

Produced by and for people with Asperger syndrome

Asperger

united

Edition 28 October 2001

Passionate about trains – talented Nicky Raithby talks to AU about his hobby.

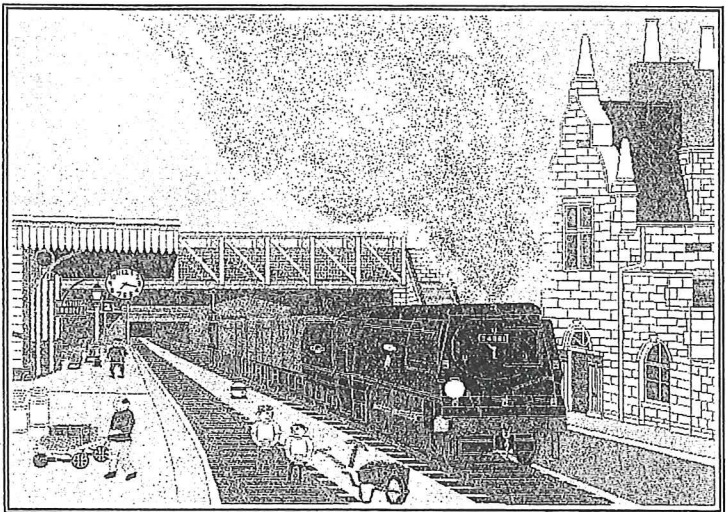
My name is Nicky Raithby, I'm 13 years old and I draw steam trains on my computer. I have been interested in trains since I was two years old. When I was ten my parents started to take me to preserved railways and I joined clubs. This made me very knowledgeable on the subject.

I started to draw trains by hand when I was 6. Later on I became interested in computers, so I decided to combine the two of them and started to draw trains on the computer. I did my first train when I was nearly 12. I have now done about 35 pictures.

How do I do it?

I go routing around in all my magazines looking for an engine to draw. If I haven't got many pictures of the engine, I will go on the Internet. If I can't find any there, I find out if, it's preserved and go to the railway where it is to take pictures of it. I do the pictures on a very simple program called Microsoft paint. I start off by doing all the outlines like the wheels, tender, boiler and cab. Then I fill in all the shapes with the right colours and put all the detail in. After I have completed the picture, I print it off and frame it myself.

I do the drawings because I like to see people who love railways or who used to work on the railways getting pleasure out of my pictures. I was recently asked to draw Q7 by somebody who used to work on the railways. He is stone deaf because he was on an engine and it blew up and he was thrown into a field. When I had finished it, I took it to him and he cried. I have also given a picture to Alan Pegler, who is the father of railway preservation (he saved the Flying Scotsman from being scrapped) and he is also the president of one of the model railway societies that I go to.



92 Squadron at Wansford (Nene Valley Railway)

Nicky Raithby 08/2001

I have just had three of my pictures on show at the Artism exhibition and all three of my pictures were picked to be auctioned at the London Ball.

I have just recently started to draw trains within pictures; here is my latest picture. It looks even better in colour. If anyone would like one of my pictures, please contact me through the magazine.

Nicky Raithby

Nicky

Thanks for your letter. I have just spent a holiday travelling on trains on the continent but because of a theft I have taken no photographs. I travelled on Eurostar, French TGV's, TER's Italian "Eurostar", regional Expresses and Swiss regional railways. If I go on further continental trips, I will photograph trains and send them to you to see if you can draw them.

John Joyce - Editor



See back page for the
October Competition!





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

Subscribing to *Asperger United*

Tel: 020 7903 3541
Fax: 020 7903 3767
Email: 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.

Asperger United needs you!

Asperger United is sent free to anyone in the UK with a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome or autism. We used to make an annual charge of £4 for subscriptions but this was so low that the administration costs were higher than the income! Institutions and professionals however continue to pay £10 and overseas readers pay £6 per year to subscribe.

But *Asperger United* still costs money to print and produce and mail out. This means that *Asperger United* is always on the look-out for help!

If you would like to support *Asperger United*, there are lots of ways you can help.

