

Produced by and for people with autism-spectrum conditions

# Asperger

*united*

Edition 49 January 2007





*Asperger United* is a newsletter run by and for people with autism-spectrum conditions. 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.

Please note that *Asperger United* receives over 200 letters each quarter so it is not possible to respond to every one, nor for every contribution to be printed.

*Asperger United* is free to people in the UK who are on the spectrum. We ask for a contribution of £6 per year from overseas readers and £10 from professionals and institutions to cover postage costs.

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**Additional support** The National Autistic Society's Publications Department

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All we need is your name and address and we will add you to the mailing list — free of charge to people on the spectrum.

Thank you to George Cox who kindly produced the illustration included here and on the pen pal page, and 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.*

Contributions for the next issue should reach us by  
1 March '07

*Asperger United* was founded in 1993 by Pamela Yates and Patricia Howlin, in association with the Maudsley Hospital, and Mark Bebbington and Judy Lynch of The National Autistic Society.

This was in response to a recognised dearth of services for people with Asperger syndrome and the potential for self help and networking as a means of support for this group.

The provisions for editor's and sub-editor's post was to develop a publication that was truly the voice of the people it was aimed at. This post also provided the possibility of work experience and responsibility and has benefited those who have held the position. These are Richard Exley, David Wright, Martin Coppola, Ian Reynolds and the current editor, John Joyce.

Pamela Yates provided support and advice to the editors until the publication was handed over to the National Autistic Society in 2000.

The name *Asperger United* was chosen by the group of original readers as the most 'appropriate name' for the publication. This was suggested by Anna Cohen.



**Dear readers,**

Hope you are all in rude health. I am well and enjoyed a trip to South Africa in October, though it included a robbery. I hope Laurie Deimel, who gave a talk at the Autism Congress in Cape Town, will be able to convey his impressions both of the congress and of South Africa in a future edition. Because I chose to stay thirty miles out of Cape Town with an indifferent public transport service, I missed by default some of the events in order to get back to my accommodation before it was too dark.

Sorry Table Mountain I did not climb you on the Saturday before the congress because I anticipated joining the delegates of the congress on a day trip round the city, but was greedy enough to want breakfast that Sunday, thereby missing the chance. That Saturday I was also

the victim of a robbery: no money stolen, no injury, but a new digital camera and cash cards disappeared. In addition to the robbery, I was the target of beggars more than once and on one occasion, while sitting by the road for a rest, a young schoolboy offered me money. I needed an occasional rest as I had to make a ninety-minute walk to reach Strand, the nearest big town, with Catholic church and railway station. I used the train to get to and from Cape Town on my first Sunday away and on the Monday morning travelled in by train, but was given a ride back by Sonia, Laurie Deimel's hostess, who also arranged transport both ways for the remaining days of the congress. I also have Sonia to thank for a few good meals during my holiday.

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## Welcome to the circus

by Sulli Thomas

It was 1<sup>st</sup> November, my 21<sup>st</sup>. My team leader had invited me upstairs to what was going to be the exam room. He pointed out a wall in the top right-hand corner of the room. He said he wanted me to paint some kind of mural on the wall. He wanted caricatures of all the team members on the wall in some kind of theme. I was a bit astounded when he asked me to do it, as I'd never done anything *that* big before. I spent the rest of the day laying down the carpet tiles for the main room, all the time thinking of my wall. Oh yeah, and my birthday.

I spent the rest of the early mornings at the team room sketching ideas for my wall. In the beginning, my team-mates were very picky about how many of each gender was in a small group, so I picked the boy-girl scheme, even though there are more guys than girls. I'm not very good at recalling faces, so I asked for a CD of the team photos. I spent the whole weekend trying to capture everyone's face just right. So far, I'd kept my pictures secret.

Monday back, the last week of the project. I was eager to get my wall started. I had my drawings, small paint pots, a couple of erasers, paint tray, brushes of different sizes, and a couple of thick pencils. I came in, put my stuff upstairs ready to use, and did I start it? No. A week left, Thursday being a half day, and the brushes were still looking brand new. They wanted me to still be working on the waterproof locker room, which should've been done last week, but someone painted the lockers the wrong colour. So I spent the whole day painting the little gaps when I could've been working on my wall. To make matters worse, in the afternoon I was helping to stir a large batch of yellow paint, which was so large it sprang a leak. I went to look for a new container, and got some yellow paint from my boots onto the beloved new carpet tiles! Luckily, the paint came right off, but I was left very upset. They thought it was because I got

paint on the carpet tiles. It wasn't. It was because I went through the whole day without touching my wall, which I didn't know how long it would take, and all I made was a mess.

