

AU ASPERGER UNITED

No. 14 November 1997



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Thoughts on Having Autism
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News from Abroad
Plus **AUTISM INTERNATIONAL**

Produced by and for people with Asperger syndrome



Asperger United is a self-help newsletter run by and for people with Asperger syndrome. Its aim is to put people with the condition in touch with one another and to provide them with information so that they can lead more independent lives.



The *Asperger United* is produced by an editorial group consisting of:

Editors John Joyce

Assisted by Pam Yates, The Maudsley Hospital's Home Based Team for Autistic Individuals

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Editorial

Letter from the Editor

I hope you enjoyed the previous edition. Sorry again for the delay in getting that edition out. We do hope, however, that with the new and efficient (hopefully) system at the NAS we will no longer have any production difficulties.

You will note that there is a new section in our newsletter titled 'Autism International'. This section will cover what is being done for people with autism and Asperger syndrome in other countries - European and otherwise. Perhaps once we get to know these organisations better we can develop a link which will enable us to pay visits to other countries - not only to share experiences but to allow us to have organised exchanges and holidays. Do note, the conference for people with Asperger syndrome is being held at the Maudsley Hospital and Institute of Psychiatry (they are one and the same place!) on the 28.10.97. I hope to meet many of you there.

Please continue to send in your contributions and comments.

Your Editor,

John Joyce

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Autism & Spiritualism

by John Brookes

"You should write the story of your life" the medium said to me on the platform. I told her that I did not think it worth telling or writing about, but the medium disagreed and fairly insisted that I should write my biography such as it is. "It would be most interesting" she insisted. But I had no idea where or how to start. The trouble is that there is so very much that I just could not know how to begin telling and would not want anyone to know anyway.

Where should I start? At the beginning, one might be tempted to reply. But I don't recall the beginning. And I believe that we do bring certain things, conditions attitudes, outlooks etc, with us into this world when we come unheralded and sometimes no doubt, unwelcome, unwanted ever, into this world.

About the earliest report I recall on my behaviour was my mother telling me of a comment made by someone who saw me in my pram. I was in all probability only a few, perhaps no more than nine months old. Apparently, I had been moving about, acting in a certain way which the commenting person did not think bode very well for my future. It might indicate it seemed, perhaps some complications to come (as mother put it at the time). But as it turned out those were the things that I do not think I would, or even should tell or relate in any way. And for me that's as far as it goes. Just what is there worth telling?

Looking through an old poetry book recently I came across an old photograph of a very sad eyed little boy of about seven years of age that I instantly recognised as being myself in my early school days; it had been put in the poetry book for safe keeping long ago. I recalled that when I brought the photo home from school, my grandmother, with whom I was staying at the time, was so very pleased with it that she said she would not part with it for a gold clock. But no gold clock was forthcoming so it remains with me to this very day.

Not much for a story to unfold just yet. I have done some writing in my time. In my early to mid 20s to early to mid 30s (I am at the time of this writing almost 75 years of age) so there will not be very much more to tell or write about anyway. When I was about 18 I got interested in spiritualism and had notions about becoming a medium and got the urge to 'write'. I was also interested in practical and self analytical psychology also at the time and began writing articles on the subject for a popular Practical Psychology magazine of the time. That magazine is now defunct, long defunct. I have kept a few of the

articles as keepsakes but there are no outlets for any such articles or writings today.

When this outlet failed I took to writing about spiritualism and published quite a few articles in their publications, and corresponded with many of their readers. But then spiritualism came to just about the same end as psychology, papers ceased to publish and now I appear in none of them, the 'inspiration' just dried up and I could write no more. Life for me had been somewhat empty ever since I quit, or thought I had quit spiritualism, half hoping that some new inspiration would take over and help and advance me more on the material plane. But nothing of the sort occurred and all the writing has dried up. I am doing this now only because of the medium's advice to see where it leads. Will I find some angles and ideas, will they just 'pop-up' from the depths of my subconscious? maybe. I think it has happened before and could happen again - I hope. And if the medium really got anything from spirit for me, if there can be, if it can lead to any new start for me. I am far from certain whether I could have recourse to spiritualism or psychology if ever they could work again for me, but of course they never really did.

