

Produced by and for people with Asperger syndrome

# Asperger *united*

29  
28 Edition Jan 2002

## Happy Birthday to The National Autistic Society! *Asperger United* Anthology

This year is the 40th anniversary of The National Autistic Society. We're celebrating at *Asperger United* by publishing a special Anthology: highlights of the last 29 issues of *Asperger United* plus writing and work which readers send in to mark the occasion!

"The Anthology is a special birthday present to The National Autistic Society and readers of *Asperger United*"

The *Asperger United* Anthology will be a booklet which we will send out free to all readers of *Asperger United* in 2002. Extra free copies will be sent out to everyone who appears in it and also on request.

The Anthology is a special birthday present to The National Autistic Society and readers of *Asperger United* from West Herts College in Watford. Students in the Printing Department are making the Anthology their special design and print project for 2002.

This means that they are designing and printing 2000 copies of the



### action for autism

Anthology booklets completely free of charge.

We are very grateful to the students and staff of West Herts College for making the *Asperger United* Anthology possible. Special thanks go to lecturers Tom Watson and Alison Lawson.

### Do you want to have your work in the *Asperger United* Anthology?

We want readers to send us their

"We want readers to send us their poems, letters, stories, articles and drawings for this anthology"

poems, letters, stories, articles and drawings for this anthology – anything which you think would

interest readers of *Asperger United*.

Please send entries to *Asperger United* Anthology:  
The National Autistic Society  
393 City Road  
London  
EC1V 1NG  
Tel: 020 7903 3595  
Fax: 020 7923 5788  
Email: [asp.ugd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.ugd@nas.org.uk)

Please make sure that your work reaches us no later than Tuesday 23 January. We apologise for this tight deadline - due to circumstances beyond our control.

A special *Asperger United* Anthology editorial board will be looking through all the 29 past issues of *Asperger United* as well as the 40th Anniversary submissions to decide what should be included. Only the best is good enough!

Please note that sadly we cannot publish all submissions, though we'd love to!

Please also make sure that you keep copies of anything you send to the *Asperger United* Anthology because unfortunately we cannot return any submissions. We look forward to hearing from you!





*Asperger United* is a self-help newsletter run by and for people with Asperger syndrome. The newsletter aims to put people with the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

*Asperger United* is free to people in the UK with a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome. We ask for a contribution of £6 per year from overseas readers and £10 from professionals and institutions to cover postage costs.

*Asperger United* is produced by an editorial group.

**Editor** John Joyce

**Additional support** The National Autistic Society's Publications Department

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

Asperger United  
c/o The National Autistic Society  
393 City Road  
London EC1V 1NG  
Tel: 020 7903 3595  
Fax: 020 7903 3767  
Email: [asp.utd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.utd@nas.org.uk)

**Subscribing to *Asperger United***

Tel: 020 7903 3541  
Fax: 020 7903 3767  
Email: [asp.utd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.utd@nas.org.uk)

All we need is your name and address and we will add you to the mailing list – free of charge to people with a diagnosis!

Thank you to George Cox who kindly produced the illustrations included in the Pen Pal Network section.  
Thank you to Graeme Lawson for producing the AU logo.

*Please note that the views expressed in Asperger United are not necessarily those of the editor, The National Autistic Society or those involved in the publication of the newsletter.*

## RUTLAND ASPERGER SUPPORT GROUP\*

### Services

Rutland Asperger Support Group is a newly formed group of parents with a special reason to meet on a regular basis. All of us have a child who has been diagnosed with, or is awaiting diagnosis of this autistic spectrum disorder. Meetings are planned for the second Saturday of each month to be held at The Parks School (The Family Room), Oakham.

We aim to offer support to any parent, grandparent or anyone who cares for an Asperger syndrome person. These meetings will enable exchanges of information, problem sharing and solving, as well as generally providing an opportunity to let off steam! We want to offer advice, support and a sympathetic ear.

Additionally, we want to 'build bridges' by means of a proposed Children's Club on a Saturday or perhaps after school and special family days out enabling sibling participation so they gain further understanding, guided activities and Entertainment, most of all we intend to have fun and allow our children the opportunities to become involved with those of a similar kind.