I don't like being held back. I've been held back my whole life. They said I was a "little slow". It's one thing to have a condition, but it's another not to have that condition recognised until fairly recently, and then realise the first twenty years of your life were just a farce. No wonder I get so mad. You might not think it, but I'm the angriest person I know. I always feel the burning of rage inside me, but with my condition, I tend to bottle it up, and that just makes it worse. You think I like having the Incredible Hulk inside me? I always hulk out at the closest character. I know it's not the right thing to do, but being around humorous, noisy, domineering, and sometimes even caring people does that to me. I don't know why I lash out at the people who care. I guess I can't tell the difference between someone who truly cares, and someone who's holding me back. I spent the whole of that night going over this in my head. I was going to talk to my team leader about it, but the second I arrived next morning they said I could start. That's one chance to voice my feelings out the window.

Tuesday wasn't too bad. I took my thick pencils and drew the entire outline across the wall. I was doing a circus theme, with twelve stars (one star per person), around the ringmaster, with our team leader's face. I wanted everyone to have a nice big star so that everyone's face could easily be seen. The outline took all day, considering I had to move four of the stars higher up than planned, and I finished the day off by painting the stars fleshy-pink so I wouldn't have to paint the faces later.

Wednesday was even better. I painted my team leader's face with pupils, mouth, and



ginger sideburns, which he was a bit upset by. Hey, you wanted a caricature, so I gave you a caricature. I outlined myself with an edgy face to show my unpredictably, and peering behind my star I did the ghost-face killer from *Scream*. To raise funds for the project, one of the things we did was a pub collection in fancy dress. I went as that character. After that I painted my own face, just to see what would be the easiest way of painting the faces. As I was outlining the faces, people started to come up to have a look, to see what they looked like. Some of them loved their caricatures, others started to make requests on which star they wanted, or some other object they wanted on the star. It's not easy agreeing to it, knowing how little time you've got. Not to mention I had to put up with people silently peering over my shoulder just to look. After outlining them all, I started painting small details like eyes, hair or grins. And I still didn't know how much longer it would take.

Thursday I really started to feel the pressure, it being a half day. The second the door was opened I went straight up, put my waterproofs on, and started. The first part of the morning was okay, but then someone put the dreaded CD player on. It's not easy to concentrate when it's in the same room with you, blasting out some speed garage/house/techno/rave/dance "music", just so everyone can hear it. I started to notice the thick black paint was making a huge mess of my paintbrush water. At one point, a couple of the lads were prating around with a tennis ball, as I was carrying the dirty water. The damn thing almost hit me in the face. I snapped at them, my face red from stress. Out of all the other twelve people here, only one asked if I was okay. She told me to have a break, but I didn't want one. I had already decided to sacrifice any tea breaks I had, and just have dinner, and the second I'd finish, I'd go back to the wall. I felt a bit better when I'd finished for that day, although I noticed we were out of yellow paint. I needed it for the stars, and they were still pink. That afternoon, I had an interview for my work placement, so I picked up some yellow paint before going home. There's one less thing to worry about.

Friday I arrived, paint can in hand; my team leader was already there looking at the wall, and gave me some reassurance. All morning, I dedicated every single second of my time to that wall: painting, drawing details, checking, painting over mistakes, not always in that order. At this time, I had a fairly aggressive view of everyone around me, but in the afternoon one of the girls came up and asked if she could help. Well, I was doing all the more complicated areas of the picture, so why not? I told her to paint the team leader's suit and tie with that thick black paint I hated so much. My team leader said he looked like an undertaker. After she had finished what I wanted her to do, one of the lads came up and asked if he could help with anything. I was a bit dubious about letting him, because he had a bit of a bad reputation of late, and I didn't want to be near the volcano when it erupted. Then again, I didn't want to paint the ringmaster's top hat, which was high up, with that dreadful black paint, so I let him go. I explained to him which parts of the hat I wanted painted, because the top hat was going to have "Team 153" in white on it. As he was painting the top hat, I took my yellow paint and started painting asterisks, dotted around the bigger stars. He did the top hat exactly the way I wanted it, without any complaints, and in my eyes he had redeemed himself. I started painting the remaining stars yellow, whilst my other teammates started painting the floor around me blue. Approaching 4pm people started to gather upstairs to see the finished product. I gave the wall a final check to see if I missed anything. Finally, after three days and a half of exhausting work, I personally gave the wall the thumbs up.

