

OVERVIEW OF MY PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT INTO AN AUTISTIC SELF-ADVOCATE

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PRE-DIAGNOSIS STRUGGLES

- ❖ Raised in the 70s & 80s, long before society knew enough about Autism to understand my academic & social struggles.
- ❖ Scored 140 on an IQ test given to me in the 3rd grade, which is considered “borderline genius.”
- ❖ Graduated from Mesa High with a 1.9 GPA, which means I barely passed most of my classes.
- ❖ Numerous “experts” made dire predictions about my future throughout my upbringing.
 - When I was about 2 years old, my birth mother (whom I was separated from at the age of 2 ½ years and reunited with on my 20th birthday) was told that I’d never develop past the mental age of a 2 year old and that she would be changing my diapers for the rest of my life.
 - When I was 5 ½ years old, my adoptive mom was told that I never develop past the mental age of a 3 years old and that I be a vegetable for my entire life.
 - When I was in 8th grade, my vice principle told my mom that I’d drop out of high school, be in and out of correctional institutions before I was 18 and be a complete burden upon society.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES THAT IMPROVED MY EFFECTIVENESS AS AN AUTISTIC SELF-ADVOCATE

- ❖ Adopted a younger sister with fetal alcohol syndrome in December 1976.
 - This, along with a lengthy list of volunteer and professional activities with individuals with much more modest personal development goal, gives me a well-rounded understanding of the developmental disabilities community.
 - Our adoptive mom was asked by a coach for the Wyoming Special Olympics, who was frustrated with most of the other parents being blinded by their children’s disabilities, asked her to talk to them about what this Special Olympics coach referred to as “handicapped parenting.”
- ❖ Began working a program of recovery from co-dependency at a Christian general purpose 12 Step program, *New Wine*, in 1990. It was at this time I developed skills in areas that Autistics are known to struggle in:
 - Self-assessment of my character and actions
 - Theory of mind
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Analyzation of situation I found myself in, including how my actions and/or inaction impacted event.
 - Stress management
 - Conflict resolution
 - My right as an individual to voice my objection to things I don’t like.
 - Effective advocating of my needs, wants and desires.
 - Other general abilities in socialization

MY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ Started volunteering to do support rolls for numerous church ministry projects in February 1987.

- ❖ Took a 3-part leadership train course at Word of Grace Church in the early 1990s
- ❖ Served as a “right-hand man” for several church leaders throughout the later half of the 1990s.
- ❖ Served on several planning committees between 1992-2009.
- ❖ Ran my own free English Classes in the community room of a low-income apartment complex 2001-2005.

GETTING DIAGNOSED

- ❖ Recognized as an Autistic/Aspie in February 2009 after my birth mother, who’s now a retired LPN, attended an Inservice hosted by SARRC (Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center)
- ❖ Received a diagnosis in the summer of 2009 which qualified me to receive SSDI by the Social Security Administration. I was not able to obtain a copy of that diagnoses to find out what I was diagnosed with.
- ❖ Received a documentable diagnosis ASD (Level 1) from Voc-Rehab; 2015 (waisted taxpayers’ money by dealing with me like I was low functioning and/or just out of high school) & 2018 (RI convinced me to give them a 2nd chance by going to the office they have a strong rapport with).

SINCE MY DIAGNOSIS

- ❖ Joined the Tempe Adult Autistic/Aspie Support Group, September 2009.
 - **Sue Golubock, M.Ed., OTR/L** (Retired Occupational Therapist, Autistic & Co-organizer)
 - **Tara Marshall, BA, SLPA** (Speech Language Pathology Assistant, Autistic & Co-organizer)
 - **Dr. Bryan K. Woodruff, MD** ([2011-2014] Neurologist who has a personal interest in the Autistic community, volunteered his extensive knowledge of neurology for our edification)
- ❖ Became an Autistic Self-Advocate March 2010.
 - Started my own monthly topical discussion group & weekly support group in February 2011.
 - Host an annual Autism conference, and other Autism related activities, at my now former church; April 2011-‘13 & ‘19).
 - Began publicly voicing my objections to the status quo means in which the Autism community operates; April 2014
 - Began “amateur lobbying” the state legislature; March 2015
 - Took Peer Support Certification Training through RI International; April/May 2018