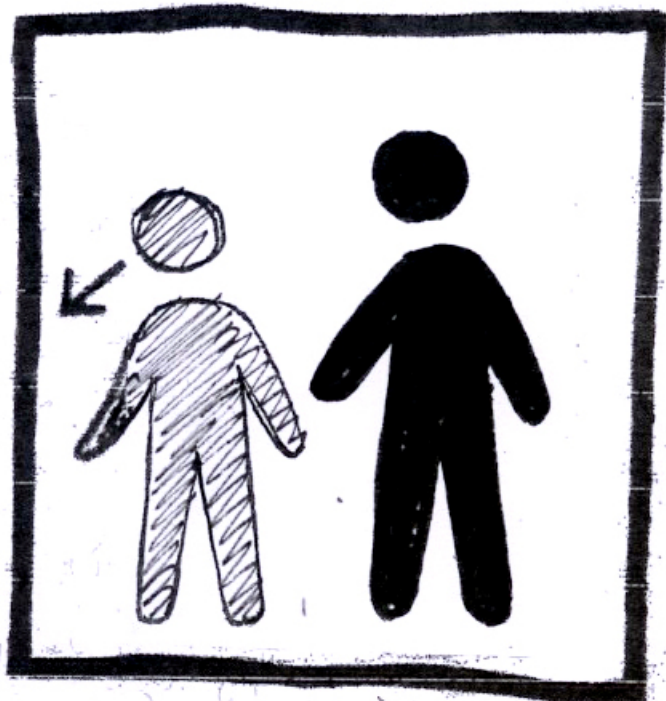


YOU'RE NOT MY DAD!

AUTISM,
LIFE,
CULTURE

—
SECOND
GREAT
ISSUE



Spring 2017

Hello!

You're Not My Dad is a zine by Simon Murphy and Charlotte Cooper, made in East London. It's our attempt to talk about autism culture in the UK. It's called You're Not My Dad because we want to undermine the paternalism of the professional/parent focus of most autism stuff we see around us. We're adults with and without autism. In this issue most of the longer pieces are by Simon and the shorter ones by Charlotte.

This is our second issue. Download the first one:
charlottecooper.net/downloads/zines/ynmd/ynmd1_nov16.pdf

We'll probably make more.

For paper copies or to say hi, get in touch via
charlottecooper.net/contact
or email
thesimonmurphy@yahoo.com

This is not a resource for parents and professionals

Last autumn I posted on Facebook to announce the imminent arrival of You're Not My Dad and I was flustered by some of the first responses, which were from parents and professionals. They seemed to think that Sime and I were making a resource for them. I don't care if parents and professionals read YNMD but it's not really for them. This is what makes this zine rare. I wondered what they imagined would be in the zine. What resources were they hoping we would give them? How to identify an autistic person? How to talk to them? How not to provoke them? How to avoid a scene? How to make things normal? I don't know if any of them ever read it in the end.

The Little Autistic Boy

Exists as a vehicle enabling neurotypicals to talk about autism

Dressed like a royal toddler

Always white

Either abject, gifted or inspiring

Accompanied by building blocks, an assistance animal, a strained nuclear family of normals

A little man!

Exhibits fleeting precious moments of charm and precociousness

Look how well he's doing thanks to the support of x charity/drug/celebrity/expensive service!

Locked into a mysterious and unknowable world

May never get a job, get married or have a family of his own!

Whoops! My drawing looks a bit like Simon.

Aspers



I once read a document for neurotypical managers about how to treat autistic workers. It was written by a celebrated expert who used the term 'Asper' to refer to autistic people with asperger's. "The Asper does this...", "The Asper does that...", "working with Aspers" etc. I thought it was really stupid and couldn't read it properly, I was so distracted by the terminology, I kept thinking she was calling autistics Jaspers. Some years later, my avaricious local council licences a super casino in a shopping centre that's tied to the Olympics development in East London. I've been in there once, it's totally grim. The place is called Asper's Casino. Finally I get a laugh out of it.

