

Autkids®

Issue 18
Winter 2013
STILL ONLY £2.50!

Positive Parenting for Children with Autism Spectrum Conditions

Canine Company

What makes dogs so special to kids on the spectrum?

USE THE FORCE LUKE

Luke Beardon, panellist and autism expert, blasts some myths



Reviews

WIN

A Detangle Brush by Stylist Michel Mercier



If your child finds hair brushing unpleasant and painful, the Michel Mercier detangle brush may be the answer. This uniquely designed and patented brush is designed to help disperse the pressure placed on hair during brushing. Three types are available for fine, normal or thick hair. It is especially gentle for children's hair brushing.

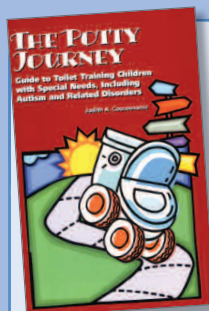
Reader Julie Stuart put the brush to the test. She says: "I had despaired of ever finding anything that let us get my son's hair brushed out without trauma for all the family, but this one certainly does the job. My son Caleb is ten and has Asperger's, and extreme sensitivities around hair brushing. Usually we have at least 10 minutes of screaming while I try to get the knots out of his hair as gently as I can. This brush is a lifesaver. The first time we used it, my husband brushed my son's hair (which never usually happens), and we had no screaming or crying. Then I tried it, and had the same result, even without the detangling spray. Caleb says the brush is brilliant and amazing – just wow!"

The brush is available at £14.95 RRP from selected Lloyd Pharmacies and www.michelmercier.co.uk

AuKids has four Michel Mercier brushes to give away.

Simply find the brush hidden in the magazine! Send your answer on a postcard to AuKids, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE or email it using the subject header 'Brush' to auidsmag@gmail.com no later than February 20th.

Find the brush →



BOOK

The Potty Journey: Guide to Toilet Training Children with Special Needs, Including Autism and Related Disorders

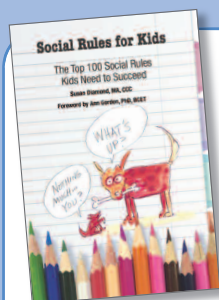
by Judith A. Coucouvanis
Published by AAPC
£15.50
ISBN 9781934575161

This is a really useful resource for potty/toilet training children with a learning disability, including autism. It is clear and easy to read. It recommends a very structured toilet/potty

plan, with straight forward ideas. It starts with the things you need do in preparation for toileting, right along to how to reach the goal of independent toileting. The book acknowledges the hard work toilet training can be, but also gives clear guidance as to what you need to do to make sure you use the resources you have in the most effective way.

Anna Turner
Continence Specialist Nurse
(Children and Young People)

GIVEAWAY!
We have three copies of The Potty Journey to give away. Simply send your name and address to us at auidsmag@gmail.com with 'Potty' in the subject header, or send to AuKids magazine, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE clearly labelled 'Potty'. Winners will be chosen at random after the closing date of February 20th 2012.



BOOK

Social Rules for Kids: The Top 100 Social Rules Kids Need to Succeed

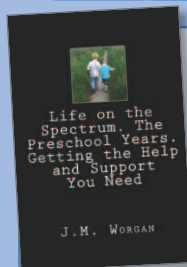
by Susan Diamond
Published by AAPC
£16.50
ISBN 9781934575840

Social Rules for Kids does exactly what it says on the tin; this is 100 neatly explained tips that children and young adults with autism need to know in order to address social communication needs in their home

environment as well as at school. It deals with issues from conversational turn-taking and being a guest in somebody's house, to managing feelings, tone of voice, and reducing holiday anxiety.

It has the odd Americanism such as 'tattle-tale', which may need some explanation for literal thinkers, and is very much geared towards 'blending in', which may not be everyone's idea of how autism should be engaged with. But used in the right way, this book can be a good resource.

Laura Keeling
Newly Qualified Speech and Language
Therapist, Specialist Support Worker



BOOK

Life on the Spectrum. The Preschool Years. Getting the Help and Support You Need.

By J M Worgan
Self published – buy it through Amazon for £1.53 for the Kindle or £3.45 paperback
ISBN 9781480026490

This lovely little guide is written by one of our loyal readers, Jo Worgan, whose son Tom appeared on the cover of Issue 15. Its chief advantage is its author. She's not some international autism guru who imparts reams of information in preachy tones. She's just an ordinary parent sharing her own experiences

and passing down what she's learnt in the self-styled fashion of someone who's been there (still going there, actually) and got the T-shirt.

Jo gets the balance right between optimism and realism. She doesn't pretend that there aren't issues that concern her, nor does she boast about being a supermum who has all the answers. Through dedicated research, a practical nature and more than a hint of resourcefulness, though, she's become great at handling daily challenges.

Not to be missed for new kids on the block.

Debby Elley



BOOK

Zak Makes New Friends

By Wendy Usher
Published by The Play Doctors
£5.99
ISBN 9780956669025

By far the most delightful children's book that I've read on autism is this one by Wendy Usher. Published by her own small company The Play Doctors (yet another innovative husband and wife team), Zak Makes New Friends features an autistic

zebra (you read that correctly), whose animal friends show readers how they happily include him without forcing him to adapt. There are nice touches to illustrate his autism; his stripes aren't quite straight (non-conformism), he flaps his ears and spins himself when upset, and he likes order and routine. There's also a pre-verbal lion who uses signs and pictures.

The little masterpieces that illustrate this book are clay models that the author baked at home. Best of all, Widgit Symbols are used to summarise each page for a simpler version of the story. Inspired!

