

# Instructions for Using this Book-on-CD

## General Suggestions

In order to get a good feel for the book and how it works, we suggest the reader first skim through the book - cover to cover - using the cursor keys or "Page Down" key.

Once you've previewed the entire book, you will enjoy reading it again and again, each time following some of the links (see "Links" below) to other places in the book that will help you better understand what you are reading.

You may want to print this instruction sheet for easy reference as you go through the book (direct the printer to print only the current page).

You may also discover that you would like to have easy reference to the ["List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome."](#) If so, please feel free to print pages 83-86 as well.

## For Best Viewing

Go to "View" on the tool bar, then select "Full Screen."  
To return to regular view from "Full Screen," just hit "Esc."

For ease in viewing some of the smaller pictures and text, you might use your magnifying tool. The magnifying tool (zoom-in tool) will also allow you to see some interesting, hidden details. Try it out for fun! To return to regular view, select with your cursor one of the three page view icons at the top of your screen.

## Links

Throughout the book you will notice that some words or groups of words are underlined. If you move your cursor to these underlined words (or some pictures), the little hand on the screen will become a pointed finger. This pointed finger indicates a link. If you click on the underlined words or the picture (called a "link") your computer will take you to another page of the book that will teach you more about that subject.

To get back to your original page after you view the link, press the large arrow (or double arrows in some versions of Acrobat Reader) pointing left at the top of the Acrobat Reader screen (it is the "Return to Previous View" button). If you are in "Full Screen" mode, you will first need to hit "Esc."



# TAP DANCING

## in the night



by  
Martha Kate Downey  
and a cast of thousands

Insights into the world of Asperger's Syndrome

Phat Art 4 Publishing

Stone Mountain Software

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2. Individual readers may print out single copies of their favorite pages for frequent reference or framing.
3. The Instructions for Using this Book-on-CD (Page 1) may be printed for easy reference.
4. The List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome may be printed and photocopied as desired; however, it must remain in its original form with credits included.

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This book is a gift to God  
in Thanksgiving for His constant love  
for all His children,  
and for His belief in our ability  
to learn,  
to grow,  
and  
to love.



If you're curious why a mom,  
who is not a writer or an illustrator,  
but rather a social worker, teacher and stained glass artisan  
wrote and illustrated a book...

[read these pages](#) and discover. . .

- \* The passion behind the book
- \* Who in the world is this book written for!?!
- \* How the [List of Possible Characteristics](#) originated and why it appears as it does.

otherwise. . .

[skip it](#) and get to the really important parts of the book!

**Enjoy!**

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That's ME!



a word from a bird... *this is important stuff*, so don't skip it



Hi!

I'm Hyacinth Macaw and I will be your Master of Ceremonies. I'm here to introduce you to some of my best friends. But first, who are you? You may be a person whom a doctor has diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) or another diagnosis on the autism spectrum, including High Functioning Autism (HFA), or Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). You may be a friend of one of these people or you may simply like books with lots of really fine art! Whatever your reason, I'm glad you're here with us!

Why? Because *Tap Dancing in the Night* will introduce you to some of my favorite people in the world. Some of these people know for sure they have Asperger's Syndrome (AS), HFA or PDD-NOS. Some think they may have one of these diagnoses, while some know for sure they do not have Asperger's Syndrome but share some of the same unique qualities.

We refer in this book to "Aspies." "Aspie" is a pet name for a person with Asperger's Syndrome. For the sake of simplicity in this book, the term *Aspie* will also refer to anyone who might share similar characteristics. This term was coined by some adults with Asperger's Syndrome. They like to have a short, positive way to refer to themselves when talking about their unique qualities. In this book you can recognize when an Aspie is speaking, because his or her words will be written like this: "*Hi, I'm an Aspie.*"

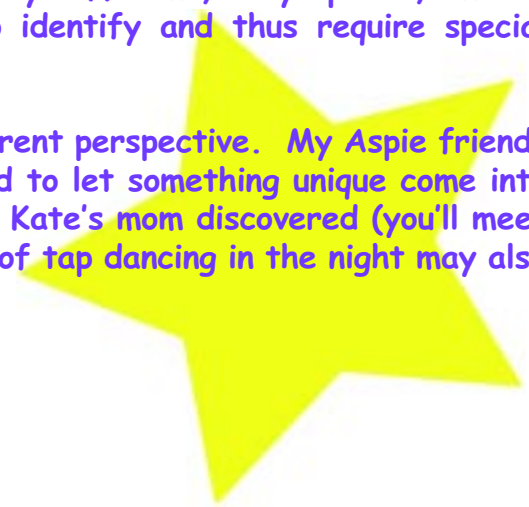
*Tap Dancing in the Night* shows us examples of the various characteristics found in this part of the autism spectrum. It can help us recognize the ways that these qualities can be positive for Aspies as well as for the rest of the world. On page 10 you'll read a poem called *Tap Dancing in the Night in Turquoise High Heels*. It shows several characteristics of an Aspie - such as, how they sometimes like to stay awake at night and how they don't care if turquoise high heels are "proper dancing shoes." It best shows how Aspies can use whatever is available at the time to add pizazz to an otherwise dull evening!

All of the selections in this book-on-CD will teach about being an Aspie. They have been inspired or written by Aspies of all ages. Some pages will delight children while other selections will speak to adults. An important thing to remember: The skills of our Aspies vary greatly! Therefore, so do the entries.

I will be acting as your guide. Watch for me! You'll see me often! Many times I will be telling you what to look for in the following pages or referring to the "List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome." As we point out the Aspie characteristics in the **foot notes** at the bottom of most pages, be searching for how you can use them in new and positive ways. When I'm talking, my words will always look like this: "Hi, I'm your favorite macaw!" Sometimes the words will appear **in large print** or other times in smaller print, but the print when I'm speaking will always be blue...like me!

If you are an Aspie, you'll notice that you will identify with some of the habits, interests and feelings of some of the characters. That's good! Those characters are based on real, live Aspies. Just like you, they share some qualities with some other characters *but not all*. There is no such thing as a "typical" person with Asperger's Syndrome. No Aspie is exactly like another Aspie, just as no snowflake is identical to another. That may be one of the most important things we can learn about Aspies...that they are all very different, very special, and all unique treasures. Like most valuable treasures, they are often difficult to identify and thus require special knowledge to appreciate. That's why my friends and I created this book.

Without Aspies in this world, many of us would never see the world from a different perspective. My Aspie friends teach me to look around, be aware of other possibilities, and not be frightened to let something unique come into my life. They have taught me that **DIFFERENT may be very GOOD!** and...like Kate's mom discovered (you'll meet Kate later) ...that with a little education and a turning of the heart, the sound of tap dancing in the night may also be the sound of a lullaby.



this ↓ is a bird's **foot** ... and this ↓ is a **note** ... together they form a "**footnote**" about Aspie characteristics



To highlight some of the unusual speech and language patterns common among Aspies, we have not edited or changed distinctive patterns of speech, grammar, punctuation, or spelling of entries written by the Aspies.





**Now, let's put on our dancing shoes,**

**grab our hats and canes,**

**and get on with the**

**SHOW!**

# Tap Dancing in the Night . . .

Often,  
very late at night,  
I listen.  
I wait to hear those sounds that tell me  
that entertainment is about to begin.

My body and mind are tired,  
yet, I know that my rhythm belongs to me,  
it governs my patterns but cannot,  
should not, govern yours.

You're up for dancing,  
doing your math  
and talking to strangers.  
I'm down for resting  
and feeding my mind on still,  
undemanding respite.

But in a strange way  
your rhythm becomes mine.  
I wait for that tap, tap, shuffle  
that dances me to sleep in these otherwise  
quiet hours.



Perhaps that's the appeal.  
Maybe your mind  
needs the time to be active,  
when the world is asleep -  
No competition,  
no annoyance,  
just calm,  
quietly blinking stars

and a

**VERY !  
LOUD !  
BEAT !**

Composed by Martha Kate Downey, this poem  
was written in appreciation for her dancing  
Aspie daughter, Kate Noelle Downey.

# ...in Turquoise High Heels



*Hi!*

*I'm Kate. I'm an Aspie! My mom wrote that poem about me. She's telling how she learned to feel okay about my nighttime shows. Want to help me teach Hyacinth to dance? It should be a challenge but well worth the effort! (Just like learning about Aspies.) We have to be very quiet, though. My mom and dad are trying to sleep in there!*



Let's talk about  
the hallmark of an  
Aspie: unusual  
speech patterns.

Here are some of  
my favorite Aspies  
as they speak...

Speech and Language



# Speech Patterns (as explained by a bird

with thoughts resembling those of Joshua Tausz)

There are many types of people in this world, and there are many different ways of communicating. Deaf people speak with their hands in sign language. Blind people read Braille with their fingertips, and most people understand why they do these things and why it is necessary. Unfortunately, not everyone understands why Aspies talk the way they do, not even the Aspies themselves sometimes. Often, deaf people can't speak like most other people because they can't hear how to make the sounds of speech. In the same way, Aspies usually don't understand how to be polite because they can't recognize "polite" versus "factual" information. Over time both can usually learn how to approach "normal" speech by learning in different ways. Deaf people put their hands on others' lips and on others' throats to feel how they form the words. Aspies get help from those around them, who tell them about specific instances of what is and isn't polite, until they can begin to generalize.

Aspies may know many wonderful words but don't always understand their meanings and therefore, use them inappropriately. They may have an amazing vocabulary, use their words properly and write very well, but it may seem out of place in its perfection.

Other times, Aspies might feel they must repeat a word, either to get a rhythm, or to emphasize its meaning when talking or writing. On occasion, they talk or write at a very fast speed and with so much jumbling of words and subjects that they are hard to understand. While the Aspies might think they are expressing many ideas in less time, what they have actually done is confuse others. Sometimes they speak very quickly so as not to lose their train of thought, but unfortunately, they would be better understood if they could speak more slowly. (Hint to the listener: If you relax and really look at the Aspie who is speaking, many times the Aspie will relax and speak more slowly with less repeating.)



# Jason's Extraordinary Vocabulary



Excellent vocabulary; may sound like "The Professor."

# ADAM for PRESIDENT



*Hi, I'm Adam. I am 10 years old. I have brown hair and brown eyes. I am 4'10". I weigh 73 lbs. I have a dog named Shana. She is a Shih Tzu. I have a brother named Zachary, who is six. He sometimes can be a real pain in the neck. I love to use our computer! I also love to read almanacs. Once, when I was in the first grade, I wrote a story called El Gato and El Sombrero. I especially like to read and write comedy stories. One of the worst places I have ever been to is - no, not the Worm Museum - school! I used to like school, but now I hate it! I haven't been too crazy about it since I was in the first grade! The reason is that now that I'm in a higher grade - the fourth grade, there's hardly anything fun about school. Two of the few things that I like about school are the fact that I am in the gifted class for the second year in a row, and the fact that I am on the student council for the second year in a row. I hope that I will still be on the student council next year, because next year, I am thinking of running for student council president, and only fifth graders are allowed to run for student council executive offices. I am even thinking of running for president of the United States when I'm 37! That year, the year 2024 will be the first year that I'll be old enough to run for President. My favorite thing about being an Aspie is being able to relate to animals. My least favorite thing about being an Aspie is not being able to relate well to kids. Most doctor's appointments that I go to seem like nothing but a big waste of time to me. The reason that I like other doctor's appointments is that I get to read themagazines in the waiting room. That is my life!*

Adam also likes to play the calendar game. You tell him what day you were born and he can tell you what day of the week it was on and exactly how old you are now to the second! He doesn't need a pencil or paper or even a minute. His brain just does it really quickly!...maybe that's why he speaks so quickly without taking a breath!





Hang on tight  
'cause Kate's speech  
is faster than a  
speeding bullet!  
Here she comes!!!!

*"My name is Kate, (I'm speaking out loud and using sign language, too, as I introduce myself, because it is fun for me and sometimes when I'm a little afraid to say something out loud, I'll sign it instead). I just wish I was deaf because I like sign language. I really would rather be named Stacy, or Haylie or Jennifer, or Love, or Kymberly Jones Smythe Hite because I just like those names. I don't have a bear, but I do have a thumb and a blanket. I know everything there is to know about singers and entertainers. I know everybody's age and their birthdays. My dad is forty-six now and I've started planning his "Over the Hill" birthday party for when he's 50. That's not long off, you know! I have a tutor and I am homeschooled. I like to play with the cat it is so cute and lovable and sits like a royal cat with its paws crossed. I like to be lazy, too. My mom is forty-five years ole (I like that slang word for "old"), I'm probably still going to be living here in this house so I can help take care of my mother and daddy!*

*Did you know that?!"*



Difficulty adjusting volume and speed in speech. Prosody was irregular, subject changed quickly and often.

At age 14, Kate's speech was as difficult to understand when you heard her speak as it is to read on this page.

Now at age 19, Kate's speech is very clear. She speaks publicly as a Global Messenger for Special Olympics!





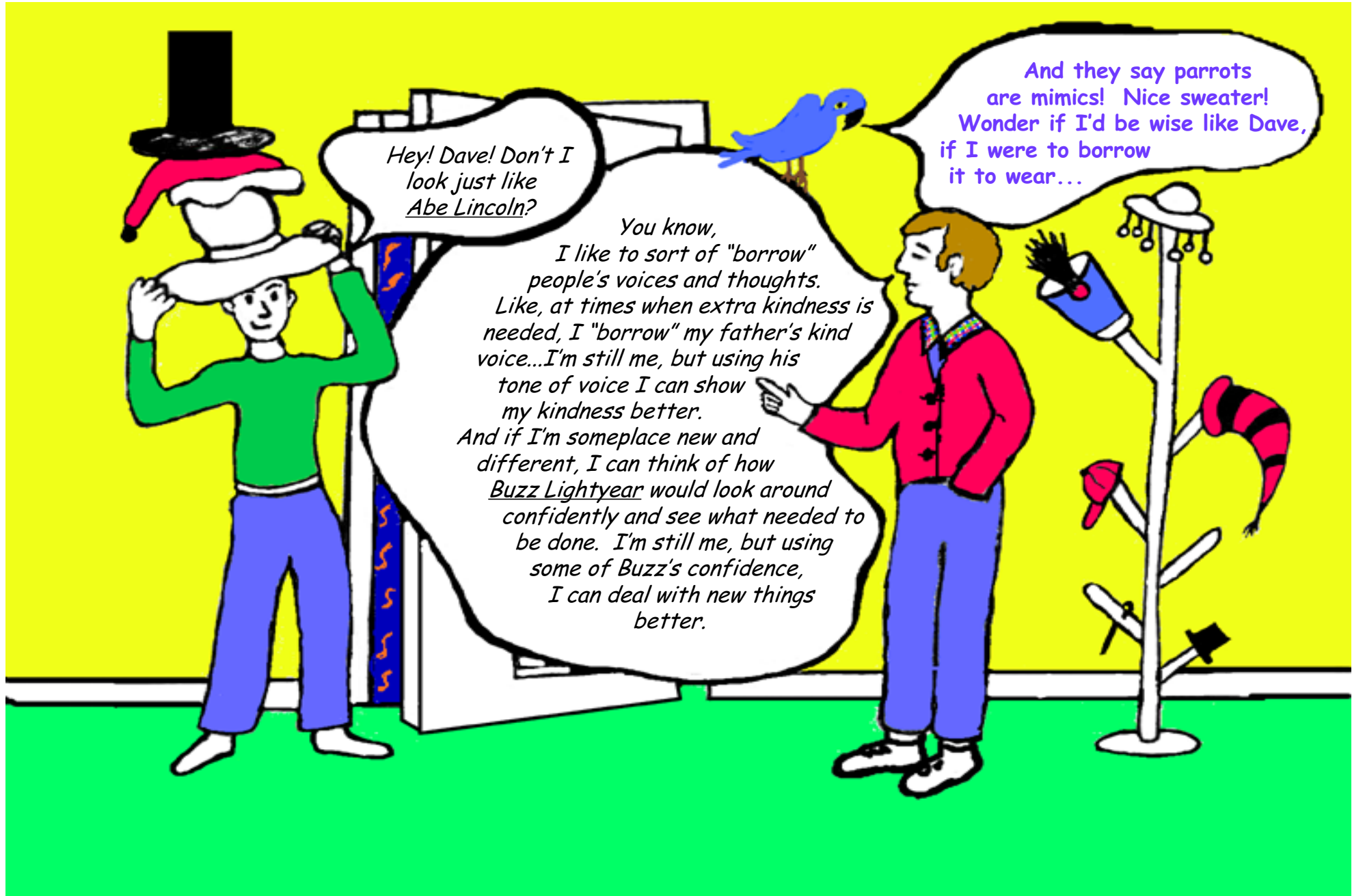
Sometimes, a method that helps one person to understand language in one way, may be used to help another person in another way - same method - different needs. Using sign language is an example of one of these methods.

