

Produced by and for people who have autism-spectrum conditions

# Asperger *United*

Edition 81 January 2015

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# Asperger United

*Asperger United* is a magazine run by and for adults with autism-spectrum conditions (although some parents subscribe on behalf of their under-sixteens). The magazine aims to put people who have the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Please note that *AU* receives over 200 letters each quarter so it is not possible to respond to every one, nor for every contribution to be printed. Discussions on editorial choices will not be entered into. *AU* protects the identity of contributors by not printing full names unless the writer asks for his or her full name to be used.

*Asperger United* is free. To subscribe you, we need your postal address. We ask for a contribution of £9 per year from overseas readers and £15 from professionals and institutions to cover postage costs. Please make cheques payable to the NAS. Organisations requiring multiple copies: no extra fee, please get in touch.

**Editor:** the Goth

**National Autistic Society production support:** the Publications Team

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*Asperger United* was founded in 1993 by Pamela Yates and Patricia Howlin, in association with the Maudsley Hospital, and Mark Bebbington and Judy Lynch of the National Autistic Society.

This was in response to a recognised dearth of services for people with Asperger syndrome and the potential for self help and networking as a means of support for this group.

The provisions for editor's and sub-editor's post was to develop a publication that was truly the voice of the people it was aimed at. This post also provided the possibility of work experience and responsibility and has benefited those who have held the position. These are Richard Exley, David Wright, Martin Coppola, Ian Reynolds, John Joyce and the current editor, the Goth (who does not wear black).

Pamela Yates provided support and advice to the editors until the publication was handed over to the National Autistic Society in 2000.

The name *Asperger United* was chosen by the group of original readers as the most "appropriate name" for the publication. This was suggested by Anna Kaczynski, formerly Cohen.

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.

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 magazine.

*Asperger United* is available in **large print** on A3 sheets (double the size of this page). If you need large print, please let us know using the postal or email address above.

Contributions for the next issue should reach *AU* by **16 February 2015**



**Welcome** to the January edition of *Asperger United*.

By pulling together everything about *Doctor Who?* from the last few years, I've created the closest thing to a fandom edition that I can. (I'm holding back just one letter about fandoms for a future issue, because it wasn't *Doctor Who?* and there was so much other good stuff I wanted to include in this issue.)

I find it strange that fandom proved to be such an unpopular topic, so if you have any thoughts on why that is, let me know.

For next time I have suggested the theme of late diagnosis, as several people have contacted me about this in the last few months (including the author of the book reviewed on page 13). I've had the theme of diagnosis before, but maybe a more specific theme will inspire more people to write something. Of course, you're free to write in about diagnosis in general, and to define "late" any way you like, though it's often applied to people who are diagnosed after they have left continuous, full-time education (which is usually 16 or 18).

the Editor

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**the *Doctor Who?* edition — the next issue notice is on page 9**

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## Turning the garden shed into a TARDIS

by James Christie

© James Christie 2014

I built the garden shed the other day. Actually it took two weeks, I had to uprate the original specifications (if the manufacturer says use a 60 mm screw, use a 70 mm screw. . .), create a windowsill from scratch and bolster the foundations while the shed itself teetered above my head at a ninety degree angle restrained only by a ladder wedged up its underside. What a daft way to die if it had fallen. One can imagine the headlines:

ODD AUTHOR AND ASPERGER KILLED  
BY SHED

or . . .

ASPERGER GONE TO HELL WITH DRU,  
MOST ATYPICAL

or, most accurately . . .

WHAT A STUPID WAY TO GO.

But the shed didn't fall on my head, though some may think it might have improved my writing if it had. It also seemed some sort of internal mechanic kept watch on my construction, calling up to my conscious mind from a neurological engineering in the manner of a deranged Scotty with comments like:

"Ye cannae do that, the crossbeams willnae take the strain . . ."

"Ye're really gonnae gie yersel' a hernia this time . . ."

and, most frequently:

"Are ye com-pletely deranged!!!"

And so it came to pass that I put the final bolt on the door, added the coat of arms to the finial

and finished the wood in a soft shade of harvest gold, nicknaming the shed my Type-40 TARDIS and explaining away the fact that it looked nothing like a nineteen-sixties police box with the simple comment that "the chameleon circuit on this one actually works."

Not exactly newsworthy, of course, except for the fact that in Barbara Jacob's helpful book, *Loving Mr Spock*, an early but lucid, analytical and realistic look at life with an Asperger, she had said:

"Don't expect any DIY or much help around the house. Aspergers can be very good at arranging things, but can take hours over a simple task, and are too clumsy in subtle ways to do decorating or home improvement."

With regard to her Asperger spouse, a contributor to *Spock* also commented that:

"He often strips screws, breaks components when he is assembling things, because he fanatically over-tightens. He is so precise he makes simple jobs very complex and time-consuming."

However, although there certainly were echoes of this in my own behaviour (plus some swearing when I broke another drill bit . . .), I tightened screws but knew when to stop, selected the right tool for the job and erected the whole thing efficiently and without ego.

So although Aspergers can be a great excuse to avoid doing jobs around the house, it's not a total get-out clause.

Why?

Well, apart from the fact that autism is a broad spectrum disorder and those on the spectrum are as different from each other as



chalk is from cheese, there are (very roughly) two types of Asperger — the focused and the unfocused. There are those who painstakingly grind their way through the flood of information coming at them and slowly, carefully, sometimes crudely, make the right decision. The Mr Spocks who work it out with hard logic and no little effort. Carrying out functions under manual control which neuro-typicals deftly fly through on autopilot.

