

On the Corner

BY ROBERT DOCTER –

Asperger Syndrome hits hard. It's genetic—on the high end of the autistic spectrum. Two of my magnificent grandsons have it. I love them fiercely. Zachary teaches us what it's like to live with it.

Asperger Syndrome: A Different Kind of Life

BY ZACHARY DOCTER –

Hi. My name is Zachary Docter. I am eight years old, in 3rd grade. My life is great with the Docters: my mom, my dad, my sister and my pets. But some of my life, I don't like...I have Asperger Syndrome.

I ask my mom, "What is Asperger Syndrome?" quite often. And she says, "Asperger Syndrome is a way your brain works." The front of my brain works differently. For example, maybe my friend's brain goes straight, but maybe my brain's liquid goes wiggly wobbly everywhere.

I like part of my Asperger's because I have the ability to draw good pictures, build playhouses and I know a lot about computers. But some of the things that I don't like about my Asperger's are being scared all the time. For example, I do not like elevators. I don't like them one little bit. Another thing I don't like about my Asperger's is...I still sleep with a stuffed dog and I'm eight years old. The reason I still sleep with a stuffed dog is because he's so cute I can't resist. I worry that I'm going to get lost at big places like Universal Studios. That's something I worry about way more than a regular kid. One other thing that I don't like about my Asperger's is...everything I see I want to build. For example, if I go on a subway train, when I get home I'd probably build a subway train.

I think about my Asperger Syndrome quite often. Mostly what I think about is that I wish I were a normal kid. I even cry, asking God "Please change my life. Please change my life," I say. But no matter how hard I try, God won't grant my wish. Sometimes I think to myself, if there was a machine that could make you someone else for just a day; I think, "No one would want to be me." If my mom and I are talking about my Asperger Syndrome, I sometimes tell her "Mom, my life is so hard and you would not want to be me." And every time she says, "I have stuff hard for me too, but I wish I could be more like you." And then I say "Ha!" I really don't understand why she wants to be more like me. I have such a hard life. I already know no one would want to be me.



Sometimes I wish I were somebody else, like my friends. They don't have Asperger's. Their life is probably much easier. That's what I always say. Sometimes I wish I could be my dog. If I could be someone else, even for a short amount of time, I would pick someone who had a plain, easy life; always sleeping, not doing much; like an animal.

When I'm sleeping and I'm having worries, worries that normal people wouldn't be worrying about, I cuddle up with my stuffed dog that I mentioned earlier. If I can't find that dog I'd use a backup dog. That's another thing about my Asperger Syndrome. People who have it care more about love and they love people more than anything. Even money.

When I'm scared and I don't have anything to comfort me; and when I'm worrying about something that people wouldn't normally worry about; and when I've just watched a scary show, I'd cuddle up with my stuffed dog and think. I think about other stuff, rather than what I'm afraid of. One other thing that helps me when I have something dreadful, frightening and scary on my mind is to play video games, watch some TV, play outside, ride my bike or pet my dog. There's only one thing I like about worrying...When I tell my mom what I'm worrying about, she hugs me and then lets me stay up after my bedtime. There are so many more fun things to do rather than just worrying.

If you have any worries, think of something you like to do that is fun. Then maybe you can do it. This advice might help you to get your mind off some really bad things that you're thinking about and you can't stop. This advice will help you in your future. I'm not really looking forward to the future. Everyone always says that computers will generate everything. I want things to stay the way they are now. I'm very sensitive about things changing. It's also easy to hurt my feelings. I'm very sensitive; the kind of sensitive where I could get very angry. For example, if I get a bad grade in school, I'd get angry.

Sometimes I ask my mom, "Why did God choose me to be the one to have Asperger Syndrome?" Or maybe I'd ask, "How does Asperger Syndrome come to be to a baby that's being born?" What I heard was that Asperger Syndrome isn't an object or a thing. It's not something you can touch. It is a different way that the front of your brain works. I remember the first time my mom even told me I had Asperger Syndrome. We didn't know that I had it for a long time. Actually, we didn't know it even existed.

But really, some parts of my Asperger's are easy for me. Also, the truth is, I don't mind. It isn't the worst thing in the world. I really don't want it to change and I think I really like having these kinds of abilities to create, build and draw. I think having Asperger Syndrome is a gift from God.