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Asperger United is a self-help group run by and for people with Asperger Syndrome. Its aim is to put people with the condition in touch with one another and to provide them with information so that they can lead more independent lives.



## WHAT IS AUTISM ?

We don't really know what it is. Its not a disease. It is in men and women. There are presently around 80,000 children and adults with autism in the UK. Currently The National Autistic Society is able to serve only a small minority. They need help if we are to ensure that every person with autism gets the special care they need. There are books out on it and papers through the Autistic Society at Willesden London. I think the publications and Asperger United are very good and what is in it I think is helpful to you.

If you think you are Autistic then make an appointment at your doctor and ask them to send you to the Maudsley Hospital which specializes in it. It is in South London, Denmark Hill and they are all nice people there, and it does not cost a penny at all its free and it is for children and adults.

**IAN REYNOLDS**

## ACCOUNTANCY

### **THE LIFE OF SIMON BARBER**

Simon is 44 years old. His birthday is in April. Simon works for Save the Children Fund in Finance Headquarters in Camberwell. Simon's work is based near (Camberwell) Maudsley Hospital.

Simon was diagnosed at Bedford by a Dr Myer of the Bedford Child Guidance Centre. Simon's case was referred to the Maudesley Hospital. His first school was in Bedford where he experienced some bullying. Simon he was a withdrawn child and he was shy.

Simon moved into Richmond at eleven years old. Anthony Barber his father taught at University College School in Hampstead for 20 years. Bullying also took its toll later on in senior school at 13,14 years old. Simon's main qualifications were 4 'O'Levels in French, Maths, History and English. After school Simon carried on education; QETC Leatherhead Gardenining College. Simon studied Office Practice at QETC (Queen Elizabeth Training College) for 6 months.

After this Simon joined a small accountancy firm in the West End as a clerk. Simon was there for 10 years. Simon studied day release and a correspondence course at Kingston College, Institute of Accounting Staff examination qualification was gained.

At 25 Simon moved into hotel accommodation in Bayswater with other men run by London Hostels Association for five years until 1981.

In 1981 Simon was made redundant by the accountants because no prospects. Simon's parents were very insistent that Simon gained his own flat, at 30 years old Simon moved into his own flat in Richmond. This property is maintained by a Housing Trust, Simon was still without work as an accountant. Simon started voluntary work for Save The Children Fund. Save The Children employed Simon permanently in the Summer of 1981. Now Simon is still working for Save the Children and still living in Richmond.

At 44 Simon wants to retire at 60. His life has been so far hard working and very well qualified in Office Techniques.

**DAVE (the Rave) WRIGHT**



## EDITORIAL

I have now got my own flat moved in one Sunday night when I got back home from the Grand National at Aintree. It is a bedsit studio and I got it on my own by ringing up a Landlord and I rent it and I live there on my own and it is a very nice flat, shops and station very handy right by where I live. I went to Kings Fund to a group meeting (on Monday 10th April 95) it was a very good day start 10.00am finish at 4.00pm. I would like to see Asperger United to do well and everybody to still send things in of it i.e. suggestions and articles of interest for the mag we have a very good mag always and we aim to please you all with the news and we are not out to bore you so always good stuff printed. People we have seen at parties we been invited to were very impressed with the mag. Some parents just wanted our help on what the mag was about and where to get help for their sons via the paper contact Mark at the NAS for further information if you wish to have it.

QED on BBC1 on Asperger Syndrome which some of us took part in to show people on TV what our condition is and so that they can understand what it is, the programme was very good indeed and I thought it was excellent and what was said and the way it way portrayed. I thought Mark copes very well and pleased he is at University and hope he passes his degree. I know he will and hope he does not worry about it. We discuss that sort of thing at our group at the Maudsley.

George in QED was a young boy but some men are diagnosed at ten or younger now but some late twenties to thirties or forties and some near fifty have recently been diagnosed nearly all the ones I know are mildly autistic. It is mostly in boys or men but in the group there are three women. Pat and Pam take our group and what was on TV was a small group of people, we normally have a large group if they all team up we get on well in the group. The programme was a success and their maybe some more people out there with it yet who don't know that they may have got it. I am lucky I can travel and do things on my own not all can. Some find it harder then others to do things but they are all good in their own way.