Film review: Asperger's Are Us US, 2016, 82 mins, dir Alex Lehmann

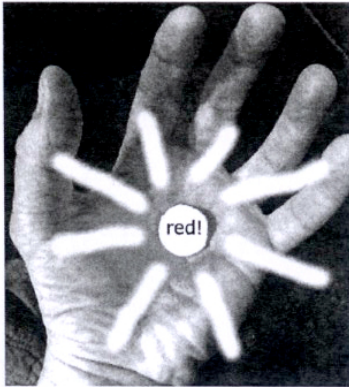
It's a sort of group 'coming of age' style documentary about a disorganised quartet of young male aspies in the suburbs of Boston who have a weird comedy act in a Saturday Night Live-style sketch format. We follow them over 8 months leading up to a big show, their trials and tribulations, and ultimate semi-triumph, and then check back in 18 months later to see how much they've grown as productive and more-normal people. Ho hum. It's unusual to see real autistic people on film, but realness in itself is not enough to make it interesting if you are autistic yourself, so initially I found the film quite boring and worthy. For at least 30 minutes I felt the director was fishing for a traditional '*autistic people are so weird!*' response.

As it develops a bit more, I did enjoy seeing their shared internal logic and references, like where they use the Beatles' White Album as a metaphor to diffuse a disagreement - this kind of thing that is lacking in some aspie/NT interactions and part of what makes them a coherent group. On the other hand their insularity means that some of their comedy isn't that funny to outsiders, though they clearly find it all 100% hilarious.

The film does present them as somewhat clueless struggling and (yes), weird, but I think this is just part of its dramatic structure - the director presents them at their most chaotic to at the beginning to create the story arc of the film, so we will think 'there's no way they can get this together in time', but, hooray, they do! It ignores the fact that they've done several other shows in the past and this is probably just their creative process. Engaging with the process itself would have been more interesting in some ways, but anyway, it's ok. I hated the way the film was promoted online, but this is a different matter completely.

Aspie Peril

This is a shorthand concept that I came up with as a way of naming difficult everyday situations, a way of telling Charlotte that I might be having some trouble, or I had some trouble that day or whatever. It's based on the weird phrases that come with film certificates like 'mild peril with occasional fantasy violence'.



Aspie peril can range in intensity, from mild to extreme, but generally it's the low level routine stuff. I have to deal with it most days, and naming it is also a way of recognising it and coping with it. It's like a metaphorical Logan's Run style flashing warning LED in my palm – sometimes I notice it starting and sometimes not.

Just walking through the '60s indoor shopping precinct near home can be high peril, if all the shop alarm panels are emitting their regular high pitched bursts, and the music from the PA is swooshing around my head, combining with the music from individual shops, and people are looking at their phones and not looking where they're going. Sometimes I'm gasping for air as I get outside at the end of that two minutes! Aspie peril!

Assuming there are no shouting christians or loads of people smoking in the way and, getting into the station is relatively low peril, but getting closer to the platforms, the rush hour crowds are walking towards me and peril is up again.

I can't tell where people are headed, some are running for other trains, I have to be super alert to not bump into anyone. This is all averagely mild peril I have every day, it's enough to raise my pulse or break out in a sweat, but I recover quickly. On the train I try to avoid sitting next to people with strong perfume or (more often) aftershave or loud music in their earbuds, and sometimes have to move or get off and wait for the next train. Aspie Peril!

Caring

I've been a carer since I was 18 but it was only in my 40s that I was able to name it and I'm still coming to terms with what it has meant over the course of my life. This is because the kind of emotional labour I do is usually obscured by my gender, it's seen as normal and natural for women.

I've noticed amongst my crip friends that there is a distinction between caring and personal assistance, the former is seen as cloying, patronising, restricting, the latter is enabling. But in my world there is little need for personal assistance in a physical sense, my work is all about being the glue that holds things together, mediating, articulating, translating, looking out for things, hyper-vigilance, problem-solving, crisis-management, organising, prompting, remembering, holding all the things in my mind.

I find it really hard to talk about my life as a carer. There are other people involved and I need to protect their confidentiality. I have a lot of conflicting feelings about caring as gendered work because of my feminism. I was really disturbed when I saw the film adaptation of Never Let Me Go, where carer labour is an essential part of the clone-industrial-complex. I still shudder about it and wonder how my role as a carer props up our present day dystopia.