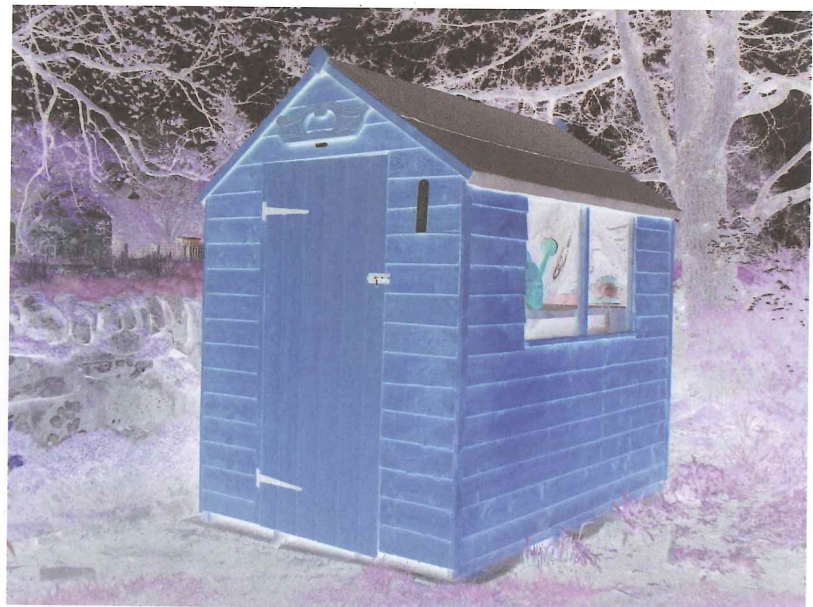
Then there are the unfocused others, like Danny in *Loving Mr Spock*, who:

“...actually managed to put the wardrobe together, in a makeshift kind of way, but had to prop it up with a piece of wood. The rest of the bedroom remained in the boxes. It was still there the last time I looked.”

Overwhelmed by the information they cannot filter and unable to let up on their need for precision, they may indeed be dunces at DIY; and it must firmly be remembered that mundane tasks which are easy for neuro-typicals may be like climbing Everest for those with autism.

So I was pretty pleased to finish my shed, manage the house and even work the washing machine efficiently while Mum had a brief stay in hospital. It may seem a bit soulless, but at least she had a clean, tidy, neat and ordered home to return to when the time came. Asperger's has its advantages.

And we also have our childlike imagination. My shed became a TARDIS and sparked a renewed interest in *Doctor Who*?; and though I can't quite claim it's dimensionally



### James's chameleon circuit seems to have some sort of glitch

transcendental, that golden box at the bottom of the garden looks to me like a ship ready to cross the universe.

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James Christie is the author of *Dear Miss Landau*. He was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, a mild form of autism, at the age of 37 in 2002. He lives in the Scottish Borders when not time-travelling through other galaxies.



## Confessions of an Aspie fangirl

by Laura

Everyone has something that they love and something that they're passionate about.

It doesn't matter if that something is a TV show, or a video game, or a certain style of music, everyone loves something. In my case, I get rather excitable if *Doctor Who*? comes on TV.

Sometimes the pressure of life can get a little bit too much and a time-out is needed, and for me, watching an episode of *Doctor Who*? is the perfect escapism. No longer am I stressing about a piece of coursework or learning lines (I am currently a drama student). Instead, I am in the TARDIS with David Tennant, meeting new creatures, seeing new planets and saving countless civilisations. Then I come back into the real world, with more focus, and get the task done.

Being in a fandom is being part of a community — despite dysfunctions, everyone works together. It is also a great way to make friends. In public, I feel very nervous about meeting new people whom I know nothing about. But when you're talking to someone and you know they are part of your fandom, there is less pressure to think of a topic to start a conversation with, and end up relying on the weather.

Being in a fandom allows you to express yourself without being judged for having “limited” interests (as some people perceive). It can inspire you to create fan-art, write fan-fiction and let your imagination run free. You can meet other people who like the same interest at conventions. You can even dress up as characters (also known as “cosplaying”). I recently cosplayed David Tennant's tenth Doctor for the Fiftieth Anniversary and loads of people commented on how cool it looked. It made me feel like I was part of something amazing. And everyone is so supportive, and offers advice and lovely comment on things that you do.

There are a couple of drawbacks to fandom. Firstly, the jargon: talking about “shipping” it doesn't mean naval fleets. Shipping is putting two characters together, because you like the thought of them being in a relationship — for example, in *Sherlock*, some people ship “Johnlock”, John and Sherlock. Although the characters are not in a relationship on the show, some people like the thought of it.

Other terms include “OTP”, which stands for “one true pairing”. This means the two people you ship the most. For example, someone may say that Tenxrose is their OTP — this means that they love the idea of *Doctor Who*?’s tenth Doctor and Rose Tyler being in a relationship. Similar to this is BroTP, referring to a “bromance”. If you're wondering, my BroTP is Tatennant, or Catherine Tate and David Tennant, because of their chemistry on stage and behind the scenes in *Doctor Who: confidential*.

Secondly, some of my friends do not share my enthusiasm. If I refer to a line from *Doctor Who*?, sometimes they laugh along, but other times they get a little bit annoyed and wish that I'd talk about something different. But when I confessed to my best friend that I was a *Doctor Who*? fan, it brought us closer as friends — we sometimes quote lines from the show and get excited about it together.

So, fandoms. I think they're great — they unite people over a love of something, and it's a great way to make friends. Sure, there are some aspects that I don't really like, but I think the positives outbalance the negatives. It's like a second family, and I don't need to feel self-conscious about my Asperger's and worry that fellow Whovians will judge me — because they don't. They love and care about me like they're my brother or sister. And it's beautiful.

If only all of society was this understanding.



# Pen pals

## Pen pal number 187

Hello, I'm Nick,

I am 29 years old and I'm from York. I like football, reading and I do voluntary work at St Nicholas' Fields. I consider myself to be friendly, genuine and honest. I look forward to hearing from you. I support York City and Middlesbrough; I also like watching football on television. I go to many social activities where I live.

Best wishes,

Nicholas

*Nick, please write in again with your address, otherwise I won't be able to send you any letters, Editor.*

## Pen pal number 188

Hi all, my name is Matt, I live in Birmingham, I am 24 years old and was diagnosed with Asperger's, autism and ADHD when I was 10.