In either case it seems very unlikely that they ever could again, if ever they ever did, which I am sure now that they didn't and unless Dr Sanderson has something really effectual to offer, I am sure that they never will. The 'autism' and Asperger syndrome business doesn't seem very promising. I will just continue with this as it keeps coming and hope for the best. I believe that a spiritualist healer helped my rheumatics but I can't find one to help my eczema or autism, whatever that is, but they say that all comes to him who waits. Well I have been waiting a long time now, so let's wait and see.

Note from Editors: Sorry John we could only publish part of your article. Thanks for sending it in.



Autism International

This is a new section dealing with letters and correspondence from overseas. This edition will focus on work being done in **Denmark** and the Information & Training Centre for Autism.

VIDENSCENTER OG CENTER FO.

AUTISME

Information and Trainingcenter for Autism

Skodsborgvej 1, 3.
2830 Virum

☎: 00 45 - 4585 1213

Fax: 00 45 - 4585 9313

● Email: vcautism@dk-online.dk ●

● Homepage: <http://www2.dk-online.dk/users/vcaut> ●

Background

The Information Center for Autism in Denmark was established in collaboration with the counties of Fyn, Århus and Copenhagen. The Center is one of seven information centers for handicapped people. A professional steering committee is attached to the Center consisting of representatives from the counties and the National Society for Autism. The Information Center for Autism in Denmark was founded in 1994 and is located in Virum near Copenhagen, sharing premises with the Training Center for Autism..

Autism

Autism is a severe development disorder, invariably of a life-long nature, appearing before the age of three and displaying the following characteristics::

- ◆ Deviance in social development
- ◆ Deviance in communication and language.
- ◆ Repetitive and stereotype behaviour

The two conditions which resemble, and are related to autism, are called *Atypical Autism* and *Aspergers Syndrome*. Together these conditions constitute a group of disorders now known as Pervasive Development Disorders. No cause has yet been isolated and no cure has yet been found. This means that treatment and training must be considered in a life-long perspective with the objective of attaining a life "as near normal as possible" for each person with autism..

Aims

The purpose of the Information Center for Autism in Denmark is to systematically collect, compile and make available information about autism in order to promote and encourage development in the field, thus helping to improve conditions and quality of life for this handicap group. Through its activities, the Center ensures that parents and families, professionals, institutions and public authorities have constant access to current knowledge and the latest developments in the field of autism and related disorders.

Target group

The Information Center for Autism addresses everyone in contact with people with autism. High priority is given to dialog and collaboration with:

- ♦ Institutions
- ♦ Professionals
- ♦ Parents and families
- ♦ Organizations and associations,
- ♦ Public authorities

Activities

The activities of the Information Center comprise on the one hand collecting, compiling and making available existing information from a wide variety of sources throughout the world and, on the other hand, initiating and actively participating in surveys and projects with the aim of providing new information..

Information searching

Via advanced and extensive database search facilities the Center is able to provide most of the titles and articles on a particular subject. Literature lists can be ordered in a form adapted to specific purposes or professional level.

Reference library

A unique library is currently being established, comprising all significant publications in the field in the form of books, journals and articles.

Survey of facilities and services in Denmark

The Center is currently conducting a nation-wide survey to describe the facilities and services available in Denmark to people with autism.

Conferences

The Center organizes Annual Regional Conferences on relevant areas in the field. The first of these concerns "The problems and needs of low-functioning people with autism".

Development projects

The Center implements Development Projects with support from the Ministry of Social Services and private trust funds. The following projects are currently being established:

- ♦ Early identification and intervention of pre-school children with autism.
- ♦ An epidemiological survey in the county of Ribe in Denmark
- ♦ Knowledge and experiences concerning people with Asperger's Syndrome
- ♦ Psychopharmacological treatment of people with autism..

Collaboration

Many of the activities of the Center are conducted in collaboration with the founding counties of Fyn, Århus and Copenhagen. The county of Copenhagen has administrative responsibility for the activities of the Information Center.

Collaboration on an overall basis takes place via two network groups attached to the Center. The one consists of parent representatives appointed by the local organisations of the National Association of Autism, while the other network consists of professionals appointed by the 14 counties in Denmark. These network groups meet on a regular basis with the staff of the Information Center in order to ensure that the activities of the Center conform to the needs and interests of people with autism, their parents and families and the county authorities.

Collaboration on specific activities also include various professionals working groups involved in the development projects and special activities of the Center.