Debby Elley

Letter from the Editors



Welcome to
2013!

Can you believe it? This summer, AuKids will celebrate its fifth birthday. Yes, you heard it, half a decade. In those years we have learnt so much and we hope you have, too. In that time, Debby, Jo, Tori and Tim have never once thrown anything at each other. Well, OK, only small objects.

A massive thanks to all those readers who have joined and supported us, and contributed to our many features. As a social enterprise, AuKids' cash may sometimes run a little low but one thing we're never short of is ideas. You share your appreciation of the magazine in so many thoughtful ways – by writing to us on

Facebook, by keeping in touch with other readers, by penning lovely letters and by grabbing a moment at exhibitions to tell us that you love the mag. Our readers have kept us buoyant and we hope that we've done the same for you.

Well, apart from getting out some Bubbly, what are we going to do to celebrate? We're launching our very own awards, that's what. We hereby officially declare (brief pause for trumpet fanfare) **AUKIDS MAGAZINE'S BIG 5.**

We even surprised ourselves by our cleverness in deciding that we'd have a category for every year that AuKids has been around. Don't ask us how we do it... genius can't be learnt.

The great thing about AuKids' awards is that the winners are going to be chosen by you, our parent readers. What better expert panellists than the folks who live with autism on a daily basis?

The not so great thing is that we can't afford a swish awards ceremony with A-list celebrities

(boo). However, winners will be able to reproduce our cool awards logo to help them promote either themselves or their product.

Here's what you have to do. Below you'll find a tear-out coupon inviting you to nominate your favourite speaker (they needn't be autistic but their subject, whether they're autistic or not, should be specifically ASC), book on autism, useful app (it needn't be designed especially for autism), special needs product that's great for autism and sensory product that's great for autism.

You can only nominate once for each category but you can choose as many or as few categories as you wish. For instance, you might just have a book in mind you'd like to nominate. That's fine, just fill in that bit, then. Nominations must be in by MARCH 1st 2013 at the very latest. You can also nominate by email at aukidsmag@gmail.com You don't need an official coupon but make it clear which category you're nominating for.

Just a couple of rules and regs. Firstly, you can't nominate yourself or a member of your family. That's called being very biased. Secondly, give us full details of what you're nominating so that we can check it out. For speakers, their full name and where you saw them speak. For books, the full title, author and publisher. For apps, the name of the app and the company that makes it. For the name of the product, we need what it's called officially (not 'that

light up thingy'), its price and where you got it from, preferably with the website address if it's an online store. Try not to nominate anyone/anything that's no longer around. For instance, an award isn't that useful to a dead speaker, even if they were a good one.

AuKids will sort through the nominations and shortlist THREE in each category based on reader popularity. In spring, you'll be asked to vote again – this time for an overall winner. The winners will be announced in our birthday issue in the summer. And there we have it. We will keep you updated on nominations received via Facebook.

So get that pen out and post us your BIG 5 without further ado. Or if you're lazy, just email them to us at aukidsmag@gmail.com

Remember the deadline – MARCH 1st 2013. Happy voting!

Tori & Debby

e-mail: aukidsmag@gmail.com

COMPETITION WINNERS FROM ISSUE 17:

Lynn Hampson, Mossley Hill, Liverpool; Catrin Montanaro, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire; Elaine Jones, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire; Sarah Tavener, Woking Surrey; Francesca Sephton, St Helens, Merseyside; Christine Manning, Chertsey, Surrey; Claire Dawes, Radcliffe, Manchester; Sarah Williams, Basingstoke

Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades: Finley Farrah, age 4, is one of our youngest fans. His mum Danielle sent us this picture to prove it.



Want to read our next issue? Not a subscriber? Subscribe NOW at www.aukids.co.uk or send a £10 cheque with your name and address on the back, payable to AuKids magazine to: AuKids, PO Box 259 Cheadle Cheshire SK8 9BE.

TEAR ALONG PERFORATION



MY NOMINATIONS ARE...

SPEAKER

Name

Where I saw them

BOOK

Title

Author

Publisher

APP

Name of app

Designed by (company name)

PRODUCT

Name of product

Price Available at

SENSORY TOY

Name of product

Price Available at

Detach your nomination slip and post to AuKids Limited, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE by March 1st 2013.

Speaker of the Year 2012



HAPPY TOGETHER:
Jen and her 'Aspie' family

LISTENING to Jennifer Cook O' Toole was a bit like being at an unexpected party. Predicting a sober talk, we were greeted instead by a surprise onslaught of vivacious enthusiasm. Jen's self-styled 'relentlessly positive' take on Asperger's meant a breathless but exciting journey into the nature of the 'Aspie' mind, how it works and what the implications are for relating to and educating kids with Asperger's.

More than that, she suggests that after a diagnosis you break the news with 'Congratulations!' explaining to your child that they have a very special mind. And why the heck not? How you view Asperger's (and autism) is just a question of perspective, and Jen, who has three 'Aspie' kids and an 'Aspie' husband, has the sort of perspective that ensures her a happy and contented life. Who wouldn't want to share it?

Jen lives in North Carolina so this was a rare treat. Diagnosed herself with Asperger's just two years ago, her books have caused a sensation in the autism world and made her an overnight star. As an 'Aspie' mum, her style of parenting and home-schooling, illustrated in her first book, was so innovative and refreshing that a publisher snapped up her manuscript within days of its submission.