I love to write poetry and short novels and I love sharing these with people for feedback and opinions. I see myself as an outgoing and bubbly person with an addictive personality.

I am an avid Elvis Presley fan. I think he is amazing.

I would be keen to write to someone with similar interests but this isn't essential. I am not fussed at age either, but would prefer to write to females as I have some insecurities when it comes to men.

## How to place a pen-pal advert

- > All you need to do is send your advert along with your name and address (and email address if you want) to *Asperger United*. You can use the Royal Mail or email. The next pen-pal number will be given to your advert when it arrives.
- > Please note that *AU* does not print dating adverts, as it is unable to provide suitable support.
- > Those under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen-pal advertisement in *Asperger United*.

## How to reply to pen pals

- > Please remember to let us know the name and number of the person whom your letter is for. (All pen pals are numbered by the editor, not the person who sends in the advert.)
- > Please remember to put your address on your letter.
- > To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG, or email [asp.utd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.utd@nas.org.uk)
- > We will pass your letter on to the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.
- > Please note that all pen-pal letters sent via *Asperger United* are opened before being passed on.

### **\*\*Important notice — please read\*\***

*Asperger United* is happy to publish pen-pal advertisements but we must stress that we are not a pen-pal or introduction organisation. We do not match people up and we cannot monitor letters (other than the first letter, that is sent via us) so please be cautious when releasing personal details in your letters. The National Autistic Society / *Asperger United* cannot intervene or be held responsible for any ensuing correspondence between letter-writers.

## Pen pal number 189

**Hi! My name is Thomas** and I am 30 years old. Ten years ago I was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, bipolar, and dyslexia (my dad has typed this).

My dad was working in Africa where he met and married my mum, and I was their first-born. I have a brother and sister and we live in the UK along with our friendly little dog. I enjoy walking the dog, with the family. I had been in a care home the past few years but now I am back with my family who have remained close. I love to meet people but have to be careful to listen to what they say and not to speak too much! I also like computer games and watching videos of my favourite singers (eg. Phil Collins and Avril Lavigne). I like doing drawings and paintings and I share this hobby with my mum. I used to spend a lot of time doing tae kwon do which I still like but need to start practising again. My aim is to be world champion in tae kwon do — I have to reach black belt first. My other love is cricket — I don't actually do it, but it's good. I am a bit plump! I like art — I did a college course for it! And passed. :D

I like going out for meals with my family, and have a special liking for Chinese food.

Although I still need to improve communication skills, people regard me as a friendly person and I would love to have pen pals and get to know people with whom I can share experiences and friendship.

I love watching *Come dine with me*, *X-Factor* and things like that!

I like the cinema and watching cool films — you know, fun-loving films. Even kids films. I like watching martial arts.

Life is good if you grab it — by its fores!!

I am being greedy: please tell me about yourself!

*Eleven pen-pal adverts have been held over for publication in the next three issues, Editor.*

## Pen pal number 190

**Hi, I'm Andy.** I am 30 years old and I have dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder and Asperger's syndrome. I have been obsessed with Tom Cruise since I went to see the first *Mission Impossible* movie in the summer of 1996. I have attended forty-six matinees of his movies and I have seen every movie he has ever been in. I also listen to 70s rock music, Judas Priest in particular, and I enjoy following the football and the rugby!

## Pen pal number 191

**I am Dan,** 24 years old and have a part time job as an IT engineer in Manchester. I work with four people and this small environment has helped me overcome my social aspects of having Asperger's.

I can help Adeinne or anyone that wishes to speak to me, to overcome the difficulties that they face.

I like wrestling, football, tennis, golf.

I like to play pc games such as *Guild Wars 2*, as MMO/MMORPGs are my favourite games. I have built my own desktop computer for gaming.

I can cook nice meals like spaghetti bolognese, shepherd's pie, roast chicken, soups.

I like most animals, except big spiders or huge bees (don't know how to get a bee out my window).

I don't like theme parks (rollercoasters make me ill) and I dislike heights, but I don't mind flying.

I also played the drums and like progressive rock, progressive metal and djent music (will teach you what that is).



## Relationships . . . there's hope

by James McCarty

I used to think I would not be suited to relationships. I was diagnosed with Asperger's when I was 26 and the more I learned about the condition, the more I understood it was the reason why I was only interested in my own hobbies. I was often recognised for insisting on just doing "my own thing, my own way." I know now that would be considered self-centred, especially in a relationship.

Then someone asked me "If that girl asked you to do something, would you do it?" And I realised I would . . . for her.

I came to see I was misjudging the situation because I was overlooking the thing that could make all the difference — my love for someone.

At some point in your life it is possible that you might meet someone you find yourself caring for so much that you'll do anything for them.

You'll sit through that film with them that isn't usually your taste, just so you can enjoy sitting there with your arm around them.

You might agree to go to that social place with them — provided they stay with you while you are there.

Then you can always ask them if they will do the same for you.

Probably the most amazing thought was, even though I've always hated cold winters, there's a certain young lady I would go to the North Pole with if she wanted me to!

As much as I like to do things my own way, undoubtedly because of the influence of AS, I respected other people for doing their own thing, their own way, especially if they could say why they'd made those choices. That was interesting.

You may even be able to use your condition to its advantage in a relationship.

My Asperger's syndrome makes my mind constantly analytical. This means I can always see the good and bad sides of any situation, and on most occasions I can focus on the good.

When a friend of mine was ill and feeling depressed, I could not stand to see her like that and wanted to help. My favourite subjects were creative writing and media, so I designed and wrote a fictional magazine article for her complimenting her on all her achievements and the good things she's done in her life. This may have been unusual, but the fact that I'd done it for her, to make her feel better about herself, was appealing to her. She was very pleased. She even telephoned her mother and read it to her.

Then she asked me, "What do you call your problem again?"