Many people who have difficulty understanding language, discover words that confuse them when heard or spoken are quite easily understood when signed. For instance, it can be very helpful to clarify opposites. If you say, "The water is hot!" when the water is cold, you may have quite a problem. However, if the Aspie understands the signs, and therefore true meanings for the words *hot* and *cold*, then the confusion may be resolved. The same is true with pronoun reversal; rarely is a person confused by the words *you* or *me* when signed.

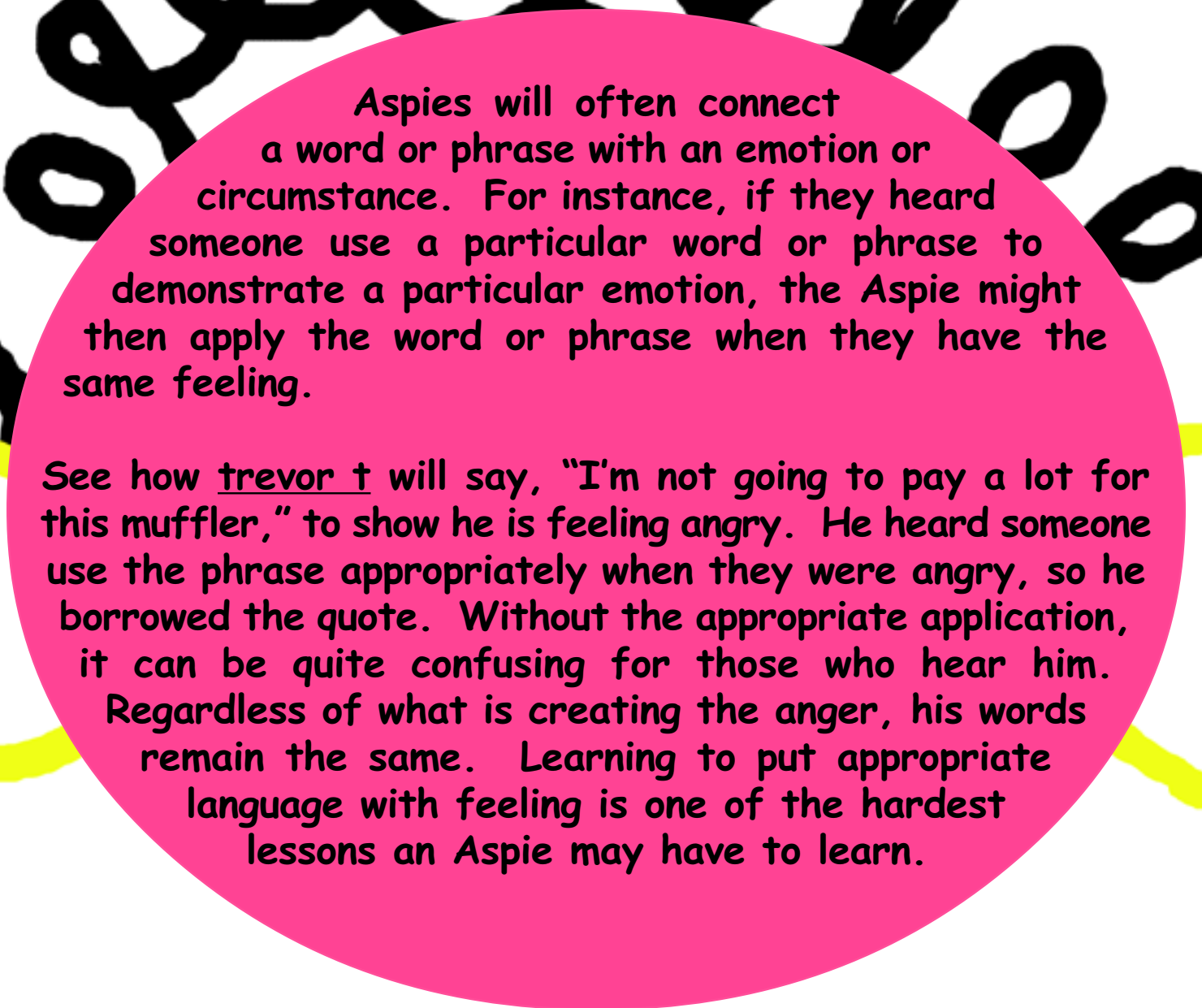
Sign language skills are also of assistance when learning to spell a new word. Simply finger spelling with their hand before writing or reciting a word's letters has been of great help to many Aspies.

You might be glad to know that while many Aspies found sign language to be an incredible tool in learning language, many later discovered that as their other language skills improved, they became less dependent on it for understanding. Most, however, retain it as a skill and enjoy using it for fun.

# The Mad Hatter



May adopt others' behaviors or speech to aid in more fluid or comfortable communication and social adaptation.



Aspies will often connect a word or phrase with an emotion or circumstance. For instance, if they heard someone use a particular word or phrase to demonstrate a particular emotion, the Aspie might then apply the word or phrase when they have the same feeling.

See how trevor t will say, "I'm not going to pay a lot for this muffler," to show he is feeling angry. He heard someone use the phrase appropriately when they were angry, so he borrowed the quote. Without the appropriate application, it can be quite confusing for those who hear him. Regardless of what is creating the anger, his words remain the same. Learning to put appropriate language with feeling is one of the hardest lessons an Aspie may have to learn.

## Borrowed Phrases



Excellent rote memory (the ability to remember something exactly as it was seen or heard).

# trevor t's stock phrases

Anger Hunger Confusion



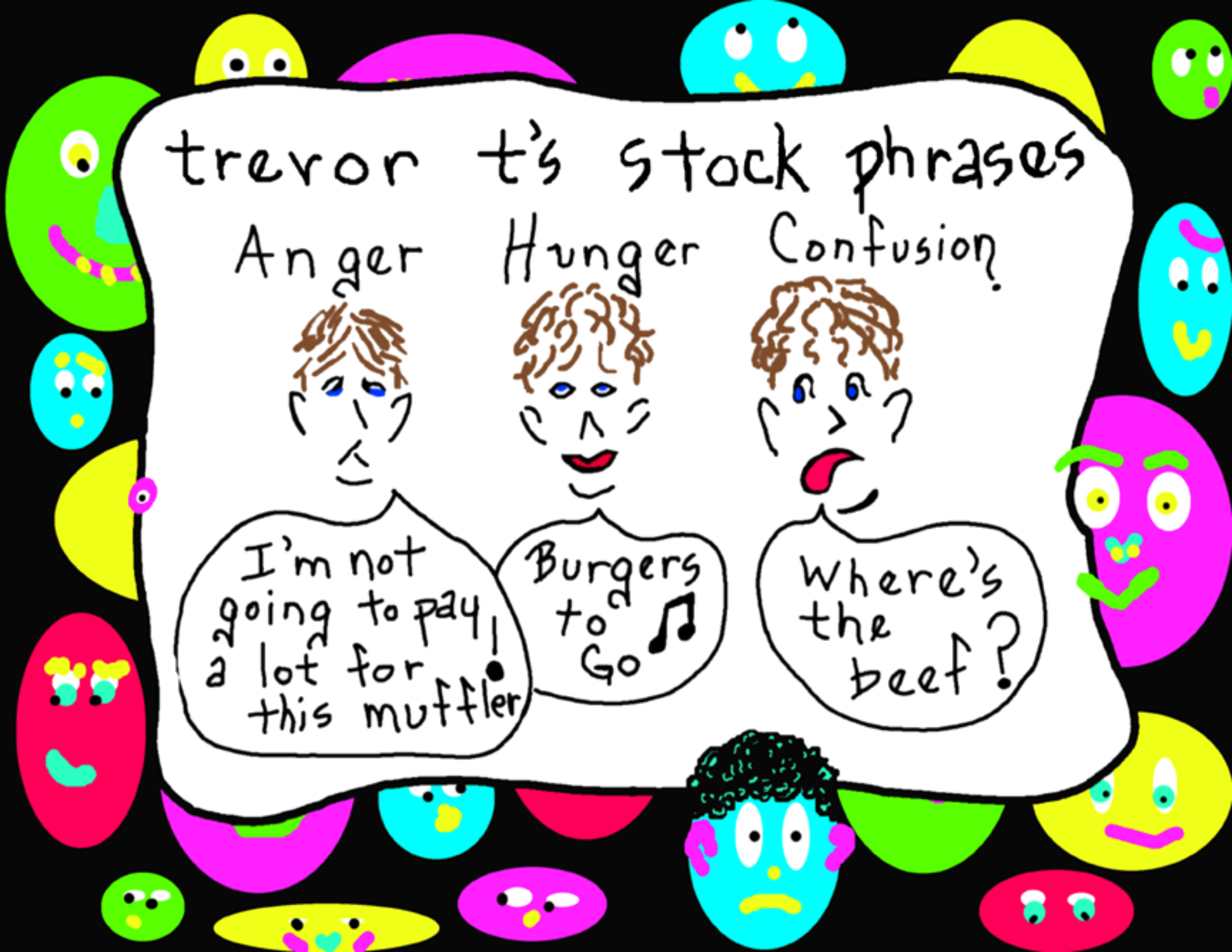
I'm not  
going to pay!  
a lot for  
this muffler



Burgers  
to Go



Where's  
the  
beef?



# Painfully Honest Chelsey

appropriate information



*"You sure have lots of diplomas on your wall. You must have gone to school a long time for all of those!"*

inappropriate information

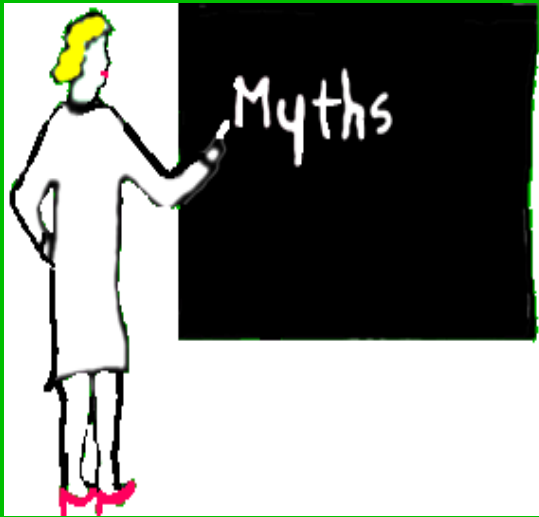


*"People like me must drive you crazy, you having all those diplomas and still can't figure out how our minds work. What a waste of school!"*



Makes honest, but sometimes inappropriate, observations.





For most Aspies, memorizing facts may be easy, but understanding the facts and using them accurately are more difficult tasks. Often an Aspie will take bits of information and form an assumption that is not at all accurate. Discerning *fact* versus *opinion* statements may be very tricky for an Aspie.

Language is also confusing to the Aspie when a character or object in a story represents another idea or another person. To an Aspie, a cat is a cat and a blue sky is a blue sky. Imagine how confusing the study of myths, allegories and other works of fiction may be.

*You're  
telling me  
to write a  
LIE?!*

## Literal Emmett



Makes honest but sometimes inappropriate or inaccurate observations.

Reading comprehension and math application are often challenging because of difficulty processing language.

Prefers the use of literal language; difficulty understanding figures of speech, similes, parodies, allegories, myths.





*Introducing*  
some amazingly  
skillful Aspies.  
Their talents and  
collections will  
delight you!

Interests, Skills and Collections

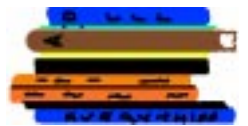
# Collectors Anonymous



Drew's yellow hose nozzles



Jordan's books



Joshua's books

DJ's rocks



Jean-Paul's strong interest in college newspapers

Thomas' and many others' interest in trains



Jason's basketball jerseys



Kate's little books in little boxes

Derry's fascination with space



Many and varied collections that often become short or long term, all-consuming interests.



# DJ and Teacher on the Bus

*"I collect rocks because some are interesting to look at and feel, they have pretty colors and textures and some come from cool places, like some granite ones I found when we were hiking in Maine and some smooth black lava rocks my parents got on their honeymoon in Hawaii and I have a large chunk of rose quartz I bought at the Museum of Science and Industry in Florida and an amethyst geode from the Museum of Natural History in NY. I have a rock collection guidebook, but I haven't had time to use it to identify all my rocks. But I got a rock tumbler for my birthday and my dad helped me tumble some rough rocks into smooth stones. But what I really am most interested in is ....."*



Enthusiastic and excellent memory in high interest areas.

Piece appears exactly as he wrote it.



Speaking of kids on buses:  
If you're ever traveling to Tampere, Finland, be sure to look up Elias. He knows all the bus lines, their schedules, right down to the upholstery used IN the bus!

While in-depth detail might be tiring for non-Aspie listeners, such a storehouse of information could be a big plus for employers needing expertise in the Aspie's area of interest. Just imagine having someone like Elias working within the public transportation system!

## Traveling in Tampere

Excellent rote memory

Note from Elias' father: By the way, in case you want an update, the bus interest never went away. Nowadays, Elias knows all the individual buses of Tampere by the ID numbers stenciled on the side of the vehicles. So, he would know whether the 626 would ever be on line 15 or not etc., etc. He also is keen to discuss the different motor sounds of the buses: 411 goes like "ddrunnnnn!" while 108 goes like "bruummmh!"



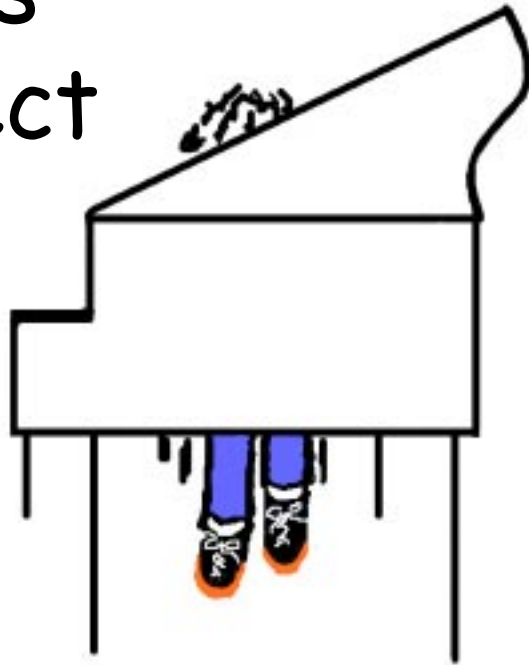


## "Savant"

I'll bet you've heard that word somewhere. A savant is, according to Webster's dictionary, a noun meaning "a learned man; a scholar; a person of high literary or scientific accomplishments."

Sometimes when you hear the word *savant*, people are talking about those gifted people who have extraordinary skills in one area. Aspies, like everyone else, have some areas that are **ESPECIALLY** strong. Therefore, it is the wise teacher, coach or employer who learns to best use the strengths of the Aspie and not worry as much about some of the skills that are not yet as fully developed. While it is important for everyone in the world to be growing and learning throughout their lifetime, it is such a gift to the world when one of these special Aspies may share their extraordinary accomplishments with others.

# Practice Makes Perfect



Michael C. was born in Provo, Utah, USA and moved to Germany in 1992. He received his first instruction in piano from his mother at age 5, winning 2nd Prize at the German Regional Youth Competition two years later. In 1994, he received 1st Prize in the Regional Piano Competition, receiving the highest possible score. After a further 1st Prize on the state level, he went on to take 3rd prize at the German National Competition. In 1997, he and a cellist received First Prize at the state level.

Michael also plays the clarinet. In 1993, he received 1st Prizes at the German Youth Music Competitions at regional and state levels, then advanced to National Competition for 3rd Prize. In the clarinet ensemble category he received 1st prizes in 1994 at the regional and state levels in Youth Competition and on to receive the coveted 1st Prize at National!!! For his excellence, he was presented with the Walter Kaminsky Foundation Award. In 1995....  
*And the beat goes on!*

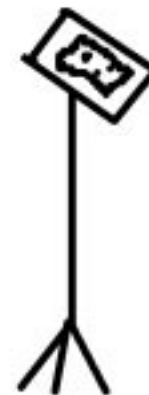
- Cindy Christensen



**Perseveration.**

May have exceptionally high skills in some areas.