Jen's theories are based on an innate understanding of the way that an 'Aspie' mind works. In her talk, she inspired the audience to use teaching methods that are not only

grounded in the real world but also recognise and respect an Aspie's need for accuracy and detail. Before learners can appreciate the wider picture that we neurotypicals tend to start from, they need to see the finer detail, building from the 'bottom up'. This means using great, imaginative teaching techniques to remove abstracts and help kids touch, see, experience and connect with what they're learning.

.....
Jen cleverly uses the quick Aspie mind to its own advantage by encouraging analysis and insight.
.....

Jen illustrated one outstanding example of the Aspie-style approach by explaining about her small son's somewhat inflexible method when faced with a particular puzzle. To help him, Jen printed out a street map of the local area and as a seemingly

unrelated exercise asked him to draw three different colour-coded ways of getting to his favourite fast food place.

Once he'd done that, she gave him a drama production. In mock panic, she told him one way was closed "What are we going to do?!" He quite sedately pointed out that there were other ways. Then came the crunch: 'Hmm, couldn't that be the same as this piece of work here as well?'

It was clear from her talk that Jen's teaching is collaborative rather than instructive and fun, too. Inflexibility comes from having messages imposed on you. Jen cleverly uses the quick Aspie mind to its own advantage by encouraging analysis and insight.

If Jen visits from the States again, grab yourself a front seat and brace yourself for impact. If you have a child with Asperger's or high-functioning autism, it'll have much the same effect as an invigorating run along the beach. Failing that, enter our competition to win both of her books.

.....
By Jennifer Cook O' Toole...
.....



Asperkids: An Insider's Guide to Loving, Understanding and Teaching Children with Asperger Syndrome

Foreword by Liane Holliday Willey
Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishing
2012 • Paperback: £13.99 • ISBN 9781849059022



The Asperkid's (Secret) Book of Social Rules: The Handbook of Not-So-Obvious Social Guidelines for Tweens and Teens with Asperger Syndrome

Illustrated by Brian Bojanowski
Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishing
2012 • Paperback: £13.99 • ISBN 9781849059152

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FIND ME! **WIN BOTH OF THESE TITLES!**

AuKids is offering three lucky readers the chance to win both these books. Simply find the superhero hidden in the magazine and tell us where he is. Post your answers to AuKids magazine, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE or email aukidsmag@gmail.com with Jennifer Cook O' Toole in the subject header.

RULES: Please note, winners' names and addresses will be passed on to the publisher so that they can send your prize to you. By entering this competition you agree to this. Winners will be chosen at random from entries received before the closing date of March 1st 2013.

Pick speakers based on background, credentials and of course relevance

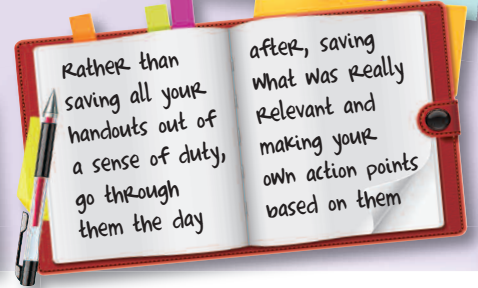
Autism Event Round Up

2013

Dying to see a speaker but it's too expensive? Buy their latest book instead. You don't have to see them in person to learn about their ideas.

If a speaker has a complex presentation behind them, listen to the speaker rather than trying to read the PowerPoint slide, which will probably be printed on a handout in any case. Good speakers won't divide your attention in this way

Rather than choosing a conference because of its nearby location, check that it really is useful for your own purposes.



Your 2013 Highlights: Get the Diary Out!

FEBRUARY

2nd: Autism, Asperger's & Mental Health at Thames Hall, The Kings Centre, Osney Mead, **Oxford OX2 0ES**. To book: www.autismoxford.org.uk

28th: Positive About Autism introduces its new SPARK training sessions. Stands for Self-Regulation Program for Awareness and Resilience in Kids. Adopted from Canada for the first time in this country. Location: National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Society Building, All Saints Street, **London N1 9RL**. For details look up www.positiveaboutautism.co.uk/page/e3/styled-4/page21.html

MARCH

4th: Positive About Autism continues its new SPARK training sessions in Scotland - Teacher Building, 14 St Enoch Square, **Glasgow, G1 4DB**. www.positiveaboutautism.co.uk/page/e3/styled-4/page21.html. Parents and carers have a reduced fee of £112.

5-6th: National Autistic Society's Professional Conference at Harrogate International Centre, North Yorkshire. Theme: Celebrating Creativity and Innovation. Key speakers include Dave Hewett of the Intensive Interaction Institute, Professor Patricia Howlin of King's College London and University of Sydney, Rudy Simone, Writer, Singer and Comedienne and Dr Peter Vermeulen of Autisme Centraal. Register at www.autism.org.uk/conferences/professional2013

6th: Positive About Autism takes its new SPARK training session to **Liverpool** - Foresight Centre, University of Liverpool, 1 Brownlow Street, Liverpool L69 3GL. www.positiveaboutautism.co.uk/page/e3/styled-4/page21.html

8th: Positive About Autism's SPARK lands on **Bristol**. Engineers House, The Promenade Bristol, Avon BS8 3NB, www.positiveaboutautism.co.uk/page/e3/styled-4/page21.html

11th: ChAPS (Cheshire Aspergers Parents Support) presents the third of its annual conferences at The Holiday Inn in **Runcorn, WA7 3HA**. Speakers include Ros Blackburn, John Biddulph and Dean Beadle, all talking about living on the spectrum. Look up www.asparents.org.uk for details.