I told her "Asperger's syndrome". She replied "And you've turned out gorgeous." Although I don't have romantic feelings for her, her reaction made me realise — find a way to express yourself in a positive way, any way that you can, then if you want a relationship and have feelings for someone — there's hope.

If sufficient material is sent in, the theme for April will be **late diagnosis** or **creativity**. Vote with your contributions: the more submissions on a subject sent in (from different people), the more likely that that subject will be the theme. Writing on any subject is still welcome, as are ideas for new themes, fillers (for putting in small spaces like this) and artwork. Remember, if you want to see different content in *AU*, the best way to change it is to send something in!

## letters to the Editor

Dear Goth

Firstly, alleviating Christmas loneliness.

When I had a driving licence I would go as far as Crianlarich on Christmas Days to enjoy such delights as low cloud streaming below Ben More's snowcapped summit. Now I am effectively under house arrest on Christmas, Boxing and Hogmanay days and the second of January I have appealed in the local press for fellow sufferers to join me on photo-rambles on those most dreaded days of the year, and in the evenings I would demonstrate my creative crafts with scrap materials. I have been savagely attacked by Christians for offering hospitality to lonely people on Christmas Days indeed *expelled* from one group for that I would like to contact fellow refugees from Christmas in the hope that one of us can *drive* and take a car load to any number of delightful places as far as Crianlarich, where I would demonstrate how to operate 35mm non-adjustable cameras as we walked along *safe* farm tracks and the first snows will bedeck the mountains. Then after dark I would demonstrate all my shoestring crafts.

Secondly, creativity. My home is crammed to capacity with all the fruits of my lifetime's wanton, compulsive creativity: a hundred folders full of stories, almost completed novels and videoscripts. I have lost count of the photographs I have produced, including very many colour enlargements showing mountaintop vistas and ancient monuments in Britain and overseas while I have very many unique model trains built of recycled materials, including engines with electric motors that cost just £5 to build, which are all, however, wider, taller and thus incompatible with Hornby-scale trains. I dearly want to pass on my experience but I am thwarted because I have the very utmost difficulty with computers at the best of times.

I hope therefore to enrich the lives of all who can reach me in Dunfermline.

Yours faithfully,

David

Dear Goth,

the [www.auties.org](http://www.auties.org) site by Donna Williams is still going, but it's a very tricky site to navigate — even for the woman who does computer stuff for me — and I can barely even log on, so maybe that's one of the reasons for limited popularity.

[www.autismsupportnetwork.com](http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com) is okay but everyone and nearly everything and all the specialists seem to be USA-based. However, it's easier to access.

[www.talkaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.talkaboutautism.org.uk) is a similar site, more UK-based; I haven't found it helpful due to the professionals and self-employed types (including one who says she's an Asperger) being unable or unwilling to take in anything I told them, but other people might find it more helpful if they communicate better.

Could it be possible to list people in AU — could I be put in to do gardening, cleaning, cooking, DIY, cat-sitting, and so on (Norfolk)? Lots more AS people than me seem to be non-computer, so a printed list may be better than the sites above.

Also, if people want help with computers for one or two hours a week, I got somewhere years ago by putting ads up in local village halls and churches, newsagents', shops, Post Offices and anywhere with a notice board. Local and national press are expensive and people want many more hours. Also, when you find a person, if they can't continue with the computer help, they can place an online ad, and people respond within minutes sometimes. Don't bother with the Council, Social Services or local or national disability organisations as none of them provide computer help, so you will waste time and money.

I really don't believe the majority of NTs are capable of understanding or even imagining what AS experience. I used to think they were being obtuse deliberately, but not now. "Perhaps the autistic condition, by its very



## letters to the Editor (continued), another letter, and a notice

nature cannot be experienced empathetically” or, indeed, “can only process what they echo.”

Maybe, if this can be a starting point, (instead of endless telling NTs stuff they won’t or can’t understand) work out a different strategy for negotiating NTs and dealing with an NT world.

All the best,

**DS Linney**

*Dear readers, unfortunately, I don't think I can afford the liability insurance for printing small-ad-type listings in AU. I can also offer no guarantee that everyone advertising or responding to an ad would be honest, nor can I guarantee that every respondent was a subscriber, nor that every advertiser and every respondent was on the autism spectrum (I know some of you will care about these things). So I think it's an idea with many difficulties, but it can still be discussed.*

*Let me know what you think, Editor.*

---

**Hello AU readers,**

I refer to Edition 80 of *AU* (October 2014).

I am guessing that it is no coincidence that the features by Tim (page 4) and Christopher (page 5) were put side by side in *AU*. The phrase “compare and contrast” comes to mind.

I am also guessing that the feature by Tim was not well received by some, perhaps many, perhaps most *AU* readers. I do not live the life that Tim lives, only Tim lives that life. So I have no idea as to how hard Tim’s life is. I have no idea how hard “the autism” makes it.

But, Tim, I can tell you that I am 100% glad to be born. I was not born perfect. Perhaps some would say “far from perfect”. But, my 100% glad to be born remains.

Tim, I wonder if, when you read *AU* contributions, your wondering about selective mandatory sterilisation will eventually come to the conclusion: NO. I hope so. The evidence suggests NO to be the correct conclusion.

**Michael**

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## Make flags and banners with others

### Draw and paint on large cloth

Place: The Arts Hut, Finsbury Park

(Lower Gate of Finsbury Park, off Seven Sisters Road, close to Blackstock Road)

Day: Mondays

Time: 1.45 pm–3 pm

Cost: £6 — Art materials provided

This is an inclusive adult art project open to all.

It welcomes people on the autistic spectrum and with diverse gifts and abilities.