Desires comfort item (like Buns, the gorilla, Michael's favorite stuffed animal and friend).





Let me present  
some of my Aspie  
friends. They'll  
show you a little  
about how their  
remarkable Aspie  
brains work!

Thinking

The mind of an Aspie is a wondrous thing!  
Here we see how the Aspie mind can teach  
a non-Aspie mom to view her world from a  
different perspective.

This was written by Kate's mom, from  
her point of view. She's a "work in  
progress." (That means she has a lot to learn!)



Look and see what objects you can find in  
**Sundae of Celebration !**

Sundae of

Kate sees ice cream and chocolate syrup.  
I see a sundae.

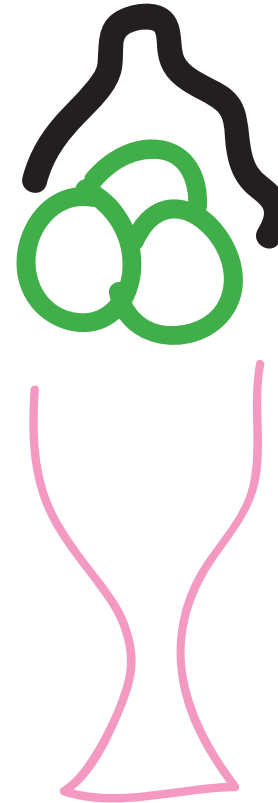
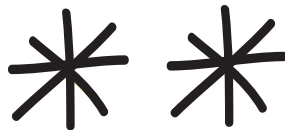
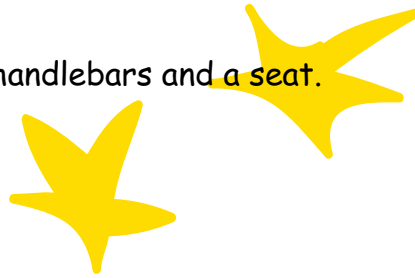
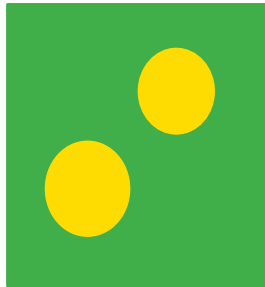
She sees wheels, handlebars and a seat.  
I see a bicycle.

She sees parts.  
I see the whole.

Without the parts,  
there is no whole.

Without the whole,  
there is no meaning.

We both need our own visions, working together  
for a glorious bike ride and a Sundae of Celebration!



Celebration

by Martha Kate Downey



May be unusually detail-oriented.

# Memory

According to Pete (an adult with AS - Asperger's Syndrome)

*"I have an excellent memory for things involving my particular areas of interest, probably because I consider things in those fields with my full attention. I can carry ten to twenty thousand lines of computer code in my head, look at code I wrote fifteen years ago and remember every detail of its design process, recognize almost every top-40 song from the '50s / '60s from any two or three notes or, sometimes, just a single chord. If I've ever tinkered with or disassembled a mechanism, I can do it again effortlessly, no matter how long it's been, and I can identify on sight almost any object - or fragment of one - I've ever known the identity of, even if I haven't seen it for decades.*

*But I do not have a photographic or eidetic memory.*

*Certain memories stand out for me because AS made the events particularly important; whereas, they would have been trivial to an NT (neurologically typical) person. These include, among other things, certain awkward social moments.*

*My memory seems to go back farther than for most; I have clear memories going back to about ten months of age. They include sights and sounds but not speech (probably because I hadn't learned to recognize it, yet); they are detailed and, as far as I can verify them, extremely accurate. (Some memories have been verified by talking with other folks whom I recall being present.)*

*For other things, I think my memory is about average, if perhaps a bit spotty. What I do remember is usually retained with great clarity, with the exception of conversations (probably because my comprehension in conversation is often less than perfect). On the other hand, when a conversation concludes with an agreement or intended action, I usually remember it well.*

*But I don't have a clue what any of the folks at the office were wearing yesterday or recall anything any of them said that wasn't work-related. I'm absent-minded when I concentrate, and this has led to being criticized of short-term memory loss. It's actually there, of course, and not particularly bad; I just concentrate so hard when I'm working on something that nothing else can enter my thought stream."*

**And DMM, another Aspie reports:**

*"Not all Aspies can remember something as seen or heard, but usually only within the person's sphere of interest or ability. For example, one may be able to nearly memorize part of a map used to get to a support-group meeting, yet have trouble following consecutive directions, especially fast-paced verbal directions based upon landmarks unfamiliar to the person listening on the telephone. So a person may have excellent rote memory in some areas but not in others."*



Ben's PC  
Personal Computer?  
Personal Camera?

Ben has them both right there in his head! Some Aspies can remember great detail about something they've seen only a few seconds!



*Here we are at my sister's concert... I'm glad my mind is a camera. I'm making pictures to save and see, again and again!*

Ben's PC

They can distinctly recall what they saw by "calling up" the picture in their minds - kind of like you call up an image on the computer. Amazing!



Excellent rote memory (the ability to remember something exactly as it was seen or heard).

# Surfing in the Hourglass

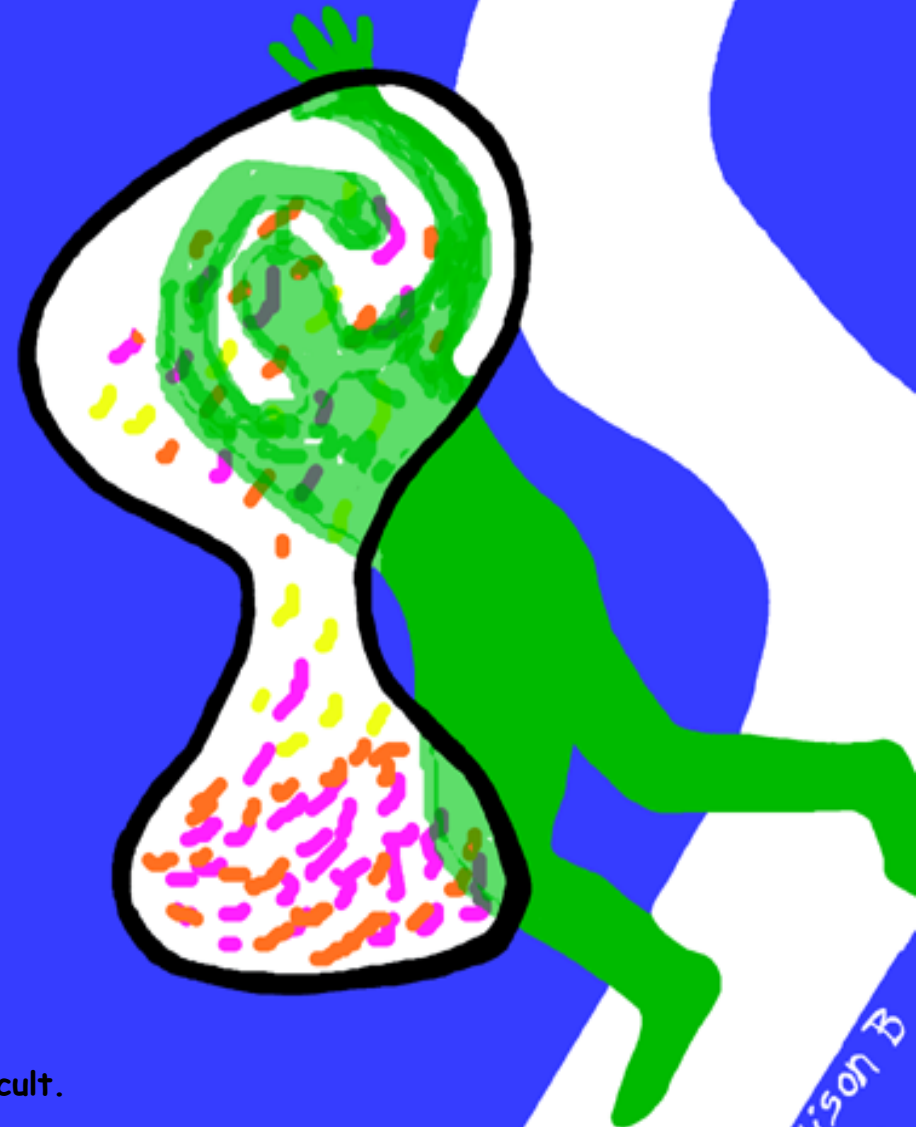
As for time, I have  
a fascination with time...

*Seconds all around me, swirling, dancing, falling,  
funnel through the center, here we go, it's NOW!...*

*Time piles up in drifts and shows me just how long  
it's been since we fell through the whirlwind of  
excitement.*

*Now we've caught our breath,  
so now we turn the hourglass,  
take another ride, anticipating, doing,  
whooshing through the moment,  
letting it depart,  
enjoying all the time  
the gift of presence' present.*

By Dave Spicer, who is pleased  
to have written something  
more obviously autistic



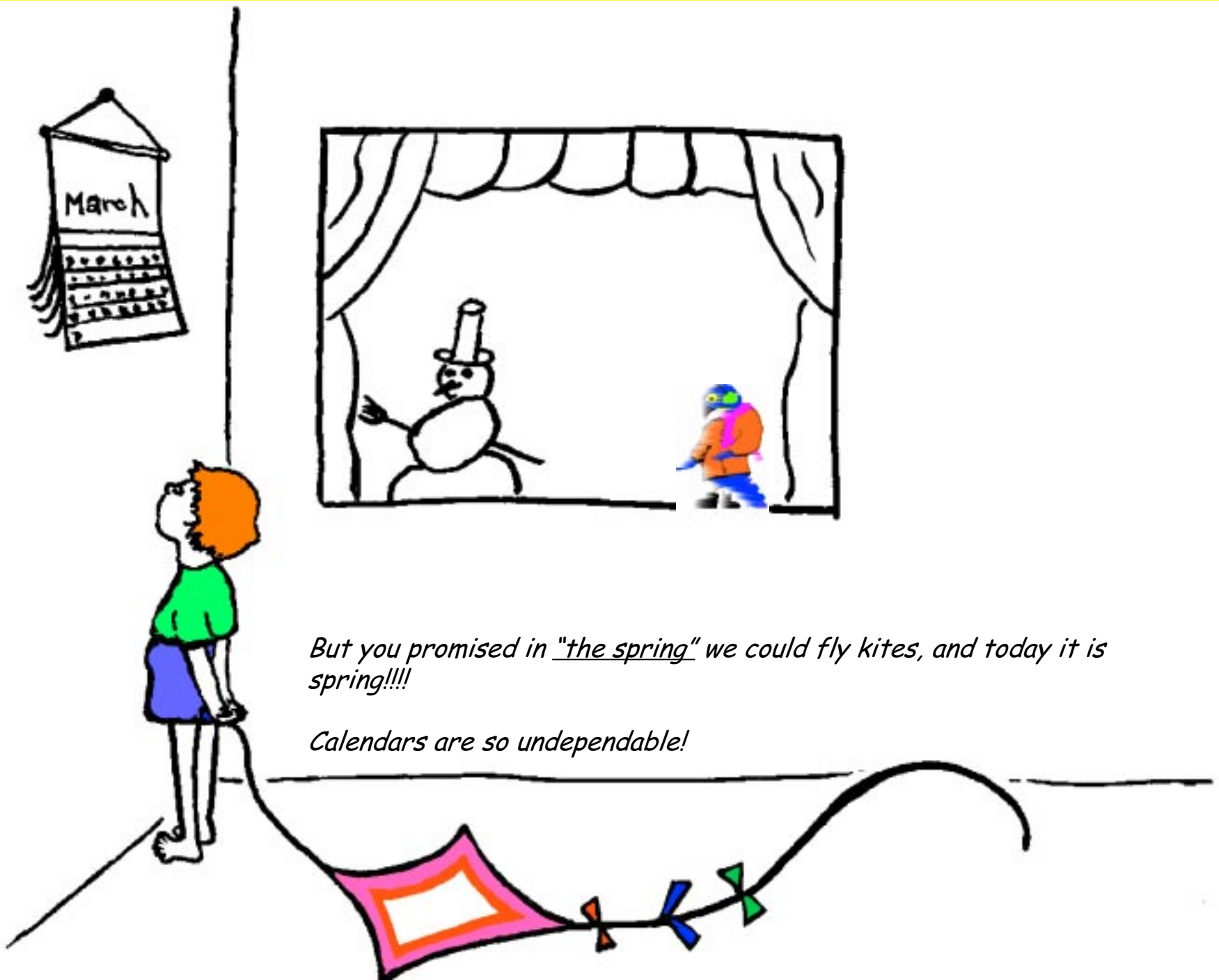
## Perseveration

Understanding and working with time concepts is difficult.

"Surfing in the Hourglass" © 1997 Used by permission.

"'Surfing in the Hourglass' seems to capture the fascination of perseverative play,  
and may even, gently, call into question the concerns about its lack of purpose or value." - Dave

Allison B  
MK



Understanding and working with time concepts is difficult.

# Albert Shea

*(There's a bit of Lancashire dialect and other funny sound stuff) It's called "Albert Shea" because of an image of a playmate in Lancaster when I was a kid, but it's really about me, the remembrance of my own disconnection from the common sense world of warm coats (and why), and in reaction to someone commenting on my wandering slowly around campus coatless in December.*

*Jean Kearns Miller*

Walking  
Along the black cobbles  
Between the backyard gates  
And the black houserows  
Of Everystreet and Bishopstreet  
A small boy age about six  
With tattered vest and  
Shabby greywool shortpants  
And no-shoes, urchin  
Red of hair, blue of eye,  
Fair of cheek and freckledy,  
Skinnylegs and very much  
Akin to the name Albert  
Though maybe not  
Runs his toe along the  
Grates peering into the sewer  
For lost threepenny bit, brooche,  
Tennisball or dabloon, if lucky,  
To the sound of omniscience:  
look't Albert the little dafty doesn't  
he know it's chilly if he were my boy



i'd box his earholes and  
the crazy little blighter going out  
on a day like this without his  
pullover and shoes he'll catch his  
death. But Albert-thoughts we on da-  
Bloons, and Gene Autry, and them yellow  
paper hats they was giving out at  
Pickup's shop for a penny-hapenny's  
Worth of kalai-and-spanish,  
And the chill and lone and grittycobbles  
Only made Albert-thoughts sharper,  
Deliciouser,  
For Albert knows, as thinkers know,  
That sensetouch must be  
Tested, teased, then put aside,  
A matter of nervends says them  
That ought know better.  
But Albert knows and canst but  
Spit at Pammy Green's dolly when  
She: Albert Shea's naughty boy  
his mum's going to leather him good  
for that why doesn't he wear his  
coat and shoes and play in his  
yard like me and t'other children?  
But disbelief-hately he screws up his  
Nose in a frightenful way  
And goes on,  
Pammy Green doesn't know.

- Jean Kearns

Albert Shea © October, 1966  
Used by permission.  
Printed exactly as written.

# Right or Wrong

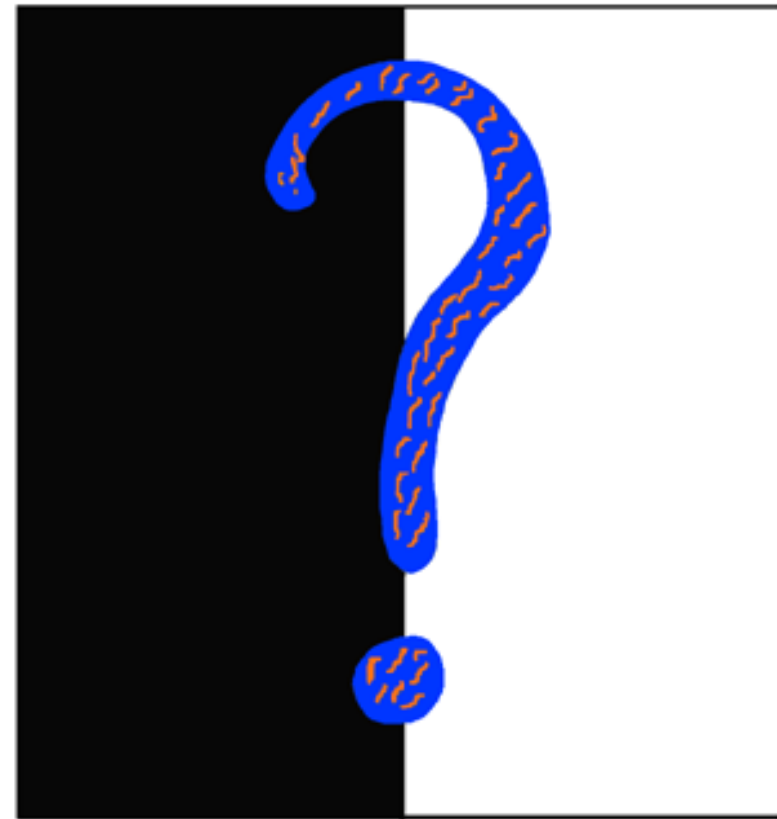
Most Aspies prefer the known, the expected.  
As an Aspie might say...