Lets hope there is a follow up to the programme sometime, to see how they get on and to see if they have seen more that have been diagnosed if any and all at the group have a Social Worker so they can see them if they have a problem so it relieves their parents of the worry but they are still there to care for them and give them their support when needed. The Social Worker is there to help fill in forms etc. Pam diagnosed me 2 years ago in November 93 I am very much better but I was very mild to start with. Even now it is a help when I go to the group and I enjoy it still we meet once a month.

Other things I have been involved in since our last meeting is joining in the VE Day celebrations on 6th - 8th May. They were very good I went to see it on Saturday afternoon in Hyde Park. It was very good. In the evening there was a good concert, seating and standing free and I manage to get a standing ticket. Some of the top stars were there including Vera Lynn. On Sunday afternoon things on in the park singing, morning singing outside Buckingham Palace songs by Cliff Richard, Sir Harry Secombe, Dame Vera Lynn, in the evening at the London Palladium a Jazz concert on Monday the show in Hyde Park goes on and in the evening a VE Day party concert, long queues to get in not all got in to concert but I got a ticket from a lady. It was good. Lots of stars sang lots of songs and Vera Lynn came on when it came on air on BBC1 at the end before five 800,000 people attended.

Finally I am still looking for a job as a messenger and have sent off applications.

Goodbye for now and keep writing.

**IAN REYNOLDS**

## LANGUAGES

### THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1969, this is the largest University in the country with over 100,00 registered students.

Conventional universities (e.g Oxbridge ie Oxford and Cambridge) require students to study on campus, that is on the premises.

The Open University is a system of home-based spare-time study which is followed by people like us who have not been to the conventional university. Most of the subjects studied in conventional universities may be taken by O U students. As with conventional universities the subjects are linked in groups called Faculties.

However, opposed to conventional universities, OU students are expected to start with generalised Foundation courses covering many subjects before attempting to specialise. These are grouped as Arts, Social Sciences, Science, Mathematics, Computer Studies.

Whereas many conventional universities have a network of colleges (Cambridge) the OU has a headquarters "Office" in Milton Keynes and a regional structure. Through this structure, regional study centres are set up and tutors appointed.

The course I am undertaking is called an Art Foundation course comprising History, Literature, Music, Art History and Philosophy. The system followed is the presentation of an essay on each topic followed by an examination in October. Though admittedly I have not studied very hard, I have presented special essays on the first two topics for marking by my tutor (Tutor Marked Assessments) I was slightly surprised to be given a Pass mark on the first paper as I thought I had written a load of waffle.

In addition to the study material, there are radio and TV broadcasts and cassettes.

The same system is broadly followed by all Foundation Courses.

Once one has successfully negotiated the Foundation course one may continue up to Honours Degree, if one has the time, ability and inclination.

As I already have qualifications I might revert to the new French course next year, and maybe, if such exists, take a course on Language in general.

**JOHN JOYCE**



## PROFESSIONAL SECTION

### HOW SPECIAL TALENTS CAN HELP YOU GET A JOB

#### **SELL YOURSELF! - Using special skills and interests to get a job**

Many people with Asperger syndrome have special interests. These interests are many and varied and can be anything from an excellent memory for numbers to extensive knowledge of a certain topic such as geography.

People generally pursue these in their own time as a hobby - a way of relaxing and a diversion from their every day routines.

However they can be used in other useful ways too.

The skills and knowledge involved in special interests or hobbies could be invaluable in a working environment.

If you are someone with Asperger syndrome who has a special skill then you could increase your chances of getting a job by using a special skill or area of knowledge as a personal **SELLING POINT** when you apply for work and if the opportunity arises in an interview.

Here are a few interests and skills that can be directly related to work and should be mentioned in application forms and CV's wherever this is appropriate:

**Geographical Knowledge** - particularly of your local area would be a good selling point if you were applying for a job at the Post Office e.g. delivering mail. You could also use knowledge of London to your advantage if you were applying to become a messenger.

**Bus, train and aircraft enthusiasts** - if you know a lot about timetables, routes and/or flight paths this will usually mean that you have a good understanding of how the rail or aircraft systems work and you probably have an aptitude for remembering times and destinations. This knowledge would be useful for many jobs within a bus, rail or aircraft company - jobs such as ticketing (making out tickets), working in an information bureau (checking flight, train or bus details and connections) or even a catering or cleaning job in an airport, bus garage or train station - in this case your interest in working in that particular environment would be in your favour.



