

## ***“A special way to see the world: A journey with Asperger’s Syndrome”***

by Stephen Smith

[outline of presentation given at 2013 Altogether Autism Conference]

### **Diagnosis**

I was given a preliminary diagnosis in 2008; then a full diagnosis by Dr Ava-Ruth Baker in 2010.

A full diagnosis has helped me understand who I am and helped me with specific situations for coping with life's challenges.

### **Healthy Body, Mind and Soul**

To help me cope better with the challenges of Aspergers Syndrome, I aim to maximise all aspects of my health:

- Physical
  - Fruit, vegetables, healthy nuts etc
  - Exercise. This has proven to be beneficial for both ones physical and mental health
- Mental
  - Calm mind
  - Classical music helps me keep a calm mind and also focused during serious academic study
- Spiritual
  - Christian disciplines and meditation. I especially utilise the wisdom material of the book of Proverbs in the Bible
  - Each must make their own careful spiritual journey

### **Practical Helps**

- Support of understanding friends
- Spending time with my Pussy cat is tremendous therapy for me. I actually learned something special about myself – I treat my cat as I, on the ASD spectrum, want to be treated myself
- Nature. The natural environment (native bush, birds singing etc) brings healing to the soul
- Planning. To minimise difficult circumstances and to make my day more efficient and effective, planning is essential
- Reading and learning – expand the mind and broaden the horizons

### **Ongoing challenges**

- Employment for professionals (I am a Chartered Accountant). In my experience, most Professions do not know how to support people on the ASD spectrum and there are very few recruitment agencies that know how to assist people on the spectrum. One thing that has been of big help to me is the Mainstream Employment funding. This is a Government wage subsidy scheme to help people with disabilities get back into the workforce. For more information see <http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html>
- Limited specific support for adults
- Sensory impairment. I struggle with hot summers and some noises
- Coping in a Neuro typical world with an “oddball” personality

## **Recommended books**

- The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome by Tony Attwood (2007 edition)
- Practical Resilience Books by Dr Sven Hansen [http://www.resiliencei.com/Books-and-Products\\_60.aspx](http://www.resiliencei.com/Books-and-Products_60.aspx) See my review in a previous ASK Trust newsletter