21st: Kidz in the Middle exhibition, Jaguar Exhibition Hall, Ricoh Arena, **Coventry**. Run by Disabled Living (www.disabledliving.co.uk/kidz/middle), this is a great exhibition if you want to keep in touch on the latest resources for kids with autism - over 100 exhibitors and free entry.

March 23rd: Free fun info day for families with children who have additional needs, held by **North Lancashire Directions Group Parent Network**. Salt Ayre Sports Centre, Doris Henderson Way, **Lancaster**, 11am-6pm. Stall holders and activities for all ages.

JUNE

13th: Kidz South exhibition, Rivermead Leisure Centre, Richfield Avenue, **Reading**. Go to www.disabledliving.co.uk/kidz for details.

14-15th: The Autism Show, ExCel, **London**. Massive show attracting 3,500 people, dedicated to families living with autism, sponsored by the National Autistic Society and the Hesley Group. It has a sensory and quiet room. Look up www.autismshow.co.uk for details.

28-29th: The Autism Show, Event City, **Manchester**.

The first year that the show has come to Manchester as well, to give the north of England a chance to access all that's available. Great stuff! www.autismshow.co.uk

AUGUST

6th-9th: Autscape, the only UK conference run by people with autism for people with autism and their families. Under the theme 'Finding a Voice'

To get updates about Autscape 2013, join the mailing list: send an empty message to announce-subscribe@lists.autscape.org.

OCTOBER

15th: Autism Central, Clarendon Suites, Hagley Road, **Birmingham**, organised by Queen Alexandra College. Lovely informal free conference with lots of useful talks and stalls to look at. AuKids attended last year and had a great day. www.qac.ac.uk/autism-central

NOVEMBER

26th: The 10th National Conference - Autism A Hands on Approach. Stepping Hill Hospital, **Stockport**, Cheshire. Top flight professionals giving talks and running workshops. Visit autism_handson at Twitter for details.

15th: Autism Aware 2nd UK Charity Ball at Alton Towers Resort's state room, **ST10 4DB**

Alton, Stoke on Trent, 6pm-1.30am. See www.facebook.com/events/120749934749903 Recommended by one of our readers who had a great time.

29th November: Kidz Up North, Premier Exhibition Suite, Reebok Stadium, **Bolton**. Another freebie run by www.disabledliving.co.uk, the biggest that they do. Not northern enough? Don't worry, Kidz comes to Edinburgh in 2014.

Our list isn't exhaustive, so keep checking our News page at www.aukids.co.uk for details of events as we get them.

Did you know?

help! is a series of one-day family support seminars run by the National Autistic Society, which provide information, advice and support to families of children and young people with autism (including Asperger syndrome).

help! Seminar Topics include:

- Understanding autism
- Managing Anger
- Sensory Needs
- Understanding Behaviour
- Common Toileting Difficulties
- Supporting siblings of children with autism

Families can book up to 2 places on a *help!* seminar for £30. This includes a full resource pack of useful information, advice and support.

If you would like to be kept informed via email about *help!* seminars in your area, please contact help@nas.org.uk For more information please visit www.autism.org.uk/help!



We'd advise you not to take notes, it stops you from listening properly. You'll find the key information sinks in anyway. If you do want to take notes, rather than writing down what the speaker is saying, write down the thought that has struck you which applies to your child. That way you'll find it far more relevant on reflection.

Don't be shy about going up to speakers after their talk, but if it's lunchtime and they seem busy, and you've got a burning question, just ask them for a card and request whether it's OK to email them with a question.

The National Autistic Society now hosts webinars, so you don't even have to attend a conference to hear some great advice! Look up www.nas.org.uk and put 'webinars' in the search bar for more information.

PAWS FOR THOUGHT...

Here are some snippets of families' experiences with the PAWS service. To see the case studies in full, go to paws.dogsforthedisabled.org

Jude & Claude

Mum Kristina says: "The day we brought Claude home from the breeder was the day that Jude actually spoke directly to someone for the first time. Up until then, Jude would talk, but always to himself, even if he was talking to you, he didn't direct the conversation at you. But with Claude, Jude actually started talking to the puppy, albeit a one way conversation!"



Kristina attended workshops run by Dogs for the Disabled and has been developing Claude's training so that now he can gently touch his nose to a child's hand to help interrupt a tantrum. She says: "For Jude, relationships are complex and confusing but Claude's patience, loyalty and playfulness have given Jude a constant and very much loved companion."

Josh & Miri

Josh has Asperger's Syndrome. His mum Suzanne says: "Josh finds it extremely difficult to communicate at times and can get very stressed where he'll usually scream and shout which affects his relationships within and outside the family."



After receiving an email about the PAWS service, they introduced Miri, a four month-old Jack Russell. "It was very interesting, both Miri and Josh seemed to have an instant bond," says Suzanne. Miri has enabled Josh to overcome many of his phobias. "When returning from school, Josh will go and talk to Miri about his day, providing him with a method of releasing his stress and giving him a vehicle that enables him to stick to routines," says his mum.

Christian & Obi

Christian, 14, has Asperger's Syndrome and OCD. In 2011, mum Sarah heard about PAWS workshops and the family started training their six year-old Jack Russell, Obi. Sarah says: "Christian has made huge progress. He is much more sociable and willing to go out. His sleeping routine has improved and he now shows more affection towards me, his dad and others."



Oak & Boogie

Four year-old Oak has Boogie, an exuberant 18-month old cocker spaniel cross King Charles spaniel.

His mum Rowen says: "Oak had demonstrated real signs of stress and anxiety around getting dressed and putting his shoes on - mainly because he associated them with leaving the house and having to do something he didn't want to do."



