

A Journey through Asperger's Syndrome

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Pre-Sharing Questions

- Why turn up for today's sharing session?
- How many of you are familiar with Asperger's Syndrome? (And by extension, the autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?)
- What are your impressions of ASD?
- Anybody around you with ASD?

Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Spectrum — range of *both* abilities and disabilities.
- Asperger's Syndrome: higher intelligence than normal — this is a strength!
- Strengths can be used to gain acceptance.
- But we need tools to cope with *weaknesses*.

Is Asperger's Syndrome Really... a Problem?

BUSINESS
INSIDER

TECH

FINANCE

POLITICS

STRATEGY

LIFE

ALL

Peter Thiel: Asperger's can be a big advantage in Silicon Valley

Drake Baer ⌚ Apr. 8, 2015, 2:01 PM 🔥 28,006

<http://www.businessinsider.com/peter-thiel-aspergers-is-an-advantage-2015-4/?IR=T&r=SG>

Innovations

Why shades of Asperger's Syndrome are the secret to building a great tech company

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/innovations/wp/2015/04/03/why-shades-of-aspergers-syndrome-are-the-secret-to-building-a-great-tech-company/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.35ce77b8743e

Timeline (not exhaustive)

Age	Event
9	Signs of disruptive behaviour in class
10	Diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome
14	A "Friend of Singa" Award
Now	Still Learning how to Cope Better?

Playing to Strengths: A Case Study of Secondary School

- Good in mathematics — but how to change perception?
- Volunteer to *impart skills* — shows capability, not disability.
- Bonus: a reason to operate meaningfully in a social context.

Strategies

- Making friends is *easier* in the Aspie's comfort zone.
- Lucky me: I could showcase my strength through Mathematics because of its importance for everyone (I ended up becoming a peer tutor)
- Support structure: get Aspies socially involved in their strengths — interaction opportunity with peers on a more “friendly” footing.

Progress



Adulthood

- The good: some intelligence is helpful in navigating a far more complicated environment.
- The bad: emotional complexity remains a big challenge.

Social Skills

- Since Aspies enjoy *imitation*, we tend to learn by *observation* and then analysing what works.
- Explicit questions on “how their peers behave” in deriving acceptable social norms.
- Personal thought: people-watching can be useful (but do not stare)

Transition

- The real world is not as kind, so we must transit the Aspie gradually from the safe platforms to the real world.
- Since help cannot be around *all the time*, we need to think of:
 - Building up a toolbox of skills.
 - Building confidence for the Aspie to use these skills.

Toolbox of Skills

- “Corrective” toolbox to address Aspies’ weaknesses.
 - Social skills
 - Breaking the ice, maintaining conversation, gracefully “exiting” conversations.
 - Interpreting nuances and subtlety in language
 - Not just *verbal*, but *written*. (social media is visual)
 - *Written subtlety* is particularly difficult — the speedier change of use of language through memes, “trending” events.
 - Empathy
 - Not just *interpretation* of circumstances, but appropriate responses such as comfort, support and acceptance.
 - Emphasis on *emotional assurance* as opposed to *rational discourse* — not everything is an after-action review!

Questions?