

Produced by and for autistic people

# Asperger *United*

Edition **93** January 2018

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# Asperger United

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*Asperger United* is a magazine run by and for autistic adults (although some parents subscribe on behalf of their under-sixteens). The magazine aims to put people who have the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Please note that *AU* receives over 200 letters each quarter so it is not possible to respond to every one, nor for every contribution to be printed. Discussions on editorial choices will not be entered into. *AU* protects the identity of contributors by not printing full names unless the writer asks for his or her full name to be used.

*Asperger United* online is available at

**[www.autism.org.uk/AUonline](http://www.autism.org.uk/AUonline)**

or by paying a subscription. To subscribe you, we need your postal address. Please subscribe online or contact the Goth for a subscription form. All contact details are below. Organisations requiring multiple copies: please get in touch.

**Editor:** the Goth

**National Autistic Society production support:** the Content Team

**NAS phone support:** the Supporter Care Team

*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, John Joyce and the current editor, the Goth (who does not wear black).

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 Kaczynski, formerly Cohen.

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**Please send all correspondence and subscription requests to:**

Email: **[asp.utd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.utd@nas.org.uk)**

*Asperger United*  
c/o The National Autistic Society  
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Tel: **0808 800 1050** (free from most landlines) or  
Tel: **020 7923 5779** (geographical charges apply)

All we need is your email address and we will add you to the email notification list.

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 magazine.

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*Asperger United* is available in **large print** on A3 sheets (double the size of this page). If you need large print, please let us know using the email address or postal address above.

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Contributions for the next issue should reach *AU* by **12 February 2018**

**Welcome** to the January edition of *Asperger United*.

Another quiet postbag — remember, you can write in about anything, my suggestions for themes are there to help, not to command.

If you are reading a paper copy, then the first paid issue for fourteen years is in your hands.

Two digital formats are available: a PDF of the paper copy, which you can download from the usual address, just like you could ever since 2006,

[www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited](http://www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited)

and the new web format, which is at

[www.autism.org.uk/AUonline](http://www.autism.org.uk/AUonline)

If you are looking at the new format, please e-mail in and let me know what you think, as I've received very little about this so far and I'm sure it can be improved.

Yours,

**the Editor**

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## the response edition — suggestion for next issue on page 11

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## My life with animals

by Ruth

I wasn't formally diagnosed with ASD in childhood, and one of the reasons for that (as well as my obvious intelligence) is that my special interest and obsession was animals. My parents and other adults considered this a very normal interest for a little girl, and no one thought it odd that my main borrowing from the primary school library was the life cycle of the frog, and the big cat book, dozens of times through my primary school career.

My family always had animals: first cats, then a small, snappy dog when I was about 5 years old. Like many on the spectrum I have always preferred the company of animals to that of most people, and if one of the cats would sleep on my bed I was delighted and honoured.

My parents believed that children should see animals pregnant and giving birth as an educational experience, so I was thrilled to be involved with several litters of kittens and a litter of puppies during my childhood years. It wasn't considered in any way unusual that I would happily spend several hours in front of a box of kittens while my brother and sister were off playing.

When I was about 11 years old my family had a horse. I'd had riding lessons as a birthday present, and other family members became involved, and then we bought Frisco, a chestnut, part-Arab mare. In a way this helped me to meet and socialise with other young people, though it didn't always work that way. The other girls who had horses on the farm tended to think I was snobbish as I rarely talked to them. It did work in that other horsey girls at school would befriend me in order to get free riding sessions.

In my teens my escape from the rigours of a busy, noisy, family life, and from the pressure of having no friends to invite home, was walking

the family dogs. I'd go out for hours with one or both, and unbeknown to my family sometimes I would be approached by quite dodgy people, but I was lucky in that no one ever tried to hurt me. One of the dogs was too friendly and the other too small to scare these people off.

I left home at 18 years old to become a student nurse, and was lucky to get accommodation in a three-bedroomed cottage. Some girls along the road had a cat, so I took on one of the next litter of kittens. It was strictly forbidden, and I was eventually caught, but while I had her she was fun and she was my best friend through a traumatic time of failing to cope. She went back to live with my dad after my parents split up.

Later I had a council flat and a fair procession of animals came through. I took on cats with feline immunovirus (FIV) as these cats shouldn't be allowed outside, and my flat wouldn't allow a cat outside access. I looked after a collie-cross dog for a year while her family lived abroad, then got my own dog, a staffie-cross puppy. He was very nervous, but he learned obedience and within three days, at 10 weeks old, would sit when he was told, even with food in front of him.

One of the worst things I have ever had to do was give up my animals to move into supported housing. I wasn't coping and had been in and out of hospital for several years. My FIV cats went to a sanctuary and my dog was taken on by a nurse on the ward I was usually admitted to. But being an irrepressible animal person, I befriended a kitten who visited the back garden of the house, who became very tame and friendly. Later I moved to a house in another area under the same support organisation, and worked my magic on a long-haired cat who went on to visit the house often, with other tenants letting her in and enjoying her company.



Next a budgie came my way. I was not experienced with birds, though I had looked after a cockatiel for a few weeks when his owner was in hospital. I was amazed how someone so fragile could be so trusting of a great, clutzy human! He would sit on my hand and ask me to scratch his neck, and I could feel all the little bones under his feathers. The budgie was less used to handling, but over a period of months she started to trust me and spontaneously taught herself to jump onto my hand to be brought out of the cage.

I had her for about four years, until she became ill and died. During this time I lived in Buddhist centres, where she often got a lot of attention, as pets were mostly forbidden.

By the time Sukha died there was already a cat in my life, and when the Buddhist centre closed she moved out with me, and I've now had her for five years, including the time I looked after her at the centre. We were joined first by a pedigree Asian cat, about a year later, and recently by an 8-year-old tortoiseshell who was advertised as needing a new home.

