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Education and transitions

CHILDHOOD

I think that my parents, particularly my mother, were much more aware than me regarding my differences to other children when I was younger.

I remember my saying words in a different way and my family and their close friends thinking that this was "cute". However, my mum was very clear that I should use "normal words" so that I wouldn't draw attention to myself.

Also I remember feeling very possessive of my things in the classroom. For example, if someone took my rubber, it wasn't good enough for them to return it. I wanted the perpetrators to be punished.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

By the second year in Secondary School, I was feeling different from other children. This was mainly because some children used it as an excuse to bully me. The bullying escalated and became physical as well as verbal and made me feel very low.

Eventually I was diagnosed with autism which I think was a low grade type or something. My mum tends to know about these things.

" The diagnosis didn't really change my world. I suppose I was pleased that it gave me a reason for my being different, but I also wondered "why me?" and "it's not fair", but generally it was life as usual." "

CHANGING SCHOOLS

I was moved to a new school when I was 13. This one had a specialist unit where I could go at break times to be safe. There was an amazing guy in charge of this unit who really helped me out loads and got lots of special things sorted out to support me to achieve 3 GCSEs. More importantly, he enabled me to enjoy school and grow in confidence.

I remember hearing about "transitions" vaguely, but for me this was merely a concept that other people used.

" For me the reality was about having to leave the school where I felt okay at last and making sure that I went to the best place possible for me." "

Again the guy from the special unit was great at helping to plan this and as a result of his input is now a family friend.

COLLEGE

When I left school I went to a specialist college, which was more what other people wanted for me at the time.

" However, I finally realised that it would give me a chance to come to terms with who I was and a chance to learn how to cope with others." "

In my third and final year there, I spent most of my time at a mainstream college successfully retaking Maths and English GCSEs. It was at this time that I really got into art and design and decided I wanted to follow this up.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

I got a place at a college doing a National Diploma in art. Unfortunately whilst here I got mixed up with a group of people who recognised and took advantage of my vulnerability, although it took me ages to see this. I thought they were real friends. Things got gradually worse and eventually they made very serious accusations.

Fortunately they were not very savvy and left information about their plan to "frame me" on one of their Facebook pages. However, I was only exonerated after I had been excluded from college for six weeks really close to my exams. The girls involved were told to leave me alone. This really does appear to be the only action taken against them. I still feel angry and hurt by this.

On a positive note, despite all of this happening I still ended with a Distinction and got into a university to study for a degree in art.

UNIVERSITY

The university I went to was good in that they had support workers in place for me before I started. Despite this, I don't think that the university and the support workers really got autism. They were far more aware of the implications of my dyspraxia and dyslexia.

" Socially it took me a long time to gain the confidence to make friends. I was very wary of people, largely due to my previous experiences at art college." "

I ended up making friends on the Internet first. I didn't really make face-to-face friends until I joined the university theatre company. In my last year I ended making 5 or 6 friends who I still have contact with now.

NOW

I currently live with my dad and I am looking for paid work. I know that I need to look for a basic job initially and use this as a stepping stone.

" To anyone with autism who is about to embark on the transitions journey, I would say: keep your family close, you will need them. "

" As for people who control transitions and are in charge of transition services I would say: employ people who know and care about autism." "

I often felt that the people who worked with me in colleges got more per hour than if they worked with people who didn't have autism. People need to care in order to be good at this type of work.

By Danny

Useful links 

Social media 

Quick contact 

Sign up for email updates 

To get email updates from us, update your details and preferences, take part in our communities, and use other services, please sign in or register.

The National Autistic Society

Until everyone understands

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