I also don't know anyone else in my situation. The carer organisations I have had contact with are preoccupied with their own administration and treat carers as data generators for funding applications, or unpaid labour (they call volunteers "champions" – gag). My local carer organisation holds meetings in a church (fuck off!), spams me with irrelevant .pdfs, and got very sniffy with me when I've tried to talk to them about how they work, like when I said that their weight loss programme was questionable and that I have expert knowledge in this area. I slip through the net because I don't fit a stereotype and don't play my role with sufficient passivity. The local council has also been difficult, with Carer's Assessments getting fucked up. I've asked them to fund a year's therapy and a monthly massage, not much really, but that's got fucked up too, so I've dropped it and am on my own again.

Sometimes I have a public life around other things and it's great that my work elsewhere touches people. But it's weird fielding Tweets or fan mail telling me that I'm amazing. People project a lot onto me, they don't see my daily life. The truth is I'm knackered.

I'M NOT NAUGHTY, I'M AUTISTIC



No 4: MICHAEL SANDFORD

Oh – it could have all been so different. In June last year 20 yr old Martin Sandford from Surrey was living illegally in New Jersey, and apparently had a notion that many of us have surely shared - that it would be better in the long run if trump was dead. So he drove to Las Vegas and tried to use a cop's gun to shoot him. He failed, and was jailed for 12 months in December 2016. Hope he's popular in prison.

Asperger United

This is a modest-looking publication is supported by the NAS and available for free to subscribers. It is one of my favourite publications and I look forwards to every issue. It's a mag but reads like a zine, presenting an unfiltered view of Asperger's written entirely by aspies. Sometimes it's a bit awkward and offbeat. I enjoy the penpal adverts, a popular part of the magazine, I like finding out about people's special interests, and hearing about their lives. The poems and short stories are the best, I loved a recent anti-discrimination allegory set inside a biscuit barrel. The chocolate digestives saved the day.

perfume or (more often) aftershave or loud music in their earbuds, and sometimes have to move or get off and wait for the next train. Aspie Peril!

I'M NOT NAUGHTY, I'M AUTISTIC



No 3: GARY MCKINNON

Scottish hacker, accused of the "biggest military computer hack of all time" in 2002, his extradition to the US was eventually blocked by Home Secretary Theresa May in 2012. Sadly Amber Rudd has not followed her predecessor's example and extradition of Lauri Love (from YNMD no 1) has been approved.

McKinnon was originally motivated by a desire to uncover secret evidence of UFO cover-ups and free energy suppression, and has since become something of a celebrity on the Brit UFO /conspiracy scene.

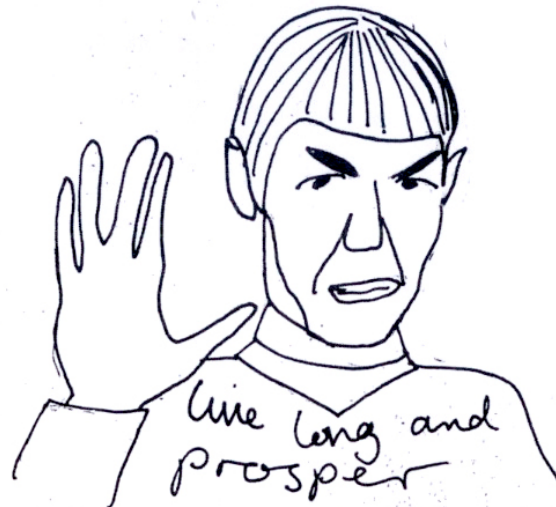
People project a lot onto me, they don't see my daily life. The truth is I'm knackered.

Mister SPOCK

I only watch Star Trek for Spock. In my eyes, and I know I'm not alone, he is an aspie ectomorphic hunk.

Best Spocks: when he is old and frail and wise beyond imagining; when he wears a hat or bandana to hide amongst ignorant and aggressive earthlings; when Kirk and Bones take the piss out of him but he treats it as a trifling irrelevance, which it is; when he saves the day through his outstanding scientific know-how; any mind-melding or death grip situation; when he is ultra-precise; when he plays his Vulcan lute; when he is able to communicate with profoundly alien beings and prevent more violence; when he is driven to Vulcan sexual frenzy; when there is slashy tension between him and his Captain. To love Spock is to love autism.

