

Asperger's Syndrome Fact Sheet – Benjamin Howe

This sheet has been written in collaboration with those who know me best. I have Asperger's Syndrome (AS) – I have it mildly and most people I meet would have no idea. AS is on the autistic spectrum – for more information on what that means and how it can be considered a “spectrum” please read this comic by Rebecca Burgess (<http://themighty.com/2016/05/rebecca-burgess-comic-redesigns-the-autism-spectrum/>).

While AS can be thought of as a disability – and it is at times – my family prefer to think of it as a way of giving me abilities that I may not otherwise have. It is not an illness – I cannot be “cured”. However, I can learn how I'm expected to behave in various situations – and have been doing this since about 11.

How Asperger's Affects Me

Communication

- I struggle with non-verbal cues and subtlety. If you want me to do / stop doing something you may need to tell me that in a direct manner – I won't take offence!
- Equally, I may sometimes be perceived as being over direct. I do not mean to cause offence or be rude. This area is one where I am learning how to react and behave so please give me the benefit of the doubt if I get it wrong.
- There are times when I may over-communicate with people. For example, I might ask more questions than seems necessary in a given situation. If I do please just ask me to stop.

Fine Motor Skills

- While I have no problem dissecting the inner workings of a laptop or PC, I struggle with handwriting anything significant – for example writing on a flipchart or whiteboard. As far as possible I type rather than write, so please don't be surprised if I'm often typing on my laptop.

Organisation

- One of the ways Asperger's affects me is that I like to know what is coming next as far ahead as possible, so I can anticipate and plan ahead.
- I get stressed if I'm running late – so I often plan to be early to avoid this.

Sensory

- I often struggle with sudden loud noises (e.g. fire alarms, emergency sirens). Obviously these sort of things can't always be avoided but, for example, if a fire alarm is going to be tested then I find it helpful to know this in advance.
- I sometimes struggle to follow a conversation when in a room with lots of conversations at once – for example at a networking dinner. I tend to network best by contacting somebody who does something I'm specifically interested in, and then having a conversation with them.

Someone who many people might recognise as an Aspie (one who has AS) is Sheldon Cooper from The Big Bang Theory. He often gives too many details and doesn't always understand when other people are bored. He assumes everyone else thinks as he does. He likes routine and gets upset if someone else sits in his chair. These are all things that I can relate to!