The PAWS workshops helped us come up with a plan where by Boogie would bring Oak his socks, shoes and a jumper from Oak's bedroom down to the living room. Boogie relished the training and it was a delight to see and hear Oak smiling and laughing as he put on his socks and shoes rather than the previous protests."

Rowen has also used other techniques she learnt from the workshops, by using a 'pretend' Boogie voice. "Oak hated showing us any pictures that he'd drawn. By getting Boogie to 'ask' if he could see the pictures Oak has slowly opened up. It may sound like a small thing, but I think these sorts of techniques may have uses in other areas of Oak's development as well."

PUPPY

When the world demands communication, it's nice to have a friend who wants nothing more than your affection and your company. The charity Dogs for the Disabled is running an imaginative initiative, helping families to train their pets to harness their therapeutic value. Ever chasing a good tale (see what we did there?) the AuKids team bounced off to find out how man's best friend has become a great pal for autistic kids, too.



Woofers and Tweeters:

When no-one else seems to understand, pets can provide comfort for pre-verbal kids

have led us to believe that whilst for some there will always be a need for a fully trained assistance dog, a well-trained family pet dog can also have a massively beneficial impact."

The result of these observations was PAWS (Parents Autism Workshops and Support), a spin-off branch of the charity formed to help families explore the potential that a pet dog might have within their family.

The organisation offers a series of three workshops. In them, families learn how to choose the right dog for them as well as welfare and care, plus training techniques through demonstrations, discussions and hands-on learning.

Dogs for the Disabled is an innovative charity that has developed the training of assistance dogs to work effectively with children with autism. Corri Waitt, Research Co-ordinator at Dogs for the Disabled, says: "During our work, we've observed that there is a special chemistry between the dog and the child, the dog having an incredible calming effect when a child with autism is angry, anxious or distressed."

"They can distract a child away from disruptive or dangerous behaviour and create a space for the parent or carer to take control of a situation. These observations

Corri says: "The results are already encouraging; a child who refused to clean his teeth will now do so happily if the family dog has his teeth brushed at the same time! A young lad who had real problems with his school uniform now sets off to school happy, proud and appropriately dressed, providing the dog goes with them, wearing a school tie too!"

PAWS workshops are held across the UK and are free, but the charity suggests a £30 donation will help them to cover running costs.

Take Part in Dogs for the Disabled Survey!



Dogs for the Disabled is collaborating with the University of Lincoln and the NAS for a research project into pet dogs and autism. A web survey will help them to investigate whether the benefits of pet dogs to families of a child with autism are dependent on breed, age or origin. If you have a dog and a child over three with autism, go to the PAWS website at paws.dogsforthedisabled.org

LOVE

The Dog That Inspired a Novel

Adalyn's Clare by Kari Dunn Buron



ANIMAL MAGIC:
Adalyn's Clare the novel, and student Erica Porter with the real Clare.

Author Kari Dunn Buron tells AuKids:

"In 2003, a colleague gave me a 1995 article from a presentation at the 7th International Conference on Human-Animal Interactions entitled 'Relationships Between Young People with Autism and Their Pets'. The article indicated that pet therapy could assist individuals with Autism Spectrum Conditions in learning relationship-building skills, such as proximity seeking, greeting, giving and receiving comfort, and the joy of play. That article started me on the road to learning more about canine therapy and service, and how it might help highly anxious students with autism.



PAWTRAIT: Author Kari, Clare as a puppy and student, Maureen Nyvold

"I first brought Clare to school when she was only 3 months old so that she could begin to get accustomed to the sights and sounds of young children with autism. Although Clare and I later completed Service Dog training, I was amazed at how much of her work was intuitive. Clare worked in an elementary school programme with children on the autism spectrum for two years and at a summer camp for youth with Asperger Syndrome for five years.

"Her primary assignment in both environments was to build relationships with students and

campers using very predictable and repetitive social routines. If a student or a camper lost control and began to scream, stomp or cry, Clare would approach the child slowly and lay down just out of reach. This behaviour was not directly taught to Clare, she just seemed to know not only how to calm an anxious child, but that it was part of her job to do so.



CALMING INFLUENCE: Clare with highly anxious camper, Tony Palumbo

"Clare has amazing insight and gentleness. She seems to know when someone is having a bad day, and she gives that person her attention. One game she learned at camp was a 'sharing game'. Two campers would be throwing the tennis ball for her to retrieve, and she would bring the ball back to first one kid and then the other. She seemed to instinctively know how to share! Other than basic obedience, most of Clare's skills were those she just came by naturally."

Clare became the inspiration for Kari's latest book, Adalyn's Clare, a delightful story that follows the adventures of a very smart but highly anxious fourth grader and her therapy dog.

For more information on this award-winning writer and children's advocate, visit: www.aapcpublishing.net/book/view/701/adalyns-clare.

OTHER BOOKS:

A Friend Like Henry – Nuala Gardner, published by Hodder Paperbacks, ISBN: 9780340934029

A Friend Like Ben: The cat that came home for Christmas by Julia Romp, published by Harper Collins, ISBN: 9780007376131

All Cats Have Asperger's Syndrome by Kathy Hoopmann, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, ISBN: 9781843104810

DVD:

After Thomas – true story about an autistic boy and his dog, made into a 2006 film starring Keeley Hawes, Ben Miles, Sheila Hancock. Cert 15. Available from Love Film.