*Black must be black and white must be white.  
They give me straight answers, don't muddy my sight.*

*Gray tells me nothing! It chases away  
the clarity needed to get through a day.*

*Don't change the rules on me, confuse and ignore.  
My mode of rigidity comforts me more.*

*Let me keep my black safety. Let me focus on white,  
'cause the gray that you bring causes terrible  
con fu s ion!*



Rule oriented.  
Prefers known patterns with no unexpected surprises.  
Prefers concrete rather than abstract concepts.



# Neurologically Atypical at age 13

## *An Aspie Teen explains about Being Neurologically Atypical at age 13*

I have a poster on my bedroom wall with a picture of Albert Einstein and these words: "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds." I don't know if anyone really knows for sure if Einstein had Asperger Syndrome or not, but one thing I do know something about is the "violent opposition" other people, especially kids who want to be just like everyone else, dish out against people whose brains are configured to function in neurologically atypical ways.

Take me, for instance. Since even before first grade, I've had various labels slapped on me: "Tourette Syndrome", "Obsessive Compulsive Disorder", "Asperger Syndrome". I've also been branded as being "lazy", "unmotivated", "incompetent", "uncaring", "disruptive", and all sorts of other disreputable things.

But there's more here than meets the eye. What some people might one-sidedly see as my problem with "sensory overload" could also be seen as a much higher than average ability to hear and reproduce acoustical vibrations. For example, I play first saxophone in my school band, and frankly, I can't tolerate the timpanist's inability to hear that he's tuned his instrument between the cracks of two half-steps! But on the other hand, when I hear a sax CD I like (such as Johnny Hodges' version of Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo"), I can easily match the pitch by memory (even when I'm not listening to it), and learn the whole piece entirely by ear.

I can also learn music the regular way, as proven by the fact that both times when I played a classical solo for a city-wide musical adjudication, I earned a "Superior" rating (the highest you can get).

Some people regard my long-winded conversations about aviation as proof that I must have a one-track (if not half-baked!) mind. But when I go to air shows and talk with highly knowledgeable flight crews (such as the pilot of the B-2, more commonly known as the Stealth bomber), there, people really give me credit for my level of understanding. And when I watch my aviation videos and then go to my flight lesson, my flight instructor always tells my mother she can't believe I'm only 13. I've even figured out that having a dose of Attention Deficit Disorder has definite advantages for my ability to pay attention simultaneously to anything when I'm up in the air. I've actually spotted several aircraft (also in the air), as well as several planes still on the runway after the tower cleared us to land - all before my instructor noticed them.

It's true, I guess, that I'm not your average American teenager with all the "normal" interests, behaviors, and neural connections that they're supposed to have. However, when you consider what I've said above, I'm most likely going to have a much more interesting life than neurologically typical people who seem, at this point, to "have it all." And if these "typical" people persist in labeling and treating people like me as if we deserve "violent opposition", then just remember the rest of Einstein's quote: they (unlike us) probably do have "mediocre minds"!



Excellent vocabulary; may sound like "The Little Professor".



Let me see if I can help  
you better understand tics,  
hums, and repetitive motion  
and thought . . .

Neurological (Brain) Patterns

The brain of an Aspie may, on occasion, cause some behaviors that other people see as unusual or confusing. Sometimes they are in the form of self-stimulating movements. Those are movements that help them calm down, like sucking a thumb or finger wiggling. Sometimes you might hear an Aspie hum. The sound they make (perhaps in a continuous monotone sound) might help them concentrate on their work.

Other Aspies might have repetitive movements. They might touch a doorknob a certain number of times before opening the door, or they might get into a pattern of thought that causes them to speak as though they are stuck in one place and can't move on.

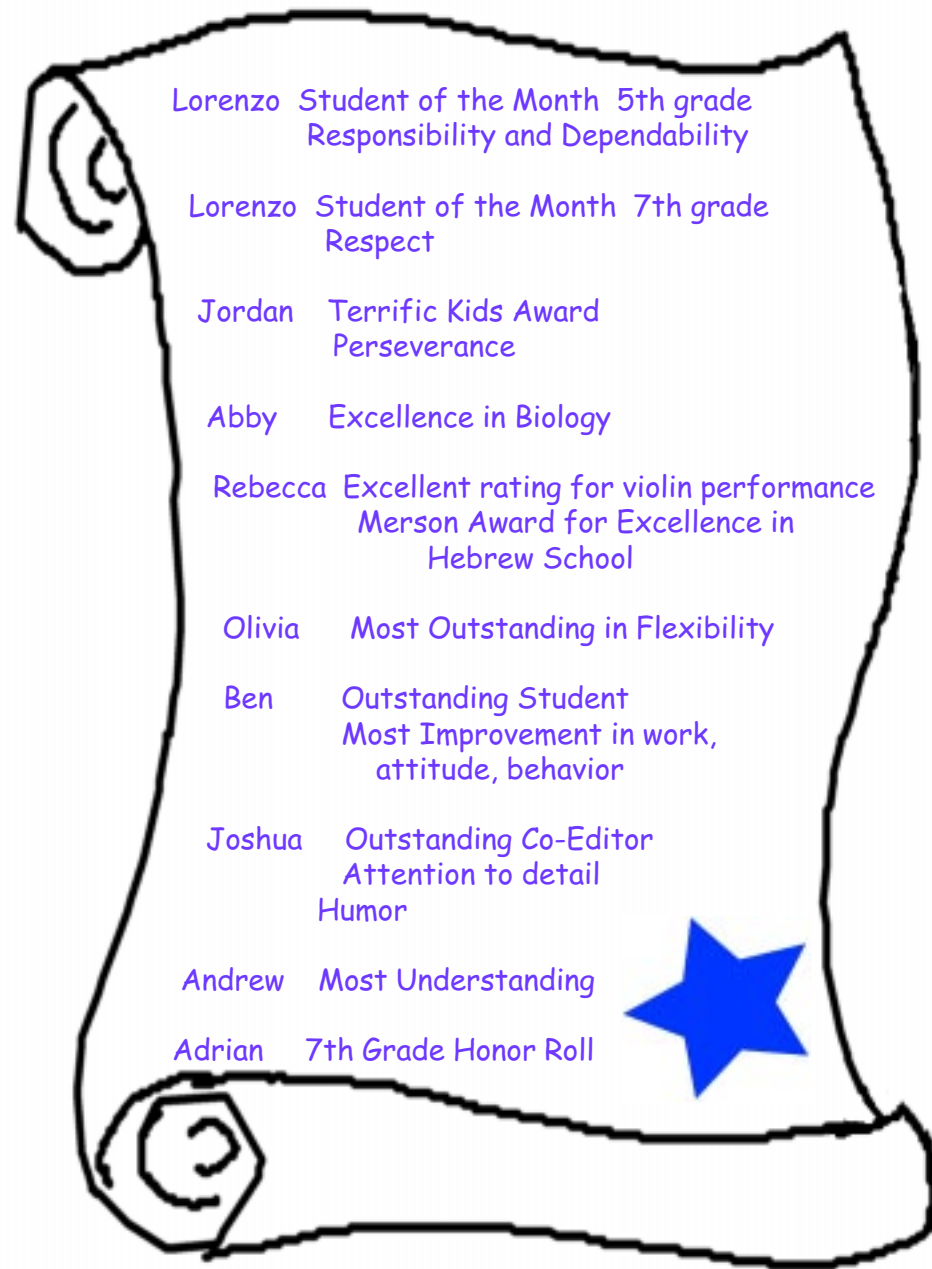
The Aspies I know would, for the most part, prefer not to have their tics and compulsions, but with help, they can learn not to let them dominate their lives.

In the instance of repetition, sometimes seen as perseveration, it can be channeled to become wonderful accomplishments. You can see on the "Honor Roll" how some pretty spectacular and creative Aspies turned their habits of *perseverance* and *exaggerated attention-to-detail* into award-winning strengths.





# H O N O R R O L L



Many of the characteristics an Aspie may have can be very helpful to a student. Those tendencies for being perseverative, detail-oriented, and having areas of exceptionally high skill make remarkable strengths for Aspies featured on this Honor Roll.

# My Song

*I hum, you frown.  
I wave my hands  
And you scowl.*

*My hands and body in movement  
Create a calming sense for me,  
But in your ignorance  
Or need for "normality,"  
You try to stop my actions.*

*My very personal habits are not intended to distract you  
Or irritate you. Nonetheless, you are even more compelled  
To stop my body and mind from functioning in its very natural way  
Than I am compelled to practice my self-stimulating habits.*

*Why is it that what relaxes me - irritates you?  
Maybe you should try it!*


*If your mind were less afraid and more open,  
Could you not see that my body is simply doing its own dance?  
Singing its own song?*

by Martha Kate Downey



Comforted by minor motor stimulations (stims) - rocking, humming, tapping fingers, sucking, rubbing fingers in circles or on seams of clothing.

Although this poem was written by a "non-Aspie," its viewpoint is that of an Aspie.



Watch Alice's fingers  
lightly touch first the door frame,  
then the door knob, next the wall above the  
light switch, moving to the light-switch plate,  
before quickly returning her fingers to the  
door knob.

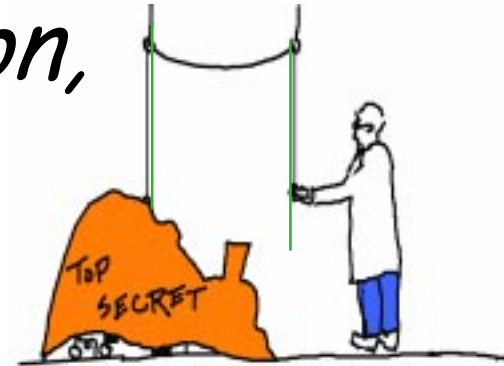
Gotta love  
her,  
she's reliable!



May have compulsions.



*"Now, for my latest invention,  
I'll just pull this cord  
and...."*



- another word from a bird (this time about inventors and such)

Now, here are some kids after my own heart. You know, with enough encouragement, I bet it will be an Aspie that provides the key to switching over to renewable energy. I hope it's soon, so that my family and I will be around to see it save our habitat.

In any case, Aspies make very good inventors, for a lot of reasons. They are perseverant, they see every little bit of something, and figure out what it does. When they make something, it is often right down to the smallest detail. The two most important qualities of all for an inventor: **perseverance & unique insight.**

Without unique thinkers, there wouldn't be a lot of the inventions and ideas we have now. Without unique thinkers, we would still think that the earth was flat and the center of the universe. Without unique thinkers like Henry Ford, we wouldn't have cars or assembly lines; without thinkers like Paul Allen, we wouldn't have home computers! Without unique thinkers, we probably wouldn't even have fire. Unique thinking is what pushes progress on. You can stop progress, but only by getting rid of unique thinkers...like most Aspies.

Aspies can be pretty stubborn, and when you're inventing, that's a good thing! Did you know that when Edison was making the light bulb, it took him over 10,000 tries before finding a filament that fit the specs? The old axiom is true: "An invention is 10 percent inspiration, and 90 percent perspiration." Without the ability to stick with an idea (as Dana did in her circular story) and actually bring the ideas of invention into life, that's all they would be: ideas, dreams, and wishes.

So, the next time someone says, "There's no such thing," "That can't be made," or "Why don't you just give up?" don't listen. Who knows? You may be, or know, the Aspie who invents the Warp Engine!



Written by Joshua Tausz



Here's how a few of our Aspie friends view the world. Occasionally, their perceptions are confusing not only to themselves but also to others. I will try, along with Kate's mom and John's mom, to explain a little about these Aspies' perceptions.

Perceptions



Many Aspies have difficulty reading a person's facial expressions to determine the person's feelings. For instance, when Kate was in public kindergarten, she started each school day in the school office. She stopped in to ask the school secretary if she were angry. The confused woman, who was a very nice person, never quite knew how to take Kate's query. The secretary loved kids, and most of the students knew that. However, Kate could not tell by looking at the secretary's face if she were angry or not. So Kate, being her wonderful Aspie self, figured she'd begin each day with the facts. She didn't intend to insult anyone; she just needed more information.



Happy



sad



mad

# Conversation between Kate

# and the secretary

*I see you in the office,  
I look around the room,  
and venture forth to ask you,  
"Are you mad or full of gloom?"*

*I watch your face, it changes,  
but yet, I know not why.  
Your voice is pitched up higher  
when you focus to reply.*

*"Why do you ask if I am mad?  
There cause to be on guard?  
If you think I should be on alert,  
then tell me! It's not hard."*

*"You do not give me answers  
You only ask me more!  
It frustrates and confuses  
when my questions you ignore!"*

*"There's no reason for my question.  
It's your face that scares me so.  
When you hide your smile behind your eyes,  
my Aspie mind says, 'No!'*

*"Please tell me when you're angry.  
Please tell me when you're sad,  
'Cause I can not look upon your face  
and see if you are mad."*

by Martha Kate Downey

# Prosopagnosia (Face Blindness)

Face blindness (prosopagnosia) goes deeper than eye contact, I believe. My Aspie son, John, once walked from the front porch of my parents' house next door. When my mom followed him, he had to whisper in my ear and ask if that was Grandma. The context had changed, and he didn't recognize her. He also walked up to me at the swimming pool, and I was in my bathing suit, hair slicked back and wet. He was not sure who I was. When contexts change for John, that is when he runs into trouble recognizing folks.



*Are  
you my  
Grandma  
?*



Problems recognizing faces out of the usual setting or known context.

# Jane's Story about Prosopagnosia

*Some years ago, when I worked in a different unit of the University, my "work station" was one of two desks in a small office. The desks were set up facing one another, so that the other occupant of the office, my supervisor Sarah, and I were face-to-face all day.*

*We had worked in this office for about a year and a half when "The Incident" occurred. Sarah was taking a day off that happened to be payday, and she called me from home to say her husband was driving her down to pick up her paycheck. Would I please bring it down to the lobby so her husband wouldn't have to pay for parking?*

*"Of course," I said, and at the appointed time I trotted down the ten flights of stairs to the lobby. When I got there I went into a panic, because I suddenly realized that I wouldn't be able to recognize Sarah when I saw her. What if I gave her paycheck to a complete stranger! Or, almost as bad, what if she SAW that I didn't recognize her, after working so closely with her for such a long time, after she had taken such an interest in me!*

*Fortunately, I had developed -- unknowingly, because I'd never heard of prosopagnosia at the time -- some strategies for dealing with my inability to recognize faces. (It's especially hard for me when a face shows up in an unexpected place. I could recognize Sarah fine when I saw her in the office; but when she appeared in some other place, she was a stranger to me.) What happened is that I saw Sarah see me and recognize me, and therefore, I was able to "switch on" my own display of "Oh, there you are!" signals with only a split-second delay, and she never noticed anything amiss.*

*One situation in which prosopagnosia is a major liability, by the way, is in starting a new job. Takes me years (literally) to learn the new faces.*

*Jane*

*PS: The difficulties we have with social cues and emotions may have positive results: The "disconnect" some of us have with our emotions can make us calm in a crisis, and my inability to respond to social cues has allowed me to respond serenely to someone who (as I realized later) began the interaction wanting to beat me up!*

One tip that might help:  
Be reading something or look otherwise occupied, so that the person will approach you first. Then, as Jane did, all you have to do is respond.