**Home computing** - computer knowledge is highly sought after and if you spend a lot of time on your own computer at home this shows that you probably have an aptitude for this type of work and certainly have the motivation! It is important then to capitalise on your interest by outlining the computer languages you are familiar with and any technical knowledge you have on a CV or application form. Also work hard on perfecting your touch-typing skills and speed - this will help in jobs involving data input or word-processing.

**Number work** - if you enjoy working with figures and have an aptitude for numbers, you should state this as this particular interest could be useful in many jobs - accounts work and book-keeping and data-input job using a computer are the obvious ones but others such as working in a warehouse or stock room would also require an ability to recognise and perhaps remember numbers of certain stock items.

**Accuracy and attention to detail** - if you are very thorough when doing a job and like to get things exactly right then you have an ability which many employers look for. Some employers want staff who can follow their instructions exactly - it is therefore well worth mentioning that you are accurate and very good at following instructions.

**Time keeping** - you may be someone for whom doing things at the right time and being on time is very important - you could therefore be a very **reliable** staff member. All managers want their employees to be good time keepers so always mention your reliability when applying for a job.

We can see then that special interests can help when applying for a job as they often involve abilities which employers look for when recruiting staff. This information about your interests should therefore be included in your CV or application form explaining how it would help you in the particular job you are aiming for. So **SELL YOURSELF!**

**Catherine Burkin**

## LETTERS/CONTACTS

**Please note** - In order to ensure the privacy of contributors to Asperger United full addresses will not be printed. If you would like to reply to any of the letters or requests for contacts please write to the N.A.S and we will pass your letter on to the appropriate person.

Jamie Jardine  
Lancashire

I am an 18 year old Lancashire lad. I live with my parents and have a little brother. I was diagnosed as having Asperger Syndrome a year ago. I only know 3 other people who have this, one of whom lives in Preston. I have been on a YTS Scheme in retailing since July 1983, I am also at College studying Art and Computer Studies, I am also a volunteer at Barnardo's helping younger children who too have 'special needs' like myself. I like Football, Cycling, Tenpin Bowling, Badminton and the London Underground. If you want to write to me don't hesitate I'll reply to all letters written to me.

**JAMIE JARDINE**

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Gareth Bateman  
West Yorkshire

I am 24 years old and live at home in Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire with my parents and younger brother. I have had difficulties all my life with communication and friendships and have only recently been diagnosed as Asperger Syndrome. I have a degree and had been unemployed for 4 years due to my difficulties until recently. I like cycling, science, astronomy, own a motorcycle and am concerned about the environment. I would like to meet someone similar to myself, with similar interests - especially cycling, for friendship and understanding.

**GARETH BATEMAN**

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## LETTERS/CONTACTS

### SINGING

Selma Star  
Leicester

I wish I could do something worth while in my life. My inability to stick at this goes right against me.

One thing I do stick at better than others is my singing. I use backing tapes and sing pop songs like those by Madonna, Kylie Minogue, Abba, Sonia, The Bangles, Bannarama etc. I have done concerts using my backing tapes. But I sadly have very little opportunity to do much. I have only one or two (if very lucky) and it is many months before there is another very rare chance of a performance. My performances are at such places as Day Centres.

My chances are few and far between. How ever well I practice I still don't get very far. I could be the best singer around. Without the opportunities and with no contacts. I will never get anywhere with it. I am totally on my own with nobody to back me in anyway. I have no chance at all of meeting anyone who could gather into a band, because I cannot stick at things I haven't been able to learn to play an instrument.

Sadly though I am relatively more consistent on my singing , because of gross lack of opportunity and having no contacts, I often go weeks out of practice because I have lost incentive, when I know it will be many months before any chance to perform even one if I am lucky. I have nothing to aim my sights on and I lose heart. I would have a recording contract if I got lucky enough to go that far. Even just to entertain Day Centres and such, I have not got anywhere near enough opportunity.

I just spend my life getting older, another year passes me by and still NOTHING. I am 30 in seven months, that is why I so desperately want to do something before too many more years of my life are wasted and I get too old and unfit in my health to do anything, then it would be too late.

I am someone who needs a chance in life and nothing comes my way. I want to be able to look back on my life in my old age and say "I have done it, my life has been worthwhile". If things just drearily carry on as they are I will be a very unhappy, sad old woman regretting a life which has been empty and wasted, with nothing to show for it.



I just seem to be spending my empty worthless life doing only one thing. Crying for help. There must be more to life than just that.