The wall looks amazing. Everyone stands out on it, it's brightly colourful, and everyone thinks it is top banana. I like to think it's very trendy too, as everyone on it looks like a character from a modern cartoon. It wasn't easy though. They say artists suffer for their work, and I certainly did. You know what the most ironic thing is? Given all the different kinds of people I had to tolerate whilst on the Prince's Trust course, this really is a circus!



## letters to the editor

**Hi, I am a reader of your newsletter** I have Aspergers and was diagnosed when I was 14.

I am now 20 and whilst reading the letter from the editor I was insulted by one of his comments, it went as follows:

"Everyone who already receives it, will still receive it by Royal snail mail".

I would like to point out that there is a spelling mistake in "Royal mail" it should have a capital "m".

And secondly, it is not classed as Royal snail Mail: I work for Royal Mail, and if you could understand how much hard work goes into working for Royal Mail, then maybe you may understand why it can be slow at times!

If this could be passed on to the appropriate person, I think it would be the editor, and I look forward to receiving future editions by "Royal Mail"!

Many thanks

**Stephen**

**I am writing this request** to people on the autistic spectrum and/or their carers.

I have HFA and have trouble being examined by doctors, etc. Part of the reason is because of the sensory issues experienced by people with autism, ie. bright lights, sensitivity to touch, etc. Being examined by doctors has been painful for me, and people have told me that I am making a fuss about nothing. This is from so-called "normal" people, who, for example, are not sensitive to touch. This has made things very difficult and, at times, traumatic for me. I am trying to collect personal based evidence of other people on the autistic spectrum who have had difficult/painful experiences within the NHS, as part of raising awareness and understanding within the medical profession. If you are willing to send me your written experiences, you can be assured that your names will be kept confidential, and your personal stories will help other people understand autism.

Many thanks in advance.

Replies c/o *Asperger United*.

**Cyd**

### Taking things literally

One of the characteristics of Asperger syndrome is a tendency to focus on the literal meaning of figurative speech, and miss the true significance of what is being said. I have a variation of that trait, in that I generally see both the literal and the figurative meaning, pretty much simultaneously. I am then able to treat the literal meaning as a joke. I would be interested in knowing if some other AS people find that this is true for them too.

One of my favourite statements with peculiar literal interpretation is a cooking

instruction — "Remove film lid and place on a baking tray." So far, I've been able to resist the temptation to bake the film lid while leaving the food on the kitchen work surface. Also, when faced with a question such as "Will today be rainy or dry?", if I don't know the answer, I tend to jokingly reply simply "Yes", on the grounds that it must be one or the other, but I have no information as to which. This answer is of course accurate, but useless. I also found it particularly appropriate when a local second-hand shop passed into new ownership.

**Colin**





# How to reply to Pen Pals

- Please remember to let us know the name 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 on to the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.
- Please note that all pen-pal letters sent via *Asperger United* are opened before being passed on.
- Those under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen pal advertisement in *Asperger United*.

**\*\*Important notice — please read\*\***

*Asperger United* is happy to publish pen-pal advertisements but we must stress that we are not a pen-pal or introduction organisation. We do not match people up and we cannot monitor letters (other than the first letter, that is sent via us) so please be cautious when releasing personal details in your letters. The National Autistic Society / *Asperger United* cannot intervene or be held responsible for any ensuing correspondence between letter-writers.

**My name is Frances-Mary** and I suffer from Asperger's syndrome very mildly.

However, while it stops me doing certain things, it doesn't prevent me from singing and enjoying music in general. With this in mind, I wonder if there are any readers with AS who have the same gift, and would be interested in forming a group or choir to use their skill to the full.

I have been professionally trained to sing solo pieces as well. I am a mezzo (half) soprano and I'm very keen to fulfil this ambition — in aid of the NAS. Please be aware that, since I'm not a professional singer, I cannot take payment. Payment as a personal gift is acceptable though, but most money raised will go to the NAS.