### Eligibility criteria

We welcome any parent or carer of a child who has been diagnosed with, or is awaiting diagnosis of Asperger syndrome. Membership is open to any family of an Asperger child living within Rutland, Stamford, Melton Mowbray or outlying villages.

How do other agencies make a referral to Rutland Asperger Support Group?

Please contact either:

Alyson Smith, Chairperson  
4 Stockenhall Mews  
Stretton  
Rutland  
Tel 01780 410 770 (after 6:00pm)

or

Julia Copeman, Publicity Co-ordinator  
The Anchorage  
46 Main Street  
Cottesmore  
Rutland  
Tel 01572 813 166



## Welcome and a Happy New Year to all readers

I hope everybody has had a happy Christmas and is looking forward to a happier new year.

As this millennium gets under way, we are reminded herein of less fortunate Asperger people whose communication difficulties prevent them telling us of their problems. An anonymous correspondent suggests we ignore them, perhaps at our own peril. Though I tend to disagree with the opinions, I have summarised them and responded by suggesting that no overt discrimination will be practised against the less able. Therefore, if you know anybody who has AU and is less able to communicate than you are, please encourage them to get in touch with AU and we will ensure that their problems are reported, and hope we can also direct them to the sources of solutions.

In future editions we will publish details of professional help available to AS People, both in coming to terms with

Asperger and with coping with life itself.

One aspect touched on in the anonymous letter was that of reclusiveness of people with disabilities. Thinking that disability excludes them from contributing to society is incorrect but people do need a lot of convincing. In truth their contribution may be of greater value than any from a person without disabilities. Unless a person has agoraphobia or claustrophobia, there is no reason why they should lock themselves away from the world. Of course there is also the contemplative side of the religious life.

I now invite all readers who have a contribution to make to sharpen their pen nibs and get writing, for the AU Anthology. You may also send in photos and paintings. Let's make the *Asperger United* Anthology a real winner!

Thank you

Your editor

John Joyce

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**Regular contributor, Michael Feldman tells AU about his summer adventure**

Every summer, at the boarding school I attended, weekly school trips were arranged for the children. One of the most popular destinations was Snowdonia in North Wales. Unfortunately I was never able to go but the desire to visit the area stayed with me into adulthood and, whilst on a walking holiday in Conwy this year, an expedition up Mount Snowdon was arranged. Here is my account of the experience.

7th August 2001

On the day our party took the coach to Snowdonia, the weather was absolutely appalling and we wondered whether the expedition would actually be called off. My friend who was with me was a bit anxious but I was determined to get up that mountain at all costs.



The coach dropped us off at the foot of Mount Snowdon, where we were able to stop for some refreshments before embarking on what would be one of the biggest challenges that many of us would ever face.

Our first approach was navigating some steps. As we progressed the climb became harder and my legs began to ache but I was determined to carry on and keep up with the remaining party.

As the expedition wore on, the weather got worse and the wind really began to gather strength. I half expected our guides Adrian and Andy to abandon the climb. But they didn't so we carried on despite the weather, dicing with danger and perhaps even putting our lives at risk.

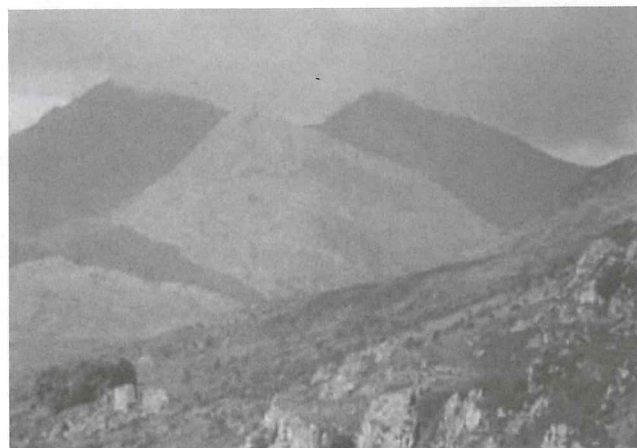
The most dangerous and difficult part of the expedition came when we approached a precipice. There must have been a drop of at least 1000 feet and the ledge we were standing on couldn't have been more than 3 feet wide. Above the ledge was a steep climb. It was during this ascent, that I began to panic and thought about giving up. I'm glad I didn't.

