperger's Syndrome

- originally described by Hans Asperger in Vienna in 1944
- "resurrected" by Lorna Wing in 1981
- Asperger's Syndrome did not have a name, even in Europe, until 1981
- Asperger's Syndrome was hardly known at all in North America until the late 1980's

Removal of Asperger's Syndrome from DSM-V

- elimination of "Asperger's Syndrome"
- Asperger's Syndrome to become part of autism
- there are people are for and against removal of Asperger's Syndrome
- my identity = "I have Asperger's Syndrome"

Part One Swimming Across Lake Ontario



Recent accomplishment: swam across
Lake Ontario on July 28-30, 2008

- raised awareness of Asperger's Syndrome
- demonstrated what Aspies can do
- for more information, go to
www.swim4aspergers.wordpress.com
- INSTRUCTIONS SIMPLE BUT PROCESS
COMPLICATED

What inspired me to swim Lake
Ontario?

- on the lookout for challenges
- Jenna Lambert
- became a fundraiser for Asperger's
Syndrome

Training

- spent one month researching and thinking
- swam to Wolfe Island
- joined Master's swimming club
- swam front crawl continuously for 90
minutes

Actual swim

- at first, felt no different than a long training swim
- only better because I had lots of support and lots of adrenaline



The second night

- Does this lake even have an "OTHER SIDE"?
- I'm willing to go on but what's the point?
- "Pull me out."



Recovery

- two days in hospital
- took a while for sense of accomplishment to sink in
- "There's Lake Ontario"
- excitement lasted for ~2 weeks (everyone wanted to congratulate me)

Part Two

Overview of Asperger's Syndrome



Aspergers
Society of Ontario

Overview of Asperger Syndrome

- unlike autism, no mental retardation or slurred speech
- average to above-average intelligence
- struggle mainly in the social realm
- good memory (can remember the page number of a quote five years later)
- Remember Rubik's cube algorithm from grade 5



How Asperger Syndrome affects me

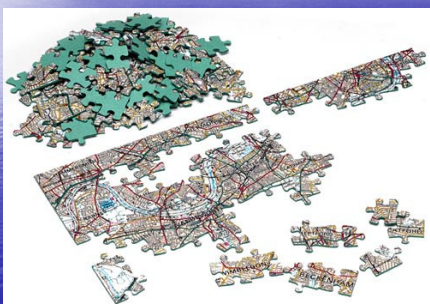
- require specific instructions



- take words and phrases literally
- get "sidetracked" by one sentence

effects of Asperger Syndrome, CONT'D

- perseverance
- very focused but cannot multi-task



Aspies are "caught right in between"

- Autistic -> help needed at once
- "neurotypical" -> no help needed
- Asperger's Syndrome -> help needed ONLY when not offered

psychiatrist

- one-on-one vs. group setting
- a sincere desire to help vs. expect child to know the rules
- "Your son/daughter is fine communicating with me."

The Problem is Recognizing the Problem

"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]

How are you?

- usually intended as a greeting – not for its literal meaning
- I'd prefer they say "Hello"
- my solution: to "beat" the other person to it and say "hello" first (doesn't always work)
- then I'm allowed to disregard the question
- or am I?

If you ask me "How are you?"
it will take me 30 minutes to tell you.
Do you still want to know?

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. If you only intend to greet me, say "Hello" - NOT "How are you?"
2. DO NOT ask "How are you?" unless:
 - (a) You really want to know the answer, and
 - (b) You can spare at least 30 minutes to listen to the answer.
3. If I appear to be in a hurry, DO NOT ask me any questions.