- Send us a letter telling us what you think about *Asperger United*. We really do value your views – after all, *Asperger United* is your magazine!
- Write an article – long or short – telling us about your experiences of life with Asperger syndrome.
- Any articles or letters should be sent to John Joyce, editor of *Asperger United*, at the address below.
- We greatly appreciate it if you send your contributions by email or on disc.
- We always welcome donations, however small. Cheques should be made payable to the NAS and addressed to:

Asperger United.
The National Autistic Society
393 City Road
London
EC1V 1NG
Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk

All donations gratefully received!

NAS publications

Dear readers

Hope you all enjoyed your summer holiday. I did some exploits that may be reported on at a later date. However I would like you to consider either of the following topics as possible subject matter for the next edition. New Year, New Ideas – open to suggestion from the floor, so to speak.

- Report on Maudsley Conference, preferably to be given by somebody not involved in running the show i.e. not London Social Skills Group
- What is “normal”? maybe a rhetorical or philosophical question
- How did you first become aware of Asperger/HFA
- Stories of unusual experiences – you will see one of mine later!!

We had an enormous response to Andrew Weston-Webb’s and Elizabeth Cornwall’s letters that were published in

the last issue. Unfortunately, due to lack of space, we’ve only been able to print a few of those responses but please keep sending those letters in.

Please continue to send artwork, poetry, and even cookery or gardening tips.

Some time ago I invited aspiring musicians and actors to consider an Asperger charity show. We would have to hire a place within our financial means to rehearse and stage the show. Hopefully we could get free use of premises so that all money taken can go to charity. Camelot are not running this show! At a pinch I would be prepared to MC the show myself

May I take this opportunity possibly to be the first person this year to wish you a Happy and Holy Christmas and God’s blessing on 2002

Your Editor
John Joyce



in this edition

editorial	3
feature: More confessions, reader’s poems and research request	4
writing: Finding work	5
letters to the editor	6
pen pal network	7
positive advice and Asperger diagnosis in Germany	8
coping with depression	9
travel tales and positive approaches	11
competition news	12

More True Confessions

Reader Tim Loder responds to Michael Feldman's "Teenage Confessions" article that was published in the last issue.

As I was reading your last edition of *Asperger United* (27th July 2001) it seemed more than just pure coincidence that there was an article on "Teenage Confessions" by Michael Feldman because at present I seem to be having a crush on a young lady whom lives locally. She's just a teenager and I'm a man of 44. She's very pretty with beautiful jet-black hair. I must confess I have tried to attract her attention by trying to be in the local shop the at the same time as her, for instance, when she renews her buss pass. There are other times when I feel almost relieved when she isn't around, as I feel very shy and retiring around her and I tend to blush. Alas, my attempts to attract her attention – including blowing my nose as loudly as I could – have fallen on deaf ears. She seems to just ignore me.

I've had other attempts at trying to form relationships with young ladies before, including on business trips to Ireland and when I attended an international pro-life conference. I remember blowing my nose loudly on another occasion near some teenagers, and they just burst out laughing. Back in the 70's when I was at school any attempt to attract the girls was met with being told to "get lost".

My sister tries to advise me. She's always telling me to stop falling for much younger women and that I need someone who's more mature and understanding.

I've been going to the Mary Lynch confidence group for a while and also, with the help of my forthright but wonderful sister, I am beginning to slowly come to terms with reality. It is questionable how much I have the inclination or whether it's only a fantasy, and am actually attracted to rejection and the "peach out of reach". I believe, in reality, that celibacy may be more suited to my circumstances.

I have a good freelance gardening business, now also in Ireland and Europe as well as in London. I have got some good friends, some of whom also have Asperger syndrome and a wonderful, supportive family.

Michael Feldman, I can certainly say I empathise with you. I may be going, through in my 40's what one usually goes through in ones teens.

P.S. I would strongly advise everyone, as I have been strongly advised, not to follow or stalk young ladies. The laws on stalking are very strict now and quite rightly so. Following and stalking could lead you into serious trouble.

Tim Loder

Inner thoughts

Today is the day
I'll explode if someone makes a comment.
I try to be loud,
I seem to get it kicked back in my face.
I give up hope –
What is the point of trying?
I just seem to be nagged at
Each time I try,
Time and time again,
Day in, day out,
The constant nagging ringing in my ears.
Every day I seem to get the same problems,
I can't change who I am
So God have faith in me.
Let me have a day
When the stress and anger do not come,
When everyone stops giving me hassle,
Treats me as I am,
That person inside –
Samantha Treadwell –
And not who you want me to be!

