



# An Autistic Female's Take on *Autism*

Lisa Curran

I am a 33-year-old female who was diagnosed with autism just two years ago. I would consider myself successful in my endeavours. I am a great performer, a great mom to my son with autism, and I own my own vocal school. I graduated with full honours from college. I can get on stage and perform as almost any character, and I'm preparing to give a TEDx talk. However, I am also an expert at "masking," and find it extremely hard to keep friends. I feel paranoid and overthink most things. I also have meltdowns when plans change at the last minute.

When I was a child, my life was interesting to say the least. I always knew that I was different and that my thought processes were different from everyone else's. In the Ireland of the 1990's, however, there wasn't a general diagnosing process for autism, especially for girls on the spectrum. This meant that I "masked" throughout my entire childhood and into my teenage years.

As I look back at my early years, I recognize that my experiences taught me how to cope, but it was very hard knowing that deep down something was different about me. I wish now that I had had what people call a 'label.' I could have gotten the help I needed. I wish I had not been incorrectly diagnosed with anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and more. I would have preferred to have someone just listen to what I was really feeling.





Now, at age 33 I am proud of all that I have been able to accomplish.

Reflecting on my achievements, I can't even imagine what I could have done with the right diagnosis! Would I have followed the same path? Would my life have been different? While I'll never know the answers to these questions, I can look to the future and make sense of my life moving forward. I can explain to my friends how I am different and educate them about autism. I can advocate for my child from an empathetic perspective. I can preempt the difficult times he may face in the future and prepare him for what lies ahead.

What I value the most is social interaction and my friends. I wish I had had the tools earlier in life to make solid friendships and to not be so easily influenced by others in my search for acceptance. I am very grateful that the world has grown to accept and include more people on the spectrum, and I am hopeful for my own future and for that of my son.

Keep advocating, keep listening to those with autism, and make a community for yourself — whether online or in person — of those who “get it.” We are making the world a better place for so many! While we still have a ways to go, we're on the right road.

I truly believe that autism is a superpower. What I have achieved has been because my brain is wired differently from that of others. I am proud of my diagnosis and even of my 'label.'



Lisa Curran is from Kerry, Ireland. She is an autistic adult and autism mom. She was diagnosed with autism at the age of 31.

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