Part Three

School: Academic Experiences

The academic curriculum

- math vs reading/comprehension
- 3 reading groups
- history
 - grade 7
 - grade 8
 - grade 10
- grade 11 literature
- "The school curriculum was not designed for people with Asperger's Syndrome." – Jay Serdula

Part Four

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

Elementary school

- in grade one, the teacher wanted me put on Ritalin
- in grade two, I worked one-on-one with a social worker
- in grade three, I had a male teacher

Jay's chart

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
9:00-9:30					
9:30-10:00	X				
10:00-10:30					

What helped me

- Mom = stay-at-home
- close enough to walk to school
- small town
- never moved
- big sister

Hitchhiking through Asperger Syndrome – Lise Pyles

- "Gotcha": other students know how to stay below the teacher's radar
- common denominator problem
- target for being taken advantage of
- common denominator problem does not imply cause of problem

bullying

- "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

- face-blind
- too many people to "stay away" from
- "safety" zones?
- grade 5
- tattling versus reporting a bullying incident

Physical activity (where I am now)

- has overshadowed most or all of my negative aspects
- catch 22/learning social etiquette
- my advice to anyone with Asperger's Syndrome
- poor motivation (liable to result in discouragement)

Find out who my true friends are

- people may play "Mr. Nice Guy" in order to win my trust
- takes time for people to appreciate and accept me for who I am
- even a "true" friend may get frustrated with me once in a while (or just need space)

excerpt – Social Skills appendix
[Pyles, 2002, pg. 257]

- What is a friend?

Do they give things to you? Share with you? Do they take turns with you? Offer to help you? Walk with you?

- What is NOT a friend?

Do they make fun of you? Hurt you? Do they try to make you do bad things? Do they take things from you?

Part Five

Day-to-Day Experiences (adult life)

job interviews

- interviewers go by first impressions
- my case of Asperger's Syndrome counts against me
- those who have a job are those who know how to look for a job
- NOT those who make the best workers

Information overload

- I hope this is the LAST question
- voicing my objection risks
 - more questions
 - the other person will copy my objection

Part Six

Concluding Remarks

When dealing with an Aspie

- (1) be aware (that Aspies are different)
- (2) #1: BE FIRM!! (may require 3 or 4 tries)
 - instructions may need to be repeated
- (3)#2: be careful asking open-ended questions
- (4) Aspies often want to be left alone
 - when asking questions, don't appear "forcing"
 - give advance warning
- (5) be careful when issuing orders

There is no "quick fix" solution

- very few "hard and fast" rules apply in all situations



How many scones did you bake?

- Why does the exact number of scones matter?
- How badly do you want to know the answer to that question?
- How urgently do you want to know the answer to that question?
- Are you aware that how large/small I cut the scones affects how many scones there are but does not affect the total overall mass or volume of scones?
- Are you aware that your question puts me in an awkward situation? (The true answer is "I don't know" but I'm afraid to tell you that because I'm afraid you'll yell at me and say, "If you don't know, who knows? I sure as h*** don't know!")
- Do you expect me to count them?
- If so, do you expect me to do so before they're finished baking?
- If so, do you expect me to take them out of the oven while I count them or leave the oven door open and stick my head in and risk burning myself while I count them?

Questions NOT to ask Jay

- How many scones did you bake?

Canadians: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.



- Americans: Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees the North to avoid a collision.
- Canadians: Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.
- Americans: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.
- Canadians: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.
- Americans: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH, I SAY AGAIN, THAT'S ONE FIVE DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTER-MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP.

Canadians: "This is a lighthouse. Your call."



NOW AVAILABLE!!
"The Ambition of an Aspie"



"The Ambition of an Aspie"
is available at:

- Handy Book Exchange
 - 1762 Avenue Rd.
 - 416-781-4139
- Parentbooks
 - 201 Harbord St.
 - 416-537-8334
- \$26.95
- email swim4aspergers@hotmail.com

Questions??

Part Seven

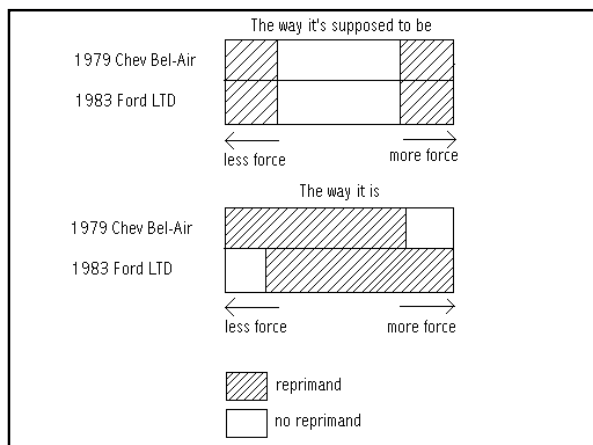
Additional Slides
(if time avails)