Samantha Treadwell

Thanks Samantha. May our "normal" brothers and sisters take this as a spur.

John Joyce

Information on drama therapy wanted

Have any readers had experience of drama therapy, in helping them come to terms with the demands of secondary school? Details about workshops and classes, and how they helped would be of tremendous interest to me. I am doing research in this topic, as part of my theatre studies. I look forward to hearing from you!

Jennifer Beattie,

Email: jelbeattie@hotmail.com

If you can help this important study, please could you contact Jennifer via *Asperger United*.

Thank you Jennifer. Hope you hear from other interested parties.

John Joyce
Editor

Finding work – Michael Feldman shares his experience with us

I read Jason Patel's article in the previous issue of *Asperger United*. Like Jason, I too have Autism, finally being diagnosed in 1998 at the tender age of 47. During my childhood, I too was referred to specialists. My parents took me privately to a specialist who, I believe, practised in Harley Street. Then very little was known about autism.

At the time, my behaviour was rather out of the ordinary. I couldn't make proper friends. However, on being admitted to the Maudsley Hospital and then to boarding school, I did show some improvement.

Shortly after leaving school, I secured a painting and decorating position. This lasted for 14½ years until the council dismissed me, resulting in an accident where I hurt my back. This meant me having to follow an alternative career.

Back in the early 80's, there was much discrimination if one became choosy in the type of job one wanted to do. In my case, I wanted to work in an office. I found however, that most office positions requested O Levels or typing qualifications. Also, candidates had to put themselves across well at interviews.

At this point, I was at a loose end. So I opted for a typing course with the employment service.

Having chosen the Clerk Typist Course, I had to take a short test. Sadly I failed. So my DRO (Disablement Resettlement Officer) suggested a preparatory course. Eventually I passed the grades in maths and English. I decided not to take the clerk typist course. Instead I chose to learn typing at night school and acquired the Pitman/RSA 1 grades. Not long after this success, I secured a position as a clerical assistant at a youth centre.

The good news is that - there is now help available for anyone diagnosed with autism.

Your first port of call is to see your disablement employment advisor (formally known as the DRO). They should refer you to the NAS. Eventually, you will undergo a personal development session, then one to one with a key worker, then hopefully a referral to Prospects, a body helping those with autistic spectrum disorders to find work. On finding work, your key worker will support you in the work place. Most employers will allow you to speak to your key worker if you encounter any problems. Speaking for myself, I have secured a position working as a filing clerk, phoning my key workers whenever things are not running smoothly. They are a great help.

With the above in mind, I would say to anyone out there who cannot find work right now, that with Prospects, you will eventually get there.

Michael Feldman

Thanks, Michael. We are blessed with more opportunities than those with our disorder fifteen years ago for instance. Maybe your late namesake, Marty, was one with our disorder who found a positive solution.

John

Prospects contact No's

Prospects London: 020 7359 9440
prospects@nas.org.uk

Prospects Glasgow 0141 248 1725
prospects-glasgow@nas.org.uk

Prospects Sheffield: 0114 225 5695
cpratley@nas.org.uk

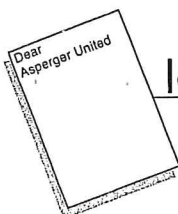
Can you help?

My name is Neil Burrows, I'm 24 years old and I'm currently working for the N.A.S as a finance assistant. I find it a bit difficult travelling on the train to and from my workplace in Islington, London to my home town of Flitwick on the Thameslink line. (It takes a while and is tiring)

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.

Once I can cut down on travel time, I can contribute more effectively to the good works of the National Autistic Society, as I can be more awake!

Please contact via *Asperger United*
asp.unt@nas.org.uk
020 7903 3541



letters to the editor

In the last issue we published two letters who were not entirely happy with the current state of Asperger United. We've have a lot of feedback from readers and here is a selection of their views.

*** Star Letter ***

Dear John

I felt I had to write some kind of response to Andrew Weston Webb and Elizabeth of Cornwall (July issue).

I have Aspergers yet work in that "fast paced confusing world". I teach swimming, privately and within a local council scheme, bring up two children as a lone parent and am a home owner and I've just completed the sale of my house and the purchase of another.