**Book for a one off taster and see if you like it.**

Contact the tutor:

**Ruth Solomon**

Mobile: 07940 890 418

Email: [yellruthtoday@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:yellruthtoday@yahoo.co.uk)

## An obsession with space and time, but how it is really helping us to cope with change

by Kim

Like a lot of Aspies I have had my fair share of obsessions. Currently it's *Doctor who?* and *Video game high school*, (a show that is on Netflix). I have every *Doctor who?* book that has been published as well as every new season of *Doctor who?*, as well as the anniversary DVDs from the classic years. I live, breathe and I'd eat *Doctor who?* if I was able to. One shelf of my bookcase is dedicated to *Doctor who?* DVDs, whilst another bookcase is filled with the new series adventure books and I have found myself in a dilemma as to where my DVDs of Peter Capaldi live, as he is the new doctor. I have posters on my wall and scour the Internet for anything to do with *Doctor who?* To me life without the Doctor in any way shape or form would be unbearable. I know that a lot of people who are on the autistic spectrum find themselves with a liking to the Doctor. But why? It is a question that I have been asking myself for ages and am unable to get an answer to. The Doctor can go anywhere in space or time, can be young or old and can save anyone and defeat everyone. But why does this time-travelling "madman with a box" manage to capture the hearts of most Aspies? As we all know, we hate a change in anything, but in *Doctor who?* change is always in the shadows. We know that, sometime in the future, the companions will change, and we also realise that in time the actor playing the Doctor will change, but we still watch and wonder at this creation. We are glued to every episode and every prequel with baited breath, we gather as much info as we can and we wait, we wait for the glorious day that *Doctor who?* is back on the TV. Recently there was an article in the papers about a little autistic girl who was really worried and upset that her hero had changed. This little girl used to go on loads of adventures with the Doctor and Clara and, when she heard that the Doctor was changing, was worried that the new Doctor wouldn't like her and wouldn't

want to come on adventures. This little girl was lucky enough to be in Cardiff when she came across the filming of the new series and was even luckier to be introduced to Peter Capaldi, and Jenna Coleman where her mum explained that she was a massive fan but was worried that the new Doctor wouldn't like her or go on adventures. Instead of dismissing this little girl the producer of *Doctor who?* introduced her to Peter and Jenna, who (according to the reports of her mum and other family members) took the time to talk to her, even though her autism meant that she would not talk to them. In fact (and again I have only seen this in the video) both Jenna and Peter made sure that the little girl was as comfortable as possible. Both got down to her height and both talked to her like she was the only child in the world, they saw her a fan not a fan with autism. Having explained her problem to Peter Capaldi, he got out his phone and still talking to the little girl went through his pictures until he came to one of himself, Matt and Jenna. He then proceeds to tell this little girl that he has been given permission of Matt Smith himself to play the Doctor and that there will be change in the series, but that some change can be good. He then asks if he has the little girl's permission to play the Doctor, reassuring her that although another actor has taken Matt's place, he is still the Doctor and that she can continue on her adventures through time and space with the Doctor and Clara.

*Doctor who?* is all about change, he changes where he goes, he changes his companions, he changes history and he changes his face, and as people on the autistic spectrum we can understand that. Change is inevitable, it happens whether we like it or not, as Aspies we change our obsessions, sometimes on a daily basis, sometimes weekly and sometimes never. As we



mature our tastes change and what was once our full obsession is put on the back burner. We can have boxes and boxes full of things that we collected when we were last obsessed with something. I know that at the moment my "love" for *Video game high school* is costing me some serious money, with buying items from the United States as well as having some serious shares in Amazon and the BBC shop due to all the money I spend on there for *Doctor who*?

Yes our obsessions are laughable to everyone else, but to us they are serious and very much loved. It is our comfort in a world where nothing makes sense to us, where social chat is a foreign language and the basic body language can leave us feeling left out and stuck in a Wonderland. Our obsessions save us from having to negotiate tricky problems, as no one can take them away from us. If *Doctor who*? is not on TV, we are able to watch his adventures over and over again on DVD, read about his adventures due to the books and process information about him that no one else but a serious Whovian would care to know about. Obsessions to an Aspie is a warm cuddle in the world of difficulties and noise. It makes us more unique than we already are, I know that if places get too loud for me I go through the Doctors in my head as a way of calming me down. It's a way of getting through the aspects of a NT life in an Aspie way. Yes, people who are NT think we are strange, but we think that they are strange: why can't they see the aspect of watching only *Doctor who*?, trains, etc. is comforting and enjoyable? To Aspies coping with NT life, it is difficult enough and so we rely on our obsessions to get us through the day, week, whatever. Life is stressful enough as it is, so maybe, just maybe, we should show our obsessions with pride. Who knows, the next regeneration of the Doctor might be someone with autism!

I really would like to hear people's views on this and would more-so love to hear from other *Doctor who*? fans. Please contact me through the editor.