Theory of mind

- Aspies don't know what the other person knows
- Where is Sally going to look for the marble?
- Aspie: "The marble is in the box; therefore, Sally will look for the marble there."
- Where will Sally expect to find the marble?
- the other student hit me first
- the teacher doesn't know (that the other student hit me first)
- other students know that I don't know that the teacher doesn't know that the other student hit me first

Things that throw me off

- "Bethel church is *NOT* going to put a team in this year (no coach)."
- "Well, you could coach it."
- eating instant oatmeal = living in luxury
- "Try to win the Gatineau ski race."



Changing lanes

- "There was something I was supposed to do when I was being tailgated."
- "Now I remember. I was supposed to change lanes."
- driving on an expressway.

Eating sugar

- sugar + mental stress = ?
- headaches
- food sensitivity to sugar
- 3 seconds to decide
- hidden "damage"
- "Don't let me catch you eating sugar ever again."

Answer questions with as little energy as possible

- in order to answer the question, I have to:
- think for a few moments
- in need of space
- shake the other person loose
- answer the question
- compare putting gasoline in a car (easier to do when there is still gasoline in the car)

What's a GIS?

- GIS = ?
- GIS = gruelling interrogation session
- whether something classifies as a GIS depends on the amount of energy required to answer the questions versus the amount of energy available
- Adrian+Tamara

How's work?

- 10-second summary or 10-minute summary

Can we not have this discussion?

- I need to learn to say this
- I'm afraid the other person will say no
- req'd to explain why I don't want to discuss issue IN ADDITION TO having the discussion

Shakespeare

- on test, students must identify who said a given quotation
- teacher: "It's not as hard as you think. Believe me, once you get to know the characters, there's no way you'll be able to mix up who says what."
- my "silent" reply: "I believe you, that.... *AFTER* I get to know the characters.
- But I, Jay Serdula, will never get to know the characters that well - at least not within the three weeks of reading Shakespeare."
- I was sick for two weeks – but went to school anyway)

writing a letter to my sister

- homework in all four subjects every day
- 1st year university easier than grade 12 or 13
- could not write letters during the week
- on Saturday...
 - Deliver newspapers (I was a newspaper carrier)
 - Eat breakfast
 - Make a point-form list of what to say in the letter
 - Let my thoughts settle (while focusing on something else, which is not so strenuous)
 - "This afternoon, I *will* write."

my aunt and uncle/GIS

- Group 1: support swimmer without being asked
- Group 2: support swimmer only if asked
- Group 3: neutral
- Group 4: discourage swimmer
- my solution: avoid my aunt and uncle if coming to Toronto to support Bren (which is only 10% of the time – or less)
- my uncle's birthday
- why don't you call them now?

Tie a helium baloon to my waist?

- straw that broke the camel's back
- voice objection or not? (treading on dangerous ground either way)
- must choose battles carefully
- don't have the people skills to say no without causing an upset
 - say no in a rude way
 - give in (i.e. give the other person what s/he "wants")
 - "run" (i.e. avoid contact with that person)

Tie a helium baloon to my waist? CONT'D

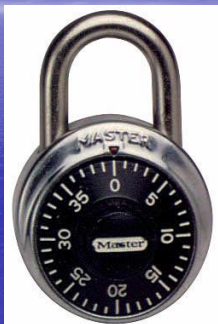
- this will work; I guarantee it.
- often the "solution" will not work because:
 - the other person is overlooking something
 - the "solution" is more trouble than it's worth
 - in order to implement the solution, I will have to make other changes in my lifestyle and I'm not ready to make those changes.
- Jens should be thankful

Write a life-instruction manual?