Maybe due to my AS or maybe due to my situation, I don't generally read research but there are many books available for those who are interested. AU has helped me communicate to those around me in a very practical way. It's a lifeline.

I have often had the opportunity to pass my copy of AU onto people who've asked about autism and what it's like, in order to help me. No amount of research would help them understand.

I've sat many times with tears of frustration and an overwhelming wish to be with those who live as I do. A.U. gives me that contact at times when I can't communicate.

I for one don't need a glossy magazine.

AU breaks through the confusion
Gives me no colourful illusion
It always arrives when I'm tired
And keeps me fully inspired
To go out and live another day
In my own distinct and different way.

Jo - Cheshire

Thanks for the letter Jo

Hope the poem inspires those who seem to give way to negative thoughts. After the incidents in the U.S. on September 11th who can afford to be negative?

Get writing to Asperger United!

Every issue we select a Star Letter for all the letters we receive. The writer of our Star Letter will receive two packs of Peter Myer's postcards.

Dear Mr Joyce

As I've not got Asperger syndrome - this is just a personal comment to you about the magazine. My adult son, Michael, has Asperger syndrome - that's how I come to read AU.

I wanted you to know that I think it's a super magazine and I couldn't fault it.

The comments made by Andrew Weston-Webb and Elizabeth of Cornwall were interesting and everyone is entitled to have their opinion. However, I cannot imagine that people with AS want to see articles by health specialists - as you rightly pointed out there are such articles in other publications.

I didn't quite understand the 'contrived secrecy' that Elizabeth thought surrounded AU. Whether a publication is glossy or not is not going to be the most important point for the likes of Michael, my son. It's the content that's important.

Perhaps it may be a good idea for you to send out a questionnaire with a future AU and ask your readers what they feel about the magazine and ask for their suggestions.

I'd like to thank you and everyone who's involved in the publication of AU - it's great that Asperger people have their own magazine and can take an active part in its production.

Good luck to AU

Best wishes

Mrs Anne Trent

Many thanks for getting back to us with your comments. It's always good to have positive feedback and we like your idea about a reader survey.

Dear John Joyce

I am afraid Andrew Weston-Webb seems to have lost the plot about Aspergers and *Asperger United*. Being an Asperger is one of the greatest challenges we will face so a positive and upbeat manner is needed from AU to encourage us to do better things, accepting our situation with spirit. Once you realise that there are others like us and that we are not alone, the reality is that we must make it a jolly experience or become grumpy old codgers! Anna Levermore is spot on.

Eric Davidson

Thanks Eric. May your views succeed against the less positive kind such as guided the bombers in the U.S. in September.

John





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.
Email: asp.utd@org.uk
- 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.

Hello Hertfordshire

Is there anyone out there with Asperger syndrome? I would very much like to hear from you. Letters from anyone would be welcome. Hopefully we could also meet socially. Do get in touch.

Christopher

My name is Endlee, I'm a black male, 28 years of age and enjoy pubs, clubs, listening to music, walking, and eating out. I would like to meet ladies in the London area. I live with my mum and sister and hope to become an office worker.

I would like to hear from ladies in the 20-30 age group who have similar interests.

Yours sincerely,
Endlee

Write to Richard!

My name is Richard and I am 26 years old. My interests include films, Classical and pop music, reading and feeding the birds. I would like to establish a genuine and committed pen-pal friendship with anyone who has Asperger syndrome.

A call from Kent

My name is Giles and I have recently moved to sunny Tunbridge Wells. I am finding it hard to settle in and make friends so I would be interested in making contact with anyone in the area.

I am 29 and interested in computers, music and recycling.

Colchester calling

My name is Graeme Lawson and I have Asperger syndrome. I am 31 years old and I have been living in Colchester since March 1995. There are four of us living here and our ages range from 28-41 yrs.

My hobbies are listening to music, drama, using a computer and lately I have started reading the classics. I attend the local tech twice a week to do office skills. I look forward to hearing from somebody.

From manchester to the world

My name is Jonathon and I was diagnosed with Aspergers just over 12 months ago. I am 13 and live in Manchester, but would like to talk to people from any area. My hobbies include reading, bike riding, Nintendo and Sega but specially making motorised fairground rides from my K'nex.