## **Very late diagnosis of Asperger syndrome (autism spectrum disorder)**

**How seeking a diagnosis in  
adulthood can change your life**

**by Philip Wylie**

**Jessica Kingsley Publishers**

**ISBN 978 1 84905 433 1**

**£13.99 / \$19.95**

**review by the Goth**

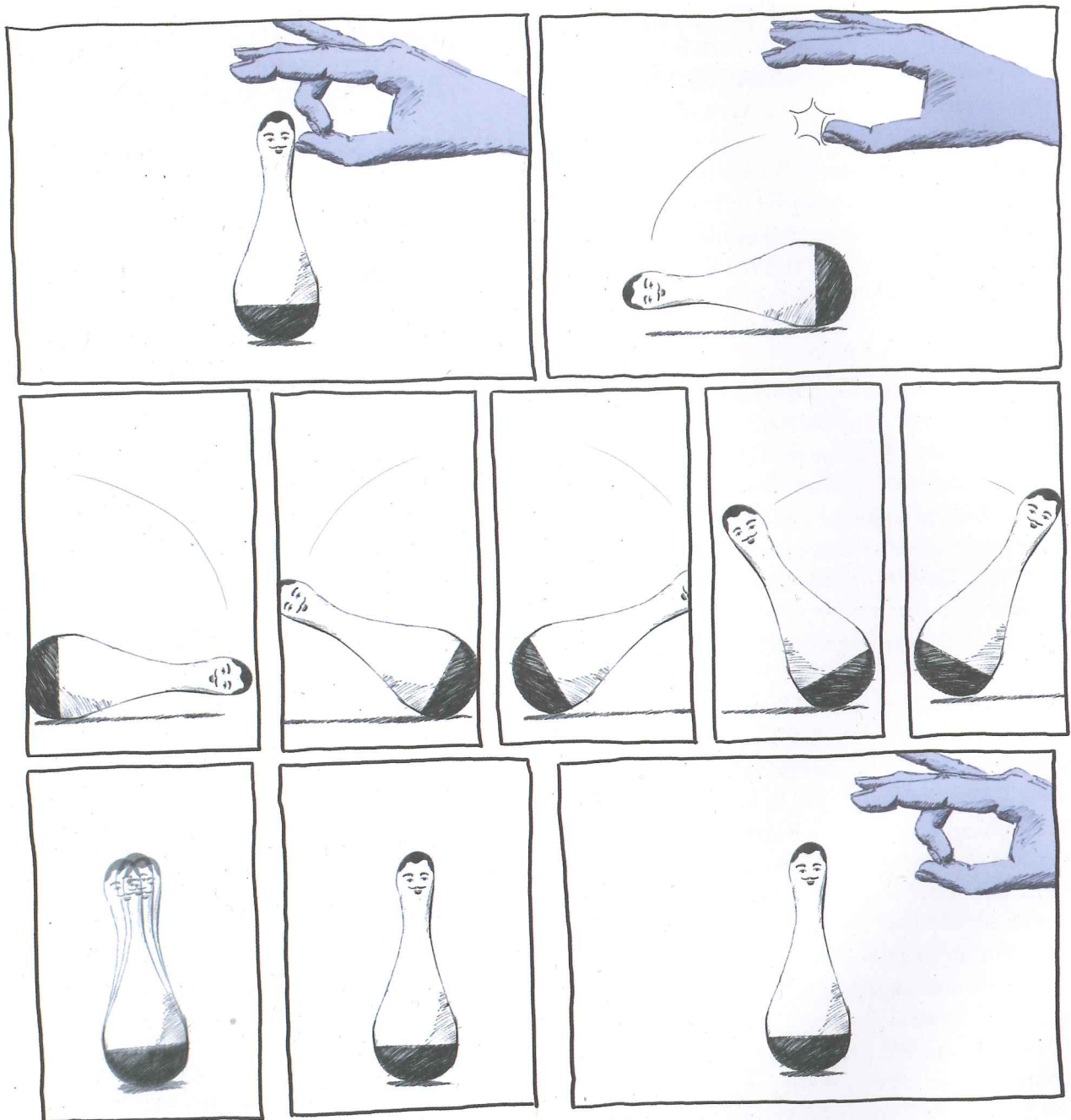
Perhaps you are tired of reading books where half the pages (or maybe more) aren't relevant to you because they are aimed at children or parents of young children. Then maybe this book is for you, as it's squarely aimed at people who have left continuous education and all of the support that comes with it.

The author also gives a detailed breakdown and explanation of the many different feelings you are likely to have at various times, such as the frustrations of being undiagnosed, the turmoil of discovering that a diagnosis might be the explanation for your problems with life, and the anger or relief which may come when your "disability" is confirmed.

He likens the process of realisation and acceptance (or failure to accept) to grieving, and the "five stages of grief" is a well-known model of that process that holds true for a significant minority of people, and is more-or-less true for most others.

If you want a book that's aimed at the majority of *AU* readers, or if you're looking for an explanation of how you are feeling, how you have felt, and how you might feel in future, then this could be a very useful book.

an illustrated poem



**\*flick\***

And there it goes again: the wobbling doll that is my mind.  
It can't wait to kiss the ground, but not for long.  
Up it shoots, only to kiss the ground again on the other side.  
On and on it goes until it settles around the upright with just a slight tremor.  
Finally, the position of peace and stability it was striving for all the while.  
And all looks calm and stable at last.

**\*flick\***

by Tom



## Thoughts on “Aspie burnout”

by Colin

This is a response to the article on burnout in October 2014. I've experienced a major burnout twice, once when trying to cope with the demands of living out of a hall of residence in the middle year of my degree, and again towards the end of a twenty-year career in the computer industry. Both times it was due to cumulative effects, any one of which I could have coped with on its own. Nowadays I restrict my commitments to prevent burnout.

It takes a long time to recover. I think there should be a recognition in the benefits system that Aspies who have left a job through burnout are not immediately able to look for a new job. Perhaps this is something which the NAS could campaign for. Actually, I don't see why such a concession should be restricted to Aspies: it could help anyone who has been through such stress.

There was a clause in the ESA Work Capability Assessment (WCA) regulations, as of June 2011, which sort of covered this if you could find a sympathetic doctor or occupational health specialist. It allowed for a person to be declared unfit for work if, despite not having enough points under the totting up scheme, it could be shown that they had a disablement such that their health would be at risk if they were regarded as fit for work. I believe this version of the regulations is still current. In any case, the WCA is supposed to target those who never work and try to spend their whole life on benefits. It's therefore appropriate that it should be more lenient towards those who have just finished a spell in work.

What I propose is that for every two months in their last job, a person going on benefits should be allowed one week of being allowed to claim benefits without having to show that they are looking for work. For people who have been in work for a number of years, this adds up to a lengthy period. In the case of an autistic person, this time might be needed to recover from burnout; for others it could provide time to retrain if they need to switch to a different career path. It would be difficult for right-wing politicians to oppose this, as to do so would be to lump people who have held down a job for some time together with the benefit scroungers they complain about.

