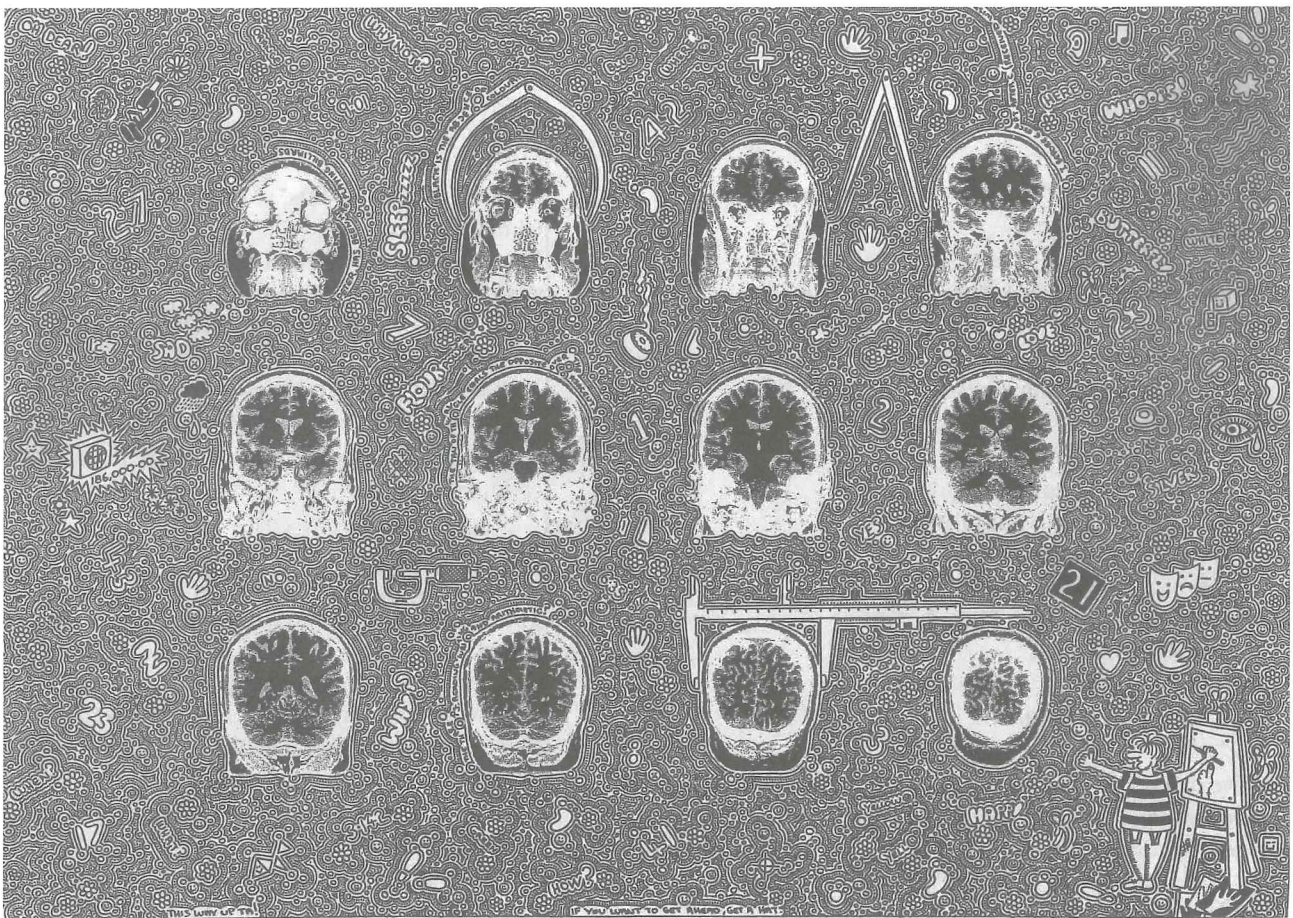


Produced by and for people with Asperger syndrome

Asperger *united*

Edition 31 July 2002



Peter Myers 2002





Asperger United is a self-help newsletter run by and for people with Asperger syndrome. The newsletter aims to put people with the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Asperger United is free to people in the UK with a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome. We ask for a contribution of £6 per year from overseas readers and £10 from professionals and institutions to cover postage costs.

Asperger United is produced by an editorial group.