MAIL ON SUNDAY ARTICLE:

www.mailonsunday.co.uk/news/article-2224043/Animal-magic-How-dog-transformed-life-quiet-boy-autism.html

Even pets without training can be great for kids with autism. Here's what some of our readers had to say about their own pet pooches:

Freddie & Rudi

– From reader Tracy Winter

"Here's my five year-old son, Freddie, (who has autism) and his best friend Rudi, the Cavalier King Charles. I got Rudi when he was eight months-old and nearly a year later you can see how close they are - and they have matching hair! He is a wonderful, patient dog and loves Freddie to bits. He will not leave him when we go on a walk and Freddie loves to cuddle him.



"Freddie doesn't talk but he definitely communicates regarding Rudi, sometimes by picking up a photo of him and then pointing and he does make little sounds to him when they are having a cuddle. It has also taught him to be gentle when stroking.

"Rudi loves coming with me to collect Freddie from school and sits right next to him in the car. It's very sweet to see Freddie stroking his ears! I think it has definitely helped him and also me as in the evenings I get the cuddles!"

Thomas & Scruffy

- From reader Janis Stokes

"Thomas and Scruffy are a great team. Thomas has struggled with friendships. Although I am sure he was quite content, we were worried he was lonely so we decided to get him a pet - a robust pet that could cope with life as a superhero's right hand man!



"When we first got Scruffy as a puppy, after the initial nerves, Thomas would often chat to him and tell him all about his day at school. This was way more information than we EVER got!

"Scruffy was also valuable in teaching Thomas how to be caring and how to be gentle. Of course Thomas isn't always gentle as we could like him to be, but Scruffy has the patience of a saint.

"Thomas loves dressing up as a super hero and often likes Scruffy to join in, too. He also has sensory issues and he finds it very relaxing to stroke/massage Scruffy or give a gentle squeeze.

"If you ask Thomas what he loves so much about Scruffy, he will say: 'Scruffy doesn't ask me questions.'"

Eoghan & Molly

By Eoghan Richardson, age 8.

"My dog is a golden retriever. Her name is Molly but her proper name is Snowsparkle.

"She is 13/14 in dog years and nearly two in our years. She was born on the 23rd December.

"She is a good companion and makes me happy. She is very smiley and is always running around.

"She is a good friend to me and she helps to calm me down on a bad day. She comes to meet me after school and is always pleased to see me.

"My job is to take her on walks. I ride my bike and she runs alongside. One of my favourite times was being out with Molly in the autumn at the end of the day and watching the sun set."





Dr Luke Beardon has been working for many years in the fields of autism and Asperger Syndrome. He completed his Doctoral thesis at Sheffield Hallam University and is now Senior Lecturer in autism at that university.

AuKids co-editors Tori and Debby heard Luke give a great talk about autism myths at an Autistic Intelligence conference in 2011. We loved it so much we wanted to give him a standing ovation, and were delighted when he published some of those views in an article for Asperger United magazine. We wanted to share it with you, so with everyone's permission, we nicked it. Here it is:

The myths of autism

Author's note: by writing autism I am including Asperger Syndrome; read on to find out why.

Author's note number two: I am writing about autism; I am categorically not writing about people who have autism and learning disabilities.

Author's note number three: if anything upsets you while reading this, please accept my apologies. All this is simply my opinion - open to question, absolutely. Nothing written here is intended to offend anyone.

This article is not (necessarily) fact. I do not claim to know all there is to know about autism; indeed, all I can claim is that I have a very keen interest in autistic people and have been working in 'the field' for 20 years or so. I probably know a bit more than the average man/woman on the street, but am more than happy to embrace the notion that in light of what there is yet to learn, I remain pretty ignorant.

The main point of this article is to try and highlight all the so-called 'facts' that are peddled about autism which lead to ignorance and misunderstanding. My intention is to question the building blocks upon which many professionals have based their knowledge, to create fissures in the foundations, and to urge the professional sector, simply, to think again.

I am somewhat constrained by a word limit. Well, that and the fact that I want to keep some of the detail to include in a publishable book, so I am not going into as much detail as I could. If you're a professional reading this and getting all indignant that I am suggesting that you are not as clued up as you should be, then you're probably one of the good ones.

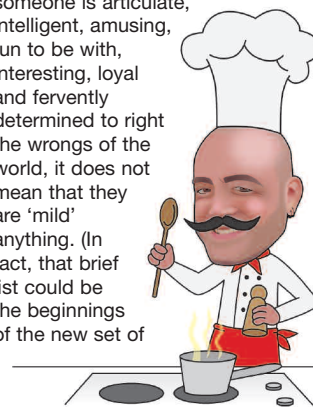
Myth: autism is a mental illness and/or a disease.

Ok, now I am not suggesting that in modern times people are still suggesting that autism is a mental illness or a disease (please don't tell me if they are, there's only so much ignorance a person can take). BUT - if this is the case, why are sets of criteria to be found in the International Classification of DISEASES and in the tome published by the American PSYCHIATRIC Association? Why do people often get referred to a PSYCHIATRIST for a diagnosis? Why are children often referred to Child and Adolescent MENTAL HEALTH Services (when there is no mental health issues evident)?

I am not suggesting for one moment that there are not good psychiatrists or mental health professionals out there, but what 'qualifies' them to work with autistic folk? Surely, the erroneous connotations twixt autism and mental illness/disease are not safe, nor sensible.

Myth: Asperger Syndrome is mild autism.