Edward asked if the National Autistic Society was already involved with services for people seeking work. It has been, but less so now. The NAS's flagship scheme is Prospects, but that has a very scant geographical coverage; following the closure of the Manchester office in 2010, its only offices are in Glasgow and London. The London office used to have a service specifically for jobseekers called Prospects Transitions, but that was axed in 2013, since when Prospects London only offers training to employers.

The name Transitions shows what age range it was aimed at, ie., people transitioning from university to their first job. Notwithstanding this, I tried to sign up for their services after being dismissed from full-time employment in 2009 a decade after leaving university (I hadn't yet been diagnosed when I was a student). The waiting list was so long that I ended up landing a job through my own efforts. This proved to be more of a curse than a blessing, as this job required me to move 300 miles across the country (from Devon to North Yorkshire) and seek out such support that existed on my own. I remember that when I attended Exeter jobcentre for the last time, I asked if I could be referred to the relevant support services in my new location, but the adviser told me that wasn't possible, that I'd have to make my own enquiries after I'd moved. The NAS website was of little use at the time, as the only information they had about local support was a parent-and-child group. Not that accessing the Internet was at all straight forward, as it took nearly two months for my broadband to be reconnected. Eventually through much shilly-shallying I was assigned a mentor by Remploy, but the news came too late: I was dismissed just five months into the new job.

Louisa

## Da-lek!

by Tony

Daleks are © Terry Nation 1963. All rights reserved.

"The in-dig-ni-ty! The in-dig-ni-ty!"

The Dalek railed against the state it found itself in. Like some circus freak in a side show, it found itself trapped in a horrific dimension of powerlessness.

In a few minutes some human idiot would pay the credits necessary and out he'd roll again, firing blanks and shouting all kinds of obscenities at those that had captured this virulent tin bucket.

"Death to all hu-mans!"

"A-ttack! A-ttack!"

"Ex-ter-mi-nate! Ex-ter-mi-nate!"

How did he manage to get immobilised and captured, he wondered? There was a big explosion, his gun ceased functioning and a giant rock crushed him against the ship. The battle moved on but he stayed jammed where he was, rusting in anything but peace. Years passed. Dirt and dust built up on his carapace. He watched and waited, until the mess eventually covered his eye stick. At this point he shut down and went into hibernation mode. He'd hoped that he could have self-destructed but the radiation blast had disabled this function and many others.

According to the dalek survival manual, no member of his race was ever finished — no matter what state it found itself in or where. It could shut down, reawaken and replicate itself as a fifth columnist behind enemy lines.

When the scrap metal merchant arrived, millenia later, they had no idea who or what he was. This was a lifeless moon and he was just another piece of waste metal (like his ship) that they could

sell on: the universe is so vast and old that newer races and civilisations are always discovering remnants of bygone eras and errors — so much so that they had become blasé about it.

And now here he was — sold to a games arcade manager, on a dump of a planetoid, who recognised this tin-pot monster for what it was.

"Yeh, I'll give you ten credits for this rust bucket."

"It's worth more than that!"

"Who to, a museum? No, ten credits or you can dump it where you usually dump such rubbish, Jago."

"Fifteen or I'll never come here again!"

"Is that a promise?"

"Branket!"

"Temper, temper! Eleven as I know you, no more because I know you too well."

They shook (their bodies with rage, not their hands in agreement). Money was exchanged and they parted.

"A Dalek — what a prize! You'll look good in the central arcade, beside that other rusting hulk of a Zircon war robot. Now a little bit of spit and polish, and you'll be fine!"

So it came to pass . . .

"I hate hu-mans! I hate hu-mans! Free me from these re-straints and I'll show you what a Da-lek is made of!"



## a story (continued), two group notices and a filler

"I don't think so. That's almost human sentiment, my friend."

"Friend? Friend? I am not your friend! I am a Da-lek, your mor-tal en-e-my!"

"Settle down, you're not going anywhere. Your gun is plugged and we're going to have a long and fruitful association."

"The in-dig-ni-ty! The in-dig-ni-ty!"

After a thousand years, another Dalek battle cruiser appeared on the horizon, destroying the arcade and most of the rest of the transport café complex that made up what little life existed on the planetoid. It accidentally freed the Dalek too, which spent the rest of its existence roaming the now-lifeless world.

"The in-dig-ni-ty! The in-dig-ni-ty!" It ranted, lost in the eternal insanity of its hurt pride.

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### Bristol and South Gloucestershire Asperger Group

Are you an adult with Asperger's syndrome?

- Would you like to meet new people and make new friends?
- We are a new group specifically for adults with Asperger's, where you can get to know people and make new friends in a relaxing and non-pressured environment.
- We meet weekly on Saturdays at the Bowl Inn in Almondsbury, 2-4pm.

The Bowl Inn  
16 Church Road  
Almondsbury  
BS32 4DT

For more information contact **Justin Charnock**

on **07827 960 213**

or **jcharnock@hotmail.com**

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Giving hugs is easy: wrap your arms around them and just pour your soul out through your skin and into their heart.

**Jack**

Hi,

this is a *cri de coeur* which I pray you will publish in the next issue of *Asperger United*.

We are the largest **adult Asperger support group in Essex**, and have 300+ members. We have tried everything to get our members to attend our social events. But to no avail. It is extremely disheartening for us on our committee to go to the lengths of planning we go to, only to have tiny numbers attend. One event had only one member attend. Another only two (apart from myself).

Do you belong to an adult Asperger support group in your area? How do you approach the challenge of putting on social events? Which events work for you? Do you offer your Asperger members any incentives to attend? And when you send out questionnaires and appeals for information and so on, how do you ensure a good response?

Any help you could give me with this would be most appreciated. Our committee is at its wits' end.

Please contact me, **Tim**, by email on **chanch.746@gmail.com**

or by text or phone on **07527 985 605**

or by post: 26 Micklover Manor  
Micklover  
Derby  
DE3 0SH

## Relationships

by Gerry

Until recently I would have had nothing to write about relationships. They have always failed, even though I never gave up on what is possibly the most natural instinct of all: to be sociable.