Positive advice- encouraging confidence

I am writing to tell you that Asperger syndrome is affecting a large number of people. It is a lack of confidence using eye contact, sometimes stuttering, and having difficulty in socialising etc. etc.

I myself suffer from Asperger syndrome and I find that in small groups I can talk to people about the exciting things I have done. I love writing letters and when I go on National Trust Conservation working holidays I find time to speak to other people.

At home however I keep myself to myself. Although I join in activities with my local conservation group, I find it difficult to speak to people. However, I reckon on a one-to-one basis I can talk for hours.

I don't like pubs or bright lights, which I think is also a part of Asperger syndrome. However, I feel that a lot of people who are not Asperger syndrome sufferers overcome their lack of confidence and fear by cracking jokes screaming etc.

So I want you to see that to overcome your fear you have to go ahead and try to act more confidently and not hide away from other people all the time.

From Anita Lewry

Thank you Anita. This is a good article. It is a subject with possibilities as an idea for a future edition.

Bless You

John Joyce

Do any other readers have experiences of working with local conservation or National Trust group? Write and let us know!

Asperger diagnosis – a story from Germany

Gerhard Beck lives in Neustadt, Germany. Here he tells the long complicated journey he had to take to find out about his Asperger syndrome.

As with so many people with Asperger syndrome, my story is one of chance self diagnosis after many years of concern. Why did I have so many problems communicating with people? Why were some things so easy for me which other people found impossible?

My childhood was a nightmare of psychological problems: anxiety, depression, despair at my state, isolation and suicidal thoughts. As a teenager I devoured psychology text books but could find nothing at all to explain my

difficulties. Teams of jungian psychotherapists seemed unable to help. Eventually as an adult I received diagnoses of ADHD and even schizophrenia but the treatment I was given did me no good at all – not surprisingly.

The long delayed enlightenment came when I read a book about autism and Asperger syndrome by Ole Sylvester Joergensen, a Danish child psychiatrist. It was as if a thick veil had been ripped away from my eyes to reveal the long concealed real me!

I looked back over my life with new eyes and everything at last made sense.

My greatest hope was that I could help people around me also to see me with new eyes and greater understanding but sadly that has not generally been the case.

However, I am very lucky with my counsellor who gives me lots of patient support and, thanks to him, I am now able to claim disability benefit.

He keeps me up-to-date with all the latest reading material about Asperger syndrome. I was especially interested in an article in the May 2000 issue of the Journal for German Doctors, *Deutsches Aerzteblatt*,

'Asperger syndrome: too rarely recognised?'

If only that article had been written ten years earlier. I might then have been helped properly, instead of wasting my time on completely inappropriate therapies!

Did you have similar problems/were you diagnosed later in life? – AU would like to hear about your personal experiences.

Teach Me How To Play

Teach me how to cry again
Teach me how to pray
Teach me all the games you know
Teach me how to play

Tell me all the jokes you've learnt
Explain to me their mirth
May I laugh in your company
May I have a second birth

Sing me all the songs you've learnt
Show me how you dance
I want to learn all that you know
And join you when you prance

Take me down from Calvary
Put me in your midst
I want to relish all your smiles
I want to start to live

Catherine, Oxfordshire

Thanks for the poetry Catherine. May you be blessed with the skill of play.

John Joyce

Coping with depression — Artist Peter Myers talks to AU about how he came to terms with, and overcame depression.

In 1979, during my adolescence, I experienced clinical depression. My employer at the time said to me 'you look like death', and sent me to see my GP. My GP in turn signed me off sick with depression. I never returned to my job in engineering. In any case, I was not suited to that kind of work and it was a contributing factor to my depression.

My GP prescribed me medication 'Happy pills' and pills to help me sleep. These did not seem to help. I had a habit of drinking heavily at that time in an endeavour to deaden my senses or to seek oblivion, which further complicated things.

My G.P advised me not to abuse my medication by drinking alcohol, but due to my dependency on alcohol and negative thinking, I ignored his advice. My GP then put me on higher doses of medication, reaching the maximum permitted dosage. This too seemed to have little effect. I had consultations with a psychologist at that time, and in reading copies of his case notes which I acquired in 1992 he wrote, "...Peter seems intent on dropping out of life".

