

About my Autism

I feel it is important for anyone that is tasked with working with me to understand my autism. In an attempt to keep this short I will only mention a few highlights. You are encouraged to ask questions.

Unfortunately, autism is invariably misunderstood – even by professional autism specialists. Autism is not a disease or something one can catch. It is genetic. It is natural. Autism is considered a “disorder”. I disagree. Autistic neural circuitry has a different “wiring”, resulting in a different umwelt (Umwelt: an organisms perception of their environment. It is dictated by the physical neural circuitry in the brain.) Non-autistic people or Neurotypicals or NT’s and autistic’s have different umwelts. That does not mean either perception is “wrong”. It means that autistics perceive things that NTs cannot and vice versa. We live in an immense world. No one is capable of perceiving everything. Autism benefits society by expanding our collective understanding of the universe. Albert Einstein, Sir Isaac Newton, Nikola Tesla, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Thomas Jefferson, Elon Musk plus many, many more are all autistic.

Sensitivities: Autistics typically have “amplified” senses – oftentimes to overwhelming levels. Being overwhelmed by certain sounds, lights, smells, touch, etc. is often misinterpreted as mental illness. Emotional feelings are also “amplified”. It is difficult to impossible for an autistic to explain how they feel. Language is a human creation for the majority. There are concepts for which there are no words. Autistic feelings fall in that category.

The concept of a medical professional or anyone for that matter, assuming control or management over my body or my health is terrifying. My request: Please do not assume responsibility for my health. Please ask and explain before taking any tests, examinations or procedures and respect my feelings. Understand that the detriment of induced anxieties exceeds any benefit of medical “help”. Also understand that you cannot relate to autistic anxieties/feelings because your neural wiring does not support those experiences or feelings.

Social Anxiety can be shocking and traumatic. Seeing a blood pressure cuff coming towards me is shocking. Like the shocking effect in a horror movie, except the “shock” is not temporary. Medical examinations or procedures are intimately social, inducing very high anxiety levels: elevated adrenaline, hyper stimulated amygdala, elevated blood pressure. Each anxiety experience is added to a lifetime mix, building throughout life to PTSD levels. I still remember and experience anxieties from years ago. This is why the average autistic lifespan is only 52 years. I am trying to limit my exposure to social anxieties or at least the traumatic elements of it as much as possible. That is the purpose of this letter.

Please understand that any blood pressure measurement taken in an office environment will not represent my normal blood pressure. It will be misleading. It has taken years to train myself how to mask panic reactions, but I cannot reduce the internal panic feelings or blood pressure elevating adrenaline, etc. I will bring my blood pressure log with me. Please accept my log entries for your records.

Please be patient with my responses to tests. For example I have Visual Snow Syndrome. During eye exams, Visual Snow Syndrome adds grain to vision, much like high ISO photographic film. The “snow” is generated in the brain, not in the eyes. Fine detail can still be made out, but it requires patience. Movie film appears sharper because you see multiple frames of the same image; each with different grain patterns collectively canceling. Likewise, I can make out fine detail, it just takes a little longer.

Amplified sensory sensitivity is a common autistic trait. This trait also includes emotional sensitivity. As such, I am extremely sensitive to stereotyping. I am very thin-skinned, both emotionally and physically. Examples include the assumption that since I am a type-1 diabetic then I must have hyperglycemia, thus I must have diabetic neuropathy, etc. Eager testing efforts to “prove” these stereotypes are insulting and hurtful. Makes me feel that I am not trusted to control my metabolism to non-diabetic normal levels – even as my blood-work indicates I do. Makes me feel that my personal health interest should not be up to me – that my health does not belong to me.

Being touched: it takes a lot of effort to not jerk away or show feelings of panic when being touched. Being examined makes me feel like I am a specimen of livestock; as if I am not the owner of myself. I feel I am being tested to find fault – to expose my deficiencies and failings for judgment at the most personal level.

Autistic’s have a very high mental “Noise Floor”. On average, at rest, an autistic’s brain is 41% more active than an NT. The activity is generally a mix of current senses and thoughts mixed with past senses and experiences. Everything is in the foreground making it hard to separate past experiences with current ones.

This letter only covers a minuscule fraction of the subject of autism. My intent is to convey enough understanding so as to lessen the trauma of my visits.

Best Regards,