# Are You There? (when I'm not watching?)

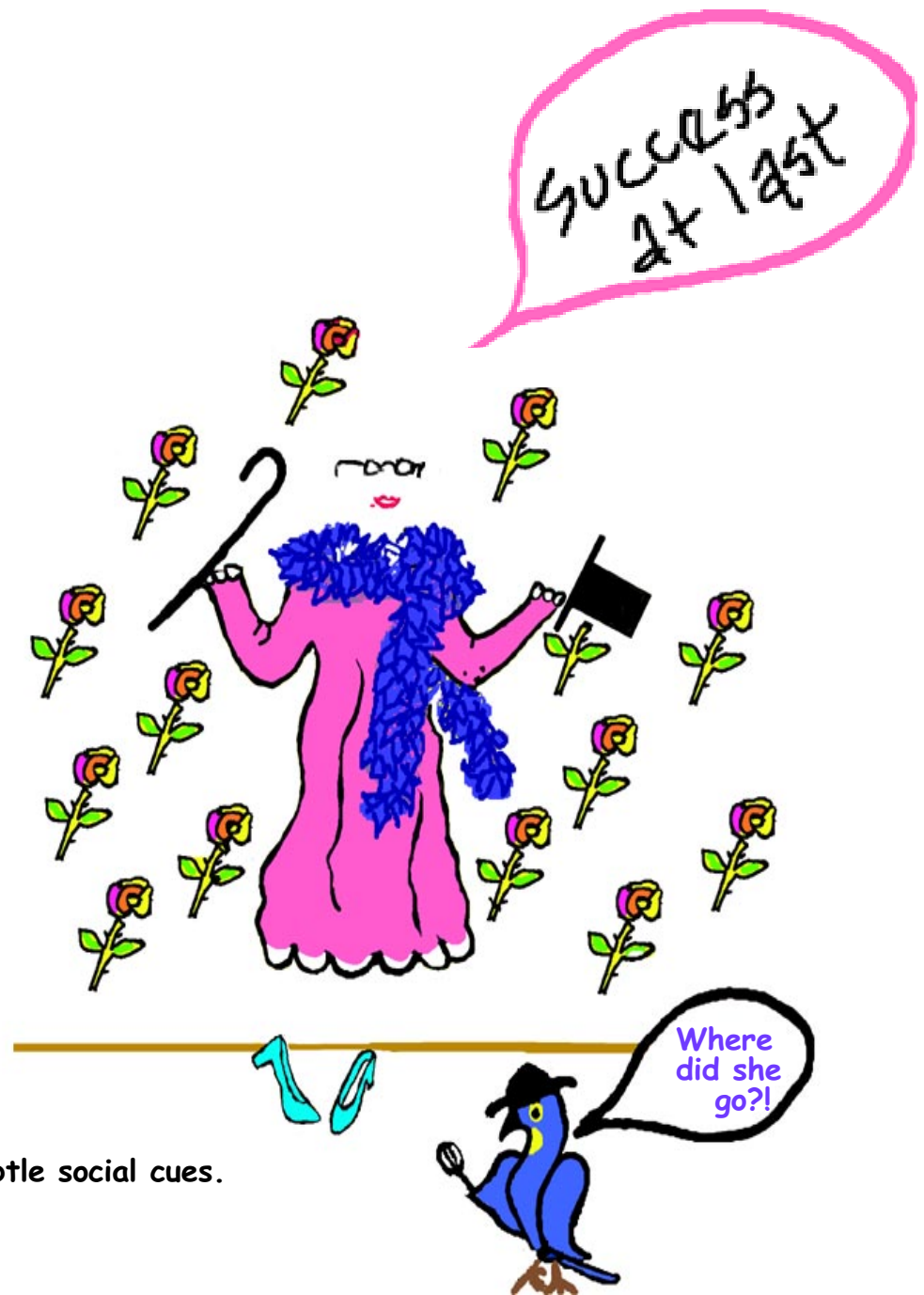
by Martha Kate Downey

*Sometimes my focus is in me,  
and I forget what you can see.  
I go about my busy day  
unheeding what the world would say.*

*And then at once my mom will shout  
my name aloud, I'll look about,  
and notice to my great surprise  
what you can see before your eyes!*

*Oh, dear! Oh, my! Oh, Goodness' sakes!  
Oh, what embarrassment that makes!  
That even if I don't watch you,  
that you can see the things I do!*

*Now one great trait I do possess  
is focusing with no distress.  
But...such a treat to me would be  
to have invisibility!*



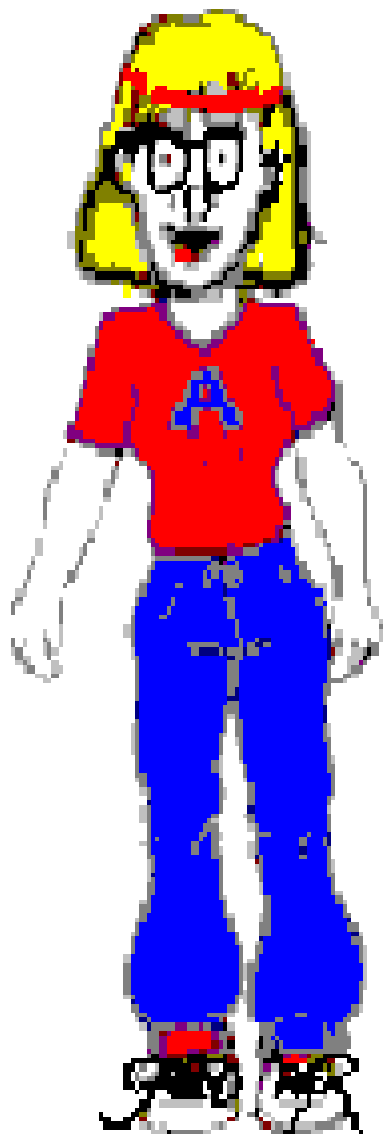
Difficulty seeing, interpreting and performing subtle social cues.  
Irregular neurological function.  
Written from the viewpoint of the Aspie.



*SQUAAAK!*

Motor Skills





Don't ask our Aspie friends what they think about physical education class (P.E.) at school. They might just tell you! Most just hate it! Learning to make your body work in new patterns that also require accurate visual perception is a nightmare for many Aspies. P.E. class usually has a coach who not only was probably good at sports (and may not understand why the Aspie ISN'T) but also enjoys using an unnerving whistle! Add some general noise to the mix and following directions is nearly impossible! (Especially if directional terms are confusing for you, like *before*, *after*, *in front of*.) Some Aspies find that learning the skills in a less structured way, like bowling or dancing, is more fun. It's easier to cover up a little clumsiness on a dance floor than on a ballfield. Team sports in regular school classes may be so frustrating for the Aspie who wants to fit in.

Come to think of it, if you have an unusual gait, just walking down a crowded hall can be a real challenge!



PS: Don't let the smile fool you, it may be hiding sheer terror!

Note from Kate: Special Olympics is a great place to practice all those motor skills...and no one ever makes fun of you! You may even enjoy coaching a team. Aspies can have a great time being on a Special Olympics team.

Ever thought about how many skills you have to learn to ride a bike? Lots and lots! You have balance, speed, not to mention learning to stay on a path or on the side of the road. Then, you have the process of making your legs work in a continuously circular pattern, while steering the handlebars. Like other tasks, it is sometimes easier learning a new skill by breaking the task into smaller portions. Many people, like Aspie Jeffrey, find it more fun learning to ride on a bicycle-built-for-two. Each skill may then be added as the beginning rider becomes more confident and capable. All you have to do at first, is stay on the seat! Nice way to get a free ride too! Just ask Jeffrey!



$V_i^s u_a L$  $P e_{rCE_p} t I_o N$ 

At times, having visual perception difficulties can make life very difficult for an Aspie. If the Aspie has problems judging the size of an object or opening, he or she might be afraid to go through a gate or a door because the opening looks too small; or they might run into the sides of an opening because it looked to be larger than it actually is.

Some Aspies have problems judging distances. If the Aspie has problems judging how far they are from something, he might run into something or not get close enough to something. This can create major problems not only for the Aspie, but for those around him too!

Other areas that can create problems relate to the ability to anticipate the direction something (or someone) is going or judge the speed with which it is traveling. Adjusting speed is often a difficult skill to master. Controlling foot pedals in a car or the floor pedal on a sewing machine can be a nightmare! Many times there is only "stop" and "go the fastest possible" with nothing in-between.

The good thing about this problem is that, generally, with a lot of practice and some visual therapy, these skills can be learned! But until then, get yourself a limo and a chauffeur - it's much more fun, anyway!



Difficulty with some skills requiring motor skill development.  
Difficulty with motor skills that require visual perception accuracy.

# An Aspie's Plea:

*Please hold the gate wide,  
if you want me to enter.  
And mark me a path,  
if you want me to mow.*

*If asking that I  
may assist you when shopping,  
then guide the cart with me -  
or risk quite a show!*

*Now driving a car  
might be doubly hard;  
we must judge our distance,  
our speed, and our **knees**.*

*Not all Aspies lack  
these perceptual skills,  
but, I'd certainly ask  
before giving us keys!*

Give her a  
break! It rhymes!



Difficulty learning motor skills requiring visual perception accuracy.  
Written from the viewpoint of an Aspie.

by Martha Kate Downey

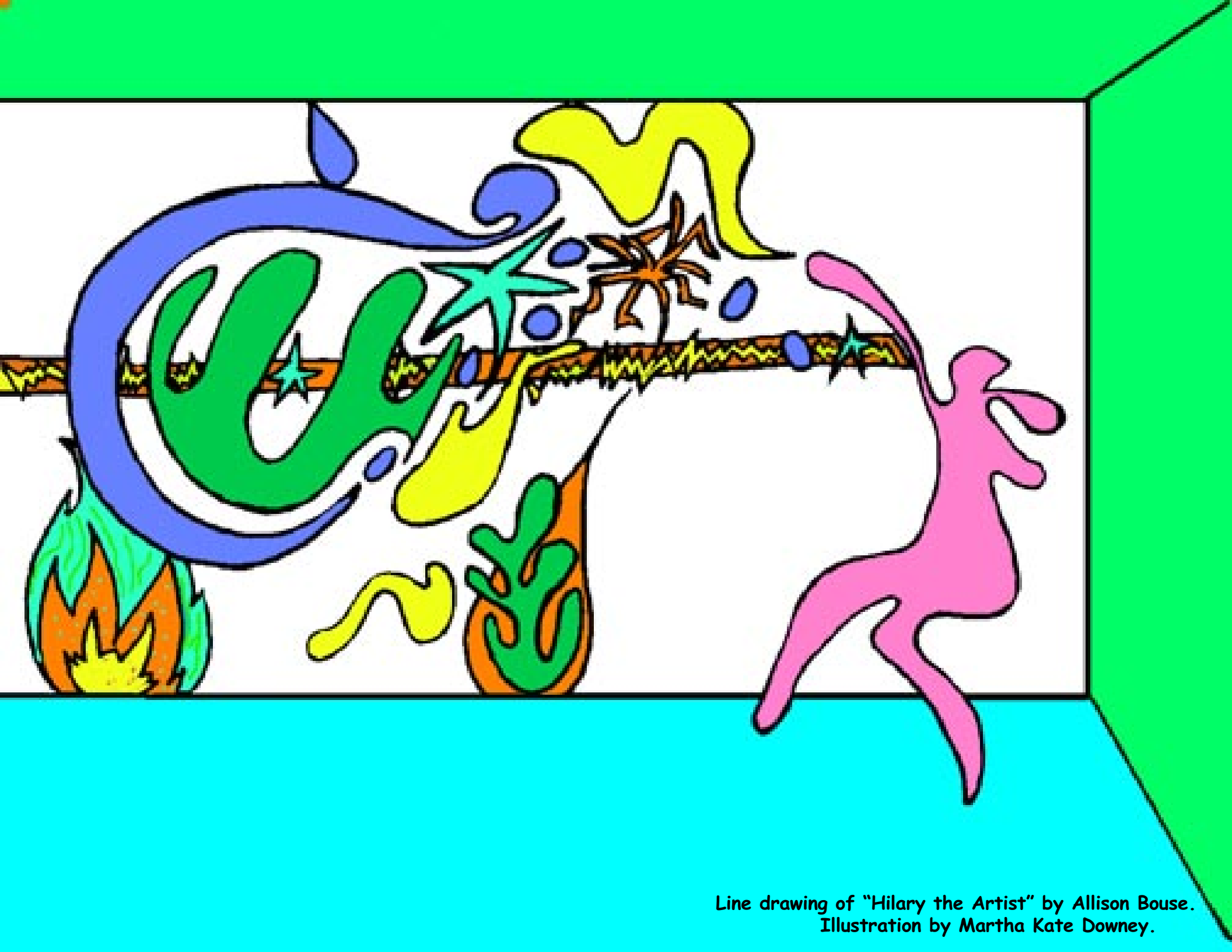
# about Hilary the artist



Hilary, dressed in her wonderful magenta body suit, is like many Aspies. She has some skills that are well developed, but others that are developing at a slower pace. Her painting wonderfully illustrates her usage of form and color, but alas, her shoestrings are generally untied. Personally, I'm glad her talents allow for such delightful artwork...much more enjoyable to study than well-tied shoes! I'll bet one of these days, she'll master that skill as well!



May have some age-appropriate skills while other age-appropriate skills may be delayed, i.e., tying shoes before climbing stairs.



Line drawing of "Hilary the Artist" by Allison Bouse.  
Illustration by Martha Kate Downey.





My Aspie friends  
can be so sensitive to  
some things and hardly  
notice others.

Here, let me show  
you what I mean...

Sensitivity

# *An Aspie reminder: Fragile! Handle (me) with care!*

*I can hear the falling dew drops  
as they land upon the grass.  
I can hear the turtles' footsteps  
go around me as they pass.*

*I can see the shades of every hue  
and cringe, when as they sometimes do  
not blend or compliment, so what  
I see is palette true.*

*I can feel the glaring brightness  
of the lights that burn at night,  
and can only tightly shut my eyes  
against their hurtful sight.*

*If only we could clothe ourselves  
with layers thick, not thin,  
that would only let the right amount  
of worldly senses in.*

*For even when you try to hug  
me gently and with care,  
your touch is often so much more  
of comfort I can bear.*

*The lights, the smells, the touch, the taste  
assault me everyday.  
I wish that just for one short time  
my sense would go away!*

by Martha Kate Downey



Laura Messner

*The sky makes me feel like I'm floating. The hills are as sharp as needles. The rain looks like hot, steaming water falling from the sky. The rain feels like sand scraping across my skin.*

## *OUCH!*

# *too much!*

*Meanderings of an Aspie mind, as I think about "too much":*

*If I reach to touch you, you say I hit too hard. Why can't I control the difference in a pat and a whop when I touch you? Yet I am so sensitive when you touch me that sometimes I physically hurt when you give an intended warm hug.*

*Why can't I hear one clear instruction, but can hear the smallest whisper of music in the very crowded mall?*

*When will I learn to talk loudly at times but softly at others?  
And why can't I figure out how to whisper in a movie?*

*Speaking of movies - why can't I take it in all at once? Sometimes I first have to just watch the pictures, then at another viewing I listen to the sounds, gradually, I put the picture together. It is like building a moving picture, one layer at a time. A movie taken in all at once cannot be understood and can easily be overwhelming, if not nibbled at, like my mother nibbles at popcorn.*

*Food mixing - don't you dare! I need to know just what taste to expect!  
When foods come together, the textures and tastes are so confusing to my tongue.*

*And judging amounts - why can't I tell how big a bite of food to put into my mouth, or what an average portion would be on a plate?*

