

Ask an Aspie

by BJ Wanlund
Staff Writer

I don't mean to be immodest here, but my first column drew praise from just about everybody, and I thank you for liking what I'm doing.

I wish to go in a different direction with the column, because I wanted a "Dear Aspie"-type deal here in this column, but reader participation in a small college student newspaper is practically nil, so I'm going to cover topics of some relevance to us Aspies.

I first wanted to cover options for learning to teach autistic and Aspie children right here in North Carolina. I think that this knowledge is universal, and even if you don't intend to teach in North Carolina, this will put you in very good stead for wherever you plan on teaching, whether elementary school, middle school, high school, or college.

The state of North Carolina is unique in that it has Division TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children), which helps to educate people who either are parents of autistic children (not just Aspies) or who are in the education of such children, and it's really a wonderful program.

I don't know if there are similar programs in other states, but I think we're lucky here in North Carolina to have such a wonderful institution that can help people learn about these types of children, and maybe one day, we can all live harmoniously, with everybody having knowledge of everybody else.

There are regional centers for TEACCH, and the closest one to us here in Brevard is the



Asheville Regional Center, which seems to me is moving around more than any of the other things in Asheville.

You can go to <http://www.teacch.com> for more details on regional centers, and more information on autism and AS than even I can provide.

The next topic, which to me is very relevant lately, happens to deal with several misconceptions regarding normalcy, or as Data from TNG would say it, "fully functional beings". I have a real sense of right and wrong. I think that's normal for everybody.

However, everybody thinks that I'm normal, save for a few quirks. This is NOT the case, guys. There are a few things that people should be at least aware of, if they've never dealt with someone like myself in their everyday lives in high school, or whatever.

First, if I have crossed some imaginary line in the sand somewhere, I never know it exactly, so if I've made some grave error, you'd be far better off telling me yourself. And don't leave it up to people in charge to tell me. Either tell me yourself or live with the decision that you've made, it's your choice.

Second, I don't always self-advocate in certain situations, and that also can get me in trouble, so if you notice something, please don't hesitate to tell me! If I know about it, I can make certain adjustments to make sure I have

an easier time.

Third, my personal life when it's not relationship-related does have its ups and downs, although mine's more like a roller-coaster than most. I was teased mercilessly in elementary school and middle school, although I was less teased in high school and here at Brevard College.

My final topic in this column is about something that I feel very strongly about, and that is the new ABC drama *Eli Stone*. This does have something to do with autism and AS.

Eli Stone has drawn controversy among pediatricians claiming that the subject matter, helping parents who sued the drug companies for creating their child's autism using a substance called thimerosal, was "complete baseless conjecture" and that "parents shouldn't be concerned".

I'm sorry, but what is baseless conjecture if you live with the mutations that the drug companies created with the help of thimerosal every day of your life? And why are the FDA and the CDC wanting to put this ugly chapter of history behind us? Did they knowingly put thimerosal into children's vaccines knowing the risk factors involved?? And with that rhetorical question, I'll see you next time!

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