Editor John Joyce

Additional support The National Autistic Society's Publications Department

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Subscribing to *Asperger United*

Tel: 020 7903 3541
Fax: 020 7903 3767
Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk

All we need is your name and address and we will add you to the mailing list – free of charge to people with a diagnosis!

Thank you to George Cox who kindly produced the illustrations included in the Pen Pal Network section.
Thank you to Graeme Lawson for producing the AU logo.

Please note that the views expressed in Asperger United are not necessarily those of the editor, The National Autistic Society or those involved in the publication of the newsletter.

The problem is understanding

Imagine a computer system that you are trying to operate

You Think

You look at the V.D.U. thinking, it displays what the C.P.U. processes,
You type at the keyboard thinking, it understands your language,
You click at the mouse thinking, it will react to that icon,
You listen to the speakers thinking, they say what the C.P.U. means,
You insert a floppy disc thinking, it can read it,
You have the best quality equipment thinking, it will perform well.

But Ignore

Your peripherals cannot communicate between each other, as you think,
Your connecting cables look impressively complicated, but go nowhere,
Your individual components respond individually, and inappropriately,
Your communication is not being processed then, but being stored,
Your frustration mounts, so you input even more communication,
Your later communication buries the earlier one, so you try again,
Your frequent attempts overwhelm the system, so it crashes,
Your temper frays, you curse the machine and get on with life elsewhere,
Your machine is trying to unscramble all your frantic communications.

The Time Lag!

The machine wants to understand what all the input is about!
The peripherals try to communicate with the C.P.U. in an unconventional way!
The time taken to find a cableless route is considerable and exhausting!
The C.P.U. eventually responds, but the route back is equally problematic!
The peripherals start to respond, but display response inappropriately!
The reaction from you is exactly as above, all over again!
The tired machine explodes in frustration, and you scrap it!

So what if you understand?

That this computer has feelings and is trying to tell you of its pain?
That this computer is not a machine, but a very loving human being?
That this human being has autism and suffers from Asperger syndrome?

Nicholas Windibank

Dear Readers

Hope all is well with everybody and that all are enjoying the summer. Hope that if you have been on holiday you have enjoyed it, and that the rest are looking forward to theirs as I am. Since the last edition of the magazine your editor has stood, unsuccessfully, for election to the council of the London Borough of Sutton. Considering the party concentrated on holding on to what it had rather than trying to upset the status quo in other seats, it might be surprising that 305 people bothered to support me in Wallington North Ward.

I have also participated in promotion tests at work with signal lack of success and completed a course on Immigration Law which I hope will

gain me a diploma. I have earned a diploma in French with the Open University, evidence for which has not yet been circulated i.e. the certificate stating this is not yet issued. I continue on a Spanish course to end with an exam in October. As well as some others I will spend part of November in Australia at a World Autism Congress then on holiday.

Any information on educational achievements and progress at work or with personal skills would be welcome for future editions as would any test of intellectual ability e.g. quizzes, general or specialised as long as the latter do not exclude people because of lack of interest in the subject.

For those who have the knowledge or experience of travelling in the

Brighton area: Can any of you provide the answer to this riddle? Which Sussex railway station can be knelt on?

An Asperger Anthology is on its way so keep the poetry rolling in.

We do not wish to use this magazine as a commercial advertising outlet for professional services but if any Asperger reader has benefited from a particular person's treatment they may give credit to the therapist concerned.

Now I say farewell until the next issue. Happy holidays - please report on anything of interest you encounter.

Your editor - John Joyce



in this edition

Editorial	3
Feature: Readers' experience	4
Prospects referral/Jazz concert	5
Letters to the editor	6
pen pals	7
Poetry/art	8
Readers' letters	9
Feature: Readers' experience - supported housing	10
More letters	11
Book news/art	12

Newly diagnosed, Chris, aged 42, writes for Asperger United

I have recently been diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, and, oh boy, it's been both a relief and a shattering revelation!

My name is Chris, I am 42 years young, unemployed, unwaged, no benefits, a history of clinical depression, only treated in the last 6-7 years with medication and counselling, and married to a woman who suffers from a bipolar condition and SADs.

I am on the wrong end of debt (due to the former statement) and, although my wife works part-time, we have no disposable income, in real terms, including savings, that can help my situation.

You can imagine the stress this has on our marriage, if nothing else. Prospective employers have little or no real intention of offering me jobs, if I declare my illness (?), being honest about it to them. On the other hand if I don't, I may be dismissed for withholding information.