*too much! too much! too much!*



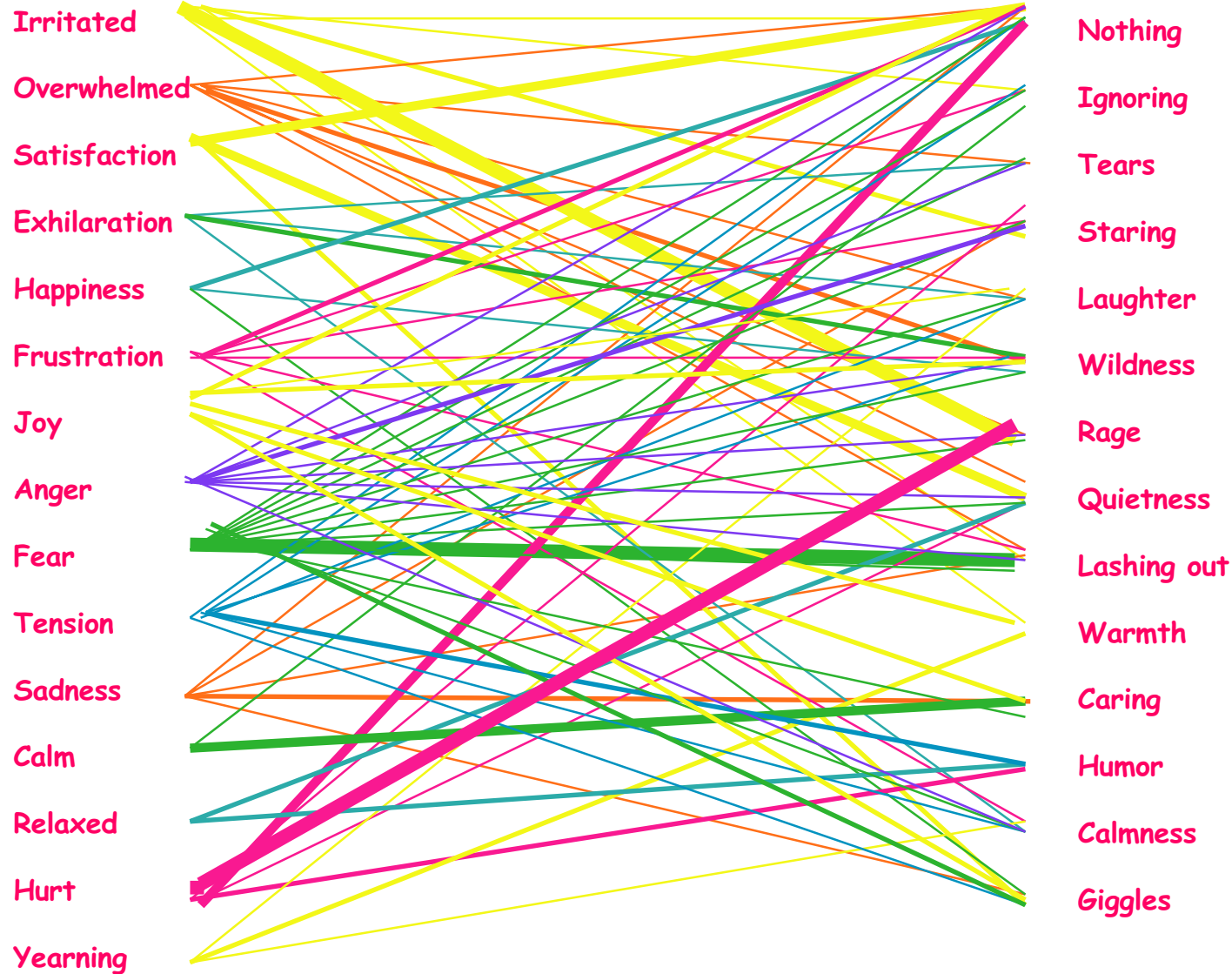
Understanding and learning to cope with their own feelings and others' feelings, too, is a very confusing and often painful aspect of an Aspie's life. Let some of these wise ones tell you why.

Feelings

My insides feel

# Please Match!

My outsides show



Don't assume that what you see is what he feels.  
Get the picture?



Difficulty controlling, monitoring or understanding emotions of self and others.  
Inside feeling not matching outside behavior.

# Thoughts on Feelings

*"My emotions are like a light switch - either off or on. I wish they were more adjustable like water coming from a faucet." (Adult with AS)*

*"This might be too obvious to mention, but I think that part of our problem with not APPEAR-ING to be empathetic might have to do with trying to mask or suppress a great EXCESS of empathy - almost to a fault. I really have to consciously try to suppress over-reactions to other's strong emotions. The result is frequently a deadpan reaction, that is interpreted as not caring, even though I am being torn apart inside." - Brett (Adult with AS)*

*"Feelings sneak up on you...I didn't recognize fear until I was absolutely terrified! " (Adult with AS)*

*"s funny, I used to cry when I was angry. Now I get angry when I want to cry - quite sure this is no improvement." - Eric (age 27 with AS)*



Difficulty controlling, monitoring or understanding emotions of self and others.



# An Aspie Alone in the Lunchroom . . .

*Please come sit  
beside me friend.  
I know I can't  
invite you in.*

*I eat alone  
and wish for more  
to share with you  
- or three or four.*

*It's lonely here  
but safer, too,  
than risking what your  
shun would do.*

*I sit and yearn  
but do not dare  
to offer you  
my lonely fare.*

*But there!  
Across the table tops!  
Another lonely  
student stops.*

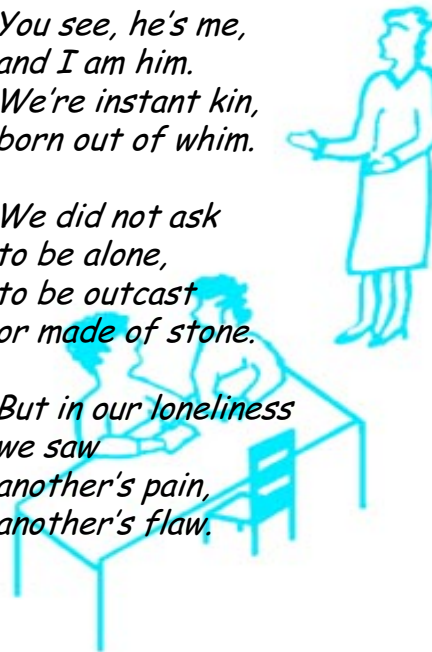


*And recognizing  
his deep fear,  
my eyes to his  
say, "Please come near."*

*You see, he's me,  
and I am him.  
We're instant kin,  
born out of whim.*

*We did not ask  
to be alone,  
to be outcast  
or made of stone.*

*But in our loneliness  
we saw  
another's pain,  
another's flaw.*



*We share a bond -  
that fear of trust.  
It turns our  
loneliness to dust.*

*And so now  
my wish is found.  
I conquered fear,  
a friendship bound.*

*Please come sit  
beside me, friend.  
I know I CAN  
invite you in.*



Difficulty making and maintaining friendships.

by Martha Kate Downey

*half poem: My Garden  
Our self, or our character,  
is like a garden.*

*God created a beautiful garden  
in each of us,  
he made each garden unique and special,  
each one containing a variety species which are one of a kind,  
so that we could admire each others gardens,  
each for it's own unique beauty and special magic.*

*Before I went to Kindergarten,  
it was just us three -  
my parents and me -  
Nobody cared if my garden did not look the same as others,  
because that is how it was intended to be.  
No one ever would have thought  
that anything is wrong,  
because my garden with its unique, special magic  
brought us happiness and love.*

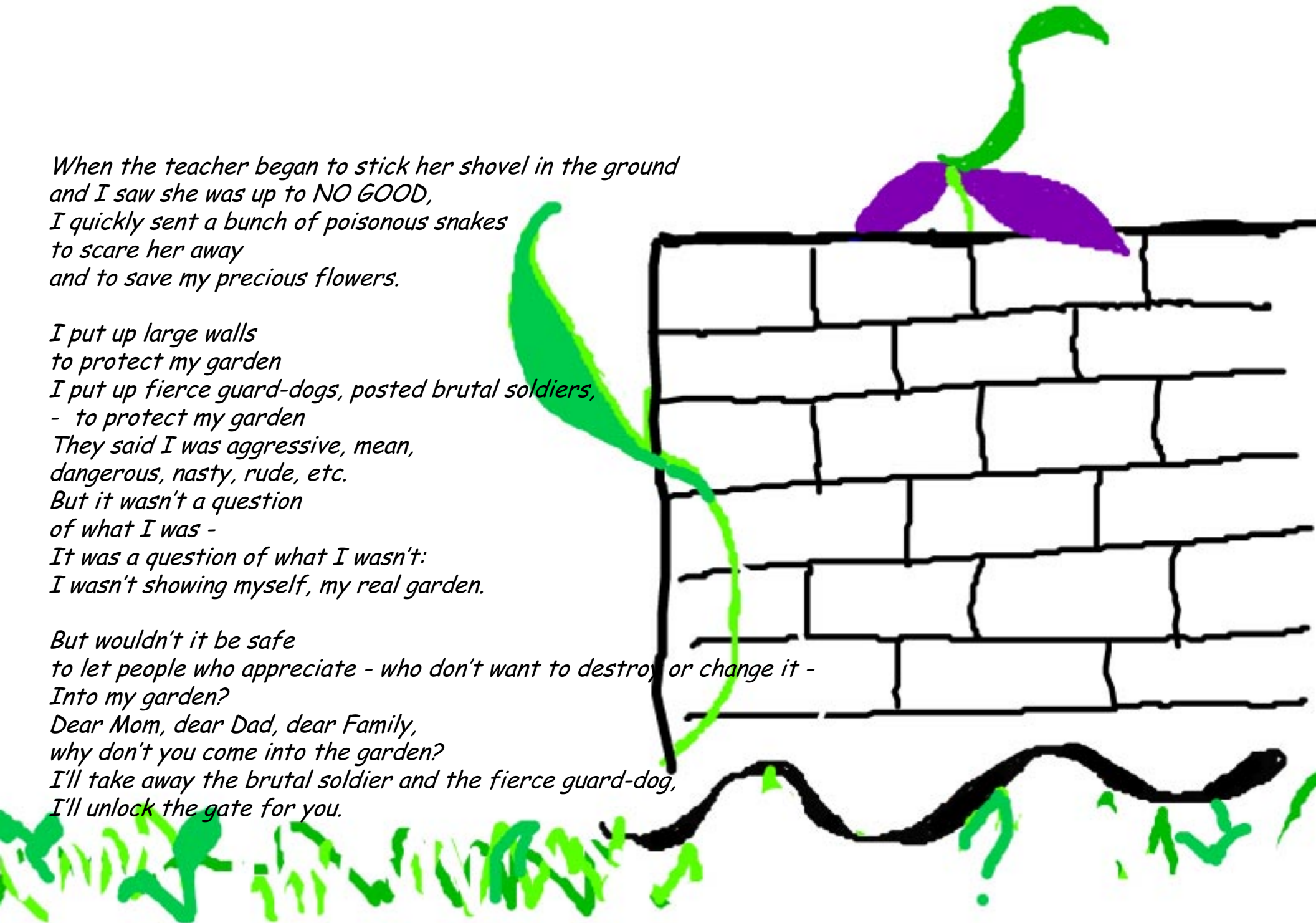
*Alas, when I went to Kindergarten,  
everything changed -  
The Kindergarten teachers invaded my garden,  
they saw flowers here, a tree there,  
which they had never seen before!  
So they decided to go home and get a shovel,  
so they could dig up and destroy all my beautiful flowers,  
just to be able to plant ordinary ones in their place!!*



*When the teacher began to stick her shovel in the ground  
and I saw she was up to NO GOOD,  
I quickly sent a bunch of poisonous snakes  
to scare her away  
and to save my precious flowers.*

*I put up large walls  
to protect my garden  
I put up fierce guard-dogs, posted brutal soldiers,  
- to protect my garden  
They said I was aggressive, mean,  
dangerous, nasty, rude, etc.  
But it wasn't a question  
of what I was -  
It was a question of what I wasn't:  
I wasn't showing myself, my real garden.*

*But wouldn't it be safe  
to let people who appreciate - who don't want to destroy or change it -  
Into my garden?  
Dear Mom, dear Dad, dear Family,  
why don't you come into the garden?  
I'll take away the brutal soldier and the fierce guard-dog,  
I'll unlock the gate for you.*





*Do you think, perhaps, that I could dare  
to leave the door slightly ajar for Juliana  
and tell her:*

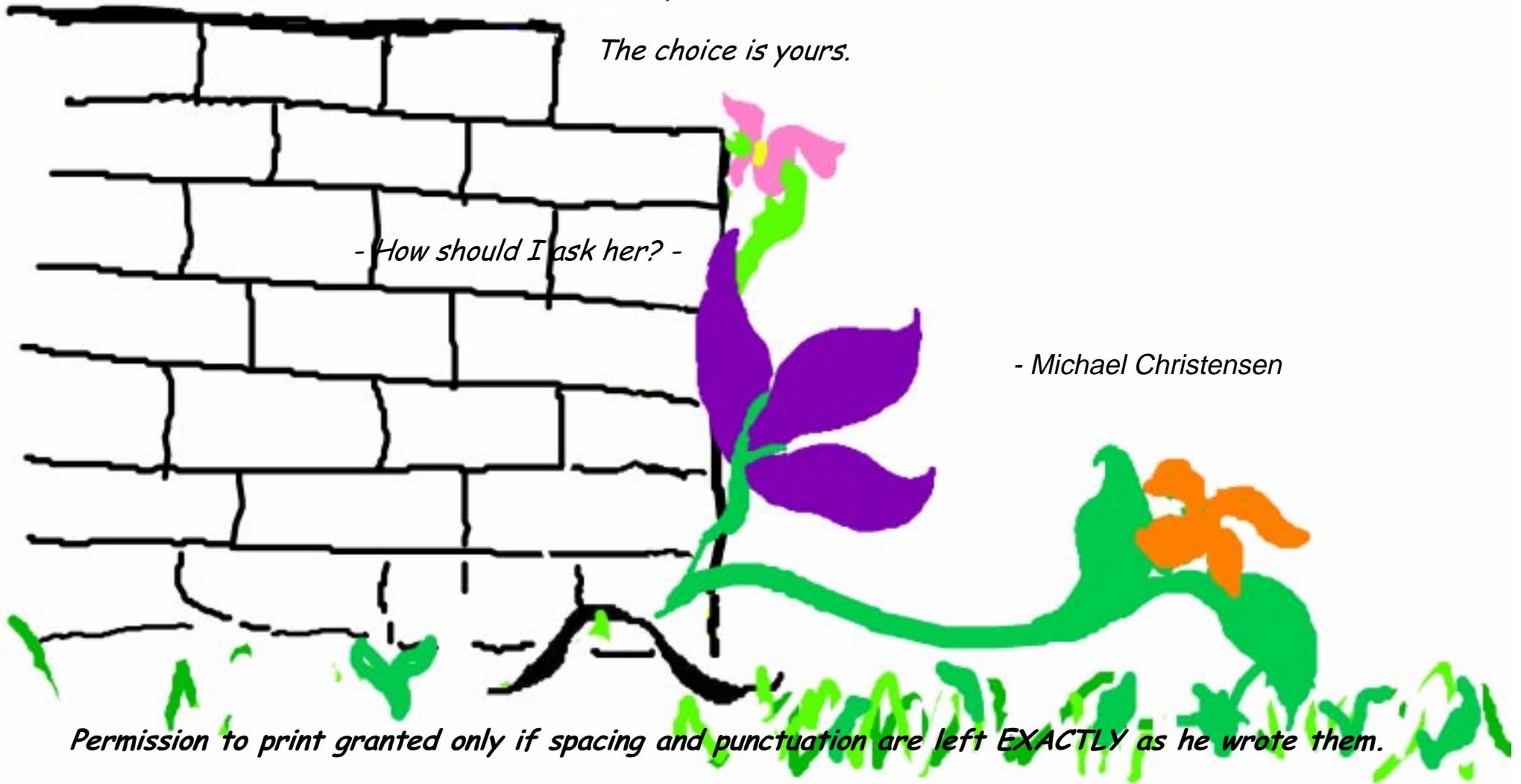
*You have already caught a glimpse of my  
garden when I wrote you the apology letter,  
which healed you from the bite of the guard  
dog. Would you like to be able to visit  
it all the time? Or would you rather stare  
at the cold, closed high wall that I usually  
show you?*

*The choice is yours.*

*- How should I ask her? -*

*- Michael Christensen*

*Permission to print granted only if spacing and punctuation are left EXACTLY as he wrote them.*



