



Lawson

***AUTISM: THEN, NOW AND
TOMORROW. A TOOL KIT OF NEW
WAYS TO ASSIST AND SUPPORT ASD
CLIENTELE. AN INSPIRATIONAL
SPEAKER SHARING VALUABLE
INSIGHT INTO THE WORLD OF A
PERSON WITH AUTISM***

Now and Tomorrow Looking back but Moving Forward

Dr. Wendy Lawson MAPS
2010

What to expect from this presentation

- Wendy talks about her personal journey, helps & hindrances.
- Looking back (early & late childhood)
- (teen years, school & work)
- raising a family
- Autism then
- Autism now
- Autism & tools for tomorrow

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

**I was born into a family,
Just like each of us.**

My brother being older, my sisters not much less.

**My Mother was a pushover,
My Father took no fuss.**

**We moved around a lot,
My Father having got,
A few of his employers riled and rather around
the color hot.**

**Mother worked too hard. Us kids were often
barred, from shop and local cinema where I
snuck us in a lot!**

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

A strange kid was I, not much has changed. In & out of trouble, no alibi arranged.

**Far too honest for my own good,
Some said that I never should.... Never should have survived my premature birth, never should have made it, down to planet earth. But, The Heavens had other plans. Plans for bolder and better things. Plans for a future full of treasure and precious things.....**

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

We can choose to be a victim, the product of abuse.

Or we can choose more wisely, to be of some good use.

“Life is what you make it”, or so some would say. But, we can only make it if we’re equipped for our way.

Tomorrow has it’s dreams & dramas.

Tomorrow may come and go. Lets be part of the answer, let’s make sure we know.

Helps or Hindrances

- We all grow up in families of one sort or another.
- So, in many ways you are my sister or my brother.
- Lets look upon each other as if today might be our last.
- Let's support one another with one more forgiving chance.

Whose Family?

- Mum found it difficult having a child who seemed so distant, different and untameable.
- Dad found me interesting, perhaps a bit like him, but he was too busy to pay me much attention.
- My sisters found me confusing & my brother didn't really notice me.
- My aunts were accepting and welcoming of me.

As a small child

- Didn't talk till I was 4yrs. old
- Considered to be intellectually disabled
- Went to main stream schools
- Loved to run freely around the playground and class room
- Unaware of 'others'
- Not connected to the world going on within me or around me



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Wendy Lawson

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Outgoing Personality

- I got all I wanted by leading Mum by the hand to point out what I needed from her. As a child I was independent and possessed a real passion for life. I was not shy and frequently went off with strangers.
- Open personality style has been one of my greatest assets.... But....

My personality also made me more vulnerable

- Lively
- Outgoing
- Independent
- Keen to learn
- Gullible
- Vulnerable
- Go off with anyone
- Unaware of danger

As an older child

- So, Didn't relate to people but very attached to animals
 - Also collected insects. Would line up my beetles, slugs and snails and take notes on how they moved, their speed and direction.
- Sexually abused age 9. If an adult said I should do whatever, then I perceived this to mean "you must do..."
- School rules didn't make sense to me
 - So I was often in trouble
- Had lots of ear infections, colds, tonsillitis
 - Joint pain was a constant issue/arthritis



- The people who supported me mostly included my neighbour, a young 12yr. old girl; the local travellers daughter and her horse; and supportive teachers in primary school who seemed to understand my need for being on the move. Things that hindered me most were my sensory 'hurts' with sound, irritating clothing and the difficulties of judging depth & distance, making it hard to interact with other children, cross roads safely or feel at home in my own body.

hospitalised

- At 10 I got really sick. Was in a coma for a month, then after several operations and almost a year in hospital, I was well enough to go home.
- The structure & routine of hospital life suited me. The nurses became my allies and trusted me to do small jobs for them. My confidence grew.

Home again

- Outside the hospital though, once back at home, sisters jealous, school life too hard, I failed academically & socially.
- Bullied at school ... ran away from home...
- In trouble with police
- Eventually, aged 15yrs. Left home, went away to College... Found my niche in study & church.

- Routine, ritual and familiarity have been good friends. I still need these in my life.
- Appreciating what my learning style is means I know what I need to assist my learning.
- Are you a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learner?
- What are the learning styles of your Service Users?
- To best support those you work with, you need this information!

Wendy Married, & then....