Finally the Information Center also collaborated closely with the Training Center for Autism which offer direct services to people with autism, their parents and families and to professionals. These services include:

- ♦ Diagnostic procedure for people who may have autism
- ♦ Consultation with and advice to parents and professionals
- ♦ Training courses, workshops and conferences on autism
- ♦ Research

Staff

Psychologist Demetrios Haracopos, director of the Information Center for Autism in Denmark and The Training Center for Autism, is one of the leading authorities in the field.

Lennart Pedersen, psychologist and chief consultant, is responsible for providing professional services in conjunction with activities initiated by the Training Center for Autism.

Maria Vedel, pre-school consultant, meets with and advises parents of pre-school children with autism and pre-school teachers and other professionals who are involved with them.

Klaus Toft-Olsen, information officer, social pedagog, is responsible for coordination of general and specific activities of the Information Center for Autism.

Charlotte Holmer Jørgensen, information officer, librarian, is responsible for information processing and the establishing of a special reference library on autism.

Kate Jensen, secretary, is responsible for day to day administration and correspondence.

In addition to the above members of staff, Dr. Med. Ole Sylvester Jørgensen and Dr. Med. Torben Isager serve as consulting child psychiatrists to the Center.

Administrated by

Copenhagen County 

Survey report on sexual behaviour

In their national study of adults with autism in group homes in Denmark, Haracopos and Pedersen (1992) suggest that behavioural problems can occur in connection with unresolved sexual difficulties. Their findings were gathered through questionnaires filled out by staff members responsible for each resident, with consultation from other staff. Eighty-one Danish adults with autism were surveyed - 57 men and 24 women - with an average age of 25.8 years.

The complex findings confirmed or provided some support for the survey's five principal hypotheses:

- Sexual behaviour is a common occurrence among people with autism.
- Sexual behaviour is often expressed in an inappropriate way for the surroundings and for the people with autism themselves
- Sexual behaviour is expressed in a deviant and bizarre way in relation to the accepted norm.
- Behavioural problems occur in connection with unresolved sexual problems.
- People with autism are unable to establish or have difficulty in establishing a sexual relationship.

Notes from Editors: Are these survey findings of interest? Do you agree with these findings? What are your experiences? Write to me with your comments.

Development on the Home front

The Doncaster Asperger and Autism Support Group has been meeting regularly each month since June 1996. Membership is open to adults (over 16 years) with Asperger syndrome (and similarly functioning young people with a diagnosis of autism), and their parents. We meet in a Doncaster Pub on the last Thursday in the month and have been developing a programme of activities which have included quizzes, music and poetry, discussions and a Christmas Party.

Members of the group have also been involved in a Music project with Doncaster Community Arts (DARTS), the aim of which is to produce an album of songs and music with the theme of autism plus an accompanying booklet of lyrics and poetry. The project is supported by professional singers and musicians but will have a substantial contribution from people with autism through the participation of group members in all aspects of production. Two residents of Thorne House Autistic Community were also involved in this project.

As the Doncaster Asperger and Autism Support Group has been so successful I would like to try again to establish a similar group in Sheffield. I have the support of the Sheffield Autistic Society who view this as a welcome extension of the support they already offer to parents and people with autism. The aim would be to provide social support for group members, but for those who would like something practical to do there is also the possibility of becoming involved with a gardening group set up by one of the parents and based on an allotment.

I will shortly be arranging another meeting in Sheffield for anyone interested in setting up a similar group there. Anyone who is interested can leave a message for me at Axholme House, our new Continuing Education Unit, the telephone number of which is 01302 367971.

Pat Housley, Family Services Worker for South Yorkshire, Thorne House Autistic Community.

Note from Editors

Thank you for your letter, hopefully your development in Doncaster & Sheffield will go well. Perhaps I could visit sometime to obtain a personal view of progress.

