

It's worse than you think /Charlotte

I was looking for some advice about being in a mixed aspie/NT relationship a while back. I was thinking a lot about how to address the emotional labour of caring, which often wears me out. I am in a poly set up and we are all queer. I was shocked at what I found when I tried to find information in books and journals that might help.

- It's seen as really remarkable that autistic people have relationships. There is no expectation that this is even possible because of the widespread and erroneous belief that autistic people can't relate to others. It's considered even weirder that neurotypicals might love and fancy autistic people. Totally unheard of that people might be open about this, or have insights about it.
- The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders entry for Autism is everything.
- Everyone is always straight, always in a couple, always white, always weirdly middle-aged and suburban.
- It's like feminism never happened.
- Where sex is mentioned, it is discussed in a few brief paragraphs and always associated with having babies, sorry, *creating a family*.
- You would never know that there are loads of autistic people in BDSM and poly community. Autistic trans people supposedly don't exist.
- No one talks about disability rights or politics.

I think finding how little people knew was a moment of awakening for me. I started to see all this basic crap being circulated about this one subject, I didn't realise it was that bad but it is. It's fucking alienating!

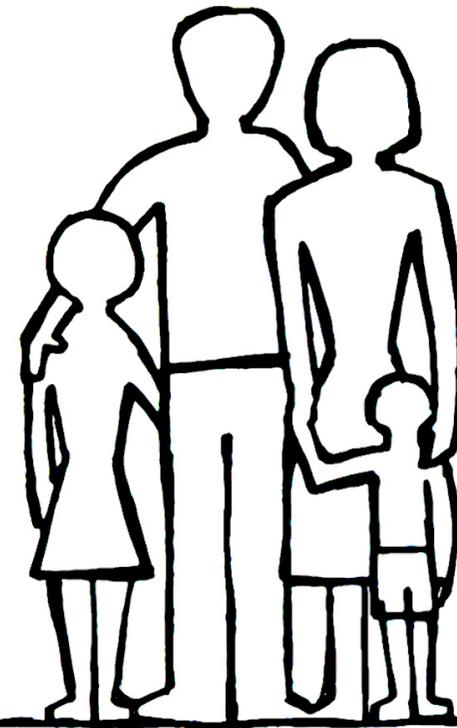
I've been thinking about doing this zine for a long time because of this absence of knowledge, the endless bullshit. I'm so sick of hearing people use autistic as a slur. Autism is amazing! Not shameful, not scary, not weird, not creepy. The absence isn't just about relationships or caring, but about how people think and talk about autism. It's almost always about the experts, the medics, the normals, the parents. Fuck them all. Where is the stuff that's relevant to me? Ok, yeah, I know, you have to do it yourself. Same old story.



Autistic t-shirts!

Unlike most shirts, these are not designed for the self expression of autistic people – here are some examples – I'm working on some better ones
- Simon

YOU'RE NOT MY DAD! No.1 FREE



AUTISM ETC

Intro /Why this zine?

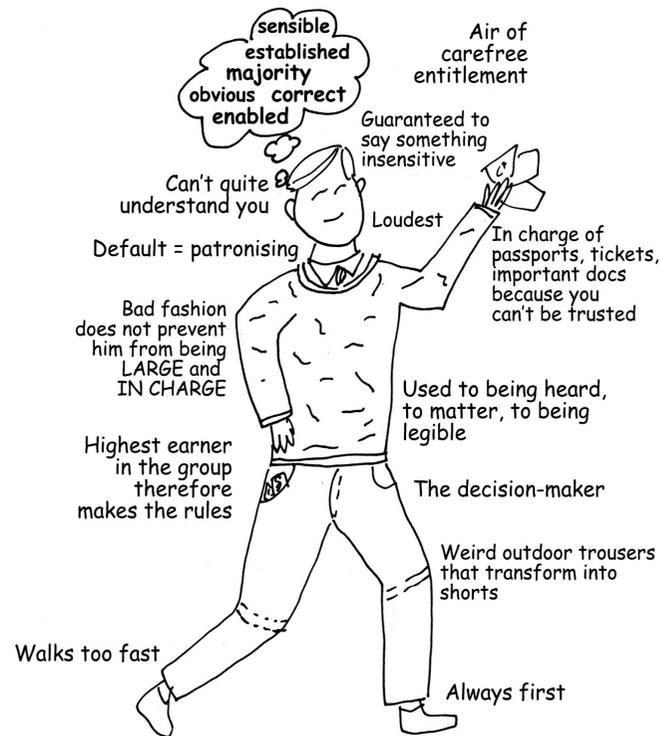
The 'autistic world' out there is still quite remote and strange to me in some ways. I'm part of it but it still feels new to me. The zine is kind of an impression of autistic culture in the UK, but also an attempt to engage more with that world. That is pretty much why I started doing zines in the first place, so it seems appropriate.