My Asperger's led me to drink, or so I believe: I became an alcoholic and slowly destroyed myself over fifteen years. Needless to say my relationships suffered very badly like everybody with a drink problem. However, stopping drinking for me was the answer, or so I thought, because most people in recovery seemed to get employed or most of all get their wives back and have healthy relationships. Not for me, and, being undiagnosed for Asperger's, I had no idea what could be wrong. Needless to say it was very frustrating.

Years later, following a diagnosis of Asperger's, I came to understand what was wrong with me and have gradually come to accept that there are certain things I cannot change. One of these being socialising, which other people seem to do so easily — even alcoholics. However, to just not meet up with other people was not the answer as I found myself isolated and very lonely. I have heard how the new social media can be good for people like us but I am a private person as well as not into trivia so it was not for me. I must say, though, I have been able to stay in touch with my two nephews and niece because of it, which is something in its favour. However, the actual physical presence of other beings seems not to be something that can be replaced.

Relief for me came by chance when I met up with a work colleague to play chess. That particular relationship is a fairly lukewarm one but in the café where we played they decided to start a chess club. At first, being very competitive, a trait I find hinders meaningful relationship, I would suffer as I was up against experienced, wily players. As time went on,

and many defeats later, I realised I was a part of something and we were all in it together. It was our chess club and friendships were cultivated. In meeting regularly we got to know each other's characters and formed a discourse around the intriguing, ancient game of chess.

There is no need for me to worry about my lack of social skills and imagination, leading to decreased anxiety levels. I feel I belong and am accepted and there is a friendliness and rapport that I have never known before. For those Aspies who are lonely, perhaps, whatever your interests are, they can be shared with others making something meaningful.

As I have read many times about so-called successful people whose lives have come to a standstill, they have come to believe that life is all about meaningful relationships. Perhaps it is.





## The rules of *Asperger United*

(contact information for AU is on page 2 and again on page 20)

- 1) *Asperger United* is funded by the NAS and readers' donations, and is independent of the NAS. Although it is called "*Asperger United*" it aims to be for the whole of the (reading) autism spectrum. That is, the concerns and joys of any subscriber on the spectrum can be printed, not just Asperger's.
- 2) *Asperger United* is free and is quarterly, published in January, April, July and October. If you do not receive a copy when you expect to, please contact AU.
- 3) Pieces that appear in *Asperger United* are credited using the author's first name only, unless the author requests something different. This is done to protect your privacy.
- 4) *Asperger United* administers the copyright of everything that appears and it does this on behalf of the authors.
- 5) *Asperger United* does not use your contact details for anything other than administering AU. Your details are not passed on to NAS Marketing, NAS Fundraising or any other organisation without your written permission. Please consider getting involved with the NAS campaigns and events.
- 6) If you move house, please inform *Asperger United* and include your old address as well as your new address.
- 7) Even if you've paid for the Royal Mail forwarding service (or another forwarding service if you live outside Great Britain and Northern Ireland), you still need to inform *Asperger United* that you have moved address.
- 8) If you phone and leave a message on the machine, please speak slowly and clearly and spell uncommon words, as the line isn't very clear. Please give any phone number you leave twice for the same reason. Remember to give your postal address so that we can find your record.
- 9) You do not have to be a member of the NAS to subscribe to *Asperger United*.
- 10) The current edition of *Asperger United* is available at [www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited](http://www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited) You need to scroll down to the middle of the page, where there is a link to the PDF.
- 11) You can sign up for an email notifying you whenever a new edition of *Asperger United* is posted on the webpage above. Email [asp.utd@nas.org.uk](mailto:asp.utd@nas.org.uk) asking for the notification by email and please include your full name, postcode and let us know whether you want the paper edition too.
- 12) If you want to unsubscribe from the paper version, inform *Asperger United* and include your postal address. Or to unsubscribe from the email notification, include your email address.
- 13) If you want to resubscribe (or subscribe for the first time) inform *Asperger United* and include your postal address (for the paper version) or email address (for the email notification).
- 14) Book reviews are the most popular thing in *Asperger United*, please consider submitting one. They can be about any book, not just books about autism. Also, they do not have to be short (the Goth keeps most of his reviews short to leave more space for other writers). If you do not want your review to appear in the NAS section of the Amazon website, please make this clear.
- 15) Although each issue is themed, submissions on any subject are welcome. Only some of the letters and articles in each issue will follow the theme. All submissions may be edited, especially for privacy, libel, and for fitting the space available.

## **Been there. Done that. Try this!** **an Aspie's guide to life on Earth**

edited by **Tony Attwood, Craig R Evans and Anita Lesko**

Jessica Kingsley Publishers

ISBN 978 1 84905 964 0    £14.99 / \$24.95

review by **the Goth**

Editing lots of different pieces together is a difficult trick to pull off. Often the book starts to drag, with one person saying something very similar to the last. I'm pleased to say that this book is not like that — the pieces have been carefully chosen, edited and ordered to give each chapter a rhythm which keeps the going light. And that despite the fact that this is a book about the seventeen most stressful things in our lives (according to a survey conducted by the editors). It helps, also, that most of the contributors are

well-known writers and trainers — I found new tips for living in every chapter, even in the well-trodden areas of depression and bullying.

Each chapter ends with Tony Attwood's understanding of and recommendations for the topic: I was pleased to see him moving away from the old model of autism and seeing it more as sensitivities in thinking and sensation, with social difficulties and anxiety as the result, not the cause.

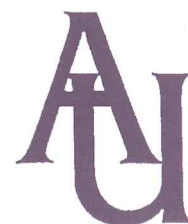
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*This book and the one on page 13 are available from all good bookshops and through Amazon's charitable scheme at*

**[www.autism.org.uk/amazon](http://www.autism.org.uk/amazon)**  
*and if you use this address instead of the usual Amazon one, the NAS gets a donation from Amazon.*

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