Feature Autism and Employment

Jobs and Interviews by Marc Segar

- In an interview body language is extra important and you want to look confident and relaxed. You are also expected to speak clearly and professionally.
- First impressions are extremely important.
- Prepare as many possible answers for as many possible questions as you can but don't over rehearse or rigidify your answers. It is good to get help at this stage.
- Know what your skills and talents are.
- The interviewer will often drop you a few hints towards the end of the interview (using mainly body language) to let you know whether you are likely or unlikely to get the job.
- There are courses and classes around which teach interview technique.
- All the same rules apply in the workplace as they do anywhere else but the one difference is that there is something at stake, your job. This means it is extra important to keep a clean slate or you might be a target for scapegoating which is a very nasty threat to your job.
- If in doubt, keep quiet. This is often seen as a good quality in the office.
- Like it or not, as an autistic person or someone with Asperger syndrome, some jobs will be more suitable than others. Examples are as follows:

Suitable Jobs

Graphic Designer
Computer Programmer
Computer Technician or Operator
Research Scientist
Medical Research Scientist
Architect

All of these are respected professions which generally take place in environments with people who tend to be perhaps just a little bit more accepting of the needs of those who worry. Please note that I have specifically chosen to show quite difficult careers here and there are plenty of easier careers available.

Unsuitable Jobs

Salesman
Manager
Police Officer
Solicitor or Lawyer
Doctor, Dentist or Health Inspector
Secondary School Teacher
Airline Pilot

All of which can be highly stressful and competitive occupations which involve making difficult decisions and compromises under intense pressure from other people.

- In the workplace, everyone is usually under constant struggle to keep their jobs. This means being organised and methodical all the time to avoid confusing situations. Good communication is very important.
- Sad as it may seem, devious games can occur in the workplace and sometimes you might feel great compassion for someone else who is on the verge of losing their job unfairly. However, to defend them can often be putting your own job at risk as well. If you do wish to defend someone against a higher authority first ask yourself whether it is worth the risk.
- Be on the lookout for the "authoritarian personality". These are people who tend to be very much bound by the rule-book, very respectful of higher authority, bossy to junior staff and quite hard

to reason with. What really needs to be respected is the fact that these people can often be much more cunning than they look.

- If you are in research, you may find yourself in a situation where you wish to patent, copyright or create proof of ownership of a piece of work you have produced. The easiest thing to do is to make a copy, seal it in an envelope and post it to your home address. It gets the date stamped on it in the post. Don't open the envelope when it arrives but keep it sealed and stored away in a safe place. Recorded delivery may be more reliable and legally airtight. Also, keep any notes you have written whilst producing your work. You now have legal proof that it is your work and should not have to worry too much about it falling into the wrong hands.

Prospects for Employment by Emma Cherry

Emma Cherry set off to investigate the 'Prospects' scheme run by The National Autistic Society which aims to enable people with autism and Asperger syndrome to gain real jobs for real wages. The programme featured Richard Senior, who is successfully employed in the Personnel Department of British Telecom.

'Prospects' is the only specialised employment scheme for people with autism and Asperger syndrome in the UK and it emphasises matching the individual's skills to the job and provides the necessary specialist support to enable each individual to fulfil their potential and contribute to the success of the organisation.

Support is provided at two levels. Employment Support Workers work alongside the individual to enable them to fully carry out their role and responsibilities and to ensure their successful integration into the organisation. During the early stages of employment, guidance is given on issues such as establishing a routine, structuring tasks and planning for changes. Equally important is the advice and support given to the individual's colleagues in the work environment. Employment Support Workers can help colleagues understand how autism and Asperger syndrome affect people at work.

Bob Mason, Personnel Director at BT - "We began to understand that Asperger syndrome people were very literal and that was really all we needed, it was just understanding that you had to be extremely precise in dealing with people".

Wilf Law, Resource Manager at BT - "I think the scheme does work. I don't believe that you can just take an individual and say this person matches that job. I think it's much more about saying how can we actually structure the job to match the special skills of this individual I personally believe one of the benefits that I have gained from having Richard in the group is that I do now take up issues immediately when they arise".

Richard Senior, Personnel Dept at BT - "What is good is that they know I feel at home. They know that I'm close to them and I feel I can ask for help when I want it and that I can help myself in any case. It's good".

Prospects for Employment

Some useful addresses

Radar (& Rights Now Campaign), 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF. Tel: 0171 250 3222

British Council for Disabled People, Litchurch Plaza Litchurch Lane, Derby DE2 8AA. Tel: 01332 295551

Disability Awareness in Action, Tel: 0171 834 0477

RNIB, 224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA
Tel: 0171 388 1266

RNID, 19/23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8FL
Tel: 0171 296 8000

National Disability Council, Helpline: 0345 622644

Scope, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ
Helpline: 0800 626216

Prospects, c/o The National Autistic Society
393 City Road, London EC1V 1NE
Tel: 0171 903 3597

Direct Action Network, Tel: 0181 889 1361

MIND, Granta House, 15/19 Broadway, Stratford
London E15 4BQ. Tel: 0181 519 2122

Guide to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
by Caroline Gooding. Published by Blackstones Press,
£14.95

Benefits Helpline: 0800 882200

Taken from The Link Programme Factsheet

Personal Security by Marc Segar

It is best for anyone, male or female, to avoid walking alone late at night down deserted or badly lit streets but here are some tips for protecting yourself.