Charlotte came up with the name a while back – the concept pre-dates any idea of turning it into a zine or whatever. It reflects our antipathy to the paternalistic/patriarchal status quo of autistic lives in which everything is decided by doctors parents and experts, mostly dads.

We're not really addressing the hierarchy of dad-authority, just pointing out the absurdity, the deference, the misery and the poverty of that situation. Say it loud: **YOU'RE NOT MY DAD!**

Simon

email via
charlottecooper.net/contact



Anatomy of a Dad

This zine is a joint project – this is who we are:

SIMON MURPHY

I've been making zines and comics since 1984. It's conventional in autistic narratives to say what age you were diagnosed, as a shorthand way of acknowledging the impact of psycho-medical intervention in your life. It might also be expected that I would list some of the interests that I pursue with 'particular intensity'. But this zine isn't about that stuff. Let's just say that by the time I was diagnosed, I'd already been a nihilistic queer adult with a lot of electric guitars and fuzz pedals for a long time.

CHARLOTTE COOPER

I am a psychotherapist and cultural worker, you can find out more about that at charlottecooper.net. I'm neurotypical as far as I can tell and I have loved Simon for 26 years and counting.

Words /Simon

I call myself autistic rather than a 'person with autism'. This is an old familiar distinction for anyone with any contact with disability politics, but it's worth repeating. Charities and parents of disabled people usually like to think of our impairments as separate from us as people, that we are 'people first', but people with disabilities. The contrary view, that I share, is that my disability, autism, isn't something that has been added to me (with the related assumption that it can be taken away again), it is part of me. I am an autistic person rather than a person with autism.

The term autistic itself is not that wonderful though – it's a medicalised category decided on by psychologists and psychiatrists. It's a 'condition', a 'disorder' that I 'suffer' from,

although admittedly I am 'high functioning'. Labelling, defining, restricting and delimiting people is generally bad I think, but there are positives in getting an 'official' diagnosis from a medical expert. I was diagnosed as an adult, and in some ways I'm glad it happened that way. I haven't had my life decided for me or my options limited by my parents' or doctors' estimates of my abilities or aspirations, thank fuck, but on the other hand I would have appreciated some insight into why I am different to others and what was going on around me sometimes. Oh well.

I use the word 'aspie' to describe myself. It sounds a bit childish perhaps, and may bring its own range of assumptions, but it's ok as a word and as an idea. When I was first thinking about looking for a diagnosis, the first place that I liked was a radical online forum called Aspies For Freedom. It doesn't exist in that form anymore, but yeah, call me an aspie. Some prefer a more general category like neurodiverse – it's more inclusive (embracing related 'conditions' like dyslexia, dyspraxia and synesthesia), but it sounds too medicalised to me. There are also meaner slang terms for autistic people, like sperg, a slur. In contrast, the normals are called neurotypical or NT for short. Satirically speaking they are sometimes called allistics, the sad victims who are suffering from allism.

See also allism-speaks.tumblr.com/



I'M NOT NAUGHTY, I'M AUTISTIC



NUMBER ONE: CHELSEA MANNING

Totally heroic trans aspie – sentenced to 35 yrs in jail for sending evidence of US war crimes etc to WikiLeaks.