**My name is Eleanor.** I am 21 with an ASD and I need a support worker. I'd like a pen friend in their twenties who likes gardening and/or nature with a positive attitude to life like myself.

**My name is Peter,** I am 23 and live in Cleveland in North-East England. I was diagnosed with AS when I was nine. My main interests are football, computing and various types of music. I also try to go to the gym whenever possible. I would like to write to both male and female pen pals. Hope to hear from some of you.

I'm Brian, am 43 years old and have only just discovered *Asperger United* after very recently being diagnosed as having Asperger's. This has followed four years of depression and an overdose. From what I can glean about Asperger's syndrome, sufferers want to socialize and interact with others but they just don't know how. This sums me up perfectly. Consequently, the loneliness is simply fuelling the depression and at this rate will probably end up killing me.

As I am able to write letters quite well (much preferring this method to using the phone), the pen pals idea seems to offer a realistic and positive option.

I have always felt more comfortable generally in the presence of females than males, ironic as my success in finding a partner has been zero, and would therefore prefer to have female pen pals.

If there is anyone who would like to make contact, I will be only too pleased to hear from you. I am currently living in SW England, but may return to my native East Anglia sometime in the future.

### Asperger's syndrome and sexuality

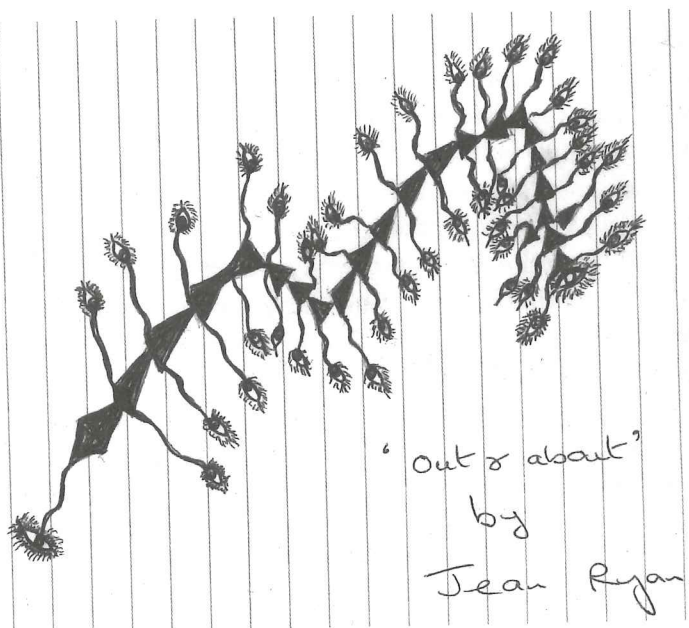
by Isabelle Hénault  
Book review by Mark

People who have AS are just as loving, caring and have a sex life just like "anybody else".

This book I am very impressed with. It is very rare. There is no research; sex education for AS needs research. I have written to the author; sad to say no reply. The only downside to this book I can see is it could have done with more pictures. Otherwise, very good. Three points I feel come from this book: very strong sexually, gender identity, and needs a lot more research.

I have other points to add. Puberty is hell for people with AS, very difficult accepting changes. Pages 35 and 36, male and female masturbation: very well written in the only way that I can understand. Well written in as much detail as possible. Sex education is a taboo for people with AS. I disagree on one thing: "A man with AS doesn't realize the importance of . . . intimate moments". There are some who do. I do.

As a person with AS myself, sex education and biology need a lot more research.





### The Internet: First introduction

While holidaying in Germany in 1994, I was introduced to the Internet by a tutor at a teachers' training college situated in Dillengen. My cousin, who I was staying with, introduced me to a tutor teaching there at the time. I can still remember, after all this time, his contact showing me a weather forecast map for Ohio. Little did I know, that he was introducing me to the Internet for the very first time.

Back in 1994, I was learning Microsoft Word at City and Hackney Mind in East London. When the Internet became even more popular the following year, my tutor gave the class a lesson on how the Internet worked. Eventually, I was to go online myself. But not until the late 1990s.

During the early days, I wasn't happy when, suddenly, I was disconnected. Back then, there were either teething problems with some service providers, or, after about two hours, some deliberately disconnected the user. Also, there were no Anytime or Broadband alternatives. Only "Pay as you Go".