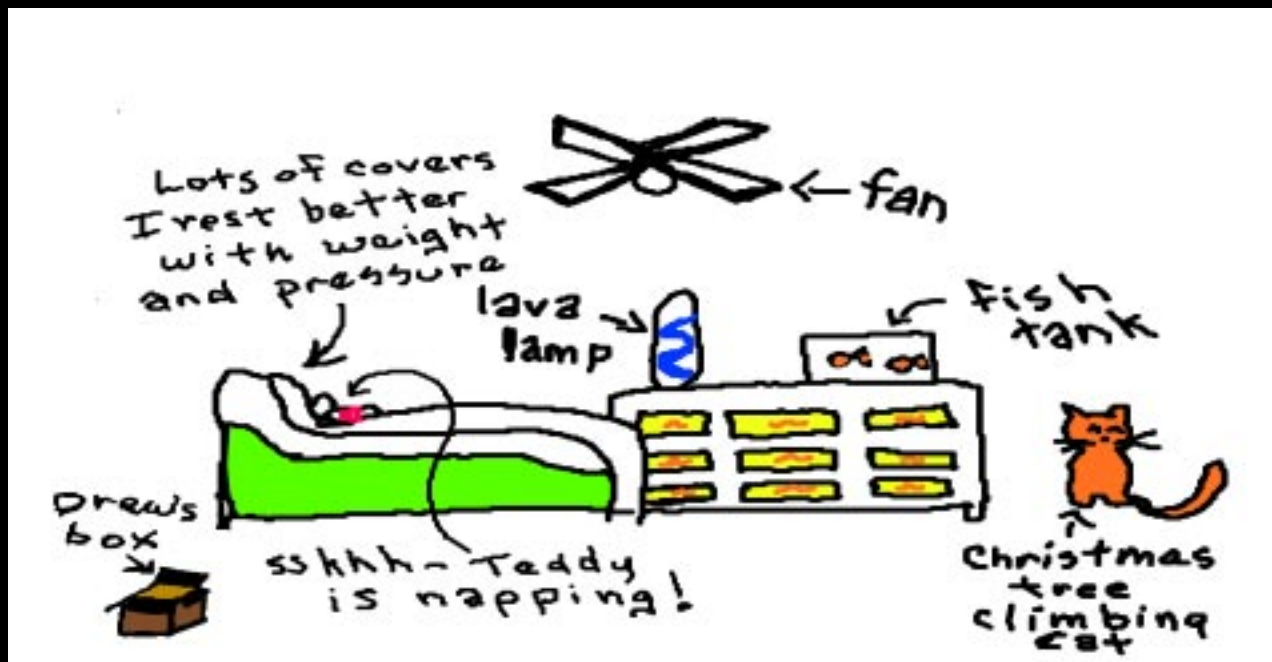


It is possible to find comfort as an Aspie. It comes in many, many forms. Some get it from objects. Some get it from motion, others from people. Many Aspies find it in routine and sameness. Recognize something comforting here?

Finding Comfort

*Hello, I'm Rick. I've just heard from my mom that I'm going to be in your new book. I myself, accept. We have an orange and white cat called Oliver. He's so persistent, it's funny. For example, five times one night after Dad had swatted him to get out of the Christmas tree, he kept coming back - for some unknown reason. He is 1 year old and irresistibly cute. We had a cat that was more relaxing than him. He was 12 years old when he was hit by a car last Halloween. Oliver looks like Sam did. I heard you might be having Teddy, my teddy bear and lifelong companion, appear in this book. Teddy is worn and torn, and has a red heart-shaped patch over his heart that has "Teddy" written on it.*

## Rick's Room of Comforters



Desires comfort item to produce calming effect.  
Sometimes requires external stimulation for calming.



Hi! My name is Teddy. I am Rick's "main man," he tells me everything! Rick talks to me when he feels he can't talk with anyone else. I know that I'm a little threadbare. It's even been said that the only thing holding me together is love. Last week I went with Rick to see the new Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. Funny how we both like the same movies. We also like professional wrestling.

Rick is a sixth grader in middle school. He has trouble "fitting in" with the crowds at school sometimes, but that's okay. Rick does have a couple of friends at school, but I'm still his best friend of all.

Once Rick's grandmother wanted to have me bronzed, I guess so everybody from now on could see how great looking I am...Thank Goodness Rick saved me from that! "Mummify Teddy! I couldn't!" Whew! What a relief, it's so good to have someone you can count on!



Meet Teddy



Unusually strong attachment to objects.  
Prefers familiar places, clothing and people.  
Difficulty making and maintaining friendships.

# Betty's Quilt

Comfort Items



Desires comfort items to produce calming effect: blanket, inanimate objects, etc.

## Infinity

*Carousels and ferris wheels  
go round and round with me.  
And fans that come in many sorts  
are always meant to be.*

*We Aspies we can spend our hours  
watching things that go  
around and round and up and down  
repeating fast and slow.*

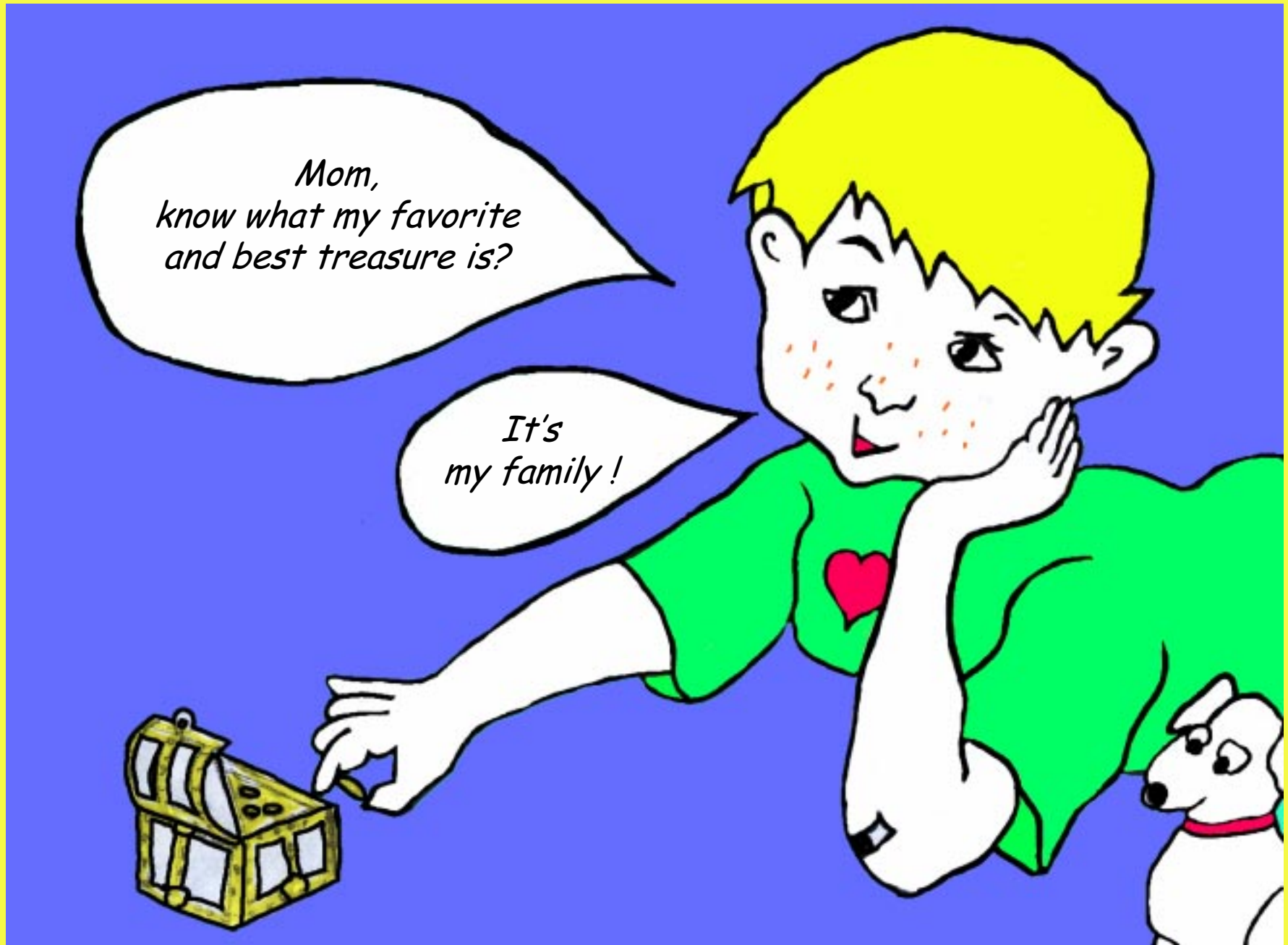
*It helps my thoughts and body, too,  
to watch these things that spin;  
'cause when my whole world looks at them,  
my calmer self steps in.*

by Martha Kate Downey



Sometimes requires external stimulation for calming.

Jennifer Hope Ellis



Prefers familiar people, places and things.



Living without knowing why you're different  
is much like being homeless.  
Sure, your parents and doctors and teachers  
all have a responsibility to provide for you,  
and you try to fit into systems that seem to work  
for every other kid,  
but  
you don't fit,  
and you know it,  
and they know it.

Like the homeless, you wander,  
going from diagnosis to diagnosis,  
in and out,  
looking for the right place to be,  
to belong, to be wanted,  
to be accepted,  
not just tolerated.  
And sometimes you just settle for where you are  
and pretend it is okay  
and that you are in the right place,  
but  
you know you're not,  
and they know you're not.

And sometimes you get so discouraged  
after wandering and wandering  
and searching and searching  
for that intangible place where you do fit  
that you give up trying;  
you feel yourself failing  
in your everlasting trial to fit.  
And you know it,  
and they know it.

but then...

Picture after you look and look  
and try and try,  
suddenly what you've dreamed for comes true!  
A door is not just opened,  
but something through it beckons you to come  
out into the light!  
It welcomes you.  
And so with much trepidation,  
you tiptoe out of the darkness  
and try to blend in and not be noticed.  
But you are noticed!  
Except this time, it is a new kind of exposure.  
Because, instead of having to try to be what  
man expects you to be,  
you are allowed to be who God made you to be.

You are challenged to be just who you are,  
the best that you are.  
Not crammed into the same old dark box  
but allowed to blossom and bloom.  
Not required to hide  
but encouraged to stand tall  
and be proud of who you are  
and why you are.

Picture being embraced  
as being absolutely necessary  
to complete the whole of God's world.

Now that's finely fitting!

# Finally Fitting

by Martha Kate Downey

# About Our Icon

Researched and written by Margi Nowak

The spectacular cobalt-colored parrot you see throughout this book is a hyacinth macaw - a rare, "gentle giant" that can grow up to 40 inches in length (including a 24 inch tail)! Because its habitat (rain forests and palm swamps of southern Brazil, eastern Bolivia and northwestern Paraguay) is threatened by human development (trees are being cut down to make way for cattle ranches, and vast tracts of land are being flooded by hydroelectric projects), the birds in the wild are in danger of becoming extinct. Hyacinths are now being bred outside their native habitat specifically for the pet trade, but they are very expensive, costing thousands of dollars to buy and a great deal of money to keep properly.

Maybe these rare and valuable birds have some sort of a special connection with Aspies. People who take care of hyacinth macaws say that they are highly intelligent and require plenty of stimulation and activity to keep them happy. They can also be very persistent in insisting that things be done their own way. Although their huge and exceptionally powerful beaks allow them to crack the hardest nuts, they are basically peaceful and gentle creatures. In fact, one of the reasons they are so endangered in the wild is that they are so fearless, noisy, and predictable. They are not afraid to be who they are! How sad it would be if the world were forever deprived of the stunning flash of color from these magnificent one-of-a-kind birds! And the world would likewise be terribly depleted if other one-of-a-kind creatures (like individual Aspies, for instance) no longer radiated the colorful qualities that belong uniquely to them!





# One Aspie's Version of a Glossary

by resident Aspie, Kate Noelle Downey

**Abe Lincoln** - 16th President of the United States of America. Well-known for his kindness and honesty. He wore a stove top hat (the tall black one on Dylan) and was often called "Honest Abe".

**Absent-minded** - 1. someone who forgets stuff alot.  
2. someone who is totally clueless (by Kate's definition of the word *clueless*).

**Abstract thought or concept** - an idea that is not literal or concrete - because these thoughts or ideas represent something else they are not easy for Aspies to understand.

**Acoustical vibrations** - sound movements that are heard or felt.

**Albert Einstein** - a famous scientist, a genius who developed the Theory of Relativity and  $E=mc^2$

**Appropriate** - used in the proper place and time (my mother's favorite word!)

**Asperger Syndrome** - Asperger's Syndrome is part of the autism spectrum. Most having the syndrome have unusual language. Asperger's Syndrome was first defined by Hans Asperger in 1943; however, the diagnosis was not used widely until the early 1990's.

**Aspie** - a pet name for a person with Asperger's Syndrome (one that you use to show someone you like them). The name "Aspie" was made up by some adults who have Asperger's Syndrome. They wanted a friendly way to refer to themselves and to indicate that they have AS. In this book, it is used to mean anyone who has many characteristics similar to those of people with AS.

**Assumption** - a guess you make by putting some facts together. In order for an assumption to become a true fact you have to have complete information.

## One Aspie's Version of a Glossary - page 2

**AS-Support** - an online support group of parents and/or adults with Asperger's Syndrome or some other high-functioning forms of autism. To contact them send an email to: [listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu](mailto:listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu) with command: **SUBSCRIBE ASPERGER** in the body of the message (not the subject line).

Note: AS-Support is not for professionals or individuals who are merely curious about Asperger Syndrome. Professionals might check out the AS Professional Forum. Sponsored by Asperger Syndrome Coalition of the United States, Inc. (ASC-U.S.), this private, moderated forum is designed exclusively for Medical and Educational Professionals who work with children and adults diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, High Functioning Autism, PDD-NOS, Nonverbal Learning Disorder and associated conditions on the autistic spectrum. Contact forum moderators Jeanine Carlson at [jeaninec@swbell.net](mailto:jeaninec@swbell.net) or Barb Kirby at [bkirby@udel.edu](mailto:bkirby@udel.edu).

**Auditory processing disorders** - a physical hearing impairment that affects the brain's ability to separate meaningful sounds from less important background noises.

**Axiom** - a statement accepted as true.

**Body language** - The messages that our body tells someone else without using words. Like crossing your arms when listening to another person, or looking at your feet when you are speaking to another person.

**Buzz Lightyear** - Disney cartoon character in the movie, *Toy Story*. Buzz Lightyear showed confidence, imagination and courage.

**Cherry** - a little, red, round piece of smooth fruit that grows on trees. I think it must look like excomysis or spirogyra. Most people know what a cherry looks like, but nobody but biologists or Aspies would recognize excomysis or spirogyra.

**Compulsions** - an irresistible, repeated, irrational impulse to perform a particular act or group of acts.

**Concrete thought or concept** - A concrete word represents exactly what something is, not just an idea; factual, with no embellishment.

**Drop us a line** - a slang phrase meaning "write to us."

# One Aspie's Version of a Glossary - page 3

**Echolalia** - 1. a repetition of what is said by other people as if echoing them.  
2. repeating a word or group of words over and over when speaking. It is sort of like a language tic, not done on purpose, just sort of happens.

**Eidetic memory** - extraordinarily accurate and vivid recall, especially of visual images.

**Figures of speech, similes, parodies, allegories, myths** - words or phrases used in a way that is different from its actual meaning.

**Gait** - a manner of walking or moving on foot.

**Geode** - a hollow stone with a cavity lined with crystals or mineral matter. They are beautiful!

**Gifted class** - special classes designed to offer accelerated or higher-level work. They usually involve lots of extra projects.

**HFA** - High Functioning Autism - Part of the autism spectrum.

**Inappropriate** - something used at the wrong time or the wrong place. It doesn't mean good or bad.

**Literal language** - language that is concerned mainly with the facts; free from exaggeration or embellishment.

**Neurologically Atypical** - when your brain works a little differently than most other people's brains.

**Obsession** - 1. when a person thinks about a subject all of the time, even when they don't want to.  
2. a persistent, disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling.

## One Aspie's Version of a Glossary - page 4

**Perseveration** - continuation of something (as repetition of a word) usually to an exceptional degree or beyond a desired point.

**PDD-NOS** - Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified - Part of the autism spectrum.

**Photographic memory** - a way of remembering something exactly as you saw it.

**Prosody** - 1. an individual's way of speaking. It is heard by how fast or slowly you speak.  
2. the rhythm and intonation of a person's language.

**Prosopagnosia** - problems recognizing faces out of the usual setting or known context.

**Rote memory** - the ability to remember something and repeat it mechanically or unthinkingly (exactly as it was seen or heard).

