



Connecting the Dots

GETTING A DIAGNOSIS OF AUTISM (ASPERGER'S) LATER IN LIFE
BY ANTHONY & LORI MOFFA

I'm Different

- ▶ Early experiences
- ▶ Being “different” from the other kids
 - ▶ Sensory sensitivities
 - ▶ Emotional sensitivities
 - ▶ Social situations overload



The Journey Begins

- ▶ Began asking questions
- ▶ Desire to find the reason for my differences
- ▶ Developed a fascination with people
- ▶ Human nature, and psychology
- ▶ Questions
 - ▶ How could I fit in?
 - ▶ Why I seemed to have so much trouble doing so?
 - ▶ Other people made it look so easy





Whatever “It” Is, It’s Hiding in Plain Sight...

- ▶ I was smart in school but clueless socially and emotionally behind
 - ▶ Academics vs. common sense, social situations
- ▶ Hearing comments from others about certain traits
 - ▶ Too sensitive to others/not sensitive enough with others (one of many dichotomies I’ll talk about later)
 - ▶ Don’t behave, think, or speak as expected
 - ▶ Other negative comments: too direct/too honest
 - ▶ Bullied and bully

Acting My Way Through Life

- ▶ Followed a script of I thought I was “supposed” to act
- ▶ Always in my head, over-thinking and not living authentically in the moment
 - ▶ Rehearsing every possible scenario
 - ▶ “Scripts” for most situations
- ▶ Having to pretend daily affected me personally
 - ▶ Self-identity
 - ▶ Self-esteem
 - ▶ Time sink
 - ▶ Exhausting
- ▶ Questioning own and other’s
 - ▶ View of reality
 - ▶ Perceptions
 - ▶ Logic



Transitioning from School to Work

- ▶ Graduated from high school
- ▶ Attended college & graduate school
 - ▶ Psychology and Engineering Psychology
 - ▶ The study of how people interact with and use technology
- ▶ I followed areas that I thought were the best fit for me in the fields of psychology and IT.



Employment: Getting & Keeping a Job

- ▶ I always worked in my chosen field, but found it difficult to stay in one place (1-3 years)
- ▶ Stress of cycling through jobs forced me to search for a diagnosis
- ▶ I was still wondering what was different about me
 - ▶ Not just bad bosses
 - ▶ Not just bad economy
 - ▶ Not just office politics
 - ▶ Not just circumstances
- ▶ Although these were some of the reasons, I knew there had to be something different about me personally



Dichotomies & Splitting of Self

- ▶ Dichotomies
 - ▶ Too sensitive to others' comments ("can't take a joke") / not sensitive enough with others' experiences
 - ▶ Inflexible and rigid / expecting others to be very flexible around me
 - ▶ Talking at length about what interests me (my current "obsessions") / not so interested in what other person was saying (also due to some sensory issues)
 - ▶ Only doing what interested me / while expecting others to do what I didn't want to do (cooking, cleaning)
 - ▶ Good at noticing details / bad at remembering details
- ▶ These dichotomies, and feeling split into "versions" of myself by acting to try to fit in was eventually too much.
- ▶ Cut myself off from an authentic life in the course of trying to survive.
 - ▶ Self-identity suffered
 - ▶ Relationships suffered
- ▶ All of these experiences led to my conclusion that I was definitely different from most other people and had to find the reason for being so

Diagnosis & Treatment

- ▶ Did the research, sought the experience of others on the spectrum online
- ▶ Finally diagnosed by a neuropsychologist: Autism Spectrum Disorder (formerly Asperger's)
- ▶ Also coexisting conditions, such as bipolar disorder and anxiety
- ▶ Worked with a holistic doctor and other doctors
- ▶ After diagnosis and treatment, transitioning to a related field, still in IT, called Software Testing. This may be a better fit for several reasons (discuss). May eventually return to my chosen profession.



Adulthood

Challenges that Arise



- ▶ DISCUSS DETAILS FOR THE FOLLOWING POINTS
- ▶ Working Life
- ▶ Relationships
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Sharing and doing/being responsible
- ▶ Raising Children
- ▶ Learning as a Parent
- ▶ Learning to be a full Partner

Resources 1

- ▶ **Nick Walker**, founder and senior instructor of an aikido dojo in Berkeley CA, co-founder and editor for the independent Autonomous Press, prodigious blogger <http://neurocosmopolitanism.com>
- ▶ **Karla Fisher**, mother of two grown daughters, semi-professional football player, Sr. program manager, software engineer, farmer, prodigious blogger <http://asdculture.wikispaces.com>
- ▶ **David Finch**, husband, father, marketer, blogger, author of *The Journal of Best Practices: a memoir of marriage, Asperger syndrome, and one man's quest to be a better husband* www.davidfinchwriter.com
- ▶ **John Elder Robison**, inventor, businessman, husband, parent, speaker, author of several memoirs including *Look Me In the Eye*, prodigious blogger www.johnrobison.com

Resources 2

- ▶ **Donna Williams**, author, artist, autism consultant, blogger
www.donnawilliams.net
- ▶ **Penelope Trunk**, career and personality coach and blogger, founder of four startups, mother and wife <http://penelopetrunk.com>
- ▶ **Michelle Dawson**, researcher, author, and blogger
<http://autismcrisis.blogspot.com> and www.sentex.net/~nexus23/naa_02.html
- ▶ **C. S. Wyatt**, freelance writer and editor, prodigious blogger
<http://theautisticme.blogspot.com>
- ▶ **Philip Wylie**, author of *Very Late Diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome: How Seeking a Diagnosis in Adulthood Can Change Your Life*

Resources 3

- ▶ **Cynthia Kim**, wife, mother, blogger, author of *Nerdy, Shy, and Socially Inappropriate: A User Guide to an Asperger Life*
<https://musingsofanaspie.com/>
- ▶ **NPR article**, 'When An Autism Diagnosis Comes In Adulthood' profiling three adults in their own words www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/03/27/471600733/when-an-autism-diagnosis-comes-in-adulthood
- ▶ Finally the last item is by an author who's not on the spectrum himself, **Steve Silberman**, but whose latest book, *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* I think is a good resource and worthwhile reading
<http://stevesilberman.com/book/neurotribes>