For a short while, about two years, I was involved with a friend's sheep, and had two of my own sheep and two alpacas. This was fascinating — livestock are very different to pets, and alpacas especially are different to the usual animals we meet in the UK. I got to bottle-feed lambs, and learnt how to look after newborn lambs and make sure they were doing okay with their mothers.

Now we are four, the cats Callie, Missy, and Philbert, and me. As with all my previous animals, they are very important to me, and life without animals would be extra-lonely and pointless. I borrow a standard poodle from a friend and walk with her once or twice a week. I miss having the outdoor animals, but, being on benefits and renting accommodation, it takes very special circumstances to be able to keep outdoor animals, which I no longer have.

None of my animals has been an official support animal, and more than anything else I would love to have a trained support dog, but sadly these are rarely available for spectrum adults in the UK. But all of my animals have played a huge support role, mostly unknowingly, and I have the gratification of knowing that I have provided an excellent home and care for them. I wish there was more opportunity for people who need support, especially in supported accommodation settings, to keep and appreciate animals on a day-to-day basis.

(The title of this article is borrowed and slightly misquoted from Eric Ashby's book titled *My life with foxes*. Eric Ashby was one of the early BBC wildlife photographers, he had a fox sanctuary, and was a friend of my granddad. I am honoured to have met him, even though I was too young to know why he was important, and I have both his books and several of his photos and postcards.)

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**Dear Asperger United,**

there are many people who can't understand why they are different and sometimes the answer is not straightforward. People suffering from autistic traits know deep down that something is not quite right yet there are still so many of them undiagnosed, struggling to conform to what people expect from them. Until six months ago, when I came to terms that I may have dyspraxia, I was one of them. The cultural differences I experienced in the UK helped me identify the reason for my oddities that I experienced all my life without knowing the name for it.

I am Romanian. I have been living in the UK for the last six years. I work as a freelance writer and artist, writing articles, poetry and offering copywriting services in both Romanian and English, and I am selling my art through online galleries and local exhibitions. I published three books: a poetry collection and a prose book in Romanian in 2008 under my maiden name Teodora Galatean and a poetry chap-book in English with erbacce-press.

Sincerely,

**Teodora**

## Acceptance

by Jules

I thought I'd write about *acceptance*, as it's relevant to me, a person diagnosed Asperger's. Please read and print with any amendments as you see fit.

**With regard to acceptance, I wanted to write about self-acceptance and the various ways in which I came to accept myself.**

**By keeping a journal**, making a note of my day, with particular reference to noting anything that made me happy for the merest moment. Examples include progressing with one of my small projects (sewing, gardening, IT), enjoying a sunny day with a coffee somewhere pretty, fixing an appliance, reviewing old photos . . .

Or maybe it related to somebody else: complimenting a shop assistant on her pretty fingernails, allowing somebody into a traffic queue, somebody smiling and saying hello to me. **It doesn't have to be a big deal to be "worthy".**

I leave out anything that didn't go well: it doesn't change history but it does help me to focus on the good and believe that "I can", while the bad tends to get forgotten.

I also keep a pictorial journal which works in a similar way, relating to small achievements in the garden, the kitchen, a trip somewhere, a lovely clean car or room, or just a lovely day.

By being aware of my language towards myself: I avoid saying "I can't" or "I'm useless at . . ." — doing so wounds me. Instead I say to myself, "I've not had much practice at that" or "I've started to learn to do that but am not good at it yet" or "memory isn't my strong suit, but my practical skills are excellent."

By being aware of my physical self: sometimes I dress up just for me, even with nowhere special to go, so that I see somebody attractive when I look

in the mirror. It took me a long time to consider myself of at least average attractiveness, having been convinced otherwise by persons who were trying, in a mean way; to feel good about themselves.

By reading books: Shere Hite, *The Hite report on the family*, made me realize that most people think they're something other than "normal": they're not of course, we're all "normal", but often we all worry otherwise — that's normal, too.

By realizing that as an Aspie I'm amongst the most intelligent people. I went as far as taking a Mensa test and the result helped me realize that "I can". I'm better at some things than I am at others, but so's everybody, and I know that if I give my attention to one of my less good areas that I can get to a fair standard at that too.

By accepting others and realizing that they have their own stuff, which might make them fearful or ill-informed, and also by realizing that each and every one of those people in the street or the shopping mall has their very own stuff that they're dealing with on a daily basis, just like me!

About me: I'm a 40-something man. Life has been a steep learning curve at times but I've emerged stronger. I'm in a happy long-term relationship and enjoy being time-rich — I don't have a job and will probably never work again. My primary skill is a very methodical approach to everything, especially practical matters. My social skills are a work in progress and I make a deliberate effort to "put myself out there" and improve them.

I hope by having lived that I can make a positive difference to the world, especially by helping others whom I respect and can identify with.

I enjoy typing, fixing anything mechanical, singing, gardening, driving and photography.

# Pen pals

## Pen pal number 258

**My name is Anne.** I'm 36 and I live in North Wales. I would like to make some new friends. I'm a very kind and understanding person and I'm very easy to talk to. I'm more than happy to chat on the phone or by e-mail. My hobbies include keeping snakes and lots of other exotic types of reptiles including a Sphinx cat. I also play the baritone horn in a local brass band. I enjoy going to funfairs, theme parks, going out for meals, going to the cinema or just staying in watching a DVD. I attend a maths class twice per week and I also go to the local library on Tuesdays. Please feel free to get in touch with me. I'm happy to hear from men and women of any age as most of my friends are a lot older than me. Thank you for reading this.

## Pen pal number 259

**Hi, my name is Hannah,**

I am 23 years old and am a volunteer for Age UK and the National Autistic Society.

I love books, I like autobiographies and historical fiction best. I recently completed my degree in creative writing and history, which allowed me to explore my interests.

I have Asperger's syndrome and epilepsy but love to live life to the full. I have travelled to Australia, I write a weekly blog and I go dancing once a week.

Thank you for reading this. I hope to hear from someone soon.