In November 2001, I was sacked from a post with a charity that works with disaffected and emotionally and behaviourally challenged young people. They themselves have various levels of mental health problems and learning disabilities and, rejected by an education system overwhelmed, under resourced, ill-equipped, they are poorly trained themselves.

I was taken on as life/basic skills tutor. I had to redesign the curriculum, get trainees to think of themselves as good enough to do the course, try to get a stable timetable initiated and deliver a vocational preparation for work course as well as life skills. On top of that, although I was an unqualified tutor, I had to clear up the mess my predecessor left, and deal with trainees high on drugs.

I did my best but, according to an audit from the charity's main funder, it was not enough. In fact, the whole unit was found very wanting, but they had taken over a previously failed training provider and were still, only after 3 months of taking over, struggling with the conse-

quences. It was into this complete mess that I was, amazingly, employed. I only knew then that I had clinical depression, and declared it.

Over the six weeks I was there, things changed. The Training Manager resigned less than a month into my job, a pro-tem manager took over from within the parent company, the audit occurred and everyone was in a flap. I just tried to get on with my work but struggled.

I got no real support from my line manager, beyond being asked 'How are you?' in passing, and the pro-tem manager was too wrapped up in getting paperwork completed, although she asked everybody, trainees included, how they thought I was getting on. She didn't ask me, until we had a review meeting. A second one was arranged for two weeks later, after offering me time and support to catch up on paperwork I missed doing, and was dependent on other people doing their bit.

Two weeks later, following a terrible day with the trainees who decided to have a pot party in my locked teaching room - they broke in, I had my second 'review' meeting which turned out to be my sacking. I got so upset that I lost it, not violently, but gave the manager a piece of my mind about the whole situation. I felt that I was being abused, misunderstood and used as a scapegoat, especially because of the poor audit report (which I guessed it would be, but felt we had extenuating circumstances), I got as much of my stuff as I could carry and left. I was followed by them all during that time.

They didn't want it to be seen as a 'sacking', but that is what it was and I didn't really let them finish. A letter sent to me just said that I had been dismissed because of 'unsatisfactory performance', leaving me high and dry. It was two months later that I was diagnosed as having Asperger syndrome. I wrote and told the parent company, twice; once to give and get an explanation and once to tell them of my new diagnosis, and to tell them how it may have affected my 'per-

formance'. I got little and no reply, in that order. No justice.

I feel marginalised by this response, from an employer, who as a voluntary charity, claims to sympathise with their employees who have mental health problems. Not illnesses. And who sets up projects for people and their carers who struggle with similar problems.

I applied for benefit support (Incapacity Benefit) as I was advised to do but because of a previous claim, as a result of my depressive illness and later being considered as being 'fit for work' - I could lift and hold a briefcase for a few seconds as assessed by a doctor - I am in the situation I described at the beginning.

Asperger syndrome is a subtle condition but has far-reaching and devastating consequences for the sufferer, especially if they learn they have it quite late in adulthood.

Why am I writing to you? Well, I need support. And there is precious little on the Isle of Wight, and I'm not in a position to pay subscription fees to national groups, whereas your magazine is free.

Being diagnosed as a recent Asperger/autistic person is a mixed blessing, but Asperger's is an invisible condition, and I have poor coping mechanisms. This has got me through a turbulent training and career as a nurse, a hard-won degree course, and two marriages, the first ending due to my 'unreasonable behaviour', and the second sailing very close to the wind. At least my second partner has a level of understanding, which has helped, but has been very hard. And we are still together with one child.

Christopher Maguire

Thank you very much Chris for sharing your story with us.

John Joyce

Prospects Referral by Michael Feldman

Having been diagnosed with High Functioning Autism (HFA for short) I was seeing my Disablement Employment Advisor (DEA) for an unrelated matter. In passing, I mentioned that I had HFA and that because of my autism, I might not always be 'with it' in the working environment. At this point, I was to learn about Prospects, a job employment consulting agency, run by the National Autistic Society, aimed at helping those with Asperger syndrome and HFA find work.

After a four month wait, I started a Personal Development Program. It was a four week course and I was joined by two other clients. Part of the course involved role playing and interview practice. We also did additional exercises in body language and on what to say and what not to say in the office etc.

Once I was tested for my reaction in a mock work change predicament. I had to adapt to a shift environment. My attitude to this was rather negative so my support worker gave me advice on how to be more subtle in my manner.