I think that may have been partly true, but I would maintain that to drop out of something, one would have to be a part of it in the first place, and that many of my difficulties at that time were due to the fact that I never really had been.

I was trapped in an inner cycle of negative thinking, which influenced both my own thought and behaviour. My negative thinking inclined me towards negative, self-destructive behaviour. I recall on one occasion I broke open a mercury thermometer at home and swallowed the contents. The next time I visited my GP I told him about this and enquired "why am I not dead?"

On another occasion I recall being taken by the police to my local hospital to have my stomach pumped out I didn't allow this and signed myself out of the hospital, only to be picked up by the police again and taken to my parents' home.

I am aware of positive thinking, or the tendency of some to artificially maintain a positive perspective at all times. This I perceive as unrealistic as it does not seem to either fit or mirror real life or at least my own experience of it. Positive thinking I perceive as blinkered vision. It views the world in one way, through rose rimmed spectacles, and ignores, or is blind to seeing the world in other ways. Thus I do not perceive it as wholly realistic, in that what it obscures or ignores, it does not face or try to solve.

And so negative aspects of life are not confronted or tackled.

Positive thinking can have great strengths and may allow a person to maintain higher levels of self-confidence, esteem and motivation. However I perceive it as a partial truth, only a part of the picture of life, only some pieces of the jigsaw.

My point is that I am familiar with being trapped in a cycle of negative thinking and of the self-destructive thought, behaviour and pure misery that can stem from this. I had to learn to utilise positive thinking, not least to ensure my very survival. Indeed during my period of depression in 1979, I simply despised my own existence, could not bear to look at my own reflection in the mirror and wanted to escape myself. But I could not escape myself, could not lose myself, not the physical being, not the mental awareness, conscious thought process, not my own sense of being.

Negative thinking I perceive as being the counter part to positive thinking. In essence its mirror image. Basically each may experience the same phenomenon but interpret it in different, opposing ways it's like asking if the glass is half full or half empty?.

Negative thinking is also blinkered vision, only one way, and a partial way of viewing this same world. It too is blind, not facing and accepting what it chooses to ignore. And in this sense, it too is not wholly realistic. It is a partial truth, the other pieces of an incomplete jigsaw puzzle.

Like positive thinking, negative thinking has its own strengths and weaknesses. Its weaknesses include lower levels of self confidence, self esteem, motivation and possibly depression, for example, when one's inner world collapses in upon oneself. This may be accompanied by self doubt, self pity or one may, attack oneself with all the negative mental energy at ones disposal. One might wonder what possible advantages negative thinking could confer on an individual? It may seem to an outsider as quite useless, and self-destructive for an individual to think in this way, and perhaps this is true in part.

At the very least, negative thinking is another way of perceiving the same world. Self doubt and self-criticism may force an individual to re-examine or re-evaluate phenomena and experiences. Negative thinking may cause one to be never wholly satisfied with one particular answer or solution.

Writers, poets, artists and thinkers since time immemorial have utilised such thought patterns to agonise over thoughts, ideas, decisions and problems. In this sense negative thinking may be a very powerful, creative and constructive force - one aspect of the human psyche which some choose to utilise, while others do not.

Negative thinking may allow an individual to reach into the very depths of the, soul or inner being to access aspects of the human mind not accessed or accessible to others, either because they may not know how to, may not wish to or are apprehensive of exploring these depths. This may incline an individual to explore hidden depths within their own psyche and may lead to deep thinking - thinking about issues, topics, ideas, phenomena in unique, new, constructive and creative ways.

Negative thinking is, as positive thinking, a level of sensitivity, and the ability for an individual to utilise either of these patterns of thought may be determined by their own levels of sensitivity to them through programming, social conditioning, personal experience. So part may be innate ability and part social influence.

I am inclined to believe that neither ways of perceiving this world are of much use on their own. Each belies a partial truth and one would seem of not much use without the other. Positive thinking may incline one towards self-satisfied contentment and so such an individual may not be driven to explore the hidden secrets of their own psyche. On the other hand, those inclined towards negative thinking may explore such things on their own, but may never be content, happy or satisfied with any discoveries they may in fact find.

To be happy and content, I believe an individual will require at least some level of positive thinking to help them feel good about themselves and others, the world about them. However, without some level of negative thinking I don't believe that one can truly explore any of these things in any great depth. And thus an individual may miss out on these other levels of experience. This may in turn limit any capacities for independent, creative, new or unique thought.