PS. I also love squirrels.

## How to place a pen-pal advert

- All you need to do is send your advert along with your name and address (and email address if you want) to *Asperger United*. You can use the Royal Mail or email. The next pen-pal number will be given to your advert when it arrives.
- Please note that *AU* does not print dating adverts, as it is unable to provide suitable support.
- Those under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen-pal advertisement in *Asperger United*.
- If you get no replies, please don't take this personally.

## How to reply to pen pals

- Please remember to let us know the name and number of the person whom your letter is for. (All pen pals are numbered by the editor, not the person who sends in the advert.)
- Please remember to put your address on your letter.
- To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG, or email [asp.utd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.utd@nas.org.uk)
- 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.

### **\*\*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.

*Six pen-pal adverts have been held over for publication in the next two issues, Editor.*

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## Pen pal number 260

**Barry, 21, Worcestershire.**

I struggle with groups of people quite a lot.

I have always enjoyed drawing and writing: I find it really therapeutic. I like to read mystery, horror, vampire books. I'm into country music, pop, clubland. I like horror, action and comedy films. I have done various art courses but still can't draw very well.

I would like to hear from anyone with any similar interests.

Look forward to hearing from you soon.

---

## Pen pal number 261

**Hi, I'm Laurence** and I have Asperger's. I'm 26.

I don't like clubbing as I find it hard to connect with people with similar interests in that environment.

I live in the London area and would love to make some friends with similar interests.

I'm really into anime and manga of all types of genres. I mainly like Japanese music but I also like the Beatles, Beck, Radiohead, and Muse, to state a few.

I am also learning Japanese. I have been doing that for about two years. I would like to visit.

I also really like *Star wars*, *Lord of the rings*, and *Game of thrones*.

I am an avid gamer. I mainly love Nintendo but my favourite genre is JRPGs.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

## Pen pal number 262

Hey everyone,

**my name is Adeinne.** I'm 27 years old from Glasgow, not-so-sunny Scotland. I got a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome which I got at 15 years old.

My interests are watching TV and movies, as I've a huge DVD collection, spending way too much time on YouTube and the Internet to be honest, walking my chocolate labrador, playing video games such as *Mario kart* on the Nintendo Switch, *Animal crossing* on my Nintendo 3DS, I'm a huge *Sims 4* fan as I love the game which to be honest I've played all the Sims games on PC. I'm a huge animal lover and I've been lucky enough to swim with dolphins, which was a great experience but I also like visiting places such as the zoo and aquariums. I love travelling to places around the world from Blackpool to America, I'm a huge fan of Disneyworld theme parks — to be honest I'd say I'm a bit of a Disney geek as I have Disney trading pins, Tsum Tsums, DVDs and lots more Disney merchandise. I'm also a WWE wrestling fan as I've lots of WWE DVDs and watch the shows on TV. I enjoy going to places such as science museums but I'm a huge fan of going to the theatre which I do numerous times a year and have seen lots of shows such as *The sound of music*, *Hairspray*, various pantomimes and many many more shows. I'm also a fan of drawing, colouring, and making stuff with Perler/Hama beads which I find relaxing and enjoy. I also enjoy reading books. Some books I've read are *A street cat called Bob* and *Sorry bro* by Ben Phillips. I'm not sure if other people with autism will have this hobby but I'm a huge fan of entering competitions and spend a few hours a day doing it which I really enjoy.

I would love to make a pen pal to write letters to or even send emails to each other, I hope you all enjoyed reading my advert and hopefully some people have one or more similar interests.

Take care,

**Adeinne**



## What is my name?

by John

Those who believe in God give themselves names such as Christians, Hindus, Jews, Moslems, and so on.

They give those who do not see God in the way that they do names such as pagans, heathens, unbelievers.

Those who do not believe in God call themselves atheists.

But what are those called who understand that God — belief in God — is a fundamental human instinct, something we are probably all born with and cannot help, which therefore makes all religions equally valid — and, I suppose, equally invalid?

Other than derogatory or derisive terms, I have never discovered a name for my group.

My best suggestions are “amateur philosopher” or “freethinker” but neither seems really adequate.

And is there another Aspie who shares these views?

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## Obsessive hobbies

by Tony

I started collecting odd material that I found on Glasgow’s city streets, when working for Safeways, delivering leaflets (my longest job — four years). This included yellow BB shot from children’s toy guns, toys themselves that were lost or discarded, models, jewellery and so on, which I then put in plastic eggs that I also found on the streets. As time went on I even bought Alien or Dinosaur Eggs to fill with my collected material and then passed them onto other people as gifts. I also collected glass tile shards from the beach at Prestwick that, again, I passed on to others as presents. Another of my odd hobbies was cutting pictures and words out of newspapers, magazines and from sweet or food wrappers, then sellotaping these to envelopes or boxes, when writing to friends or sending them presents like the eggs or jars of tile shards. I never collected train numbers. Do any readers have odd hobbies like this and if so what?

Dear Goth,

after the article in edition 92  
I have some further comments  
on what not to say to an autistic  
person.

**“Autism — that’s just a  
trendy diagnosis at the moment.”**

How much more dismissive of  
what someone on the spectrum  
goes through can this be?

**“Well, there’s a bit of autism  
in all of us, isn’t there?”**

I try to contextualise this for  
the ignorant by saying that we  
experience cramp sometimes but  
we don’t say that there’s a bit of  
cerebral palsy in us, do we?

**“I’ve done a course in  
psychiatry so I would know the  
spectrum if I saw it.”**

This comment from a GP in  
her early forties. Her ignorance  
is staggering. What hope does  
anyone have when GPs can’t even  
categorise the condition properly.

**“Autism — well, that’s  
something to be proud of,  
right?”**

That was my GP’s comment  
when I was first diagnosed. This  
situation might come at the end of  
an acceptance journey but it is not  
appropriate when someone is first  
diagnosed. To her future credit my  
GP does now recognise that she  
can learn something from me.