Coming up to date, I am with AOL and have been for some time now. It is, in my opinion, a very good provider to be with. Although I had connection problems with them when I first moved to Ilford, these were eventually ironed out after much complaining to them and also to BT.

On a positive note in which to end. The Internet has opened my life. It is definitely good that there is no end of knowledge. I have gained a pen friend who I am often in contact with. The BT directory, too, is useful and saves money because I don't have to go through directory enquiries. Right now, I wouldn't be without the Internet in which to communicate and find the information that I am looking for.

**Michael**

### Editorial . . . continued from page 3

There were some interesting speakers at congress and the last morning was enlivened by Ros Blackburn the Rover with a fine talk. I wish to use this editorial to thank Pat Matthews for his service to the World Autism Organisation and to say bienvenida to his successor as president, Isabel Bayonas. Felicitaciones sabes la dificultad de tu vocacion nueva.

After the congress I enjoyed a long, wet Friday morning walk in search of a bank to change travellers' cheques which were still in my possession. When I reached the bank, my passport and the cheques were saturated and the latter could not be changed. I continued walking around the area, probably clocking up ten miles before being picked up by none other than my host returning from the airport after delivering another of his clients. On my second Saturday away I walked to Strand in time for the 5.30pm mass at St Peter's Church, and received a lift from a parishioner on my return journey.

On the Sunday, I was given lunch by Sonia who then took me to the airport for my return flight. By next midday I was on my way to mass at St Mary's Church, Croydon. Masses in Cape Town during the previous week at St Mary's Cathedral and Sacred Heart Church.

I would like to thank you all for the continued high standard of presentation. Long may it continue.

In my last editorial, I had the misfortune to use the term "Royal snail mail": I apologise to all fellow Aspergistas who work for the Royal Mail and wish to state that our postal service is much appreciated.

Anybody else who went to the congress is welcome to send in his or her impressions.

Your editor,

**John Joyce**

### Asexuality: a valid orientation

In her response to Neil's article on sexuality in people with AS (*AU*, October 2006), Elizabeth states her belief that nearly all AS women would like a sexual relationship if they could find the right partner, and before that she wrote that it is having sex with "the wrong man" that AS (and non-AS) women find repulsive.

I am keen to rectify some mistaken ideas here. Firstly, there are people with AS who are happily lesbian/gay, so it's not just about the "wrong man" but the wrong "person" for those people. Stating it as the "wrong man" can lead to men being too pushy with women who prefer their own gender, in the belief that "they" will be the "right man". I have experienced this.

Do not assume that the majority of AS women actually do want a sexual relationship. I think for many, as for myself until recently, there is a lack of awareness that being asexual is a valid sexual orientation. Thus some women (and men) may attempt sexual relationships because it is what people do, rather than because it is what they personally want to do. Or they may feel bad that they have not had or enjoyed a sexual relationship.

There are degrees of asexuality and one can identify as asexual and still have some interest in sexual activity, but less than most people. My preference in describing my sexual orientation is "lesbian asexual" (also celibate).

On line I have met a number of asexual AS/autistic women and some asexual AS/autistic men. Asexuality is valid, and probably more common in autistic spectrum people.

I have been told that a lot of non-autistic women who become nuns have a background of little or no interest in sexual relationships. So I would postulate that asexuality isn't uncommon.

Also interesting is that it is known AS men are often in their thirties before wanting a relationship, showing delayed maturity in that area. Perhaps some AS women are similar, and may not want a sexual relationship until later in life than most non-autistics?

**Kelsang**, who was Ametrine

Readers who think they might be asexual can check out [www.asexuality.org/info.htm](http://www.asexuality.org/info.htm)





## Ambition achieved: follow-up to my article in the October issue

by Kelsang

In my last article in *AU*, “A cat is not a broken dog”, I wrote about my experiences in the mental health system and how much my life has changed since I became a Buddhist. I wrote that my ambition was to become a Buddhist nun.

Before the article was printed, in the last issue, I had achieved that ambition. On 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2006, along with around forty others from ten different countries, I took the Ordination Vows of the New Kadampa Tradition in the beautiful temple at Manjushri Kadampa Meditation Centre near Ulverston, Cumbria.