- In & out of Mental hospital.
- In & out of trouble.
- Eventually taking back the control of my life. Are you still being controlled by the past?
- Being angry.... Who is my anger hurting? Writing on brown paper... burning my notes in a metal bowl...
- Letting go of hurt in the smoke, taking hold of hope for the future.

Helpful Individuals

- With the help of friends from church and neighbours near where I lived, I eventually settled down.
- Life centred around my children and making ends meet.
- Eventually Uni beckoned & I wrote for others, not just myself.



Wendy & writing

- I think the strategies I employed most were using my writing skills to write and record events, often as poetry, so I could read them over and over again to help build understanding, especially of a social nature. The things that hindered me mostly were my social difficulties with being appropriate, not given to being good at small talk and my obsessive over attachment to others

Finding & developing my career

- My writing turned into an ability to communicate the difficulties and helpful strategies involved in my daily life.
- Returning to school & then Uni a dream come true.
- With support and encouragement from many of my friends I recently passed a PhD in psychology, This enabled me to fulfil a long term goal of becoming a psychologist.

Diagnosis for my son

- My youngest son was diagnosed with AS at 12 and his older brother with ADHD. My eldest son, now living with bi-polar disorder, has always seemed classically autistic to me .. Is also ADHD but has a very high IQ.
- He lives happily with his partner, plays in a successful band and earns a crust by working on the roads or as a painter.



I am AS not NT. This means:

- **Delayed development**
- **I am not multi-channeled so need to process things one at a time**
- **I have grown-up over time, it's just taken me longer**
- **I had to learn concepts and strategies in order to understand and cope with every day life**
- **I work best within my passion/interest**

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6 things others might do to help

- **First Thing is: To help us feel Valued**
- **Feeling good about who you are and believing that you are a worthwhile person lies in feeling valued. Upon the foundation of being valued one can attempt to reach out and take risks. When things don't go according to plan, one can have the confidence to try again.**

Second thing is:

- **Help us focus upon the positive:**
Having someone help us remember the things we do well, rather than the things we get wrong, is part of feeling valued.

3rd thing

As one builds skills and accomplishes small things, such as daily successes associated with self-help, basic goals such as in education, budgeting and so on, individuals can build bigger dreams and explore ways to make these happen.

- **Having others walk with us in our dreaming is essential to the building of all future goals.**

4th. Thing

Even though our goals and dreams may be bigger than reality at times, I reckon having someone point out and paint the small steps necessary to getting there (e.g., getting up; having a shower; getting dressed; having a shave; going to school etc) will help us build a future we want.

- So, paint a picture, step by step of the processes you know we should take.

5th. Thing

In autism spectrum (AS) our brains are configured to work with single focus and single attention. Having our particular learning style understood and accommodated will go a long way to helping us build a positive self image and create the confidence for a life worth living.

- Therefore, accept & appreciate our differing learning style.

6th. Thing

In AS we can only attend to areas of focus that hold our interest. This is not a choice but our default setting. Having others use our interest to capture our attention will ensure our future goals remain within grasp and are achievable.

- Therefore, use our interest as a vehicle to take us places. Rather than expecting us to join yours first.

The Adventour



lives in London, UK and has Asperger's Syndrome along with several other disabilities. She is an acclaimed artist, as well as operating her own business as an autism consultant. Robyn aims to provide training from a person not just a textbook.

I paint with my fingers and a sponge and sometimes I've used spatulas, but mostly just with my fingers as this is the only way I can express myself pictorially - any other implements take away from my process.

Robyn Steward

Painting, poetry or pottering....

- **Think about tomorrow.. What stands in your way? What do you need to do for yourself; or for your Service users?**
- **What is the best medium for letting go of yesterday and taking hold of what is to come?**
- **Don't stay stuck in the past. Take up your tools for tomorrow.**

Tools of the Trade

- **The tools you use for communication might be speech & body language. But for those of us who might not speak, might not know what to say or when, our tools might be visual (pictures, DVD, comic stories) auditory (radio, CD's) or kinaesthetic (needing to rock, twiddle or doodle).**
- **Please get to know us & choose your tools wisely!**

We are in this together

Walk beside us, not in front or behind



Resources

- Wendy's Web Page:
 - www.mugsy.org/wendy
 - Sue Larkey: www.suelarkey.com
 - Lots of Books & Video's:
www.jkp.com
 - Book in hand:
www.bookinhand.com.au
- www.footprint.com.au