Best wishes,

Sally

## letters to the Editor

**Dear Goth,**

I read my magazine in one sitting — in the bath!

It was such a thrill to be published — thank you!

Tammy — love your cover (issue 92). At first I thought you'd put ink onto silk, the gorgeous slub effects.

Elkie — perhaps other beginner gardeners would love some organic tips from you, Elkie? How can we turn a soggy or ant-infested compost bin into yummy earthworm heaven? What do you do to help soil, naturally? Companion plants. Building soil fertility. Oh, I let the yarrow, plantain, dandelions and violets do what they will in the “lawn”. If you have any tips for roses in a very windy part of Devon that would be great.

Michelle — yes, it's easy to get swept away and do too much on a “high”, and then crumble in burnout. I've noticed that being strict with a regular bedtime, no blue light two hours before, a dark room, and getting up at more or less the same time help. But it's so tempting to stay up late, on a new project.

I love reading *AU* as it makes me appreciate how varied our tastes, interests, skills and personalities are. We are each so unique! As Lydia said, it's infuriating to be told you don't look autistic — what is that meant to mean? None of us look alike — we don't have a “clone” look.

My contribution today is a tip to help you sleep when you have a bunged-up nose, or the beginnings of a cold. (I'm a trained aromatherapist, so this is tried and tested.) You get a vaporizer (supermarket, or on line) and add a couple of drops of essential oils on top of the water. Place it near your bed, where you won't trip over it! And maybe cover the annoying blue on/off switch with a sock. Oils that are really good include: pine, eucalyptus, cedar, lemon, ravensara, rosemary, bergamot, lavender, thyme, bee balm, oregano, or niaouli. If you can place a damp towel near the radiator, that helps too, to keep the humidity of the room. It's helped me

get precious snatches of sleep. And prop yourself up with pillows. I hope this will help somebody get through what always feels a l-o-n-g winter. (About 4–6 drops is plenty, in total. So if you use two oils use 2–3 drops of each, to make a total of 4–6.)

Oh! I have two final tips today, for any Aspie who would like to study more, for free, and has access to the Internet:

- Duolingo — to learn a new language;
- Khan Academy — science, geography, maths.

(Thanks, Goth, for deciphering the hieroglyphics. Long live real pen and paper!)

**Wendy**

Idea for an online poll: how many Aspies are on a wheat/gluten-free menu? I've been learning about leaky gut, our biome, and how AS folks tend to have “issues”, not that mainstream medicine knows or acknowledges — we have to figure things out on our own!

*Slub effects are caused by little lumps in the fibre — these lumps, called slubs, are particularly noticeable in some knitting wools.*

*As to an online poll: I am currently trying to keep the online and paper copies of *Asperger United* the same, as I know having two different versions will distress some of you. However, if people are happy with the idea of additional content on line, please let me know. If I feel I can introduce such features without upsetting people and without incurring extra costs, I will, Editor.*

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**Dear Ian**

I was diagnosed with AS aged 7 and I do not have any sensory issues. I agree it does distort the condition a little. Hope this puts your mind at rest

**Louise**

# I want to be allowed to be autistic

by Lois

I want to stroke soothing textures and oooh and ahhhh at the way the light hits flower petals. I want to let my dyspraxia run riot so I can walk like a puppet with its strings cut. I want to wallow in hot baths five times a day. I want to smell every rose, every skimmia bush, every sweet pea.

But if I do all that, neurotypicals will laugh at me and say, "That's not socially acceptable".

I want to bury my nose in the long belly fur of my cat. I want to spend hours photographing tiny critters in my wildlife garden. I want no one to talk to me for hours. I want to envelop silence. I want to become the sea. I want to be away from a neurotypical world.

But if I do all that, neurotypicals will laugh at me and say, "That's not socially acceptable".

I want to listen to the same piece of music time and time again. I want to watch the same DVD and marvel at the cinematography. I want to stare at the same birds visiting my garden and always have the same child-like fascination when I watch them. I want to not have to answer questions like "why aren't you married" or "why don't you have children". I want to be alone, in peace, all the time.

But if I do all that, neurotypicals will laugh at me and say, "That's not socially acceptable".

I want to not follow fashion. I want to have mis-matched shoes and handbag. I want to eat the same foods every day. I want to spend hours marvelling at nature. I want to write in my illegible writing.

But if I do all that, neurotypicals will laugh at me and say, "That's not socially acceptable".

I want to spend hours watching the tadpoles in my pond, marvelling at nature's ability to turn a squiggly squirming little thing into a handsome frog. I want to admire the colours and textures of the spiders in the log pile. I want to have my breath taken away at the magnificence of a butterfly's wings. I want to watch in awe as the bumblebees sip at the nectar-rich plants in my garden. I want to be at one with nature, not people.

But if I do all that, neurotypicals will laugh at me and say, "That's not socially acceptable".

I want to revel in the shades of green as the evening summer sunlight filters through the leaves. I want to listen to nothing but the wind rustling through the trees. I want to have my soul stroked by melodious birdsong. I want to smile as a mother bird gently feeds her young.

But if I do all that, neurotypicals will laugh at me and say, "That's not socially acceptable".

What price to live in a neurotypical world?

Just the price of my soul.

Just the price of me.

If sufficient material is sent in, the theme for April will be **things that I enjoy**. Vote with your contributions: the more submissions on a subject sent in (from different people) the more likely that that subject will be the theme. Writing on any subject is still welcome (though I have a feeling this one will produce lots of letters) as are ideas for new themes, and artwork. Remember, if you want to see different content in *AU*, the best way to change it is to send something in!

## Asperger's — relationships

by Thomas

Relationships are a key part of our lives, and they can lead to events that shape us to be the people who we are today, but what can we do when these take a turn for the worst, especially for an individual who has Asperger's syndrome?

Being an Asperger, I can appreciate the stern difficulty of trying to build a long-lasting affectionate relationship with someone. I myself have experienced an unhealthy relationship, which I will divulge later in this article.