- Always make sure your wallet is out of sight.
 - You may do well to look over your shoulder every now and then.
 - Don't look down, look straight ahead.
 - Look like you know where you are going and show no fear.
 - Following these guide-lines will make you look less vulnerable and more able to defend yourself.
 - If someone threatens you and you start running, just keep on running.
- If it is too late or you are unable to run, let them have your wallet if they ask for it. This is a small price to pay for your personal security.
 - If they take your wallet, cancel credit cards as soon as possible and get them replaced.
 - Never try and bargain or reason with your mugger(s).
 - Finally, ALWAYS phone your mum or dad and let them know if you've decided to stay the night at someone else's house or they will probably be so worried they will call the police to search for you.

Rape Crisis

- In the unfortunate event that you might ever be on the receiving end of a sexual attack, it is probably a good idea to scream at the top of your voice **before** the attacker gets the chance to threaten you to be silent.
- The police do advise women to carry rape alarms with them just in case.
- Most rape victims know their attackers. What's more, most rapes do not happen on the streets.
- If it has already happened to you, you are **not** the only one, it is **not** your fault and if you tell the **right** people they will believe you.
- If a simple "no" is not enough, then what the hell is.

Conversation Skills by David Braunsberg

British Telecommunications plc have published a small book called *Talkworks: How to get more out of life through better conversations*. Its chapters include advice about being a good storyteller and a good understander and about giving and receiving feedback. It ends with useful summarised advice. Here are a few items which may be particularly important to us and which may need attention and practice.

1. When holding a conversation show your full attention, listen properly and say what is important or relevant as briefly as possible.
2. Body language and eye contact are essential.
3. A serious and relaxed expression may be helpful. Smiling or

laughing briefly may be appropriate when the other person makes a funny comment.

4. Ask brief questions or make brief comments about the subject under discussion to show you are taking an active part.
5. When you are talking try to read clues that you may be boring the other person. He/she may be looking away from you, fidgeting or slumping in a chair.
6. Give the other person time to talk and air his/her views and show that you understand differences of opinion. Interrupting a person's flow of conversation can signal unwillingness to listen.
7. Timing is important. Do not start a conversation if the other person is rushing to go out, engaged in a

telephone conversation, listening to the radio, watching TV, reading or simply tired or irritable.

8. Do not point at a person: this can offend or undermine confidence.

The book discusses in detail how one can improve one's conversational skills and people with Asperger syndrome may find some of these hints very useful. To obtain the book free or get information about BT Forum, a body that conducts research into the role of communication within society, phone 0800 800808 (no charge).

Note from Editors

Dear David - Thank you very much for this interesting information. If anyone else has read or acquired information on skills such as conversation skills, please let us know.

Letters to the Editor

Extract of a letter from a parent
(We have not included names to protect their identity)

I have just read the latest issue of *Asperger United* (AU) with great interest. As a mother I found it so helpful, because my daughter wasn't diagnosed until she was 27. I had to try and bring her up the best way I knew how, without any help or understanding of her problems. I tried to bring her up to be as normal as possible, because no one could give me any idea as to what her strange and unusual behaviour was caused by.

It's not been easy to understand my daughter and even more difficult for people outside the family, who did not know her fully. But since she has been diagnosed I have much more help and information, and I have also become a member of the Autistic Society and just recently spent an incredibly amazing and informative day at the conference in Luton. The speaker was Roz Blackburn, who gave an absolutely fantastic talk, and gave me even more understanding of the problems and fears that Autistic and Asperger people have, and how in fact she copes with every day life.

I found reading this latest edition of AU very informative with regards to what it is like to live with Asperger syndrome, from the people themselves. My daughter has now been living in her own house for a year and a half and although it has not all been plain sailing, she is doing incredibly well.