Following the one to one sessions, I joined Prospects at their offices in Islington, London. There my support worker gave me guidance on the type of work that I should go for and helped me with the application forms. In particular, the tricky bit where they ask for that dreaded statement. Still, with the correct guidance I was to become successful more than once with securing an interview.

I did very well on some of the interviews I attended and on

one interview, my support worker thought I put myself across better than the mock interview I'd done previously.

Eventually and with perseverance, I secured a filing clerk position with a building consultants firm. This vacancy came to the attention of another DEA who learnt about it through the company. They were advertising a position for a disabled person. It was then, that my DEA thought of me and contacted Prospects.

Following on, I went for the interview with another advisor. Later that day, I learnt that I was accepted for the job working for the company.

Michael Feldman

Prospects contact No's

Prospects London: 020 7704 7450

Prospects Glasgow: 0141 248 1725

Prospects Sheffield: 0114 225 5695

Prospects Manchester: 0161 998 0577

Jazz concerts with my friend

I first met my friend about two years ago at an Asperger group meeting in Bromley. I discovered that he lived quite close to me and decided to get in touch. I had a lovely supper with him and his family at their home. Here it emerged that we had many common interests.

One of these interests is jazz music, and since that meeting we have been to two jazz concerts together. The first concert was held in the Great Hall at University College School, Hampstead (which I attended many years ago and from which I still receive occasional mailings). The concert was held to raise funds for their cricket team to tour the Caribbean. There were several good artists although none were particularly well known. A number of good standards were played, but personally, I liked the numbers written by Gershwin. In addition to those professional artists, certain pupils from the school joined in some of the numbers. Before the concert we had had a nice meal in a Chinese restaurant.

The second concert was at the Purcell Room on the South Bank. That was a fabulous concert featuring three artists of which the highlight was the vocalist Tina May. Again we travelled up from my home and had a meal at one of the many restaurants at the South Bank Centre.

S Barber

Dear Mr Barber

Re. The Purcell Room – I too recently attended a concert there on a Sunday evening in May. My nephew Peter, himself an oboist, and I attended a Beethoven concert. There again the performers were not well known to the general public only among the concert scene

Yours John Joyce.



letters to the editor

Dear Editor

I am completely baffled by Chris Henniker's article on Asperger syndrome and gender issues (in edition 30 of *AU*). I do not understand one single word of it. Please can he explain it in plain, simple English so that readers like myself can understand?

He has made me feel stupid in his attempts to show off his ultra intellectual vocabulary in writing academic gobbledegook like this.

Please would you ask him to simplify it? Thanks, it would be much appreciated.

Richard

Dear Richard,

*Thanks for your challenge to the author of this article.
Hope he responds in kind.*

John Joyce

Dear Editor

Thank you for including the advertisement for our new support group for adults with Asperger syndrome/high functioning autism in South Cumbria in the last issue. I thought I'd write to give your readers an update on how we're doing.

So far we've had five meetings and four or five people attend each meeting. We're in the process of writing to local businesses to seek funding to cover such costs as stationary, postage, telephone and to produce our own information and publicity leaflets. We have a long term aim to set up a 24 hour telephone support service to help local able autistic adults.

We're very lucky to have the assistance and support of Sally Percival, who runs South Lakeland Autism and Asperger syndrome support, a group for parents of children who have autistic spectrum disorders. Soon we hope to begin group outings such as bowling.

Starting the group and coming together is a very positive and empowering experience and I would recommend anyone thinking of doing this in their local area to go for it! You've nothing to lose.

Joanna Lavender

Dear John

I was delighted that you published my poems and cartoons in edition 30 (April 2002) of *Asperger United*, but I have been meaning to speak to you for some time about the Lion and Elephant story which you published in edition 27 (July 2001). I think that you editorialised it to make sense and added the line before the punch line (threw him up into the tree) to make it more upbeat.

The reason I was upset is that the joke originally was an antibullying story where the lion does it once too often and gets his come-uppance, which is why the elephant uses his size and strength to defeat the bully, looking down on the "King" of the jungle from his great height. As do other animals and it shows what we all think of bullies wherever they are, at school, home or work. Still never mind, it was good that you published it.

However, the only really bad thing about edition 30 was that my name was mis-spelt, a terrible "offence" whether the author is being published for the first of umpteenth time. In all correspondence I always give my name as "STEVE GIST", then when people are being formal they remember to write Steven.

Yours Steve Gist

Thanks Steve

Sorry for editing your work incorrectly and for the problems with spelling your name. We will try to be more careful in future.