When it comes to developing a relationship we have a lot more challenging and perplexing encounters than the general public can comprehend. We tend to find many aspects of social collaboration a lot more difficult than general people. Actions such as hugging, eye contact and maintaining a conversation are perplexing to us, depending on your level on the spectrum. I have, on a personal note, managed to build my confidence over the years and learned from both my peers and friends, as well as from the valuable support from support workers, the skills required to improve my chances of successfully building a relationship. There is help out there that will provide you with the guidance needed in building your confidence and self-esteem to a level that will bring you peace and harmony with yourself, and thus, increase your chances of building a long-lasting relationship.

It is all about self-acceptance. Without accepting who you are, nobody else will. Ask yourself this question: how can I expect someone else to love me, if I cannot love myself? Try looking at yourself in the mirror and asking that question a couple of times before jotting down the answers on a piece of paper. If you can't think of anything, then ask your family, ask your friends. There will always be something good and positive about you as a human being, you just have to look hard and listen to the good aspects

that are being spoken about yourself. Shut out the "no" voice and, instead, embrace the positivity.

This is how I recovered from my only real relationship with someone from the opposite sex. We were together for just a year, and for the first time in my life I felt that I was with somebody who accepted me for who I was, who believed in me and gave me the confidence to do things that I didn't know I could do before, like apply for a university course. I look back on that relationship as a blessing, because I realised a lot more about myself back then than I ever did before. I understood that I was indeed good enough for anybody, and that I had the skills and personality to be able to be with someone who, I thought, loved me just as much as I loved them. But it was not to be. I was cheated on near the end of the relationship and then accused of sickening crimes. I do not believe in hate, no. I do, however, feel sorry for her. Why would somebody sink so low to accuse another person of committing crimes that they would never, ever, even contemplate doing in their deepest, darkest dreams? Perhaps it is jealousy, or a lack of self-esteem: I do not know. What I do know is that after that relationship, I was in a dark place. A depressed place with no hope and no light at the end of the tunnel, I could not see a way out.

But then, one day, I simply looked at myself in the mirror and asked myself if I really wanted to be in this state? I wrote down all the positive aspects that I had, and I embraced them. I motivated myself that day to want to strive to be the best in whatever it is I wanted to do, and now, I am a freelance journalist with a job that is paying substantial amounts of money, and I have the family and friends that I want in my life.

The moral to this story, I guess, is to believe in yourself and your ability. Love has a fine way of finding you when you least expect it, and when



## an article (continued) and a letter

it happens, don't rush it. Embrace it, and you will find that you'll be the happiest you've ever been. If it doesn't work out, then don't worry. Life is too uncertain to have regrets. Look back at the good aspects of the relationship, and do not dwell on the bad. You deserve to be loved. You

are just as special and important as anybody else, and eventually, with time and patience, someone will find you and you will be in the most caring, heart-warming and loving relationship.

Patience is a virtue.

---

**Dear Mr Goth,**

please recall that I said that autism is identifiable by the study of brainwave frequency. Thus, I despair at two great things:

1) My first letter was published (and thank you for that) but still no one paid attention to it?

2) This paragraph is separated, due to being what "people" call "very technical". The end of Graham's letter suggests that an MRI scan would diagnose ASDs:

No, no, no! MRI (and fMRI) do not detect brainwave frequency, and so I know that what I suggested is still being ignored (by majority society) — apart from those poor few who have also found out what I suggested, via EEG, and so they validate what I say, yet alas, they do not really understand their own results?

Yet as I write this I must take the opportunity to stress again that you must not (and cannot) search for ASDs in babies and children, because they are in the alpha state naturally. You are supposed to look for excessive alpha state in adults. You cannot suppress any brainwave frequency or neural links in children because their minds are still stabilising and validating innate neurophysical links! For analogy, a baby's brain is a big mass of arms or legs, and as they exercise they find out which arm or leg in life they need or use and which arm or leg is never used. You as yet have no method of predicting which arm or leg is going to be used by that child and so you should not suppress it.

(This is called natural atrophy of the brain, where puberty is when any unused arm or leg is neutralised. This is why the entire brain and

body go through changes at puberty, in response to what the environment asked after about ten years of living. For example, your brain is born to know what an egg is, but if you never see one, then during puberty you'll forget what an egg is.)

So, a test for ASDs would actually be more like what happens in an eye test: they would ask you to interact with different things (such as questions involving social interaction, or putting you through actual social interaction, or they may do as they do now in order to diagnose ASDs). And if you are any kind of autistic, then your result would show up as largely below 13 hertz frequency — below beta state — and that would be how you are diagnosed with any ASD.

End of. (Notes: an MRI only scans the brain like taking a photocopy, and so that is why it has nothing to do with diagnosing living autism. An fMRI scan is similar, just seeing which parts of a brain are active/have blood flow/are oxygenated. Still not the same thing as an EEG. This is wrong because the entire brain is always active and not always with whatever an fMRI is programmed to detect — but the main problem during diagnosis is this: which is less stressful while scanning any body and brain, being freely active while wearing only a weird hairnet (an EEG) or lying stiff underneath a machine as big as a Toyota (an fMRI)?!)

(Still remains, if you do a websearch with keywords "autism" and "brainwaves" you shall find some validations towards what I say, ignoring the ones which concern MRI, fMRI or children or early diagnosis in babies or along that last sort of thing. What I say is not about the physical state but rather concerning the intensity of it.)

**Pi-iii-iii-ichupika**

## If we ruled the world . . .

by James Christie

According to the *Daily Mail*, Callie Rogers, Britain's youngest lottery winner, is broke but happy.

I've been broke. I was not happy.

Although I'd be the first to admit I'm a charter member of the grumpy old men's club (special section for particularly mean old fogies . . .), there are times I'll honestly admit I get completely exasperated with the illogical antics of the neuro-typicals (NTs) who rule this sceptred isle, our Earth.