I feel we have both had difficulty with understanding, me as a mother trying desperately hard to understand her ways, and my daughter trying to understand life itself. I think we are both getting better at understanding now, thanks to people like yourselves putting the information out, to not only people with Asperger, but to the parents of these people. I always pass copies of AU on to the professionals in our area (i.e. doctors, and psychologists) in the hopes that it will also give them a better understanding.

I have enclosed a couple of poems (included in the 'Talent Spotting' on page 12) that I wrote for my daughter, to show that despite all the problems and difficulties we have encountered together I still love her. Once again I would like to thank you all very much, keep up the good work.

Editors reply

Thank you for your letter - Roz will be pleased to know

Please send 'Letters to the Editor' to:

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Fax 0171 833 9666

her talk went down well. Pass our best wishes to your daughter, and perhaps she can one day address a conference herself. "Normal" people have more problems in life than Asperger people, but they do not recognise it. *John Joyce*

Letter from Isobel Brookfield

Hi, My name is Isobel, I am Paul's mum. Paul is nine years of age and has Asperger syndrome. We are regular readers of this magazine. Paul is in a mainstream village school and is coping very well at the moment (he

has been to another mainstream school which didn't work out for obvious reasons).

In two years time he will be at an age where he should transfer to mainstream high school. And this is the reason I am writing.

Many of you young people have attended mainstream schools, and I am interested to know from you whether this was a good experience or not or perhaps would you have preferred to have done something else. As I see it there are three options, special school, mainstream school or, alternatively, perhaps I should consider teaching Paul at home. I know that in recent years things have changed and there is more support in mainstream schools than there ever was before, having said that, I am not convinced that an 800 plus mainstream high school is right - what do others think? I write to you because I value your comments more than the professionals and I can count on you for HONEST replies.

Please write and tell me what you think - I promise to answer all replies! Many thanks.

Editor's reply

Thank you for your letter in which you introduce an interesting topic. It is quite possible that some autistic/Asperger parents may worry about the problem of education for children who may have inherited their disability. You are sure to receive responses from our readers who have been diagnosed before or during their school days. PS Co-editor, Pam Yates advises me that all parents of children with autism and Asperger syndrome worry about their children's education and the questions of a mainstream education Vs special education needs a great deal more discussion and is, in fact, something that the

Letters to the Editor

reply to Isobel Brookfield continued

Maudsley are looking at now. However, hopefully some of the personal school day experiences of people with Autism and Asperger syndrome will be of value to you. *John Joyce.*

Letter from Tim Loder

Dear Friends,

If any of you have possibly been contemplating joining a Psychotherapy Group, I have recently been in a mixed (with non-Aspergics) psychotherapy group, over a period, and have to say it did **not** work for me. I went to try to learn to relate to young women (a young man myself) but to no avail. In fact I found the experience and the women upsetting, and it was apparently upsetting the group itself. The fact that the group was far too 'abstract' for me it was difficult to 'get', to 'tune in' to, the theme of the evening. There were general difficulties with non-verbal communication that they couldn't understand, and our tendency to be over literal which annoyed them. There was a lack of coherent order, but I now take part in Martial Arts Training, for confidence, which has more discipline and the 'theme' is easier to 'get'. Also, I am making rapid progress with Mary Lynch's confidence group for Aspergics (322 Endsleigh Court, Upper Woburn Place, Euston WC2. Telephone 0171 387 8023).

I therefore conclude I can **not** recommend psychotherapy groups for Autistics or Aspergics.

Yours sincerely,
Tim Loder

Editor's reply

Dear Tim,

Thank you for your letter and for your comments on the value of Psychotherapy for people with Asperger syndrome. If anyone has any experience of Psychotherapy or any other therapy that they have tried then please write in. We will repeat Mary Lynch's address in the 'Handy addresses' section. *John Joyce.*

Editor's reply

Dear David Miedzianik,

Thank you for all your letters and poetry. I hope you get some sales of your books. I hear that an Autism Support Group operates in Doncaster, perhaps you could visit it? *John Joyce*

PEN PALS

If you would like to reply to any of the letters or requests for contacts then please write to:
Asperger United, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NE. We will pass your letters on to the appropriate person.

Conor Jones, Limerick, Ireland

I am not a bright autistic person but I am able to do a lot of things. I am very lonely and isolated all the time. I might never work even though I am able for it. The big problem for sure is that I will never have a friend or a girlfriend. It's not possible. Everything has failed before, they say I'm not wanted. I don't understand why. It's been like this for a long time.

