

Why am I doing this?

The very nature of my disability is that I'm prone to perseverate to the point of obsession on something, determined to solve the problem and can't stop myself, but I feel like if I solve the "puzzle" (autism symbol), I will have peace because then I can be aware of what I need to do and put modifications in place to help me succeed. I want to stop wearing people out.

Because I have trouble keeping a job due to people issues. I get triggered a lot, obsess over what they say, ruminate about how terribly I handle situations, feel ashamed, hide, or get angry and don't want to do what they want.

Because I need to understand how to overcome what's holding me back

Because I am tired of suffering

Because I believe that I am an author and this is my first book and that would be the answer to my problems. I believe that I am an artist on paper and have a weird way of looking at the world that people find interesting.

Publishing company read a skeleton of my book and said "where did you learn to write like that?"

My law school professor said "There's one student who didn't get the highest grade, but I've never seen writing like that at South Texas."

Got A+ and came in first in two law school classes. When I really give it everything I have, I come in first, but only in academics.

Research/writing editor in law school.

Research and Writing assistant to professor East in law school, who said I was afraid of success.

Varsity brief writer for T. Gerald Treece's famous moot court team and he came to law review and asked me to write for them because someone told him that I was a great writer.

Bullied a LOT growing up and in my career and it was very painful.

I re-traumatize myself all of the time because I can't predict who is crazy or how the opposing counsel is going to treat me or why a judge is yelling at me.

When I get filled with rage, I do stupid things to stop the feelings.

Impulsive – creates chaos in my life. Spending, drinking, law practice.

Planning is hard but necessary.

I don't have a plan anymore and I am anxious about that.

Why do I believe that I am autistic?

I'm 52 years old and I am just figuring out some really basic things like why routines are necessary and how I made it through law school without reading

books, but cliffs notes, but can't work with people very well. Why I am a stupid genius? I can get a doctorate but can't follow directions. I do everything different than other people. I've never understood who I am because I've spent my life trying to be everyone else. I struggle with seeing myself accurately because I have suppressed the things that I don't like about myself. Women present differently than men with autism and frequently show signs of mental health problems, nervous breakdowns, regression (losing skills you had due to trauma), and PTSD just from life itself. Every successive disappointment made me withdraw from the world. I've made it this far and I know I can make it further if I just understand how to self regulate and effectively deal with other people. What modifications do I need to succeed? I understand that I may always struggle to process sensory information so it will take me longer and I will have to PAY ATTENTION AND SLOW DOWN. Being fast makes me sloppy, error prone. I worked with autistic kids for years and never saw the similarities but once I really understood how autism looks in women who mask and camouflage, I saw a "pattern" through all of the things below that fit. Patterns are diagnoses. I would have been devastated to learn this before so I'm glad no one told me but as an adult, I needed to know.

These are the symptoms that make me believe that I am autistic

People have screamed "you don't listen!" my whole life.

I listen and comply if I agree or think it would be beneficial, but I skip past the details and read so fast that I miss things.

In law school, I never read an entire textbook (only small portions or cliff notes) and graduated in the top of my class.

Photographic memory is how I learned because my reading comprehension is slow.

Spatial recognition problems

Directionally or navigationally challenged.

Think in black and white. It's been a process to stop doing that and realize there's gray. Now I know there's gray but can't predict what's true in most situations.

I have to have a situation repeated a lot to recognize a pattern but once I see the pattern, I recognize it instantly in other situations and have a déjà vu feeling.

Bad performance anxiety

Get lost when I look in people's eyes and suddenly, I can't hear anything they are saying, never remember names.

Hate spinning.

Nervous system feels assaulted a lot.

Motion sickness (gotten better)

Vestibular problems with balance

Not good at sports

Suck at gymnastics and cheerleading

Feel terror a lot.

Almost drowned 4-5 x

My book related to animals, like me feeling like an eagle, turtle, or a dove

World is not safe.

Cannot manage money because I'm afraid of it and hate it for what it does to people. Sometimes I fear if we had money, my husband would leave me.

Adrenaline junkie

Don't perceive danger, so I've almost died several times.

I have been in shock several times as a kid.

Needs external validation and someone's disapproval makes me want to hide, lower than low.

Going over social interactions over and over again long after they are past to critique my words.

Hate brushing teeth and going to dentist, pain aversion.

Jumbled emotions

Love to think outside the box.

Lacks common sense and has to be shown how to do things or I panic and freeze.

Overwhelmed by too many tasks.

Awkward in groups, used alcohol to feel okay around people.

Laughs at inappropriate things or myself usually and people's reactions to me because they are always thinking I am stupid when I know otherwise, and they do too.

Brilliant ideas that no one understands.

Trouble reading between the lines.

It always takes me longer to get jokes and then it's not funny anymore to the other person.

Bad timing relationally and emotionally

Prefer written communication because I can polish it for hours whereas speaking, I am goofy, feeling terror, and choke.

Don't like public speaking unless I have a script.

Good at drama

Music talent

Web design sort of talent (I don't know coding and my architectural skills are weak)

Two speed productivity – very fast or very slow

I don't like sitting in my chair to work alone and prefer someone to be in the room.

Trouble working with other people because I need frequent reassurance.

Happy without material things, but I love to shop when I get too. I spend too much money because I can't conceptualize what is too expensive, so I usually look for prices mid-range.

Talked late but once I did, would not shut up.