I understand Ms Rogers did not have the best start in life and I sympathize, but why in God's name couldn't she just have got a good lawyer, listened to her independent financial adviser (I believe the National Lottery does try to supply such help), invested her money carefully in low-risk bonds, told the hangers-on to \*\* off and got on with her life?

She'd never ever have had to worry about bills again, could have had more time for her children, and maybe even helped her community.

But no, that would have been too logical, and neuro-typicals (as I once wrote myself) think emotionally first and logically second. And as neuro-typicals make up the vast majority of the global population, they do indeed rule — and frequently ruin — the world.

Ms Rogers is not the only example, nor are the antics of NTs confined solely to the ranks of lottery winners. Mention must however be made of John McGuinness, a hospital porter from Livingston who won five times as much as Ms Rogers and still managed to blow the lot, most notably via — let's put it gently here — an ill-advised investment of four million pounds in Livingston Football Club . . .

And what of the highly-educated CEOs and non-executive directors of such august institutions as the Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank of Scotland who managed, within the space of a few short years, to destroy two organizations pivotal to Scotland's global reputation as a cautious, reliable and financially astute nation? Surely they should at least have been able to behave maturely . . .

In the case of the Royal Bank of Scotland in particular, why in the name of all that is holy did such a supposedly logical and astute organization buy the Dutch bank ABN Amro (a toxic timebomb of bad debt) without carrying out proper due diligence?

Because the then CEO, Fred “The Shred” Goodwin, was an emotionally arrogant individual with an ego approximately the size of Jupiter who'd allegedly been kept waiting to see senior management at ABN Amro. Fred's ire and ego were aroused by this, bad decisions followed, the timebomb was flogged off for too high a fee and we all ended up paying too high a price.

Where's the logic in breaking banks and blowing millions, and why the uncious defensiveness when asked for a logical explanation and some gesture of humility?

And while credit was crunching, banks blowing and lottery tickets followed by millions of banknotes wafting away o'er the White Cliffs of Dover, what was your autistic blogger doing?

Well, buying a flat with a nineteen-fifties-style mortgage, having that flat properly surveyed (a sort of due diligence), putting down a large deposit and paying off his mortgage early . . .

This may sound a little smug, but I remember sweating my fearful way through those decisions

with the hard facts of life laid out clearly before me by my autistic brain. As an Asperger, the phrase “oh, it’ll never happen to me,” is simply not part of my vocabulary and I knew darn well the truth of the saying that we’re all “three months away from homelessness.”

If I hadn’t made those decisions properly, I’d have forfeited my flat five times over. My next-door neighbour was a bit more easygoing, and lost his home ten days before Christmas.

So sometimes I get exasperated when I see people damaging and destroying their lives, because I know that a few logical decisions could easily avert much unnecessary pain and suffering; but if I open my mouth and say so, everyone tells me I’m being too logical and boring.

I’m not sure it’d be better if Aspergers ruled the world, and it might indeed be pretty boring, but sometimes I wonder. . .

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James Christie is the author of *Dear Miss Landau*. He was diagnosed with AS at the age of 37. He lives and works in Glasgow.

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## Two sides to fandoms

by Jenna

Like others on the autistic spectrum, special interests have always been a part of my life. Currently my fandom is for a singer who has enjoyed a long career. I grew up listening to their music but became a fan in my own right about fourteen years ago. All the time my interest in them increasing until I finally decided to join the online community dedicated to them. Finally I had my opportunity to meet others who shared my interest and I was finding out about things that they were working on before they happened so I had time to save up, time for the excitement to build up for an album release or tour.

After a couple of months, I felt like I was getting to know some of the other fans better and we began to talk about the possibility of a tour. I had only been to one concert (a group that my sister liked) before but I wasn’t on my own. I didn’t think that any of my family would want to pay to come with me so I was faced with the thought of going on my own. Just thinking about it raised my anxiety levels but I plumped for the most expensive package. The fear went to the back of my mind for a while as the intense excitement took over but came back a few days later. Thankfully, the positive side of being in a fan community is that you aren’t alone, there’s usually someone there that you’ll know.

I’m highly sensitive and whatever I feel is very intense, and whilst fandoms offer some joyful feelings, sometimes they can be the source of negative feelings. A fandom can isolate you from your peers if you do not have the same interests as the people you associate with. I’ve never been someone who has had the same interests as my school or workmates, so I was teased. Why did I have to be the different one? I tried to convince others that I liked the popular bands, hoping to convince myself, but my brain was not going to let that happen. Fast forward a few years and other intense emotions were thrown into the mix. The artist played a tour in their home country with no plans to bring it to this country and the green-eyed monster emerged. It was driving me to insult the artist, the other fans who I’d got on so well with. Later on, the artist announced that they were touring this country but it was a different tour. I felt a bit let down but decided that as I had been saving, I’d go to all the shows I could anyway. In hindsight it was a mistake because although there was nothing wrong with the performances, I was still angry and resentful about missing the other show. To this day the resentment and regret about spending such a vast sum is still so prominent. Are fandoms always a good thing when you’re prone to such intense emotions?

## An unexpected visit to see the doctor — a life in the day of an Asperger man

by Nicholas

Dear Goth,

I hope the attached may be of interest for the magazine, which is read (devoured?) from cover to cover just as soon as it arrives and is then despatched into the local community for an eager teenager (or several) to read via my wife who works with autistic folk in education.

All best wishes

Nicholas

I am not a Martian but sometimes I wish I was. I have come to realise there are many times when I step out of my world and collide head on with theirs, that of the non-autistic majority, that it is usually me who walks away feeling as if I have walked into a brick wall, nursing wounds that only I can see or feel. You would be surprised at how even some of the simplest tasks, which you would regard as mundane and everyday, turn into an “event” that can take its toll in surprising ways. Here is a real life scenario: an account of something that happened to me that was both an unexpected event and which went horribly wrong. I have indicated the autism responses and traits in a different font and in brackets, in the hope that this may be helpful.