**Sensory Integration Disorders** - When the five senses of the body don't give your body the right information because of the way the brain is receiving and sending the information.

**Special Olympics** - an organization with teams in many countries around the world. Individuals having autism or other neurological disorders, between the ages of 8 and 99, are eligible to be on a team. Anyone may participate in Special Olympics either as an athlete, volunteer or coach. Some athletes also choose to coach teams. [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org).

## One Aspie's Version of a Glossary - page 5

**Specs** - a short word for "specification"; a precise, detailed presentation of something; a plan or proposal for something.

**Spirogyra** - a genus of fresh water algae of a bright green color.

**Stigmas** - is a sign indicating something is not considered standard; a negative idea or bad attitude about something that isn't necessarily bad or negative.

**Stims** - minor motor stimulations (stims) - rocking, humming, tapping fingers, sucking, rubbing fingers in circles or on seams of clothing. Stimming calms the person down who is doing it.

**Stock phrases** - a group of words commonly used for a single meaning.

**Tics** - Involuntary face or body movements. People with Tourette syndrome and some other syndromes have tics. Having tics may make a person very tired and make their muscles hurt, too.

**"the spring"** - in the cartoon, the young child thinks of spring as being determined by the calendar. But when the parent said, "the spring", they meant when the weather got warm. Not always the same thing.

**Visual perception** - the way your brain understands what your eyes see.

**Waldo** - a cartoon character that has a habit of hiding within the picture.

**Warp Engine** - in the television show *Star-Trek*: the warp-drive, made up of the warp core and the power conduits, which lead to the nacelles.



Remember, Dear Reader...

The purpose of the following "List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome" is not to make a diagnosis. Instead, it's to help everyone better understand the Aspie in their world - especially if that Aspie is YOU!

This list is not to tell you how to be, but rather, to help you and your friends and neighbors better understand some of the habits, thoughts and feelings of an Aspie (a person with Asperger's Syndrome, High Functioning Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified). There may be some kids having other diagnoses, like Noonan's Syndrome, William's Syndrome, Tourette Syndrome or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, who may recognize some habits they have as well. ***No one will have all these characteristics!***

This is just a list of some characteristics you MIGHT see in yourself. However, in reading about them, you will better understand Aspies and see that, ***"SURPRISE! You are not alone!"***



# List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome (AS)

High Functioning Autism (HFA), or  
Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)

## I. Cognitive Learning

- A. Excellent rote memory in certain areas
- B. Unregulated fears; difficulty judging situations that create fear -  
may be overly fearful in safe situations, yet fearless in dangerous situations
- C. Very detail-oriented
  - 1. difficulty seeing overall picture or situation
  - 2. applies same level of detail to every situation whether appropriate or not
- D. May have exceptionally high skills in some areas, but very low skills in others, i.e., splinter skills, savant skills, or special talents
- E. Prefers concrete, rather than abstract concepts

## II. Language

- A. Pronoun reversal
- B. Excellent vocabulary; may sound like "The Little Professor"
- C. Conversational language may appear stilted
- D. Speaks with stock phrases or phrases borrowed from other situations or people
- E. Makes honest, but often inappropriate observations
- F. Has difficulties adjusting volume and speed in speech
- G. Problems with prosody; irregular accenting and inflection used in conversation
- H. Literal language: difficulty understanding figures of speech, similes, parodies, allegories, etc.
- I. Speech may have started very early in development or may have started then stopped for a period of time
- J. Repeated last word or phrases several times (echolalia)
- K. Difficulty understanding some language, i.e., directional terms easily confused

## III. Emotions

- A. Rage/anger/hurt may all be expressed as rage
- B. Perfectionism
- C. Easily overstimulated by sound, crowds, lights, smells
- D. Inside feeling not matching outside behavior

*No one will have all these characteristics!*

#### IV. Motor Skills

- A. Difficulty with some skills requiring motor skill development
  - 1. Gross motor skills - riding bike, swimming, crawling
  - 2. Fine motor skills - handwriting, tying shoes
- B. May have some advanced, age-appropriate skills while other age-appropriate skills are delayed, i.e., tying shoes before climbing stairs
- C. Unusual walking gait or clumsiness
- D. Difficulty with motor skills that require visual perception accuracy, i.e., walking through a parking lot, participating in sports, pushing a shopping cart through aisles, turnstiles, revolving doors.

#### V. Perseveration - "The tendency of an idea, experience, or response to persist in an individual."

*Webster's New World Dictionary*

"per se ver a tion ( ... ) n. Psychology. Continued or repetitive activity or actions: 1. the uncontrollable repetition of a word, phrase, or gesture. 2. The spontaneous recurrence of a thought, image, phrase, or tune in the mind" *American Heritage Dictionary*

- A. Obsession - the fact or state of being obsessed with an idea, desire, emotion, etc.
- B. Compulsions - an irresistible, repeated, irrational impulse to perform some act
- C. Fascination with rotation
- D. Many and varied collections
- E. Redirection very difficult (changing focus or thinking from one activity or idea to another)
- F. One emotional incident can determine the mood for the rest of the day; can't let emotions pass quickly

#### VI. Social Cues

- A. Difficulty reading facial expression and emotion in another person
- B. Difficulty understanding body language
- C. Difficulty understanding the rules of conversation
- D. Difficulty understanding group interactions
- E. Too much or too little eye contact
- F. Difficulty understanding others' humor
- G. Problems recognizing faces out of the usual setting or known context (face-blindness or prosopagnosia)
- H. Stand-offish or overly friendly
- I. May adopt others' behaviors, speech or dress habits to aid in more fluid communication and social adaptation

***No one will have all these characteristics!***

## VII. Senses

- A. Very sensitive or undersensitive to light, pain, taste, touch, sound, smell
  - 1. May have injuries they are not aware of
  - 2. May experience physical pain from oversensitivity to light, sound, touch
  - 3. Very picky eater, both in selections of foods and in the way they are presented on the plate
  - 4. May crave specific touch, taste, smell, sight, sound, lights
- B. Over-sensitive to change in surroundings, people, places
- C. Over stimulation may result from too many verbal directions or instructions

## VIII. Comfort Skills

- A. Desires comfort items to produce calming effect - blankets, stuffed animals
- B. May need external (outside) stimulation for calming - brushing, soothing sound, rotating object
- C. Comforted by minor motor stimulations - rocking, humming, tapping fingers, toes, sucking, rubbing fingertips in circles or on seams of clothing
- D. May need separate space or area to decompress
- E. Unusual attachment to object
- F. Self-stimulation, i.e., rocking, tapping, humming, etc., to increase concentration and attention or to calm down and relax

## IX. Neurological Function

- A. Erratic neurological function
  - 1. Attention difficulties
  - 2. Irregular sleep patterns
- B. Understanding and working with time concepts difficult
- C. Sensory processing disorders (how the brain processes information it receives from the sensory organs)
  - 1. Visual processing disorders
  - 2. Auditory processing disorders
  - 3. Sensory integration disorders

## X. New situations, Patterns, People

- A. Rule-oriented
- B. Prefers known patterns with little unexpected surprises
- C. Prefers familiar places, clothing, people
- D. Difficulty with transitions when changing activities
- E. Difficulty making and maintaining friendships (especially peer friendships); more successful with adults than other children or young people.

*No one will have all these characteristics!*

The “**List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome**” (pages 83-85) is included in the book, *Tap Dancing in the Night* (copyright 2001 by Martha Kate Downey, published by Phat Art 4 Publishing). It was compiled of characteristics the members of AS-Support had seen demonstrated by their children or in themselves.

“AS-Support” is a group of adults with Asperger's Syndrome and/or parents of children with Asperger's Syndrome. In order that the list be as accurate as possible, Martha Kate Downey, a member of AS-Support and mother to a daughter with Asperger's Syndrome, only included those characteristics that were seen in many of the children. It was important that the characteristics be shared by others, thereby ruling out the possibility of including occasional individual habits. The list was edited many times by the members of the group until all felt they stated a clear picture of a person with Asperger's Syndrome.

The list is helpful in explaining characteristics that individuals with Asperger's Syndrome have currently or have had in the past. Because autism is within a spectrum, portions of the list also help identify characteristics that other persons with diagnoses within the spectrum might be demonstrating. My recommendation is that you highlight or mark and then date the characteristics that you see present now, as well as those that are no longer seen in the individual. This makes a very useful tool for doctors, therapists, teachers, as well as others, to best know or recognize specific thought patterns and/or behaviors that might not be seen within an office setting or school room.

The “**List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome**” may be photocopied as desired; however, it must remain in its original form with credits included. Feel free to copy and use, but please attach this page of explanation with the list on pages 83-85.

Thanks!

Martha Kate Downey  
mdo651@airmail.net  
www.mkdowney.com

read these pages by Martha Kate Downey

## The passion behind the book

When I first read about Asperger's Syndrome, I felt as though I had come into the sunshine. At the time, our 14-year-old daughter, Kate, and I were homeschooling. My days were spent balancing the bringing up of a daughter who had significant neurological differences, and an older son, along with running my own stained glass studio. Finding the article about AS had a dramatic impact upon my family and me. It was one of the great *Ah Ha's* of life. Finally, we understood more of Kate's behaviors and began to learn about how to help her better fit into our world--and us to better fit into hers--happily!

As many of you who are reading this book, I was consumed with discovering everything I could about AS. Eventually, I found a website with an online support group begun by Barb Kirby. There I met friends, friends who knew exactly what I meant when I described Kate and some of her activities, as well as my own feelings and bewilderment.

Since the diagnosis of AS was so new to the United States at that time (1996), there were many members of AS-Support who had only recently been diagnosed. Not surprisingly, because of their living in such confusion with families that were equally as confused, the incidence of depression among the young adults was quite high. It was SCARY for everybody! Depression was NOT part of my vision for Kate. It was not a place I wanted Kate or other young Aspies to visit. I met young adults with AS who were suicidal. Not just one, but many were trying to manage lives as young adults in a world that did not understand them, nor want to understand them. As a social worker, I knew that acceptance and education are often the best deterrents to depression. I became focused on helping those young adults see themselves in a healthier way.

My learning about AS also was changing my ability to help Kate. My friends who are adults with AS were very caring and patient in their attempts to educate me. With their assistance I was able to educate my family and those in Kate's world about Asperger's Syndrome.

[Maybe I'll read the rest of this later; for now, take me to the Table of Contents.](#)

As the members of AS-Support continued to write, we would read about one another's children who were Aspies. It occurred to me that, if we could share these incidents and the examples where the kids used the Aspie trait in a positive way, it would boost the young Aspie's feelings about themselves, as well as provide an AS "primer" to give to coaches, neighbors, etc. I suggested that, perhaps, the children could put together a book about themselves, including in the book their own drawings and writings. I meant for THEM to do the project as a way of seeing that they were not "weird" or alone, but instead, were in very good company.

Upon my making the suggestion online that "someone should do a book," the responses were NOT as I intended. My friends wrote back, "Great idea, Martha Kate (MK)! Go for it!" I quickly hit the reply and reminded them: "I'm a homeschooler, a glazier. I am NOT a writer. I have never aspired to be a writer! I'm not a book illustrator, just a glazier/designer of stained glass windows. You have definitely identified the wrong person for the project."

As you know, if you frequently use email, a post may easily be ignored or deleted. Each time I stressed that I was NOT the right person to do a book, they continued to pretend that I was moving ahead with a book! After a couple of weeks of having my denials ignored, I decided that I would begin the process and, hopefully, a writer and an illustrator would surface along the way. If not, then I would simply take the things the kids sent in, copy them, staple them together, and send them each a copy that they might in turn share with those in their worlds. I told myself, this shouldn't be that hard!

Well, as weeks went by, the project took on momentum; I found my hours for sleeping on the wane. The "book" took on a life of its own, redefined itself and forced my participation. Finally, five years later (and quite a bit more knowledgeable about graphic design, thanks to Pete Levy, Bill Leek, and Randy Bouse), this project is seeing the light of day. Thank goodness for Abby (Messner) Collins. She was the founder of PUP (Potential Unlimited Publishing, Inc.) and saw merit in the work. Abby is now the co-owner of Phat Art 4 Publishers. She believed intensely in the project, since she had also witnessed the depression and hopelessness by those Aspies who remained undiagnosed, or misdiagnosed, for years. She shares my passion for saving anyone with Asperger's Syndrome from unnecessary pain.

**Take me out of here! [I want to read the book!](#)**



## Who in the world is this book written for!?!?

This is a tricky question. While many of the entries are ones written by children with AS, the writing itself is equally helpful to an adult reader to more clearly get the picture of an Aspie in their mind's eye. This book is NOT intended to overwhelm the reader, but rather to enlighten the world about the daily struggles our Aspies face, everyday, every minute, and to help the young Aspie feel less alone in her or his struggles.

When Kate was first diagnosed, I bought some information written by authors who have AS. Unfortunately, unless you are accustomed to reading that sort of literature, it is difficult for the general public to understand. It is like trying to teach a child with a five-year-old's vocabulary how to read, using a college text book. Doesn't work. Kate's dad was attempting to read some of these books when it occurred to me that what he needed first was a primer. We discovered that without a teacher's and social worker's education (he's an engineer), the writer's information was going right over his head. He needed a beginning book to learn the language about Asperger's Syndrome. He needed concrete examples of how it appears in real life, in an Aspie child's life. We concluded, if he needed a primer, others new to AS would find it helpful too.

Since no Aspie is a "typical" Aspie, then neither will the readers of the book be "typical." This book is for whomever finds it informative, helpful or entertaining. It originally had a target range of 7-15 year olds. However, we found the age range of those interested varied to such a degree that setting a range was not only impossible, but unnecessary. So, we suggest, "*Just try it!* Take from it what you will and don't fret if you don't understand it all, or enjoy it all. It's okay!"

[This is boring. Where's the good stuff!?](#)

## How the List of Possible Characteristics originated and why it appears as it does

The List of Possible Characteristics of an Aspie was written by the group members of AS-Support. We were not as focused on positive Aspie traits as we were on defining exactly how AS was displaying itself in our children. We were looking for similar experiences in the hopes that the similarities might also lead to sharing of solutions or suggestions that would help our own Aspies live happier, easier lives.

There have been those who have seen the list and felt that it was weighted toward the negative side of the characteristics, but there is a reason for that. The "neurologically typical" world must first see the Aspie in a way that is familiar to them. They may not readily know that the reason a student might do so well with a science fair project is also the same reason the student perseverates on a subject. They are not rattled by the successes of the Aspie but, instead, by the unusual differences. The entire purpose of the book is to take the characteristics and help the rest of the world see that, rather than being deficits, they may also be major contributions. However, the book must begin where the reader is (Why am I/Why is my child out of sync with the general population?), not where we want him to be at the end (seeing ways to turn the characteristics into strengths).

This list is factual, written in clear English. It is not intended to be used as a diagnostic tool, but as an honest accounting of characteristics found in many Aspies.

Finally through with all the dull stuff!  
Let's get this show on the road!!!

# Credits

cast of thousands...

all those parents who supported

all those Aspies who taught

all the kids who graciously shared their lives and their talents

Pete Levy, a remarkably talented Aspie. Owner of Stone Mountain Software.

Joshua Tausz (bird collaborator)

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Betty, Randy and Allison Bouse - three generations of talented artists

Jim Aikin, a man with talent to spare

All my "Dear Daughter" friends

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Bradley Marshall, a sharing soul

Penny MacNaughton, a lady with a talent for friendship

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Carol Robinius, my personal cheerleader

Lorraine Wilkinson, a woman with a mission

AS-Support, where life in the sunshine begins

Virginia Artho, a woman with many talents

Jane Asker, a gentle soul with a world full of information!

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and "Thank you" just isn't enough to:

Dennis  
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my husband, a man  
who gives  
generously from  
his very soul!

Kate,  
a young woman  
with the courage  
to share her life,  
that others might  
find comfort.

David,  
a man who  
gives his mother  
the confidence  
necessary to complete  
any project.

Pete, Abby  
and Joshua,  
Thank you!  
Thank you!  
Thank you!

more to come...

Many of the remaining entries I received for this book will be included in a future work called *The Wise Ones*. In that book, our Aspies share wisdom and solutions they've discovered through the years. They teach us how to turn Aspie characteristics into very positive attributes!

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