As a nun I have a new name, and I wear the maroon and saffron (yellow) robes of an ordained person. The Ordination Vows are: not to kill, steal, engage in sexual conduct, lie or take intoxicants, and to practise contentment, reduce desire for worldly pleasure, abandon meaningless activity, keep twelve refuge commitments and practise moral discipline, concentration and wisdom.

At the beginning of October I moved into a Buddhist community of around thirty residents situated in a “castle” in Yorkshire. Our ordained people do not have to live in Buddhist communities, but it can be helpful to have the support of others.

Before moving here I was clear about my abilities and limitations with those who run the centre, to reduce chances of misunderstanding. They were very accepting and continue to check that things are going okay for me. They maintain an awareness of how noise will affect me, and my need for a reduced workload.

My situation is complicated by chronic back problems, so it's not easy to find me appropriate work to do in the community. I can't do lifting tasks and also can't sit for long. But there is an advantage in that I like boring, repetitive work!

The area here is beautiful. We're halfway up a steep hill, and the town is in the valley below. We're surrounded by steep hills and other towns in similar valleys. The grounds are extensive, with areas of grass and trees and two ponds. There are ducks, squirrels, newts, frogs, various other birds . . . and I have heard we get foxes and even badgers.

My budgie and I have two rooms in the accommodation blocks behind the “castle”. I share a kitchen downstairs with three people, so I usually avoid the bustle of the self-catering kitchen in the castle, unless I need to microwave.

Lunches and suppers are usually provided, at a reasonable charge, so I only have to make breakfast and snacks (due to blood-sugar issues).

As I settle in to a new area, I'm in the process of setting up a neurodiversity support group for adults. “Neurodiverse” usually refers to anyone who is “differently brained” so includes people on the autistic spectrum, those with Tourettes, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, chronic fatigue syndrome, acquired brain injury, epilepsy, prosopagnosia (faceblindness) and many other differences. My aim is to provide a safe space twice a month where we can be ourselves in an accepting, non-judgmental setting.

In the last few months, I've become a nun, moved to a completely new area, moved from living on my own to a community, and am setting up a support group. And they say autistic people can't cope with change!

**PS.** I have wanted to write my autobiography for a long time, and have started it at least three times but become bogged down over how to organise it. If there is anyone out there willing and able to help, please contact me via *AU*.

## The infamous gift token

by Elizabeth

Does anyone remember the old gift tokens (or “vouchers”)? They were easy to recognise and simple to understand.

We now have the “new, improved” complicated version. They come in three separate “bits”. Firstly, there is something that looks like a credit card — but which isn’t — stapled to a piece of card. I don’t think these two serve any purpose. Thirdly, and crucially, there is something that looks like a till receipt.

A couple of years ago, I boldly approached a store check-out operator with one of these new gift tokens, together with my selected goods. I was nervous, as I knew that if she asked me any questions about the token, I wouldn’t know the answer. I had a vague dread of being arrested for fraud without knowing why. I couldn’t make out the new system.

Typically, the crunch came. “Do you want to add anything to that?” she asked. Did she really mean she was willing to hold up the queue while I made further selections from the shelves? I knew I must be getting this wrong. I hesitated and nonchalantly repeated, “Add to it?” Luckily, she was patient. “Yes. Would you like to pay more towards the voucher?” This was amazing. Was I being invited to go on paying for goods weeks, perhaps months, in advance just because someone had given me a gift token? Goods I might never need? I thought I must be getting this wrong as well, but said, “No thank you,” and got away as quickly as I could. I later figured out the system really was inviting me to go on paying for goods well in advance. There is something alarming in the way the gift token system has developed.

To make matters worse, a year ago, I lost my grip on my personal affairs (for reasons which are beyond the scope of this article). Previously, they were meticulously organized. I now live with two paper mountains, one in the

room where I write and a second one growing on my kitchen table. This consists of bills, bank statements, insurance policies, junk mail, newspaper cuttings, things that “might come in useful” and that ubiquitous till receipt.

I don’t want to sound ungrateful to people kind enough to give me presents, but my store check-out experience, together with my paper mountain, make gift tokens a bit of a nightmare.

In 2005 I received a twenty-five-pound gift token as a birthday present. This is a huge sum of money to one on my income and could have kept me in food for over a week. I immediately lost it in my paper mountain. I have made a few forays into it to see if I can find it, but perhaps I threw it away by mistake. The fact that it looks like a till receipt (among many real till receipts) makes it impossible to spot. Twelve months on, I still haven’t found it. I still have a ten-pound gift token from the same birthday which I haven’t used yet and which makes me nervous.