A while ago, following my usual procedure [*routine/ritual*], I went to the local GP surgery for a blood test. I rely upon a medication, which is restricted to a four-week supply, to keep me mobile. I have a form of arthritis that if left without medication means I have difficulties with walking and with using my hands [*as a result, I have a permanent, low-key level of stress, worrying about the availability of the drugs I need, which borders on being obsessed*]. But, to get the medication, I have to have a blood test every month. I really dislike blood tests, because I have to have a needle stuck into my arm and this really hurts me [*hypersensitivity of the senses is common in people with autism; I also immensely dislike being touched by cold hands and cold objects*]. The nurse who normally takes the sample, is great — very gentle, calm and relaxed.

So, I had had my blood test done and then I waited a few days and, again, as is my normal habit [*routine/ritual*], I went to the chemist to collect my monthly dose of medication. However, I was very surprised to find that there was no package for me [*disruptions to my normal routine/ritual mean that I start to become anxious, stressed, worried and concerned*].

I then went to the surgery reception to ask what had happened, and was told, “you should be collecting the prescription from us” [*my literal understanding of what I was “supposed” to be doing was called into question (who had told me anyway?); also, now there was further disruption of my normal routine/ritual, unexpectedly interrupted, which leads to my becoming even more anxious, worried and concerned*]. I explained that I had never been asked to follow a routine that meant I had to call at the surgery to collect the prescription [*routine/ritual being questioned, or undermined, leads to further anxiety and distress*]. The receptionist checked her box of prescriptions and of course found nothing for me. Then she asked me to take a seat and wait in the reception area [*waiting time not specified; a vague or non-specific statement such as this has the capacity to create more anxiety and stress, or add to an already tricky situation*] while she tried to find out what had happened and why there was no prescription for me [*my routine and ritual is now completely disrupted; I become yet more anxious, worried and I am beginning to feel quite agitated. Additionally, I am starting to build up to losing my cool because I have lost “control” of the situation — an element of control is essential to someone with*



autism — and the outcome (will I get my prescription for my drugs) has become difficult to predict, which loads up the tension and stress even further]. Afternoon surgery is running and it is busy with lots of people coming and going [I am in an uncomfortable situation — because it is crowded and noisy and hot — which causes further distress]. My impression is that this was taking a long time to sort out and I couldn't see why this should be [this adds to anxiety and heightens possibility of losing my cool]. After quite some time I went up to the receptionists' desk, and asked again as to what was happening [unpredictability of time and situation can lead to further build-up of anxiety, and contributes to my feeling more agitated], but was told they couldn't give me an answer and please would I wait to see a doctor [once again, the potential waiting time was not specified and open-ended scenarios like this, with a lack of parameters and specific, defined times leads to distress], who would fit me into his list when he could [my routine is now completely wrecked; my levels of distress and anxiety are building to the point that will almost certainly result in an inappropriate reaction. What had been a routine situation has become very stressful because of the unfamiliarity of the situation; I have no self-help guidelines to follow, which might help me to keep my cool in a situation such as this].

It took about forty-five minutes, perhaps an hour, from my coming into the surgery until I went in to see the doctor [I have a "history" with

this doctor, so that once I knew who I would be seeing I knew it was going to be bothersome, if not edgy and with a strong possibility I might be rude or offensive, which heightened my anxiety and made me feel even more on edge]. My expectation had been that I should have collected my prescription from the chemist and have been on my way home inside five minutes [so that, from having been calm and on my way home to enjoy a cup of tea, I had become very stressed, highly anxious, to a degree incoherent and agitated, and was fighting off the real possibility of losing my cool completely].

I was anything but calm from the outset of my consultation with the doctor [I have developed specific fears and anxieties about attending consultations, not just from medical scenarios, when I know, as in this case, that a problem has emerged and there is a likelihood that a meeting or consultation will be touchy and difficult]. The doctor's first statement was to tell me that he could not give me a prescription for medication because I had not had a blood test. But I knew that I had had a blood test [people with autism are notable for being truthful, sometimes in ways that are not to their own benefit; to be told what was to me an "untruth" (I knew the blood test had been done) was probably the final straw]. Having protested that I had had a blood test done, I was then told that what had happened was that the wrong sort of tests had been carried out and that I would have to have another test [this added to my sense of "being

wronged, the world is against me" and, given the situation, this was like throwing petrol on the fire]. It was not a happy consultation [the situation deteriorated rapidly; I can give inappropriate responses and fail to ask for clarification in a reasonable manner]. It was anything but calm [I probably became belligerent and argumentative and was, no doubt, unreasonably stubborn, although it must be noted I would not have been aware of this at the time. Additionally, I would have been utterly oblivious to how I was coming across to the doctor who was taking the consultation because, being autistic, I have little self-awareness]. It was very nearly a total disaster.

The outcome was that arrangements for another blood test were made, it was done the next day, the results were expedited and I collected my medication a couple of days later [expectations fulfilled — result!]. However, on the day I went home feeling very wound up, stressed and unhappy — especially so because it was all so unexpected. And next month I will have to go to the surgery again; my hopes are that all might go well, but I am not overly optimistic — why would I be? And I will have to face the same, everyday and mundane, prospect month after month after month. This little story occupied but one hour in one day in one month! Most observers who write about people with autism comment that we are loners: isolated individuals with few friends. I do not need to wonder why: do you?

## a letter and a poem

**Hi Goth,**

I am an “Aspie” and I would be pleased if you would consider the content of this e-mail for publication in *Asperger United*. This is a profile of the typical bully.

My name is Norman and am a 70-year-old “Aspie” and I have been bullied all my life, but over the approx. last 10 years this has intensified because I have become a target of a vendetta which has escalated into hate crime and bullying, which has been physiological rather than physical because autism has affected my verbal communication skills and verbal self-defence, and have had to ask for help from the police hate crime and diversity unit, who have done all they can to diffuse the situation.