John Joyce - Editor

Hello John

Thank you for printing my story in the last issue.

As a postscript, whilst at university part of my dissertation was on stress at work. Whilst researching it I looked at bullying at work. I contacted the author of a book about bullying at work – *Bully In Sight* by Tim Field – and related some of my experiences at school and at work. He suggested writing to my old school about it.

A few weeks after doing this I read in the local paper an article about a new anti-bullying campaign at my old school led by the same teacher who had bullied me. Coincidence? No, I don't think it was. I just wish I had acted earlier.

Iain Payne



How to reply to **Pen Pals**

•Please remember to let us know the full name (including surname) of the person who your letter is for.

•To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.

•We will pass your letter onto the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.

•Please note that all penpal letters sent via *Asperger United* are opened before being passed on.

•Young people under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen pal advertisement in *Asperger United*.

My name is Carla - I'm 18 years old and was diagnosed with autism at the age of 3. I live in Cardiff and I'm on an advanced business course at college.

I would like to get in touch with people, both male and female, aged between 17-22, living in the Cardiff/Newport area who have been diagnosed with AS/autism.

My hobbies are going to the cinema, walking, reading, karaoke, meeting new people and learning new things.

My name is Carlene and I am 14 years old. I have recently been diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. I have been told that this is rare in girls but there must be other girls like me and I would love to hear from them.

I have also developed other problems such as anxiety, agoraphobia and morbid thoughts. I no longer attend school because of bullying and I am on Risperdal medication.

If anyone else is in the same position as me please would they contact me through the newsletter as I feel quite isolated.

Rachael - aged 33 from Devon enjoys letter writing and walking. She has recently moved house and is looking to make new friends.

Please contact via *AU*.

Dear *AU*

My name is Benjamin and I'm looking for a female friend in the Wellinborough area to go out to pubs with and to generally have a laugh.

Contact via *AU*.

Adrian & Catherine, both with Asperger syndrome, are a couple. They are interested in hearing from other couples where both partners have Asperger syndrome or high functioning autism.

Please email or write to *AU*

My name is Jonathan. I am 34 years old and would like to make contact with other adults of a similar age with Asperger syndrome and who live within reach of Hemel Hempstead.

I am quite good at playing snooker and would like a partner. I also enjoy watching tennis, playing the clarinet (in a concert band) and some pop music.

Please contact via *AU*.



Sameness Song

Each day things seem the same.
Life in front of the TV every night.
Is much too tame.
When I go to town.
I mostly do the same rounds
Around the shops, and around the pubs.
Then I pop in the church.
Life without no-one much is a curse.

I'm now writing my sameness song.
So that some more people and offers in
my life can come along.

Some say we're cursed people, us lot.
Instead I think they should sing
My praises right now.
They should sing
"It's The Rain Man Hallelujah", somehow.
I get mixed-up on what to think.
These days
As I think, I'm pretty fed-up.

I'm now writing my sameness song.
So that some more people and offers in
my life can come along.

Today I picked up my copy of Kerrang!
I'm The Rain Man in Kerrang!
So where's that heavy metal song?
I'm The Rain Man too in NME.
Once again, where's that song for me?
So this is my sameness song.
I hope it's in the right key?
Writing about sameness is all I can say.

I'm now writing my sameness song.
So that some more people and offers in
my life can come along.

David C. Miedzianik.

I'll Tell You How The Caged Bird Sings

With due credit to Maya Angelou, author of '*I know why the caged bird sings*'. This poem is dedicated to Caroline

I'll tell you how the caged bird sings,
Maya Angelou. You who read the eulogy
At Bill Clinton's Inauguration,
And the networks cut you off, Miss Angelou.
Because that is how the caged bird sings;

Like a bird's whose head's cut off;
With a voice that's strangled 'ere its birth,
By frightened mothers, and still more angry
Fathers, who lead new life, to challenges,
That they have each not faced, until they face their son;

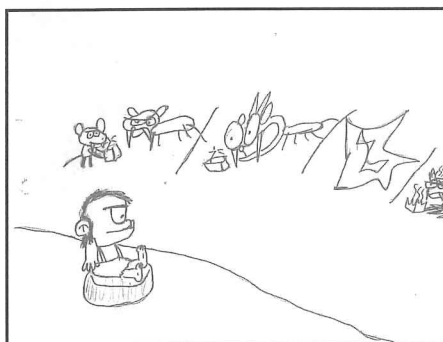
Look their daughters in the eye and say,
We love this life and in our love we brought you here,
And with our love around your shoulders,
We will teach you how to fly,
How to live your life enough, before you surely die.

