

Luke Jackson, *Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome: A User Guide to Adolescence*.

Here are some quotes from the book.

p16 'Joe has the wildest imagination of anyone I have ever met. I think he would be great as a storywriter. The only thing with this is that when he tells other people his "stories" no one ever knows which are his fantasies and which are reality. I sometimes wonder whether Joe knows either! Mum gets very worried about this sometimes because he is so believable that if he told someone something bad, other people may believe him.

I remember being with Mum when she picked him up from school a few years ago and his support worker brought him out. "Hello Joe, have you had a good day?" Mum said cheerily. "Oh yes thank you," said Joe. "My teacher didn't hit me once today." His poor teacher went scarlet and even Mum looked shocked. If people on the autistic spectrum have problems with imagination then that certainly describes Joe - it is a real impairment not being able to work out where the line between reality and fantasy is!

p46-7 'Although it is said that people on the autistic spectrum don't like change, this cannot be entirely true as most people's obsessions and fascinations change. Maybe some last longer than others, but I think most parents and most AS or autistic kids would agree that these fascinations either get ditched in favour of a new one, or merge into something else. I now have a question for teenagers here.

Q: When is an obsession not an obsession?

A: When it is about football.

How unfair is that?! It seems that our society fully accepts the fact that a lot of men and boys 'eat, sleep and breathe' football and people seem to think that if someone doesn't, then they are not fully male. Stupid!

p117 'Reading was not something that I did at an early age but I did have some problems with reading when I was younger. The school gave me all sorts of extra help with reading and I couldn't even remember one letter from the other. However much anyone taught me, it just would not sink in. I had had an assessment by an educational psychologist when I was seven years and eight months old and my reading age was not assessable because I just couldn't read anything. The next day Mum got a phone call from the school asking her to come in and see them.

She told me that she was very worried as that usually meant that I was having a massive tantrum, but when she got there the teachers had something that they just couldn't wait to tell. I had picked up a copy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which the teacher was using to show how plays were written. It seems that I opened the book and began to read it fluently. How weird is that?! I wonder if that has a name too - 'can't-read-then-suddenly-starts-to-lexia' maybe?'

p153 'If you stay silent and become more scared and depressed, then they win. If we can feel like we are freaks sometimes, if we can rise above being called freaks, if we can make our way through a world that seems to speak a foreign language a lot of the time, then we can deal with half-witted morons who have so little brains that they have to find some other way to pump up their oversized egos.

Remember, the most important thing is to tell someone. It may not be that easy. I know, I've been there! But from my experience I have learned that you can't just sit around and wait for it to stop. You have to do something. If teachers won't listen, then make them. Keep on and on. Go to the head of the school. Get your parents to come in and talk to the teachers. Remember, now is the time for it to stop.'