I need to know someone to "get me in". I went a year ago trying to join a hockey team. I was on my own I knew nobody who knew anyone who plays hockey, over the weeks as I tried to talk to people at the hockey clubs, they all froze me out, it was obvious they didn't want me hanging around. This is how being a complete stranger totally alone, I was never excepted. If I had someone I knew who could introduce us to each other there would be more chance of me getting in. This is where contacts are needed.

"Its not what you know, its who you know". Another thing against me is Autism, however slight, that still goes against me, the hockey teams were "Normal" people someone slightly Autistic like me is a misfit.

Unfortunately I know nobody at all who could get me in with other singers and musicians, if I went alone I will be frozen out, just like the hockey team. this is where I need to be backed up.

Although Leicester is a City there is nothing for me, no opportunities, it will be years before anything is available for Autistic able adults in Leicester.

Waiting two years for this, waiting a couple of years for that, waiting two or three years for something else, is all my life seem to be. These years all add more years onto my age, making me older and eventually I will be too old and unfit in health for anything, what a waste.

All the being kept waiting has robbed me of at least half of my younger years. At almost 30 there are not too many years before I become middle aged.

I would love to be able to create my own songs, because I have never been able to stick at learning to play my keyboards properly I will need the help of other musicians but I can never get the opportunity of ever meeting such people.

I hope there is someone out there who could help me with this. So sad that John Lyons had to leave a year ago. Had he stayed I would have probably been a lot further with my life than I am now. I have got another year older and still got nowhere.

**SELMA STAR**



## LETTERS/CONTACTS

Richard Exley  
Liverpool

I was reading issue 6 of "Asperger United" and I immediately see there is an editorial on employment, this is great, but only to a point, the overall content is bias and as far as I can see unjustified, I am saying that the way that Dave has condemned the Conservative Party is unexplainable in my view.

Yes, some of the opinions maybe facts but under no circumstances should this type or any similar article, if I thought I was reading a manifesto for a particular party, well ok, **but** we aren't, remember we are reading a magazine for people with Asperger Syndrome, in order for this type of document to be published most people would see it as very controversial, I think also where "unemployment should be a forgotten word" is unrealistic, but also I add where people like the NAS and other charities/disabled industries should find jobs for unemployed/ disabled people is also a long way off as the NAS and similar organizations can't afford schemes due to the cuts and also the work it involves, yes, it would be nice in an ideal world, **but**, this is the real world and at the current time it wouldn't be possible.

If you wish to put my details out to anyone in the magazine, you can do,

I am also setting up a support group similar to the group down in Cardiff (which John & Barbara Keylock have set up) for people with Asperger Syndrome, currently it will be for people in Merseyside, North Wales, Lancashire, Cumbria, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Humberside, but if successful I'll expand further, for more information or if you want to help or have any ideas please contact me on 0151 708 5891 or 0151 527 2322, ext 11

**RICHARD EXLEY**

## SELF ADVOCACY WITH A PURPOSE

I believe the National Autistic Society could help people with Asperger Syndrome in many ways if a new group were started for them, which I hope would meet once a month for about two hours.

The purpose would be to give them the opportunity to make suggestions to the NAS and to each other on what help they and fellow sufferers might find useful, for example, about education, training, employment, housing and socialising, and to exchange knowledge any member of the group had about any of these things.

I would be glad if the NAS could provide us with a place to meet in and with someone from the NAS office to attend our meetings. I do not think the person need be an expert on Asperger Syndrome, but it would be helpful if they knew about the work of the NAS and also about provisions made by the state. We might also try to get guest speakers. Everybody with Asperger syndrome would be welcome, especially those of us who do not belong to a group.

How would a new group improve us individually?

1. It would give us a chance to make suggestions which would raise our self esteem. Many people with Asperger Syndrome feel ignored, which makes them more aggressive.
2. It would improve our social skills by giving us the opportunity to speak up in a civilised way on something which interests us all.
3. There is a chance we could do something about the issues we are discussing by getting our suggestions accepted by the NAS or by some other organisation.
4. We could also advise each other on our problem. It would not be roleplay: I am a firm believer in practising on the real thing.
5. Lastly, we could practise organisational skill as we would elect a committee to run our group.

The conference, organised for us by NAS was interesting but it only takes place once a year and it costs £10. It consist of a series of lectures, with very little discussion, which is quite different form the meetings I am suggesting.

**DAVID SHAMASH**