Eventually, after what was a gruelling climb, we reached the summit.

“ The fog and the mist looked beautiful and created a magical atmosphere ”

At the summit we stopped at the mountain café. Nearby was the Summit Railway Station and I wasted no time in photographing the trains and station sign. Now, although the weather was still atrocious, the fog and the mist looked beautiful and created a magical atmosphere.

On reflection, I dare say those who took part will remember the expedition for many years to come. I know I will. But, if I were to visit Snowdon again, I think I'd make it easy on myself and take the mountain railway instead. It's far less treacherous and I'll probably get to see more scenery!



**Michael Feldman**

*Thank you, Michael.*

*You have done better than I have in all forms of climbing, e.g. mountaineering, climbing the professional ladder!*

*John Joyce  
Editor*



**David Braunsberg writing on how he deals with stress and phobias.**

**Mister Horrible**

I am a high-functioning 42-year-old man with autism, diagnosed at the age of 4.

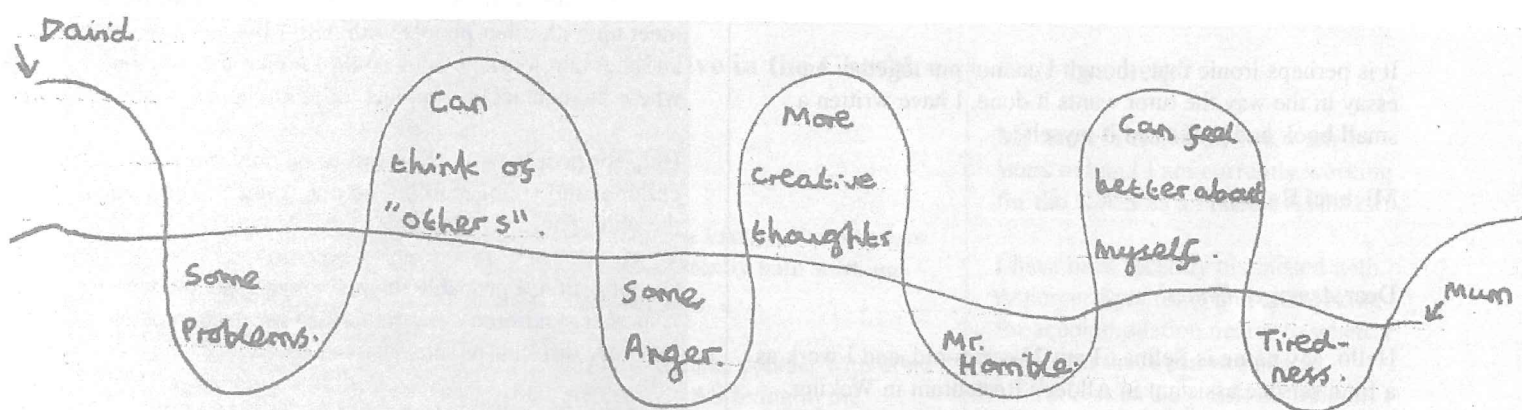
Some of my problems arise from spells of depression and of phobias which my counsellors have called 'Mr Horrible'. They have given me guidelines for overcoming these experiences on my own, and have told me that involving others by discussing my problems is not helpful. In their view only I alone can fight and overcome 'Mr Horrible' by logical thinking and writing down my thoughts.

be done. They cause feelings of tension or anger or the belief that I may have upset somebody who may take revenge and even kill me (phobias).

When trying to overcome such destructive thoughts I find it useful to use my stress ball, though sometimes when I am very tense I forget to use it.

On some occasions stress initiates migraine – severe headache and sickness – which I can overcome by resting and sleeping in a darkened room. On 'up' days I become creative, get on with my work and tasks and feel generally happy.