But no. Instead we take the yellow bird,
Surround it with imaginary fears,
Drive in piles of needless punishments,
And on the steel of unresolved resentments,
Conceited webs and warps of arrogance are laid.
The gilded cage,

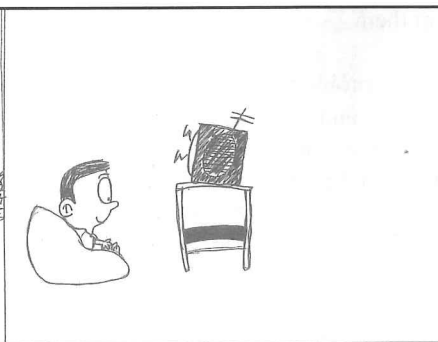
From which we expect God's voice to sing
That it does, all credit due to God,
In whom all of us, the Absolute resides,
But with little help from parents – or not at all,
From whose perch of expectations, we can only fall.

Andrew Weston-Webb

What kids did in the evening in the
Stone Age



What kids do in the evening today



James Hutchinson

Dear AU

How does one get in touch with C.L.A.S.S. (Cambridge Lifespan Asperger Syndrome)? Or any other diagnostic agency in the U.K. for that matter, please?

I read your feature by Iain Payne and also Kevin Healy's letter in the recent issue of *AU* with interest and hope that one day I might be able to share the pain and confusion of a small life – time with someone in the field who has experience of late diagnosis and understanding

"Pretending to be normal" I'd say has all but killed me. Discovering three years ago that there was this syndrome called "Asperger" was a lifeline. It was the missing piece of the jigsaw or so it seems to me.

Fortunately I have a sympathetic G.P. Consultation with the psychiatric profession was not so helpful. They would have me accept a diagnosis of depression and shyness. Wouldn't anyone be depressed after 50 odd years of misunderstanding and confusion?

Self-diagnosis was a non-starter. Am I receiving an *AU* fraudulently?

Yours gratefully

S. Murphy

Dear S. Murphy

CLASS - Cambridge Lifespan Asperger Support Service
Tel.01223 746001

I was diagnosed at the Maudsley Hospital, Denmark Hill, London ten years ago. Various members of staff there are still involved in diagnosing autism/Asperger syndrome. I was in my late 40's when diagnosed.

Good Luck - John Joyce

"You see, wire telegraph is a kind of very long cat.
You pull his tail in New York and his head is
meowing in Los Angeles. Do you understand this?
And radio operates exactly the same way:
You send signals here, they receive them there.
The only difference is there is no cat."

Albert Einstein explaining radio

Sent in by Iain Payne

Dear Mr Joyce

I was very pleased to receive the April copy of *Asperger United* and had been looking forward to it, remembering that January's copy came in time for Christmas!

I would have been looking forward to it even more keenly if I had not been immersed in Mrs L H Willey's book *Pretending to be normal*, which had at last arrived from the library, after being ordered at the start of December. With a title like that I had high hopes (which it fulfilled) but I wanted at least to dip into a copy before buying my own, but Devon Libraries had only one copy, which was due back to Tavistock library in October and had not been returned! To begin with they asked if I would like to pay £1 towards them ordering another copy, but I said "No" so eventually I was told in February that I was first in a queue of about six who had ordered it, so they were ordering another copy which should arrive during March. It didn't quite make that, but I am now going to get my own copy. Mrs Willey deserves it, and I think I am going to want to refer back to it from time to time.

It occurs to me that the interest in the book may be due in part to the publicity given by *The Times* in its Christmas Appeal on behalf of the NAS, and I am rather surprised that there is no comment in *AU* on the results of that appeal. Is there perhaps some other publication by the NAS that I would find interesting, even though it is really Aspergers that I identify with? I was very interested to note that Mrs L H Willey has not herself had a 'diagnosis' (only I can't immediately find where she says it) and I don't now care that I haven't either. I know, and that is enough for me.

May I suggest you put a selection of books that relate specifically to Aspergers on the back page of *AU*, and not only mention new books?

G Ball - Devon

Pretending to be normal by L H Willey
Published by Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 1 853027 49 9
Price £12.95
Available from NAS Publications 0207 903 3595

Thank you for your letter and suggestions. The Times Christmas Appeal results are likely to have been published in the NAS, Communication, membership magazine.

