

I Am Autistic

By Riley Costello

Noises. All around me, in my head, I hear them endlessly as if someone is mumbling, but they cannot be heard. I struggle through a few of my day-to-day tasks, but each day is a new adventure. My strengths, my weaknesses, all bundled up into a life form that is me. Society sees me as different, some might even call me peculiar, but I see myself as beautiful and unique in each and everything that I do. The way I see, how I feel, the movement of my interactions differs from most. I do not hear like you, I do not feel like you, I don't express myself in the same way as you. I am autistic.

I struggle through some social interactions. Talking to others is hard for me. I may need some alone time in order to continue a conversation. I feel as if communication to me is like having to swallow a cactus would feel to you. Loud noises upset every being of my soul. I might need to detach from a group for a few moments in order to complete a task. Counting helps me cope. Simple tasks for you may become difficult to me. I am autistic.

I see things differently from you. I see trees as an animal's playground. I see it as somewhere for birds, squirrels, and even bees to feel safe. A hiding place for chipmunks. My mother is my tree. She is my protector as the trees protect the animals. I see flowers as colorful abundant gifts from God. It is a place for bees to take a nap after a long hard day. To me a rainbow is a vibrant streak of color that causes me to become overly excited, some may even say disruptive. I am autistic.

Yes, I am wired differently from you, but I can do anything that you can do. I may even be able to do these things better than you. I can become a baker, surgeon, lawyer, photographer, or even a computer genius. Just because you may not understand me does not mean I am stupid. I can achieve the goals I set just like you. I will break the limits others have set for me. I will overcome all obstacles. You cannot break me. I am autistic.

You may see me throw a tantrum. Instead of staring at me and whispering about my mother's parenting skills, see how you can help me become calm. I may begin dancing or even sing a song. Rather than calling me strange, why don't you sing along? If you pick on me you don't understand the excruciating pain you cause me for I am already an outsider. I might loath doing something that is asked of me such as write my name or repeat the alphabet and instead throw an object like my pencil or a book. My nails may be painted blue. Do not destroy my imagination and tell me boys do not wear nail polish. Why don't you instead tell me my nails look good as I show off my autism awareness color? I may have an obsession over certain objects. Whether it is candy, toys, or even something as simple as an eraser. Do not forbid me from it. You never know it could be my coping mechanism. I am autistic.

I do not enjoy bright florescent lights they cause my eyes to burn. I pay attention to details like the colors of the buttons on a shirt or how smooth the edges of puzzle pieces are. I enjoy playing alone. Even when I try to sleep my mind is in constant wonder about the journey I shall take next. It's as if I am trapped in a prison of my own thoughts. I lack the same social skills as my peers. My lack of eye contact does not mean I am uninterested in your conversation. I enjoy putting my toy cars in a line. I say phrases that have no context. Changes in my routine bother me. I am autistic.

I learn at a faster rate than most. By two, I knew how to do puzzles. When I turned three I knew all my numbers, letters, shapes, and even colors. At almost four I can operate electronics and communicate very well. Most children with autism have major learning setbacks, but thanks to the fact that my parents discovered my differences early on I am functioning almost "normally" as most would say. My thought process is more advanced than my peers. I understand things deeper because of my differences. I am autistic.

I have trouble relating to others. When I play, I would rather do it alone. If another person attempts to join me I usually either do something else or act possessive over the object. I enjoy stacking blocks. It helps me stay calm. I struggle to play with my siblings. If I get overwhelmed I will become very upset or leave the room. My communication skills aren't the best. I try to talk to others, but every time I do, it seems like something is stopping me. I feel like there is a barrier between myself and the other person. Almost as if we do not belong in each other's worlds. Other children do not particularly enjoy my company. They act as if I am a burden, but my best friend gets me through it. Her brother is nine and he has autism as well. She helps me learn to socialize. She stops me from running off when I am upset. I understand few social interactions. I am autistic.

I have many flaws. Noises become louder and more noticeable to me each day. I enjoy the adventures of traveling through life. My strengths and my weaknesses make me who I am. I interact differently than most when I communicate with others. I have trouble expressing myself. I am beautiful. You don't define me. I am autistic.