Talking to my Asperger friends, I find they also have such problems. I wonder how common this is and what others do about it.



The diagram above illustrates the fact that my moods are subject to cycles of steeper 'ups' and 'downs' than those of, for example, my mother. It is difficult to predict such cycles: the 'downs' can arise at any time, but are often related to stress arising from busy days ahead or urgent tasks to

**David Braunsberg**

*Thank you for your contribution, David. Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year!*

*John Joyce, Editor*



'Cliff Tops' painted by David Braunsberg, 1999



## letters to the editor

Dear *Asperger United*

In her booklet *Autistic Spectrum Disorders: an aid to diagnosis* Lorna Wing says 'Autistic disorders can and often do co-exist with dyslexia, language disorders or any other type of specific or general learning disability.'

I have dyslexia, but a rare type. I can spell all right but I have difficulty with reading, comprehension and essay writing. I have found that the educational establishment does not recognise that a person may be able to spell without any problems but could have difficulties in essay writing and other areas.

I wonder if any other subscribers to AU have either ordinary dyslexia or even the rare type that I have.

It is perhaps ironic that, though I cannot put together an essay in the way the tutor wants it done, I have written a small book and published it myself.

**Michael Barker**

Dear *Asperger United*

Hello, My name is Selina. I am 21-years-old, and I work as a food service assistant in Allder's Restaurant in Woking.

Readers may be interested to know about a social group for young people with Asperger syndrome in the Woking area in Surrey.

Two years ago my younger sister, my mum and her friend started the group. On our first meeting we had a BBQ and my sister invited some of her college friends.

The idea of the group is to give young people with Asperger syndrome the opportunity to go out socially just like anybody else. We also encourage young people without AS but who are sympathetic to join us.

Some of the activities we do are bowling, swimming, trampolining and Lazer Quest. We also have Christmas parties and regularly go to the pub. Usually about ten of us from all over Surrey meet up about once a month. Also in the summer a new social skills group in Godalming in Surrey was started for young people with Asperger syndrome, where we practise telephone and job interview skills and learn how to order things in pubs and restaurants.

**Selina Wood**

Dear John

Soon after my 73 birthday in July 2000 I heard a piece on BBC Radio 4 about Asperger syndrome. During the broadcast I woke up to the realisation that they were telling 'my story'. After knocking on a number of doors, one was opened to me at St George's Hospital in Tooting, London. A diagnosis of Asperger syndrome resulted.

Since June this year I have lived in a 'geriatrics barracks'- my pet name for a very nice sheltered accommodation complex.

Making new friends is difficult. I seem very different from the other residents and it's very difficult for me to meet up with other people with AS. I live in Croydon and the train journey from South London to Islington, where the contact group meet, does not appeal to me.

Help for people with AS seems to be only available to children and younger folk - no one wants to know about the older ones.

On reflection, I probably knew two other people with Asperger syndrome - my father and my grandmother - two very difficult people.

My late wife once said to me 'there has always been something wrong with you'. 'She did not live long enough to learn what it was.

Those who grow old knowing what is wrong with them are fortunate.

**Reece Bell**

*Thanks for your story Reece. Maybe it is a small consolation to you to know that you are not alone in having "something wrong" with you.*

*As far as I know there is no "perfect" human being, the allegedly "normal" being plagued with more disabilities and problems than us Aspergistas.*

*John Joyce*  
Editor





# How to reply to Pen Pals

- Please remember to let us know the full name (including surname) of the person who your letter is for.
- To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.
- We will pass your letter onto the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.

## Scott from York

My name is Scott. I am 25 years of age and I live in York.

I was diagnosed with having borderline Asperger syndrome in 1999. I enjoy reading, using a computer, and music.

I am a member of the Modern Jesus Army movement and would look forward to hearing from anyone with similar interests.

## Do you live in the Cheshire area?

Hi.

My name is Joanna, I'm 33 years old and currently both working and studying.

I'd like to make contact with other adults with AS living in the Cheshire area – to write to or maybe even to meet up with as a group in time.

Please contact me via *Asperger United*.