- (1) no one can or will take the time to write such a manual
- (2) Aspies couldn't/wouldn't take the time to read such a manual
- (3) Aspies have difficulty resolving ambiguity
- (4) rules change over time
- (5) rules aren't always followed

What is Asperger's Syndrome, CONT'D

- remembering locker combinations



INFALLABLE IQ TEST

Mix and match the following:

1. That which Noah built.
2. An article for serving ice cream.
3. What a bloodhound does in chasing a woman.
4. An expression to represent the loss of a parrot.
5. An appropriate title for a knight named Koal.
6. A sunbanned man.
7. A tall coffee pot perking.
8. What one does when it rains.
9. A dog sitting in a refrigerator.
10. What a boy does on the lake when his motor won't run.
11. What you call a person who writes for an inn.
12. What the captain said when the boat was bombed.
13. What a little acorn says when he grows up.
14. What one does to trees that are in the way.
15. What you do if you have yam and needles.
16. Can George Washington turn into a country?

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| A. hypotenuse | I. circle |
| B. polygon | J. axiom |
| C. ascot | K. cone |
| D. geometry | L. coincide |
| E. unit | M. cosecant |
| F. center | N. tangent |
| G. decagon | O. hero |
| H. arc | P. perpendicular |

Aspies

- Q. What is the difference between an Aspie and a normal person?
- A. There is no difference. Both are people. You just have to understand the rules of engagement. – Chris Dobson
- Q. If you could tell the world one thing about Asperger's Syndrome, what would it be?
- A. People with Asperger's Syndrome are not usually as threatening as they seem.

How Asperger Syndrome affects me (original slide, without pictures)

- require specific instructions
- take words and phrases literally
- perseverance
- difficulty discerning appropriate time for something
- take longer to learn social rules ("grey areas" are what kill me)
- get "sidetracked" by one sentence
- very focused but cannot multi-task
- when there are three people in the room...

How Asperger Syndrome affects me, CONT'D

- take longer to learn social rules ("grey areas" are what kill me)
- difficulty discerning appropriate time for something
- when there are three people in the room...
- go into too much detail

"For example, a child may repeat the same phrase over and over, talk with exaggerated inflections or in a monotone, discuss at length a single topic that is of little interest to others, or have difficulty sustaining conversation unless it focuses on a particular, narrowly defined topic." [Myles and Simpson, 1998]

ALL-OR-NONE

- 16km trial swim
- thought my heart was going to break
- focus on stamina – swim 16km in training
- win approval IN ADVANCE
- Marilyn swam with me for five hours

miscellaneous (overloading) questions

- "Is this something I gave you?"
- Ron's favourite question
- who's doing who a favour?
- treading on dangerous ground

Be careful what you say Be careful how you choose your words

- not OK: "You didn't reply to my message so I assume you didn't get it."
- OK: "You didn't reply to my message so I'm not sure whether you received it."
- OK: "Did you receive my last message?"

- not OK: "Come to our church this Sunday."
- OK: "Would you like to come to our church this Sunday?"

Finishing the swim

- I remember:
 - seeing the wall
 - Marilyn saying "Touch the wall"
 - touching the wall
 - hearing people clapping
 - being lifted onto a blanket
 - waking up in the hospital five hours later

Ben wronged me three separate times

- I ignored someone's joke
- I left cereal in the box
- I went to an interview without telling him

Asking questions

- want information/challenge my right?
- when to ask questions

When I'm asked for an explanation

- Must have already prepared the explanation or else...
- Speak quickly and run the risk of saying the wrong thing
- think about what to say - and run the risk of appearing that I'm forestalling answering the question
- "ANSWER THE QUESTION, PLEASE!"

How to destroy me

- Ask me a question which I cannot answer and then demand an answer on the spot

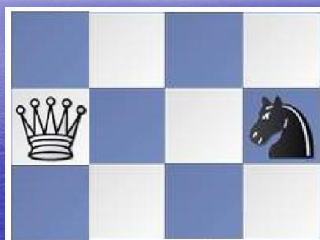
How to ask questions

- does question have a specific answer?
- e.g. "How did you make out in flashcards?"

paddling volunteers

- Group 1: I'm excited and can't wait. I'll be disappointed if you never ask me.
- Group 2: I'm willing to paddle beside you but I'm also willing not to do so. I won't be disappointed if you don't ask me.
- Group 3: I could paddle beside you but I'd prefer not to. Ask me only if you're really stuck.
- Group 4: I absolutely will not paddle beside you.

A horse can get a queen
but a queen can't get a horse.



When a horse is in a position
that it can get the queen,
the queen can't get the horse.