Just a thought – do 'normal' people pretend to have no disability rather than us mimicking 'normality'? - John Joyce

Note from publications - your reading list idea is a really good one! we'll work on it for the next issue. Meanwhile you can check out the special offer for the month on the back page and get a free catalogue of books on autism and Asperger syndrome.

My experience (so far) in supported housing

In July 2000 I did one of the most difficult things I've ever done: I re-housed my 3 beautiful cats and my faithful if naughty dog, and moved from my council flat into supported accommodation. I'd spent all my adult life up to that point striving above all else to keep my independence but I wasn't coping. My flat was a mess and dirty and I was very isolated, which contributed to regular psychiatric hospital admissions for depression and stress.

I moved into a shared house for eight people. It was what I wanted to do but it was very hard. I had to get rid of my furniture, give a lot of my possessions to various charities and learn to live in a very small room, sharing communal areas with a lively household.

When I first moved in I was very scared and hardly dared to speak. I was afraid of going to the support workers' office and would leave the house by the back door so no one would see me. We had a house meeting every week and at first I found it hard to speak out. Then when I did speak my voice was so quiet others would talk over me. God bless one of the support workers, who would stop the others talking and make sure I was heard.

I'd only been living there about a month when two things happened: my support worker left and another tenant started bullying me. I'd made a complaint about her for regularly coming back from night clubs in the early hours, making a lot of noise and waking me up. Her early harassment of me was subtle and it took the new support worker a while to realise what was going on. Then she hit me and I was sent for respite at another house run by the same organisation 20 miles away until she was evicted. This took two months but I enjoyed the time away.

I returned to the original house in January 2001 but things quickly deteriorated. Tenants with alcohol/drug problems caused a lot of trouble for the rest of us. The organisation that ran the house gave them a lot of "last chances" before beginning eviction procedures. Luckily I was developing a very good relationship with

one of the support workers but it was still very stressful. It's awful when vulnerable people turn on each other in so-called "safe" settings.

Although these months were very stressful I was somehow developing confidence and social skills and becoming a very different, far more empowered person. I had to learn to speak up for myself or I would have gone under completely.

I became involved with Tenant Participation which is an excellent objective within the organisation. The aim is to have tenants involved at all levels of the organisation, from basic decisions like what food they get and how their home is decorated, through to helping to interview for new staff and right up to having five tenants on the national board of directors. So far I've travelled to Preston, Manchester and London for various activities.

Well, as I said, things were stressful at the house. I had applied to transfer to another house in Cumbria but the transfer took a few months to come through. By September 2001 I was living in a friend's flat in her spare room and only spending part of the days (weekdays when staff were in) at the supported house.

On 9th November 2001 I finally transferred to the Cumbrian house, and things are so very different here. I was the first female to move into the house in the eight years it had been open, which was daunting. I was given advice about keeping my bedroom door locked at all times and not going downstairs in my pyjamas. I was especially worried as I had been sexually assaulted during the summer of 2001 and exploited on previous occasions.

But it's not like that here.

I found moving to a new area was very stressful; previously I'd lived in the same city for almost ten years, and knew the local area and a lot of people although I had few actual friends. I didn't know if I'd stay but I had three months to decide.

It's beautiful here. The house is big and the bedrooms are a reasonable size, with en-suite bathrooms. We have a nice garden with a stream which runs into a natural well and disappears underground and we can see hills from the front of the house. And best of all we have no particularly troublesome tenants. I have some good friends here and have been elected as House Rep, which means I liaise between tenants and staff when there's a problem.

I miss my support worker from the last house and, unlike where I used to live, I have no community support outside the supported housing. But I'm happy here. My social skills have improved and I usually feel 'real' when I'm with people now. I used to hide behind 'facades' like Donna Williams and feel totally separate and inadequate.

The support is good though I could often use a bit more. We have a support worker from 9-5pm Monday to Friday, and a support assistant who works 3 days to help us with cooking, cleaning and shopping. We each have an hour 1:1 with a support worker every week and can drop by the office when we need extra support.

It's taken a while but now I feel my move to supported housing had paid off. I still have a fear of being assessed as no longer needing support and being pushed out into my own place and back to the isolation and vicious circle of depression and stress. The needs of intelligent people with hidden disabilities are not generally well met, but at present I'm glad I am where I am, with non-judgemental support available.

Joanna.

28-yr-old with high functioning autism

Dear Joanna - thank you for the article. I hope this encourages others, who want the same, to consider applying for supported housing.