Best when I script a conversation in advance, but being a trial lawyer is sometimes hard because you have to shift gears and be prepared for what the other side does. When I anticipate in advance and prepare, I can do this well, but otherwise, I get into terror and flounder.

Hard to start everything but once I start, I have trouble disengaging even when I should.

Lacks situational awareness completely.

Gets lost – sends me into terror.

Everyone in my life has always said, “How can someone so clever be so stupid?”

Struggle knowing what to do in every situation because I panic and cannot think.

Messy and disorganize!!

Horrible time management, I don't have a schedule.

Understand camouflaging because I've done it forever like a chameleon.

I learned to be popular from studying and mimicking my sister.

Did not know how to have friends as a child and would sit on the porch with a jar of coins, saying “kids I have money, come play with me.”

Always want to skip small talk and just tell someone what I think but they consider it rude and get angry.

Don't like sales because it seems totally manipulative, so I instantly don't trust people if I feel they are trying to sell me something.

Trouble opening jars and other things.

Hate reading directions because it takes too long, and I have to think too hard.

Prefer just trying to figure it out but I usually can't do it, so I have to ask for help.

Mother said when I was a baby I was “so good” because I never cried but also said the Dr. said I didn't move in the womb because I was lazy. I didn't like that.

Can't handle loud noises because I am startled a lot and it hurts my brain when Rick's phone is too loud.

Hate phone calls. Startling

Don't realize when I am hungry or thirsty, so I get dehydrated a lot.

Forgets everything unless written down.

Great short-term memory, no long-term memory. Much of my childhood is a blur except for memories others have told me about. Don't know if they are my memories or pictures, I created from what people told me.

Will watch a movie, listen to a song 20x if I really like it and it speaks to me (meet joe black, up, sound of music, gone with the wind) lose interest very quickly if it's slow or I don't see the point.

Thinking in pictures

Very hard to recognize people or remember names, esp. if they have aged.

Out of sync

Obsessed with pop culture to the point my husband thinks that's what I got my degree in

Became a psychology major to fix myself.

Lack of sense of identity

Didn't understand what to do as a mother until now (23 years) no one showed me.

Quirky sense of humor

Tired all of the time

Frequent headaches from stress

NOT LIKING BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO, but needing that.

LOVES AND LIVES for research, particularly in the area of neuroscience.

Didn't know how to have charisma, had to read a book.

Love being funny and most of the time that I am funny, it's because I'm stupid.

Over apologizing for everything thinking it must be my fault

Not caring what people think because ultimately, it's too hard to please them and understand.

Self-centered because I am distressed and trying to figure it out all of the time.

Being really good at something that is completely useless usually because I'm trying to figure out an answer that no one else has come to yet.

Avoids trying new things.

Food textures bother me, like onions, fat, celery.

Very few foods that I really like (cheese, pasta, rice)

Eating the same foods over and over again to the point family complains

ALWAYS WANTING TO UNDERSTAND WHY and if I don't understand why people do things, I think it's stupid and won't do it.

Overly empathetic

Sarcastic (bad when I was a teenager, but I think it's rude now)

Finding inappropriate things funny

Find cartoons hilarious.

Not liking to be touched because it's startling.

When I do things, like piano, have to do it over and over and over again if I mess up and won't stop until I do it perfect (or trivia, have to beat my score before I can stop)

Getting excited and interrupting people because it's very hard to wait because I'm only half listening to them, very hard to focus on what they are saying.

Very clumsy and uncoordinated

VERY RIGID

DIFFICULTY WITH TRANSITIONS, BECOMING SOMEONE ELSE.

ALWAYS WANTED TO BE SOMEONE ELSE in school and I would try to mimic everyone who was successful to the point I didn't know who I was

Maybe I did that because my mom wished I was dead, don't know but I think I didn't like myself. I even changed my name in school without telling my parents.

Thought I would only have value if I did something extraordinary like be a lawyer or a Dr.

Very good writer

Terrified when I was put in special education for speech therapy because I felt retarded as did I when my sister and mom laughed at my hearing test because I failed.

Got in tons of trouble growing up rebelling and acting out because I was angry.

Full of rage.

If you hurt someone I love, I'll nearly kill you. Will fight for other people who I love.

If someone I love is angry with me, I'm devastated and panicked.

Growing up, I was very secretive because I couldn't bare someone I loved being mad at me but I couldn't give up my addiction.

Mischievous and excited by thrills.

Took reading French in school because the conversation was too hard.

Always looking for shortcuts to excel above everyone like cliffs notes.

School was incredibly easy, so easy that I was always bored and annoyed.

Very hard to do things that I don't want to do or see an instant benefit, like long term things because I usually don't see results and the waiting is too hard.

Talks way too much but I don't know how much is enough and how much is too much and I usually overshoot.

Have a couple of close friends only. People really didn't know me growing up, just the version of me that I chose to let people know.

Avoided a lot of beneficial things because I thought it was nerdy and I was terrified to be seen as a dork. (piano when I was really good at it, books).

Avoided books because I thought only nerds read books.

Got a doctorate and it was a piece of cake, but the jobs are too hard because of the politics which I never understand because it's like chaos.

Don't know how to negotiate very well.

Suffer burnout and exhaustion a lot.

Multiple nervous break downs, usually from drugs but also other traumatic events combined.

Trouble identifying what's bothering me unless I think a lot.

Intense preoccupation with a narrow focus of subjects like tunnel vision

Obsessed with solving problems, especially involving myself.

Social difficulties

Emotional regulation problems that haven't been fixed with medication completely.

Don't like people bothering me.