But have been hampered because of silence and denial from the bullies’ supporters.

I have compiled a list of the bullies’ tactics which I have researched and also from my own bitter experience.

Bullies always use the same tactics on their target, which are isolate, intimidate, exclude, spread inaccurate misleading malicious gossip, humiliate, ignore, be rude, tease, bait, invalidate, treat with contempt, brainwash others to withdraw friendship, and try to encourage others to behave in the same way to try and justify their cruel behaviour.

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### Until I found you

A little space at the bottom of the page  
I know you’ll probably not read anyway  
Discarded as irrelevant and not much use  
It’s just how I felt until I found you

by **Dan**

The bullies’ qualities are aggressive, assertive, see themselves as leader, interested in self, thick-skinned, two-faced, untrustworthy, lacking conscience, cowardly, vicious, vindictive, spiteful, “follow me”, “look up to me”, “do as I say”, “do it now”, immaturity and irresponsibility.

How do bullies get away with it? They are always protected by silence and denial, ignorance, choosing not to see, unenlightenment, not understanding what bullying is, disbelief, not wanting to get involved, unwillingness to challenge for fear of being picked on next, not wanting to rock the boat, being unable to comprehend amoral behaviour, being taken in by the bullies’ lies, willingness of the bully to abuse their position of power, rewarding the bully with promotion. “What joy is there in inflicting stress and misery on others?” There is a book called *Bully in sight* by author Tim Field which is about workplace bullying, which may help anyone in a bullying situation.

With kind regards from,

**Norman**



## The rules of *Asperger United*

(contact information for *AU* is on page 2 and again on page 20)

- 1) *Asperger United* is funded by the NAS and readers' donations, and is independent of the NAS. Although it is called "*Asperger United*" it aims to be for the whole of the (reading) autism spectrum. That is, the concerns and joys of any autistic subscriber can be printed, not just Asperger's.
- 2) *Asperger United* is quarterly, published in January, April, July and October. If you do not receive a copy when you expect to, please contact *AU*.
- 3) Pieces that appear in *Asperger United* are credited using the author's first name only, unless the author requests something different. This is done to protect your privacy.
- 4) *Asperger United* administers the copyright of everything that appears and it does this on behalf of the authors.
- 5) The NAS would like to keep in touch with you about NAS services, support, events, campaigns and fundraising. If you want to hear from the NAS, you can opt in to this on the NAS website. The NAS will only contact you in the ways you want.
- 6) If you subscribe to the paper edition and move house, please inform *Asperger United* and include your old address as well as your new address. Even if you've paid for the Royal Mail forwarding service (or another forwarding service), you still need to inform *Asperger United* that you have moved address.
- 7) The current edition of *Asperger United* is available at **[www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited](http://www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited)** You need to scroll down to the middle of the page, where there is a link to the PDF.
- 8) You do not have to be a member of the NAS to subscribe to *Asperger United*.
- 9) If you phone and leave a message on the machine, please speak slowly and clearly and spell uncommon words, as the line isn't very clear. Please give any phone number you leave twice for the same reason. Remember to give your postal address so that we can find your record.
- 10) You can sign up for an email notifying you whenever a new edition of *Asperger United* is posted on the webpage above. Email **[asp.utd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.utd@nas.org.uk)** asking for the notification by email and please include your full name, postcode and let us know whether you want to subscribe to the the paid paper edition too.
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- 12) If you want to resubscribe (or subscribe for the first time) inform *Asperger United* and include your postal address and fee (for the paper version) or email address (for the email notification).
- 13) Book reviews are the most popular thing in *Asperger United*, please consider submitting one. They can be about any book, not just books about autism. Also, they do not have to be short (the Goth keeps most of his reviews short to leave more space for other writers). If you do not want your review to appear in other NAS publicity about that book, please make this clear.
- 14) Although each issue is themed, submissions on any subject are welcome. Only some of the letters and articles in each issue will follow the theme. All submissions may be edited, especially for privacy, libel, and for fitting the space available.

Dear AU,

It would please me immensely if the following could be published in your next edition on the ups and downs of daily living.

I am a 24-year-old female with a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome and chronic anxiety. The only thing I really want in life is a job and my own flat (I currently live with my parents). The latter aspiration will be satisfied some time next year, when social services will place me on Band A of the Housing Register. But the likelihood of securing gainful employment does not look too great given the recession and the difficulties I face due to my condition. This is a very sad state of affairs because, like many people on the spectrum, I have a very strong work ethic and need structure and routine. To compensate for the lack of paid employment, I volunteer for three hours a week at Age UK, where I have successfully learnt how to use the till and engage with the public. I also volunteer at an organisation called Enable Me, which raises awareness of different disabilities. My greatest achievement here was when I spoke to a group of school children at a school via computer conferencing technology, and the children asked me a lot of questions about my life with Asperger's syndrome. Next year I am going to be involved with teacher-training at the same school because the headteacher really enjoyed my talk.

Despite the enjoyment I get from my voluntary work, I still feel a deep sense of boredom and lack of direction that penetrates my very being. But my problem is that most jobs are out of my reach because of their fast-paced nature and lack of flexibility with regard to the needs of disabled people. I could not work in most high-street retail stores for example, and temporary work would not be suitable because I need permanence and predictability. An ideal job for me would be a 9–5 job in local government or reception work in a mental-health clinic, but at the moment these jobs are restricted, and, with the Government's assault on the public sector, secure, disability-friendly jobs are likely to become even harder to find.

My plan for next year is to take the European Computer Driving Licence course, so that I can become more employable, and it will also give me a sense of direction that my Aspie self so desperately needs.

Meanwhile, my special interests bring me pleasure and a relief from my boredom. I enjoy reading about psychoanalysis, philosophy and history. I am a very serious person, always with a book in hand, and my mind deep in thought. It is just a shame that I cannot, as yet, put my good qualities to use. But I keep hopeful.

Anna

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