Connecting the Dots

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

- Early experiences

- Being “different” from the other kids
  - Sensory sensitivities
  - Emotional sensitivities
  - Social situations overload
The Journey Begins

- Began asking questions
- Desire to find the reason for my differences
- Developed a fascination with people
- Human nature, and psychology

Questions
- How could I fit in?
- Why I seemed to have so much trouble doing so?
- Other people made it look so easy
Whatever “It” Is, It’s Hiding in Plain Sight...

- I was smart in school but clueless socially and emotionally behind
  - Academics vs. common sense, social situations

- Hearing comments from others about certain traits
  - Too sensitive to others/not sensitive enough with others (one of many dichotomies I’ll talk about later)
  - Don’t behave, think, or speak as expected
  - Other negative comments: too direct/too honest
  - Bullied and bully
Acting My Way Through Life

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

- Graduated from high school
- Attended college & graduate school
  - Psychology and Engineering Psychology
    - The study of how people interact with and use technology
- I followed areas that I thought were the best fit for me in the fields of psychology and IT.
I always worked in my chosen field, but found it difficult to stay in one place (1-3 years)

Stress of cycling through jobs forced me to search for a diagnosis

I was still wondering what was different about me
  - Not just bad bosses
  - Not just bad economy
  - Not just office politics
  - Not just circumstances

Although these were some of the reasons, I knew there had to be something different about me personally
Dichotomies & Splitting of Self

- Dichotomies
  - Too sensitive to others’ comments (“can’t take a joke”) / not sensitive enough with others' experiences
  - Inflexible and rigid / expecting others to be very flexible around me
  - Talking at length about what interests me (my current “obsessions”) / not so interested in what other person was saying (also due to some sensory issues)
  - Only doing what interested me / while expecting others to do what I didn’t want to do (cooking, cleaning)
  - Good at noticing details / bad at remembering details

- These dichotomies, and feeling split into “versions” of myself by acting to try to fit in was eventually too much.

- Cut myself off from an authentic life in the course of trying to survive.
  - Self-identity suffered
  - Relationships suffered

- All of these experiences led to my conclusion that I was definitely different from most other people and had to find the reason for being so
Diagnosis & Treatment

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

Challenges that Arise

- DISCUSS DETAILS FOR THE FOLLOWING POINTS

- Working Life
- Relationships
- Responsibility
- Sharing and doing/being responsible
- Raising Children
- Learning as a Parent
- Learning to be a full Partner
Resources 1

- **Nick Walker**, founder and senior instructor of an aikido dojo in Berkeley CA, co-founder and editor for the independent Autonomous Press, prodigious blogger [http://neurocosmopolitanism.com](http://neurocosmopolitanism.com)

- **Karla Fisher**, mother of two grown daughters, semi-professional football player, Sr. program manager, software engineer, farmer, prodigious blogger [http://asdculture.wikispaces.com](http://asdculture.wikispaces.com)

- **David Finch**, husband, father, marketer, blogger, author of *The Journal of Best Practices: a memoir of marriage, Asperger syndrome, and one man’s quest to be a better husband* [www.davidfinchwriter.com](http://www.davidfinchwriter.com)

- **John Elder Robison**, inventor, businessman, husband, parent, speaker, author of several memoirs including *Look Me In the Eye*, prodigious blogger [www.johnrobison.com](http://www.johnrobison.com)
Donna Williams, author, artist, autism consultant, blogger
www.donnawilliams.net

Penelope Trunk, career and personality coach and blogger, founder of four startups, mother and wife http://penelopetrunk.com

Michelle Dawson, researcher, author, and blogger

C. S. Wyatt, freelance writer and editor, prodigious blogger
http://theautisticme.blogspot.com

Philip Wylie, author of Very Late Diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome: How Seeking a Diagnosis in Adulthood Can Change Your Life
Resources 3

- **Cynthia Kim**, wife, mother, blogger, author of *Nerdy, Shy, and Socially Inappropriate: A User Guide to an Asperger Life*
  
  [https://musingsofanaspie.com/](https://musingsofanaspie.com/)