FreeChelsea.com

About AutismCon /Simon

Britain's biggest autism charity was set up in the 1960s by a group of parents, and more than 50 years later, their perspective as concerned mums and dads hasn't changed much. It's only in the last few years, following research suggesting that they should address the needs of autistic adults as well as 'the children', that the National Autistic Society (NAS) has started to change their approach slightly, to acknowledge the lives of autistic adults, and the increasing numbers of people like me who are diagnosed later in life.

One of their major new ideas in this area is AutismCon. The first one, subtitled 'A Festival of the Mind', was in January 2015 at Conway Hall in London, and was described as "an exciting and unconventional new event organised by people with autism... where special interests are encouraged, communication comes in all forms, and the skills and talents of people with autism are clear for everyone to see." It was quite a small event, with an atmosphere a bit like a local fete, organised by a team of young autistic adults who with help from NAS volunteers and staff. The helpers all wore sky blue t-shirts proclaiming that they were 'having an amazing day for autism!' Nobody seemed to think this was patronising or demeaning. Though it was ostensibly for young people and adults, there were still many concerned parents in attendance. There was quite a lot of discussion of bullying in the various sessions, and the parents asked the most questions and tried to relate everything to their kids' prospects for normality. Annoying.

By accident or design there were several sessions on the music industry, with X-Factor finalist Lauren Lovejoy, Johnny Dean from the britpop band Menswear, and Mark Tinley, who produced Duran Duran in the 80s and delivered a multimedia lecture on how autistic creativity should be exploited by capitalism. Though flawed, it was a good day I think – about 400 people were there.

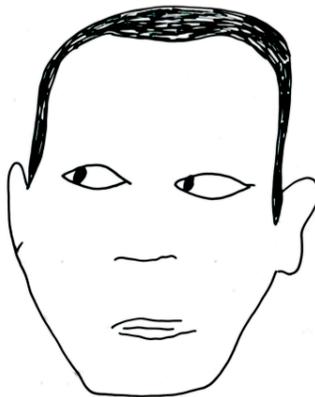
The 2016 event was much bigger, at the Friends House on Euston Road, with around 700 people, but with more NAS people than autistics presenting and being visibly involved, a huge step backwards! The popularity of the day showed how much demand there is for adult-centred autism events, but it also exposed the gulf between the dad-ist worldview of the NAS and the reality of the outspoken autistic queer and trans lives. There was a great panel on queer stuff, including aspie drag queen Marilyn Misandry, but other sessions also included mostly underplayed queer stuff. Hopefully this aspect will be acknowledged properly as a bigger part of the programme in future years. There were still lots of parents around, but I took some pleasure in seeing the disruptive autistics, shining beacons of individuality in their bland families!

No Yoko No! /Charlotte

Yoko Ono is Global Autism Ambassador for Autism Speaks! The exclamation is part of their stupid name, not an indication of excitement about Yoko. Any radical aspie will tell you that Autism Speaks! is the heavily funded mouthpiece of the curebie movement, ie people who think that autism is a condition in need of a cure. But autistic people don't need curing and normality is overrated. Why Yoko Ono, a woman who has made a life out of being completely weird, would give her name to this project is beyond me. Maybe she's a fan of Blue Man Group, they're also major funders. And Lindt chocolate, PayPal and Solgar vitamins. Fuck them all too.

Numaneyes /Charlotte

Radio 1 DJ Richard Skinner interviews Gary Numan on Top of the Pops in December 1980. You can find it on YouTube. Numan looks edgy, uncomfortable, cold, presumably this is part of his alien schtick, all showbiz, cornball. Watching it 35 years later, now knowing about his diagnosis, it all looks different. Skinner is all smooth patter, but Numan can't meet him there. Maybe he's unsure how to handle it, maybe he's tired. His sharp, untrusting glances aren't an act, he's kind of startled, trying to translate himself into something Skinner can manufacture for the millions of viewers at home. Watching it now you can see the enormous amount of cognitive pressure he is under. It falls apart towards the end, unsurprisingly. Skinner doesn't know what to do. Microcosm of millions of aspie/neurotypical interactions, past, present, future.