To my horror, I recently received a further fifty pounds-worth of gift tokens. With twenty-five pounds still lost and ten pounds as yet unclaimed, I now had a further fifty pounds-worth. All this cash disguised as a variety of till receipts! Spread across three stores. All with their attendant bits of card which may, or may not, be relevant. I registered panic.

This story has a happy ending! I was able to do a deal with a relation (God bless her!). In return for my gift tokens (except the lost one, of course) she gave me a cheque for their face value (the full sixty pounds). This has freed up some credit for my next vet bill and slightly reduced my monthly repayment on my credit card. Best of all, I am now free from the tyranny of gift tokens!

Now for the missing twenty-five pounds and the paper mountain . . . .



## First Day at School

The bell rings, the class erupts, and everyone rushes to the door.  
I don't hear them though.  
I'm still lost.  
I'm distant in a sense of calmness, staring up at the clouds, trying to escape.  
I just felt so uncomfortable, but instead of facing it, I lost myself.  
Lost myself in the silence of my own mind.  
Blocking everything else out.  
Suddenly I could feel my entire body tense up,  
I let out a scream as the echoes engulfed my mind and my body began to shudder.  
As I was torn back to my senses, I pulled away from her grip.  
I could smell her perfume. Strong, Disgusting, Foul.  
I glared around the class, it was empty; but she was standing, towering over me.  
I hear her whisper, "arnt you going out to play?"  
I don't reply though, I just get up, and wander out into the corridor.  
The shock, I can still feel it, it flows through me.  
I feel hate towards her.  
She touched me, and I hate to be touched.  
The noise, it's overwhelming. Piercing screams, laughter and shouting echoes through the playground.  
I see them running, jumping, skipping. Playing without me.  
I see their faces, staring, eating away at me.  
I feel sick and my head begins to spin.  
The wind rises as the sun retreats behind the dark clouds.  
As if it knows the peril I face.  
The chill cuts deep into my skin and I panic as the shadows try to consume me.  
I run, flee from the grip, avoiding anyone, anyone that comes near.  
I stop, look around, and cower behind an outbuilding.  
It smells here, reeks of cigarettes.  
I can taste it in the air as I cower further to the ground.  
And I think to myself: is there no escape?

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### Hello people!

I've sent in one of my poems which I'm sure you people out there will understand. Only in the last couple of years have I realised how odd I really am! No one ever told me so I grew up very independent and very much in a bubble — I understand your "bubble" Mike! Isn't it a great gift to be able to shut down and go somewhere pleasant! Mind you, sometimes I feel like a child who just wants a long hug! And sometimes I get depressed, but music was always my way out, my passion, my drive! And I would sing my emotions because I was unable to explain it in words; words can be so cheap. I always knew exactly what song I would play on my way home from school after being bullied for just being me, for doing nothing but being different, I guess.

I grew up in a Christian home from a very loving background and close family, so thank God I have firm roots although I always felt like an orphan; I empathised with *Oliver Twist* and *Annie* (I am male). I gave my life to Jesus at seven years old, and He has held me close ever since even though for fifteen years I went away from the church and lived recklessly and became angry, depressed, lonely, suicidal, confused: I really began to feel like a fat blob of flesh! Until two years ago when I started to flow with Bible-based songs, and believing these to be from Jesus I asked for more, and night after night I was woken with music and rhythm in my body and songs of deliverance in my heart. Eventually, I took myself off to church again and was baptized and cleansed anew, and it is now that, through the loving counsel of Jesus, I am no longer suffering and understand that I was born with autism or AS. I had two road accidents which also caused brain injury and possibly hyperactive attention deficit. My message now is: focus on Jesus. Ask Him into your life, repent of your sins and persist with Him, because He really does understand us better than anyone else in the world.