## Can you help?

My name is Neil Burrows, I am 24 years old and I am currently working for the N.A.S as a Finance Assistant.

I have been recently diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and am looking for accommodation nearer to where I work, but that I can reasonably afford. Not an easy task in London! I would like to perhaps stay in a room, stay with a family, all options considered. I can provide references if required.

Please contact via *Asperger United*.

## Musicians Wanted!

I am 28 years old and was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome four years ago.

I am a pianist, just embarking on a career providing incidental music for hotels, restaurants etc. I would like to play with others in a piano trio or quartet to provide background music for special occasions or just for fun. If there are any strings players out there who are interested, please contact me via *Asperger United*.

Thanks  
Robert  
Glos.

## New Year resolutions

We get lots of requests from readers of *Asperger United* for the Pen Pal section. The problem is that not enough people contact the people who are making the requests!

So if you're thinking of sending in your personal details, why not stop and think again?

It's much easier and less painful to contact people directly through *Asperger United*.

Make it your New Year resolution to write to at least one person in this issue of *Asperger United*!



## OCTOBER

Autumn bloom.  
Corn-coloured leaves  
On cornflake-covered trees,  
Spinning round  
And falling to the ground in the breeze.

Orange glaze.  
Rot-stricken apples lay forlorn  
Beside jewelled chestnuts untorn  
From their creamy cases  
Jealously protected by thorns.

Amber touch.  
The grass creeps into the shade.  
The green pond has decayed.  
The last dance of the drowned lovers  
Flickers through the leaves, then fades.

Still October.  
Summer has passed in a haze.  
Nine magpies fly away.  
The smoky skies  
Promise rain for another day.

Written by Richard Berd

Dear *Asperger United*,

As someone active in the Trade Union Movement, I would like to contact others who are active in it as we can accomplish a lot with a movement which has a natural solidarity culture. I know from my own experience of getting a motion through the Public and Commercial Services Union Benefits Agency Sector Conference without opposition and by acclamation on Invisible Disabilities (presented by our then branch chairman who describes himself as having Asperger syndrome and whose eldest child is autistic) that this is so, but also that widespread education is needed. If you are an active trade unionist, or are thinking of becoming one, please get in touch with me at via *Asperger United*.

Looking forward to hearing from you! Yours,

Adrian Whyatt

*Adrian, thanks for the contribution from a long-term member of PCS, BEC and IND Croydon.*

*Support for your views.*

John  
Editor

## ANOTHER POEM THAT NO-ONE WILL PRINT

I keep sending stuff off  
I feel like giving up.  
These days I don't seem to be  
Getting anywhere with my stuff.  
I've not written much  
For a few months now.  
I get no money for my stuff  
And not much love.

Sometimes I don't care what people think.  
As for me this is just another  
Poem that no-one will print.

Sometimes I think they should  
Do away with magazines, and books  
And give us all computers instead.  
I hate people saying  
'Books are good for folks' heads'.  
I'd rather look at a screen  
Than read a book, or magazine.  
Good poets give me bad dreams.

Sometimes I don't care what people think.  
As for me this is just another  
Poem that no-one will print.

I've spent years sitting in cafes,  
Hoping to get in print a lot.  
All I've ever got  
Are experts saying  
'your stuff isn't all that hot'.  
Then they wonder why  
I like no-one a lot  
As poetry is mostly all I've got.

Sometimes I don't care what people think.  
As for me, this is just another  
Poem that no-one will print.

Written 22nd July 2001 by David C. Miedzianik

*You have it on my authority that this poem will be published.*

John Joyce  
Editor



# THE HOBOS' BUS STOP

I'm sitting at the hobos' bus stop,  
No buses stop here,  
So the hobos collect and shelter.

I'm just sitting. Alongside, a plump young woman  
Eats a sandwich then points at a nearby café  
And says wistfully 'they do a lovely cup of tea in there.'

A couple come by, searching their pockets  
For the price of a cup of tea,  
Head off towards the café.

Nearby, an unshaven man lingers  
Over a home-made roll-up.  
Eventually he ambles away without speaking,

And I am left alone, in the hobos' home,  
Until a foreign-looking woman comes along  
And waits for a bus which will never stop here.