I'M NOT NAUGHTY, I'M AUTISTIC



NUMBER TWO: LAURI LOVE

Aspie hacker and activist Lauri is facing extradition to the US and 99 years in jail for his alleged involvement in online protests following the persecution and untimely death of fellow hacker Aaron Swartz.

freelauri.com

Memories of AutismCon 2016 /Charlotte

The beautiful autistic queers and trans delegates. Where so much National Autistic Society rhetoric and imagery is about nuclear families, being normal, fitting in, being good citizens, it was a balm to witness trans people in the audience speaking back to medicalised authority. There was a fantastic moment where a medic apologist for inadequate services was told to stop and listen rather than expound his views on autism and gender. It was fantastic to see autistic trans people asserting themselves as experts of their own lives. I know that this friction took a lot out of the speakers, dealing with the conflict was exhausting and upsetting, and I am grateful for the work they did.

I don't have much autistic community, I experience autism in quite an isolated way even though it is a big part of my life. It was exciting and overwhelming to be amongst many other autistic people and their neurotypicals. I felt like I was part of something.

There were too many neurotypical helpers controlling things or adopting positions of power and authority through roles as timekeepers, facilitators, or simply being People In Charge. It was dismaying to see how they lacked sensitivity about their own power in relation to autistic people. The organising assumptions felt neurotypical, the event wasn't created from an autistic point of view.

Example 1: The Chief NAS Dad, for example, was like a fucking headmaster. When things don't start on time, autistic people who to whom precision and detail are important are going to kick off about that. Mr Firm But Fair could have apologised and acknowledged this, but instead he took to the podium and essentially told everyone to settle down and shut up. Yet people around me were stimming like mad because the wait was so stressful. A guy who complained about the wait was treated as though he was being really unreasonable.

Example 2: The performers in the Open Mic session were like no others I've ever seen, quite weird and lovely, making me think a lot about what makes a song compelling to someone, what singing can be, what a performance might communicate. Mind-blowing, really. It didn't look like neurotypical performance, it looked really autistic, and not 'high-functioning' either, which was brilliant. But you could tell that the facilitators were embarrassed, wanted it all to be over, were unprepared and disengaged, their squeamishness was patronising and awful.

Example 3: It doesn't have to be like that. The neurotypical guy who facilitated the poetry session was supportive and knowledgeable about the poets he introduced, there was no attempt to normalise anyone. Presenters were treated respectfully and warmly.

HUMAN OUTCOME FOR ALIEN-HYBRID BREEDING PROCESS

ONE OR BOTH

Human female with altered/damaged genome from aliens
Human male with altered/damaged genome from aliens

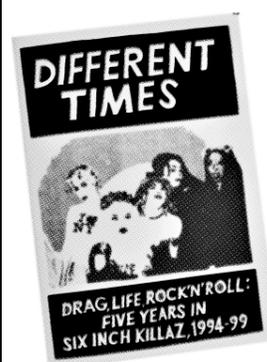
NORMAL CHILDREN

AUTISTIC AND ASPERGER CHILDREN

CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME

GLOBAL BREAKDOWN OF HUMAN GENOME

Autistics – have you ever felt like you were from another planet? Well, that isn't quite true, but it might be that we are in fact genetically modified alien-human hybrids! All makes sense now eh? The aliens have been working on us but they aren't very!good at it, producing us, which will ultimately destroy the human race. Startling new American medical research (from 2009!) has been twisted to support this hypothesis.



Hi there – it's your pal Simon here and I wanted you to know all about another zine you'll like! It's about me + drag + aspergers + rock'n'roll in queer London in the 1990s! 40 pages, lots of drawings and a 3-

colour cover!
It's £3 + P&P from Charlottecooper.bigcartel.com