John Joyce

Mediation Strategy

I have always found it difficult to express my feelings. Whenever I did, people never listened to me and they responded negatively. I never quite knew why before I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome and I wasn't really aware of how I came across. People used to complain about my rudeness, but they didn't understand.

I gave up expressing my feelings in the end, to stop people from giving me a hard time.

When I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, I knew why I found it difficult to express my feelings, but didn't realise I had a communication difficulty.

In order to discover that I had a communication difficulty, I started expressing my feelings. I was having difficulties with an ex-friend. She was not treating me very well as she couldn't accept me as I was. She upset me and I wrote her letters explaining my feelings to her. She found the letters strange, cold and clinical. Mum explained to her that it wasn't intentional but she wouldn't accept this. We parted company.

All this made me realise that I did have a communication difficulty. I then decided that if I needed to express my feelings to anyone I would ask someone else to act as a mediator. This means I would tell the mediator what my

feelings are and then the mediator would explain my feelings to people in the correct way.

This mediation strategy had proved to be very successful. People respond positively to me now that I use mediation. The reason why they didn't respond positively before was because they couldn't deal with my feelings.

Debbie Hudson

Dear Debbie

Thank you for reporting your improving state. Please inform us as it continues.

May this be an encouragement to other readers with similar difficulties.

John Joyce

Dear Editor & AU readers

My name is Julie and I am 49 years old. I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome when I was 46.

I was given some tests by my counsellor and my mum was given an appointment with a doctor to get my past history. From the tests, it was confirmed that I have Asperger syndrome.

The following are the events after I was diagnosed.

My counsellor gave me information relating to Asperger syndrome and thought it would be a good idea to get feedback. This was a big mistake. As it was late coming, my family and friends were unprepared for such information. As a result, there was no feedback. I felt very lonely. I couldn't cope with it and ended up having to attend a mental health unit at a local hospital, which had no facilities for people with Asperger syndrome.

Once I was in hospital, it was arranged for me to attend day centres for people who were far worse off than myself. My self confidence hit rock bottom. I felt let down by the hospital and the handling of the diagnosis. All the plans the hospital had made didn't work.

After a period of time, I came up with the idea of speech and language therapy because my main problem was communicating with people. After some time things began to improve.

I am slowly coming to terms with this condition. Unfortunately it is still very difficult communicating with certain members of my family and some friends. However I have a very good counsellor, who is an expert in Asperger syndrome, and I am progressing well with speech and language therapy.

Dear Julie

Thank you and thank God for the improvement in your condition. Long may it continue.

Keep us posted

John Joyce



Deja Vu! by James Hutchinson

New book news

***An Asperger Marriage* Gisela and Christopher Slater-Walker**

We are delighted to be able to recommend this warm and positive book to readers of *Asperger United*.

An Asperger Marriage is the work of Chris and Gisela Slater Walker, who have been together for twelve years. They have four children. Four years ago Chris was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome.

The book is cleverly divided into chapters written separately by Gisela and Chris looking at important issues such as diagnosis, communication, living together, parenthood, social life and employment. This is done with great sensitivity and highlights the different experiences of each partner.

Their accounts of real examples of how misunderstandings arise vividly bring to life the frustrations experienced by both of them.

Their book is the first to offer a personal view on the experiences of being in a relationship where one person has Asperger syndrome and the other is 'neuro-typical'. It has also received a lot of positive publicity on radio, television and in the newspapers. This makes it essential reading for all couples where one has Asperger syndrome.

Chris and Gisela discuss the important question: when is a diagnosis useful and how far do we extend the boundaries into 'normal eccentricity'? For Gisela and Chris it was clearly very important to have an explanation for the difficulties they were experiencing – it really helped them understand each other. Gisela stresses that a label is not a form of discrimination but can be the way forward to understanding a person.

Chris and Gisela never pretended that life is easy but the factual information, together with poignant yet amusing anecdotes, make this an enjoyable as well as informative book to read.

They also show that an Asperger marriage really is possible if both partners are ready to work at their relationship.

This book is published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers and costs £12.95.

Special offer to readers of *Asperger United*!

Normally we charge an additional £3 postage and packing on book orders but readers of *Asperger United* can get their copies without this additional charge until 31st October 2002.

Just send your order, together with a cheque or postal order for £12.95, made payable to the NAS, to *Asperger United* – see page 2 for full address details.

Please also send us news about any other books that you think readers of *Asperger United* should know about.



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