**A. Hart**

## RAIN

Eyes in the sky fall down on me  
But feel so soft and gentle  
On my skin.  
The tapping noise on the roof  
Makes me sleep an endless dream,  
That I hope from not to wake.

I see it not as water to shelter from  
But a rhythmic pattern in the sky.

From the mountains,  
To the rivers,  
To the sea.  
The end of a dance only to happen again.

Eyes in the sky fall down on me  
But feel so soft and gentle  
On my skin.  
The tapping noise on the roof  
Makes me sleep an endless dream,  
That I hope from not to wake.

I see it not as water to shelter from  
But a rhythmic pattern in the sky.

From the mountains,  
To the rivers,  
To the sea.  
The end of a dance only to happen again.

**Laura**

Dear John

I realised that I had a talent for writing stories and poems when I was about 10 years old. My Dad enjoys writing poetry so I think I take after him.

Many of my poems are about what's happening in the world today such as the terrorist attacks on America. I also have written some funny poems, which I like the most.

I prefer to make my poems rhyme as I find this easier. I have written over 50 poems in the last year and would love to get them published one day. I'm going to call my book 'A world of my poems' or 'Poems Galore'. I also hope that the proceeds of my books will go to charity to help less fortunate people.

I have decided to write some poems about my feelings towards having Asperger's syndrome. Here is one of them. I wrote this because I feel that Bullying is a very strong issue in my school and I have been bullied in the past. I hope you like it.

Thanks for a great magazine.

Anna Levermore  
age 15.

P.S. I would be happy to hear from anybody who writes poems or have had them published.

## BULLYING

Bullying.  
Hitting, kicking, punching, flicking,  
is what they do to me,  
I do have a life,  
can't they see?  
If they want to make friends,  
then bullying's not the case,  
can't they see the tears rolling down my face?

### **My Life with Undiagnosed Asperger Syndrome – a personal experience by Betty Marwick**

**T**his has been a momentous year for me. After a lifetime of perplexity I have been diagnosed with Asperger syndrome – at the age of 67!

As far back as I can remember I have felt 'different', afflicted with severe social phobia, endeavouring to maintain a semblance of normality and to function as others do. My childhood was pervaded by a vague uneasy sense that something was wrong with me, and a fear that other people would notice.

For some obscure reason, I didn't start school until I was 7-years-old (my father taught me to read and write). I found my schoolwork easy and enjoyable, despite making little effort. At the age of 11 I decided to start making a real effort, and became consistently top of the class. I supposed (mistakenly) that this proved that there couldn't be anything wrong with me.

In due course I left school with three A's at A level. Now as I confronted the outside world, I felt really out of my depth. I wondered whether I should try for university, but had little idea how to go about it; moreover, there was no way I could contemplate leaving home. I eventually ended up in a backwater of London University (commuting daily), one term late. Quite a fiasco. I nevertheless managed to gain a first-class degree in mathematics.

The next hurdle was obtaining a job. After several half-hearted attempts and distressing interviews, I was rescued by a recommendation by my former college. The job, with a major engineering firm, involved computer programming and statistical analysis. The work was agreeable enough. I managed to carve out a niche for myself, specialising in devising formulae, intricate work that didn't appeal to anyone else. There was never any question of promotion – I couldn't have handled that. I felt little sense of job satisfaction, having no interest in engineering, and I jumped at the chance of voluntary redundancy at the age of 49.

In recent years I have sometimes wondered whether I might have a touch of autism, but dismissed the idea because I didn't have learning difficulties. Then on 21 August 2000, I happened to catch an item on BBC Radio 4's 'You and Yours' programme, in which a man in his 70s spoke of having just been diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, and of his long standing difficulties. Most importantly, I learned that Asperger people may be highly intelligent and that their disabilities may not be noticed/recognised.

I raised the matter with my counsellor, and she referred me to the Maudsley Hospital for an assessment. This involved many hours over three sessions, covering life history, psychological testing, DNA analysis and MMRI brain scan. Then came the

big day, 21 May 2001, when I learned the outcome: the diagnosis was positive for Asperger syndrome, with my psychological profile confirming the evidence from my life history.