I shall pray for you all. **Simon**

I never asked to be alone  
Young in the playground ungrown  
A mere child playing superman  
Beneath metal steps  
Next the canteen land.  
I never understood "playtime"  
For I didn't want to play  
I knew I wanted to learn  
And that playtime was not a concern.  
I'd approach people in play  
And untie their shoes!  
For no apparent reason  
It was just something to do!  
To clarify my oddness  
Which I have now confirmed!  
No one's ever untied my shoes.  
Yet, in my grey-and-yellow jacket  
With my hood on my head  
A hero I became  
A conqueror of the world!  
So! I'd shoot out in the crowd  
On a mission and proud  
To save someone in distress  
Who needed me around.  
Once it's done  
And I've done my deed  
Away I'd go to my hiding place again  
Scrutinising the small human race.  
Some girl would approach me  
She'd say  
Kiss chase?  
She'd slap my bum and kiss me and chase me  
round and round  
Now that, I did love so!  
See! I was not alone  
Just in a world on my own.  
Then they'd shout!  
What's the time, Mr Wolf?  
And there I'd be again  
Running all around  
Scrambling from the captor  
Seeking higher ground.  
Sometimes I'd get caught  
And sometimes not  
Though at the end of the game  
You'd be sure to find me  
In that hiding place again.  
The hero with no name.



### *Positive Aspects* — email newsletter

When I left Local Opportunities & Awareness of Down's Syndrome (LOADS) in December 2005, I continued to receive articles and thought it would be a waste not to pass these on to those involved in the disability sector. I have also built up a huge network of contacts and the information that these contacts can give. I want to continue helping people, and to make sure that nobody who has an interest in any disability or mental health issue feels alone.

So I have thought long and hard, and would like to start producing a monthly email bulletin, which will be sent to those who request it. It will be called *Positive Aspects* and it will include stories, poems, events, places to visit, holidays, benefits, law, requests, conferences and useful articles etc., I will not be able to print it off or send it on as I am doing this as an extra for the time being. It will be an email bulletin, full of information etc., to help people who either have a relative who has a disability, or for people who care for somebody who has a disability, or anyone else who has an interest in disability, from anywhere in England. I will cover articles relating to any disability and all ages, so everyone is welcome to contribute.

I have two children who have disabilities. Nicholas (12 years old) has Williams syndrome and Alice (8) has Down's. I myself have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and a history of depression and self-harm (currently under control).

I'm happy to give this a go. It might not work out; it might be a roaring success, who knows. If you want to receive *Positive Aspects*, give me your email address and I'll do the rest!

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Trudy Ransome**      **trudy.1@ntlworld.com**

PS. All the information I send on can be shared by everyone and reproduced so that everyone

knows what's going on. All groups, clubs, services, networks etc., are most welcome to email me their newsletters and other information at any time.

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#### **Thief**

I stand upon the precipice,  
Not knowing where to look.  
I feel the sin within my hand,  
The items that I took.

I was a thief in the night,  
As silent as a ghost.  
When I moved within their home,  
And stole what I crave most.

While just a shadow on the wall,  
I pilfered from each room.  
Opened up their trinket boxes,  
As if raiding from a tomb.

I listened as they breathed,  
Tucked within their beds,  
As I moved about around them,  
And stole dreams from out their heads.

Then when all to have was had,  
And the morning light was near.  
I rushed from out their house,  
And came to this spot here.

I stand upon a precipice,  
And fear the choices that I make.  
But until I know which choice is mine,  
I'll take and take and take.

**Chris**

## Everyday worries

What do people who have Asperger syndrome or High-Functioning Autism worry about?

What might make people who have Asperger syndrome worry less or worry more?

If we can answer these important questions then we can use that information to better support people who have Asperger syndrome and High-Functioning Autism. I am carrying out a research project to try and answer these questions by looking at what influences the everyday worries of people who have Asperger syndrome.

I would like people who are over the age of 18 years and have Asperger syndrome or High-Functioning Autism to complete a survey that I have prepared. The survey is completely anonymous and can be completed online in your own time at:

**[www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=155312119269](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=155312119269)**

Alternatively, you can contact me on the details given and I will send you a paper copy. I will also send you a stamped addressed envelope so that you can return it to me in the post. The first page of the survey explains a little more about the study and how you can take part.

This research is being carried out as part of my Doctorate of Clinical psychology, with Royal Holloway, University of London and in association with Asperger Research North West. The survey has full ethical approval from Royal Holloway, University of London.

Please contact me on the details below if you have any questions.

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Email: **[p.hembry@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:p.hembry@yahoo.co.uk)**

Thank you so much for taking the time to consider being a part of this important project. I hope you decide to be part of it.



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