If an individual were wholly consigned to positive thinking, then one might argue that they were living in 'dreamland'. However if an individual is engaged in purely negative thinking, then they might be considered 'in a living nightmare'. So I would consider neither state as wholly desirable. I can think of two alternatives to these ways of thinking: 'neutrality' allowing all thought to wash over one - being inclined to neither one or the other, and 'fusion', a combination of both positive and negative thinking patterns - although coupled with this is the potential to fluctuate between one or the other.

I think self-awareness, learning to like ones own sense of

being, may be something that comes naturally to others, perhaps at an earlier stage of development. But for myself, I feel this came later, and so perhaps the transition from one level of mental state or awareness to another higher level was for me more intense, more traumatic.

Some may not be consciously aware of such a transition within themselves, as it is a gradual process. For some it may be something they are consciously aware of but may not be deemed traumatic. And for others like myself, the change may be left until it can no longer be avoided.

“ So although my period of depression in 1979 was in many ways negative, being trapped in a cycle of negative thinking, it was also a period of growth and change. ”

It was a transition from one mental state or level of awareness and development to another. It may have been something I neither wished, wanted nor felt a need for, but it did occur. And I had to learn to accept, like this change within myself, in order to survive it, and I could not have done this without thinking positively about myself, positive thinking, which in turn leads to thinking more positively about others. For how can one respect others if one doesn't at first respect oneself? Oddly enough I had to lose myself to find myself, and the self that I found was always there. It was just that I hadn't seen it before. I had to let go of self to maintain it.

“ One of the most important things in life is balance. ”

I like balance, I like harmony, I like equilibrium, and I dislike anything that disturbs this. It upsets me. Change always disrupts balance. So when change occurs I automatically seek to re-establish order, continuity, harmony.

I feel it true to state that if I had not begun to accept, even like my own sense of being, I may not have lived until today. Learning to accept and then like myself for what I am is probably the most difficult thing I have ever had to learn.

The above is an edited extract taken from one of Peter Myer's letters to AU.

My Positive Approach to Asperger Syndrome

Communication

I learned about body language. Reading two books were helpful, one by Alan Pease and the other by David Lewis.

I learned about empathy by reading the following book: *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey.

I have the ability to show liking.

I have the ability to communicate interest.

I have the ability to communicate empathy.

I am friendly, caring and positive. These are important ingredients to communicate successfully.

Positive Thinking

The predictable part of my life is having a positive attitude. Positive thinking is a strength of mine. Practising a strength is good for self-esteem.

I have benefited from having many positive thoughts and searching for the positive. A positive attitude can create hope and lead to positive action.

Imagination

My imagination has helped me. I have created many positive thoughts. My imagination is also beneficial so as to respect probable responses of other people, which I believe I will do successfully.

Future

I expect the future to be positive. I believe I will create much positive. I believe I will meet many friendly and caring people, talk about and think of positive ideas, study chess and exercise.

Daniel White

Thanks for these insights Daniel. May they guide you to a bright future

John

Editor

Dear John Joyce

As I had a treat for my birthday, I went to Iceland for the day to see all the whales. I wrote the poem for my college reading evening and I was then encouraged to send it to your magazine. I have autism and go to college four times a week and meet lots of people, but it's good to read about other people's experiences of autism. I enjoy your magazine.

My Day Trip to Iceland

On Sunday 27.5.2001 I went up in the air
to a great height,
For a long flight.
I felt like I had been lifted up in a crane
When I set off in the plane.
When we got there
The place looked bare.
Instead the place had lava all around
which was black
And it all had a great crack.
We went out to sea in a boat with sails
To see the gulls, dolphins and whales.
All the dolphins kept on making themselves
look as if they were racing
Because they kept on chasing.
I thought the day in Iceland had been nice
But I came home feeling as if I had been
in a deep freeze
and covered with ice.