The diagnosis came as an immense relief, which seems a strange thing to say but is apparently a typical reaction. At last, an explanation for my life-long social and other difficulties. I feel more peaceful within myself knowing that there is a concrete reason for those difficulties, that it wasn't because I hadn't tried hard enough.

So many aspects of my life now fall into place. The consultant said I had done remarkably well to have achieved what I have – quite a boost to my self esteem! There are good things too about Asperger syndrome – insofar as one may have special qualities, skills and insights.

From my reading, it seems that Asperger syndrome may manifest in an astonishing variety of ways in different individuals. For example, I had supposed avoidance of sexual relationships to be inherent in the syndrome – yet it appears that some Asperger people long to find a partner, and may even marry. All very puzzling!

My particular problems include social phobia, lack of drive, and inability to organise and 'be in charge'. Many things were never an option for me, such as owning a car, or holidays abroad. Restaurants, pubs, hairdressers and such like are 'no-go'. I didn't succeed in using a telephone until I was 30, nor achieve independent living until I was 36. In short, I cannot handle the practical aspects of life, which other people take in their stride. But, in contrast to my restricted lifestyle, I enjoy a free, rich inner life.

I have also found a measure of fulfilment in my special interest, parapsychology (scientific study of the paranormal). I remember how thrilled I was to discover, at the age of 26, that such research existed. I have since contributed to the field, albeit in a critical capacity

**Mother died when I was 41. How I wish the diagnosis could have come during her lifetime, so that I could have said to her: 'It wasn't your fault and it wasn't mine either'.**

My mother was profoundly disappointed in me, especially as my deficiencies became more obvious in my teens and twenties. In her eyes, my social awkwardness was inexcusable. Then again



she would blame herself, for failing to bring me up correctly, or for the separation trauma when I was 3 years old - the doctors sent me away for several weeks because I was 'too clingy'. Mother remarked that I was 'never the same again'.

It now looks as though that event served merely to trigger my Asperger syndrome, and that something would have triggered it sooner or later. That thought in itself is quite liberating. Mother died when I was 41. How I wish the diagnosis could have come during her lifetime, so that I could have said to her: 'It wasn't your fault and it wasn't mine either'.

I now realise that my father had autistic traits. This is perhaps why my mother found life with him increasingly intolerable, they separated when I was 14. She settled with a new partner when I was 30 and, with her attention no longer focused on me life became much easier.

Throughout my life I have felt a deep sense of frustration, at failing to make the most of my intellectual gifts, and at missing out on so many opportunities. A diagnosis of Asperger syndrome in early life could have made such a difference, bringing help and understanding, and easing the tension between my mother and myself. But of course diagnostic assessment wasn't available in those days.

I first experienced depression at the age of 25, following the witnessing of a horrific road accident in which a young woman died in the resulting fire. It was a revelation, a dark revelation, triggering insight into the intolerable suffering and futility at the heart of reality. The shield of illusion, which mercifully protects most people most of the time, was shattered. My despair gradually resolved into a state of chronic existential depression - a rational, cognitive form of depression directed towards fundamental questions of existence.

Sometimes I think of myself as an unblinkered horse in a field of blinkered horses: they function better than I do because they are focussed on the immediate, undistracted by the wider reality.

Some 15 years later I began developing the 'ordinary' personal form of depression. Incidentally, MAOIs are the only class of antidepressants which work for me - I suspect because unlike most antidepressants they act on dopamine.

Judging from his insightful article on 'Coping with Depression' in the October 2001 edition of *Asperger United*, Peter Myers appears to have experienced both personal depression and existential depression. He argues that positive thinking is blinkered and unrealistic, but then so too is negative thinking. He considers that negative thinking has value in allowing the individual to explore hidden depths of the psyche, leading to creative and constructive thought. He advocates a balance between positive and negative thought patterns.