Excuse me while I grind my teeth and bang my head against this convenient brick wall. Just don't go there - ever. Just because someone is articulate, intelligent, amusing, fun to be with, interesting, loyal and fervently determined to right the wrongs of the world, it does not mean that they are 'mild' anything. (In fact, that brief list could be the beginnings of the new set of



AND ADD A DASH OF MILD AUTISM!

diagnostic criteria for Asperger Syndrome...). People are either autistic or they are not. The severity (i.e. the impact on the individual) will vary - dependent on numerous factors. So-called 'severely autistic' individuals may be supremely happy; so-called 'mildly autistic' individuals may be suicidal; you do the maths.

Myth: autism consists of a triad of impairments.

No, it doesn't. There are clear differences between the development of the autistic child and the predominant neurotype (PNT). Difference does not equal impairment. A different way of developing does not automatically mean the individual is impaired. Even if one might argue that a certain 'skill' is lacking, does that mean that the individual should be branded inferior?



The PNT have the 'skill' of chatting at length about essentially nothing; quite the coup, perhaps - but is it sensible? Many autistic people have the 'skill' of chatting at length about subjects that are extremely important to them; neither group is 'right' or 'wrong' - they simply possess a different set of skills.

Professionals must stop this branding of autistic people as impaired, deficient, or inferior in some way - as it's simply not true.

Of course many people face problems; those problems are a combination of the individual plus the environment - not simply because of the autism. In this case, surely the most sensible way forward is to change the environment, rather than somehow trying to change a person's autism (which ain't ever gonna happen).

Myth: autistic people are not sociable.

Oh, please, stop! Where did this bizarre and incalculably inaccurate notion come from? Some people with autism will happily while away their lives with no interest in others at all - and this should be perfectly acceptable (NB - please, if a person genuinely does not want to engage socially, don't try and force them to do so; it can be tantamount to bullying).

However, others might be hugely sociable, seeking company left, right, and centre. I suspect the wider PNT population is pretty similar. Sociability has nothing whatsoever to do with whether someone is autistic or not.

Myth: Asperger Syndrome is an intelligent form of autism.

Yes, people with Asperger Syndrome (AS) have average or above average intelligence. But, hang on, since when did autism denote intellectual impairment? If this was the case then surely the notion of 'co-morbidity' with a learning disability would be defunct? (I am deliberately using 'learning disability' here to denote intellectual impairment; as opposed to 'learning difficulty' - e.g. dyslexia - which has nothing whatsoever to do with intelligence). As far as I am aware, being autistic does not equate to being intellectually impaired - so the distinction between autism and AS can therefore be questioned. Unfortunately, it appears that some diagnosticians make the erroneous assumption that the diagnosis of autism implies intellectual impairment; in isolation this is simply not accurate.

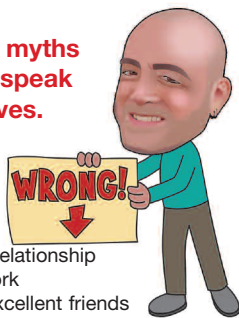
If one (rightly, in my opinion) recognises that all autistic people are very much individuals, then such sub-classifications become highly questionable. What's wrong with simply identifying the individual as autistic, and leaving it at that? As a brief aside, is there anything more ludicrous than the notion of 'atypical autism' - if it wasn't so tragic it would be laughable.

Some other myths that clearly speak for themselves. Autistic people:

- Can't look you in the eye
- Can't have a relationship
- Won't ever work
- Don't make excellent friends
- Will never be independent
- Are no good at sports
- Can't be good leaders
- Never show their emotions
- Are unfeeling and cold

The above are so obviously insanely ridiculous I shall not waste any more words expanding on them.

There is nothing that an autistic person cannot achieve in life as a result of being autistic. All sorts of other things



will come into play, of course, but autism alone is not a barrier to anything.

Those professionals who turn into soothsayers for parents, and who predict doom and gloom at every turn should be ashamed. They are not fortune-tellers, and there is no way of knowing at childhood what the future holds.

Yes, life is considerably tougher for most autistic people than their PNT peers, but it does not mean that dreams cannot be achieved.

I've merely skimmed the surface of the sea of ignorance that is evident 'out there'. By no means am I suggesting that all, or even most, clinicians and professionals are ignorant to a significant degree. However, I would stand by the sentiment that there is enough ignorance in enough clinicians and professionals for there to be a significant and negative impact on the lives of people with autism and their families. Clearly, this is unacceptable.

Until it is accepted that the autistic population is not one to fear, to marginalise, to brand inferior, or to decry as impaired, it seems obvious that there is still work to be done. Such ignorance is neither an excuse, nor is it in any way, bliss.

Luke Beardon

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With thanks to Dr Luke Beardon and Asperger United, which originally published this article and gave us permission to reproduce it. Asperger United is a free magazine run by and for adults who have autism spectrum conditions. Send subscription requests to Asperger United c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG or email asp.ugd@nas.org.uk

Publications by Dr Luke Beardon

Dr Beardon co-wrote the ASPECT consultancy report, the largest consultation with adults with AS then undertaken (2007). He is co-editor of Asperger Syndrome and Employment: Adults Speak Out About Asperger Syndrome, Asperger Syndrome and Social Relationships: Adults Speak Out About Asperger Syndrome, and Aspies on Mental Health: Speaking for Ourselves

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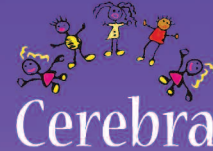
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Brenda Smith Myles
Ph.D.

Brenda is an international speaker and consultant for the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. She is the recipient of the Autism Society of America's Outstanding Professional Award, the Princeton Fellowship Award, and the Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Developmental Disabilities, Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award.

There are several reasons why children ask the same questions repeatedly. As you indicated in your question, the 'why' is very important.