Jonathan Main

*This poem gives a great insight into
your experience – John Joyce*

October competition

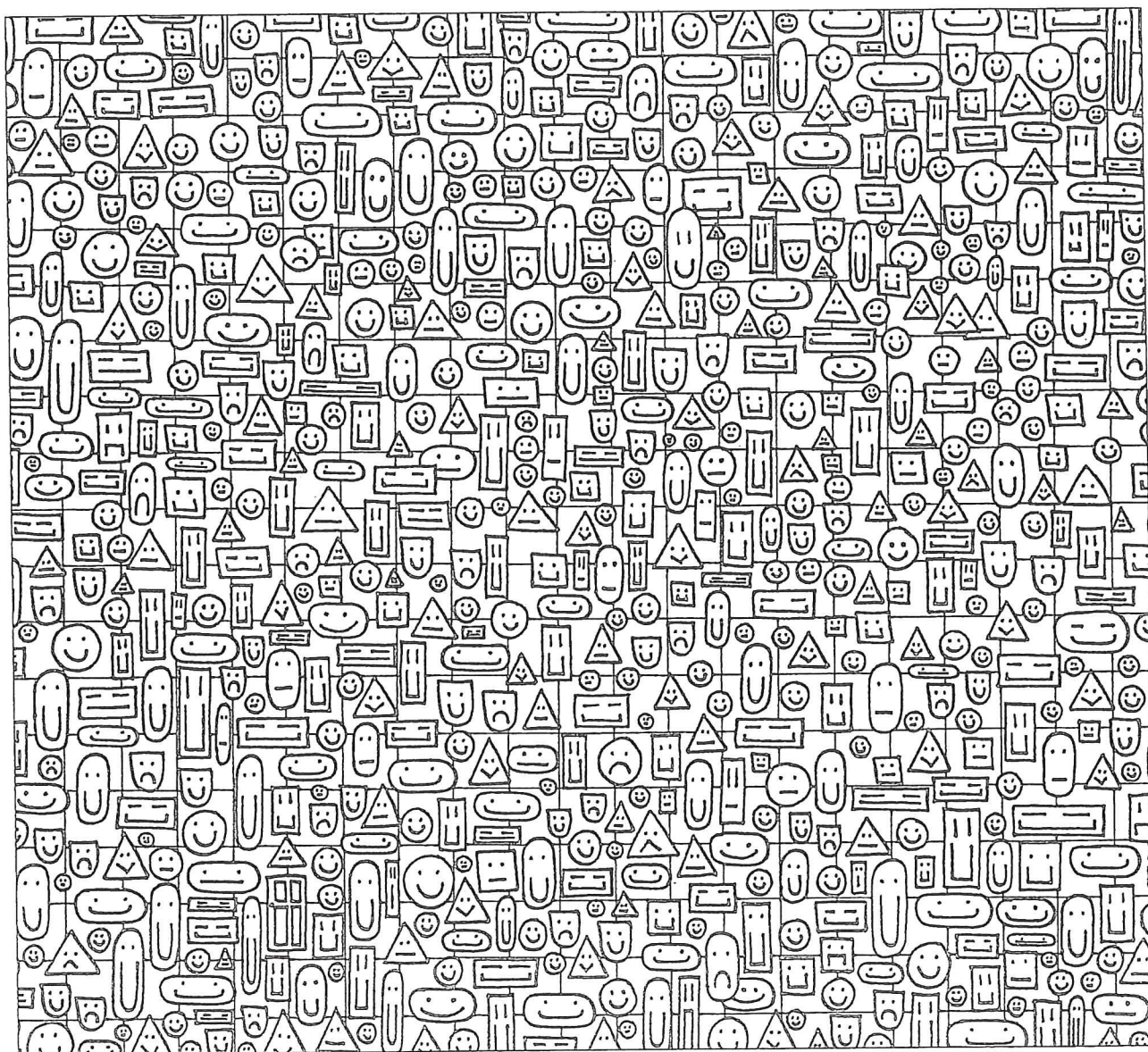
Competition results

Can you think of a suitable title for drawing below?

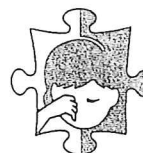
Answers to *Asperger United*, together with your full contact details, by either letter or email. The winner will receive two packs of Peter Myers' beautiful postcards.

The winner of last issue's competition was Paul Lowe of Gloucester who correctly translated "L'homme en reve" as "The man in a dream". Congratulations to Paul who wins two packs of Peter Myers postcards.

Closing date for entries: 31 November 2001



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



The National Autistic Society
Registered as a Charity No.
269425