Do you know if they can make a medicine for autistic people soon enough. They have been investigating the disorder for years and found nothing. my only chance is either killing myself or getting medical help in this way.

Reply from the Editor

Dear Conor,

Thank you very much for your letter. Hopefully, you will find a pen pal to correspond with through our newsletter. Please do not give up hope on life. Life is tough on us all but if you believe in yourself you can win through. Please let us know what it is like living in Limerick.

John Joyce.

Peter Bibby, Heaton Chapel, Stockport

I am 24 years old and was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome when I was 15. I am quite high functioning, having obtained a degree in Natural Sciences from Cambridge University two years ago. Unfortunately, I have been unable to work since a nervous breakdown at the time of my finals.

I don't have many friends and I would like to meet other people with Asperger's syndrome, preferably in the Manchester area, to improve my social life. My interests include chess (would anyone like a correspondence game?), card games, Karaoke (through which I have found a way to express my unspoken feelings), discos and badminton.

I hope to hear from you all soon.

Editors reply - see next page

PEN PALS

Reply from the Editor to Peter Bibby

Dear Peter,

Thanks for the letter. Maybe I will take you on at correspondence chess. This sounds a great idea, although I have never tried it. *John Joyce.*

Nigel Wood, Oswestry, Salop

I would like some Pen-Pals to write to. I have Asperger syndrome - and am 25 years of age. I am also interested in music, transport and the G.P.O too/ as well!!!!!!

by Jasmine Lee O'Neill Pennsylvania, USA

Hello. I received the newest issue of *Asperger United*. I'd sent a hello letter and essay long ago, back when I was still 27, and my birthday is in March. I hadn't gotten a reply, so I had no idea my material would be printed. I didn't think it would be accepted, because I really do not have Asperger syndrome, I have severe autism, Kanner type. I was surprised to get the issue. I am glad that a part of my hello letter was printed, especially the mentioning of my heritage and that I plan to move to London. I am slowly getting more contacts to do so, but it is too slow and frustrating. I do have special needs.

I think this issue is fascinating and articles are well written. It would be helpful if doctors and teachers read that newsletter. Do you know if any receive it?

One of my aims in my job as educator is to help teach people with autism themselves that they can take pride in who they are. I read them mostly feeling negative, that is society's influence, telling different people they are wrong and bad. I don't fit in anywhere, but don't try to do so, because it would be only a mask of me. I get opposition from all around, as well as much admiration. I come from a lifetime of abuse and, at school, torment. It makes me stronger. It makes solid my desire to be true to myself. I think differently than most people, probably even most other autistics. Just because everyone surrounding disagrees with something I do or say doesn't change my mind. Nobody can make me change, or force me to become what they want. They are who they are; I am who I am.

I tell all autistics that they are precious, and need not hate autism, or themselves. I have many important things to say, and at last, important people are beginning to listen.

As events happen, I come closer to my desire of living in London, and I keep wanting that more. I believe in myself to create a life in my way, and to succeed in my way, not in anyone else's way. I do have some support from a very few people. Many people in the Autism field also know who I

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News from Abroad

am, and many have my drawings, poems and essays. My parents...are severely NON-autistic. I am not very close to them. My Mum is quite a loving woman, though, and she can be a type of friend. She does help me with some things, but also doesn't understand enough. But, that doesn't ruin me. I do need to move on, and do have special needs, so I do have a special living arrangement, no matter where I live.

I am not willing to live a poor life. I am used to always having nice things, and have potential to make a great amount of money, so that's what I've started to do.

I receive federal disability money, which is pitiful because it is a tiny amount. But, it can be saved, added to my minuscule details in my plans to have my world as I like it.

I do answer questions from parents, and I have several people I have allowed as close to me as I will allow, but I shy away from most others and do not seek relationships, with the exception of that I do want a life partner. One person, I can handle. Numbers of them, that becomes too much. I don't get angry at myself for not having the life that others have. There are enough outsiders who can get angry, such as my parents, and who scrutinise and think I don't live my life properly. I don't let myself believe them, because I am worth more than that.

I hope other autistics can learn how they can take pride in their differences, too, even in the scorn of others. If they are not like others, why should that fact cause them to hurt. They can be good friends to themselves. Feeling hurt limits soaring wings.