Many of our children process information visually and need to see information written or drawn out. For these children, write out or draw the

answer to the question on a sticky note, index card, or piece of paper. Each time the child asks the question, refer him to the answer by saying, "Check your piece of paper (index card or whatever)."

Some children need to have more information about the subject at hand. For example, they might not understand the concept of time and may need to be directed to a clock or timer (on a microwave, for example)—again, using a visual.

Other children get into a pattern of repeating responses. In those cases, it may be necessary to set limits. For example, the parent might say, "You can ask that question two more times. I will answer it two more times, and after that you will have to look at what I wrote down for you."

Still other children may want to participate in a conversation, but don't have the skills to do so. For these children, the adult can model how to ask other questions and write them down. In this way, children are learning new conversational skills.

In brief, there are multiple reasons why a child may keep asking the same question, all needing different approaches.

"They may have difficulty processing your answer the first time around and so there is a need to ask several times."

— Member, Wrong Planet online forum



Chris Barson
RNMH, GWCMD Dip

Chris is the founder of training company Positive About Autism
www.positiveaboutautism.co.uk

Prior to that, he was External Training Manager with the National Autistic Society and still delivers training for the charity. He is a contributing author to *The Autism Spectrum in the 21st Century: Exploring Psychology, Biology and Practice* Jessica Kingsley Press 2010

As with most things that people do, there's usually more than one back story. We do things for reasons that are often invisible to others and sometimes to ourselves.

.....
"Autism just adds layers of complexity to the ordinary human things that we all do."
.....

This is human. It's not autism or disability. It's human.

I've come to the realisation that autism just adds layers of complexity to the

ordinary human things that we all do. Somehow autism makes some needs more potent!

'The need to know what's going on'

We all have this need. For the predominant neurotype (that's mostly me and you), once we have figured out what's happening (or someone has told us), then that's the end of it. But kids with autism have a lot of difficulty predicting and knowing the future. Their strengths are pointing in the other direction. Great with the past - not so great with the stuff that hasn't happened yet. This aspect of autism comes about because of a whole bunch of cognitive (thinking) differences that arise from different 'hard wiring' in the brain box.

Anything that hasn't happened yet is hard to imagine for kids with autism. The invisible thing bothers the heck out of them. So they gotta keep asking, as no amount of telling makes the future any more concrete.

Words are 'here now, gone now'

For someone who has real problems in processing data, telling someone something verbally just isn't gonna work. Your response lives in the working memory for milliseconds. So then they've got to ask again.

I'm getting a buzz every time I hear you say those words!

Having autism often means that repetition is just a whole lot more fun than it is for others. What's more, the fix doesn't lose its novelty anywhere nearly as quickly as it does for non-spectrumites.

We want interaction with our kids don't we? Well *this is* interaction Jim - just not as we know it.



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For more information contact Amy Stanion, Services Coordinator
Tel: 0161 443 4060 Email: peterlawson@cygnethealth.co.uk

"A consistent response was a small island of experience where I found I could actually understand the mechanics of an interaction with someone else. I would ask the same question over and over in an attempt to establish whether or not I actually had knowledge of the answer (which really meant the interaction, not the answer per se). I wanted to get to the point where I was sure the answer wouldn't change, to get to the point where the answer changes, or to get to the point where there were no more changes in the answer and I thought I had become familiar with all the possible responses."

— Member, Wrong Planet online forum

"I used to ask for the same couple of stories to be read to me over and over again when I was younger. Nowadays me and my family just laugh about it. It could just be that he asks the same question as many times as he does because he enjoys the answer that he gets."

— Graduate Sam Rowett, 22, who writes for AuKids and has Asperger's. Follow Sam's articles at www.aukids.co.uk or his blog at www.pywritetchnics.com.

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The Last Word

By Debby Elley, journalist and mum of twins with autism.

My Game...My Rules...

BOBBY rushed through the door, bounded upstairs and jumped into bed. Under his duvet, still in shoes and coat, he muffled that he was never going to after school club again.

Apparently he had refused to share his new board game and there had followed a meltdown.

We are used to explosions of emotion, but as Bobby's matured, it's easier to find their cause. As he ate his beans (skewering a bean at a time), I played my first pawn. The opening gambit in discussing social situations is always the toughest. It could go either way.

I asked him to imagine that someone else had brought in a game and wouldn't share it. How would he feel? Apparently I was missing the point, big time.

Bob's mouth turned quavery. "But I

DID want them to join in!"

So what happened?

"They all came at once and then they WOULDN'T PLAY BY THE RULES, they just made them up!"

Ten kids diving on his game and *making it up as they went along?* Disaster.

And so we advance upon the subtleties of negotiation. Wow and I thought getting him to talk was difficult. Life's a battleground for autistic kids, but these hiccups are really practise runs which will help to shape his adult life.

The world is unjust and chaotic to Bobby. Grey areas don't feature. We have to help him paint them in. It isn't a case of 'one day we'll get there'. It's more a case of 'every day we get a bit further...' And that's what counts.

JUDE HUGHES

Age: Nearly 8
I have: Autism
My family: Mum, Dad, Gabe, Claude (dog) and my cats Sassy, Smog and Moss.
School: Specialist unit attached to a mainstream school.
I love: Claude, cats, surfing, chocolate, playing on the beach, going for dog walks, building things and playing with my pigs, chickens and cows on Minecraft.
I hate: Sirens, public address systems, alarms, fizzy drinks.
Me in three words: Funny, good, clever.
If I were Prime Minister: I would make the world much quieter.

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