The question is: how far is a realistic, balanced view of existence conducive to overcoming depression, bearing in mind the immensity of human suffering? After all, research studies show that mildly depressed people and hence inclined to negative thinking tend to be more realistic than the non-depressed. In other words, perhaps the most realistic stance is to be mildly depressed - unless one is prepared to embrace some degree of illusion.

Asperger people are said to perceive the world differently from 'normal' people. Again, I have more than once come across the idea that Asperger people tend to see 'the whole picture' rather than editing input for what is personally relevant. Conceivably, then, Asperger people may be more prone than 'normal' people to existential depression in their perception of reality. I wonder whether any other readers have experienced this atypical form of depression, and, if so, whether they have succeeded in coming to terms with it.

**Betty Markwick**

*Thank you, Betty. A fine expose of dealing with the Syndrome by an older person.*

*John Joyce (age 51)  
Editor*

### Last issue's competition

We had so many entries for October's competition that we've decided to choose two winners this time. The winning entries were A-M-A-Z-I-N-G by Reece Bell and Allsorts by Alex Makin, who will each receive two packs of Peter Myers' post-cards. Listed below are some of the entries that were sent in:

*A-M-A-Z-I-N-G*

*Shaped Facial Emotions*

*The many expressions of a journey through life*

*HACES*

*Emotions: The 4th Dimension*

*Can you see the real me*

*Face to Face*

*Where's Smiley*

*Mood Mosaic*

*Multi Faceted*

*Allsorts*

*Thoughts and how they affect us*

*Different Personalities*

*Changing faces*

*Life*

*Spot the Asperger*

*All God's children*

### Response to anonymous letter

We received an anonymous letter complaining of our imbalance. It states that we take little notice of people who are in need of help and ignore their contributions. We feel that *Asperger United* is an example of self help. It highlights the achievements of its readers but does not discriminate against those who cannot perform to a high degree.

I am employed but have not been found good enough for advancement, therefore failing to turn a job into a career. My editorial job is part time (in my own time).

We cannot publish every article that we receive because we simply do not have the space and we also need to keep postal charges down so that we can allow people with Asperger syndrome to receive AU free of charge.

We will however publish letters and articles by people whose experiences are less positive in future editions.

John Joyce  
Editor

### Participants Required for Memory Research

If you are aged between 17 and 55 years and have a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome or Asperger disorder, you might be interested in participating in some research into memory functioning in this condition.

You would be asked to come to City University, London for one or more half-day sessions. We will pay your travel costs together with a small fee for participation.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, please contact:

Sebastian Gaigg  
Department of Psychology  
City University, London  
Northampton Square  
London EC1V 0HB

Telephone: 020 7040 8544

Fax: 020 7040 8581 (please mark faxes clearly: For the attention of Sebastian Gaigg)

email: s.b.gaigg@city.ac.uk

## New book news

### *The other half of Asperger syndrome* by Maxine Aston

The National Autistic Society publishes a number of books aimed at people with autism and Asperger syndrome as well as their teachers, parents and carers. Now NAS publications have produced a new book for people who are in a relationship with someone who has Asperger syndrome.

The author Maxine Aston is a qualified Relate counsellor who specialises in this area. She explores the relationships of adults with Asperger syndrome as part of her academic research and from her own personal experience.

She writes with insight and her positive attitude and strategies make this an essential guide for both halves of a couple in an intimate relationship, where one half is a person with Asperger syndrome.

The book includes an introduction by Dr Tony Attwood, the leading expert on Asperger syndrome.

*The other half of Asperger syndrome* is published by The National Autistic Society and costs just £6.00.

### Special offer to readers of *Asperger United*!

Normally we charge £3 postage and packing on book orders but *Asperger United* readers can get their copies without this additional charge until 28 February 2002.

Just send your order, together with a cheque made payable to NAS or your credit card details, to *Asperger United*.

This is the first of a new regular column in *Asperger United*. Please also let us know about any other books which you think *Asperger United* readers should know about.



Asperger United, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road,  
London EC1V 1NG.  
Telephone: 020 7833 2299. Fax: 020 7833 9666.  
Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk  
Website: www.nas.org.uk



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