The most painful Spock is an early episode where he makes a duff decision and proves that he will never be good enough to be fully in charge. No matter how brilliant he is, you know he will always be second. Spock suffers from disablism too.



a popular part of the magazine, I like finding out about people's special interests, and hearing about their lives. The poems and short stories are the best, I loved a recent anti-discrimination allegory set inside a biscuit barrel. The chocolate digestives saved the day.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/aspergerunited>

The Emotional Poet



Mary-Ann Ambrose has a freshly-shaved pink mohican, tattoos, a crutch covered with stickers and decorations. She wears tinted glasses, a striped onesie, bright accessories. She looks amazing! She is out as gay and as a mental health survivor. She describes herself as misunderstood and complex, often isolated. She has a support worker who couldn't look more proud of her as she reads her poems. She is The Emotional Poet and she has DIY-published a collection of poems as an eBook. Vulnerability, fear, hope, humour, sadness, shame, defiance are some of the emotions that The Emotional Poet invokes. The poems are intense to read and to see her perform. Most of them are quite short and written in accessible language. Many people think poetry should always be lyrical, but I like a direct emotional hit and that is what Mary-Ann does.

Please buy my book
Because I'm Autistic
If you don't I might go
Emotionally ballistic!!!

<http://tinyurl.com/emotionalpoet>

Seeing yourself / autism memoirs, another review of sorts

When I was diagnosed the first book I got was Tony Attwood's *Complete Guide*. It was good, interesting, opened my eyes in a way, but obviously it's very generalised and autistic experience is so varied. Although I had a real official diagnosis and so much of how I live could now be labelled as autistic, I felt I still needed evidence that that I really was/am autistic somehow. When I've told people about it, they don't know much about it I guess, so they don't have that much to say, and the few conversations I had about it were short. Not many questions. Some people prefer to ignore it, at work especially. They don't want to acknowledge it's a big deal – after all, I have a job, partner, a life – so I can't be that autistic, right? It's frustrating to be misread, and also diminishing. I've heard people I work with use the word 'autistic' as a slur too. One of the work people I told now treats me like some kind of magical savant who remembers and knows all. There's also the whole 'everyone is bit autistic'/'I'm feeling a bit autistic today' thing. Maybe the spectrum idea undermines the real differences between autistic and NT people? I am 'high functioning' and have 'mild' rather than 'severe' autism, so it may not seem like a big deal, but I still want it to be acknowledged that I have got through my life with these obstacles, that I am disabled. Just don't fucking patronise me! I don't need your congratulations.

Complicated feelings like these have led me to books written by other autistic people. Scratch the surface and there are tons of these, most look quite terrible, but I have bought a few. The major problem with these books is they are usually 'triumph over adversity' narratives, by 'exceptional' individuals. They at least border on the precipice of inspiration porn (a term coined in 2012 by Australian disability activist Stella Young) if not wallowing in it completely. And mostly they are American, with some quite limited definitions of 'triumph' and 'adversity'. I don't get much out of them. Would anyone want to read a book about someone just getting on with stuff? That's another thing this zine is about!

One book I've read recently is definitely not inspiration porn. It has been published sem-commercially, and the author works for the NAS, but don't draw too many assumptions from these facts. It is *Guerrilla Aspies* ("A neurotypical society infiltration manual") by Paul Wady. I don't have the time to write a real review, but this book is an epic trawl through most aspects of autistic /NT interaction, from someone who was diagnosed in his 40s, as I was. It's dense, randomly punctuated and broadly satirical. It's hard to judge what Wady really thinks on lots of the issues raised, and it could have benefitted from an edit, but it did make me laugh, and it's a genuine autistic artefact at least.

OK - HERE I GO AGAIN. HAVE YOU CONSIDERED BUYING MY ZINE DIFFERENT TIMES? DRAG, ASPERGERS, ROCKNROLL - WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE? AVAILABLE FROM charlottecooper.bigcartel.com