I find I am much happier because I'm not devoured by stress to learn to the

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big world's social codes and rules, and what others think is appropriate. I don't care. They don't care about my world's rules, so why should I try to follow theirs? I feel it doesn't have anything to do with me. Even around people who are more understanding, I am myself, and they know who I am, and they don't seem to act like they need me to change.

I don't know how your opinion is about the tragic events of this week, but I am deeply sad and broken inside about Princess Diana's death. I had exchanged letters with her and was replied by her secretary. My hope was to meet her someday, after I came to London. I felt she was a very nice lady, very human and chic, and cared a lot for many, and was a shining person. I'm frustrated that I am not in London now to take part and be more a part that I can be here now.

Peace, Jasmine.

Talent Spotting

In this section we have some new talent - a mother - shown in the following two poems to her daughter. Also, we have a poem from David Miedzianik and some suggested logos for *Asperger United* from Tom Lee and Thomas Simmons. Our apologies to Thomas, as we forgot to include his suggestion in the last issue.

FOR MY CHILD

I know I don't always show you,
How much I really care,
I know it's not always enough,
Just simply being there.

But I've always been beside you
As you've travelled through your life,
Taking the rough with the smooth,
The trouble with the strife.

Watching over you as you grew
To an adult from a child,
Soothing all your hurt and pain
Relieving your troubled mind.

Helping you to understand
The world and it's complex ways,
Guiding you along the paths
Of life's complicated maze.

Trying as only a Mother can
To prepare you for life's ride,
When you are out there all alone
Without me at your side.

I hope you will remember
The things I've tried to do,
I hope your life is a happy one
And full of love for you.

Although it's not been easy
as we've travelled this journey together,
I wanted you to know, my child
I will love you always and forever.

Name Withheld

Talent Spotting

My slightly imperfect Rose

The Lord blessed me with you,
Slightly imperfect, and yet,
As beautiful as the rose,
As sweet as it's perfume,
I'm glad it's me he chose,
To be your guardian Angel,
To help you through your life.
Sometimes the imperfections,
Were hard for me to bear,
And although I've shed many tears,
The Lord was always there,
His strong hands to guide me,
Helping to smooth the way,
For me to be your Mother,
So that to you this, I could say,
Susanne my precious Daughter,
I love you more, each and every day.

Name withheld

Space Station Sam

The year is 2070 and Space Station Sam rockets around.
Some space stations are so big, that they're like towns.
The people that run these stations are always glad to see Sam.
Sam brings them fuel, and oxygen, and tries to make things go to plan.
Computer mega-chips run the life support systems, in these space stations.
In these space stations are people from just about every nation.
Computers talk to the people on board making sure life doesn't get too hard.
People on board grow their own food and do experiments in test tubes.

Space Station Sam is everyone's man.
Sam tries to make things go to plan.

Sam looks after radio telescopes that are searching space.
He sometimes looks after infra-red telescopes.
The space stations get more money every time they find something out there new.
Sam thinks that one day The Universe will fall, into a black hole.
So to find some way of stopping this is one of his goals.
Although sometimes he's not bothered as long as this doesn't happen before he gets old.
Now Sam goes to inspect a space stations metal walls, that helps keep out the cold.
Some of these stations have been up there quite a bit, and they too, are getting old.

Space Station Sam is everyone's man.
Sam tries to make things go to plan.

Science has made loads of progress in these last few years he thinks to himself.
Now people aren't getting so old so quick.
Also some of the diseases that have plagued mankind, are now getting licked.
There are now just about too many people to fit onto The Earth.
So everyone's now going into space for all their worth.
Although some think that being in space is a curse.
After all there's no hills and trees in space, and food that's grown can't go to waste.
Sometimes even Sam wonders why he's floating around, in such a place.

Space Station Sam is everyone's man.
Sam tries to make things go to plan.

Soon Sam will travel to Mars.
Soon they'll also be trying to go to the stars.
Sam pours a drink that's supposed to make his thoughts better.
Sam looks down at The Earth, to see how's the weather.
Sam's computer now tells him, that his shift is over.
All he's done today has been logged onto this machine.
Sam's now in his space station cabin and the lights are now going dim.
Out there in space there is no proper day and night, to bother him.

Space Station Sam is everyone's man.
Sam tries to make things go to plan.

David C. Miedzianik

Suggested logos for *Asperger United*

An Idea for a new logo for Hyper Unit.

14 Asperger United

Handy Addresses

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