



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

# MiNavigator

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MiNavigator Newsletter Issue 11

Presented by Autism Alliance of Michigan

[www.AAoMI.org](http://www.AAoMI.org)

Help. Hope. Answers. Today.

## Amazing Things Can Happen When Autism and Running Meet

By Tracey Cohen



I was eleven years old.

Institutionalized for anorexia nervosa, neither the professionals nor my family members recognized that this was merely a symptom of my Asperger syndrome/autism which was not diagnosed until twenty-eight years later.

You see my pediatrician told me that I was fat, and I was teased by family members about my prepubescent body. Thin was in, diets were the norm, and my literal, logical mind concluded that the lower the scale reading, the better. And at least for this very literal-minded aspie, once you told me something, there were no take backs.

Frightened, ashamed, confused and frustrated, it was months before a sympathetic childcare worker offered me a ray of light. While she was as perplexed and uninformed as the next, she nonetheless recognized and respected my genuine distress and sheer desire to move and be outdoors. A runner herself, she asked if I wanted to go for a run outside, and I leapt at the chance.

After only one hundred yards, my lungs burned and breathing coursed, but I was outside and moving away from the bright lights, piercing noise and crowded quarters. I was essentially on my own as she left me to my own devices, staying a good hundred yards in front, parallel play at its very finest, and the best of both worlds for this aspie.

Fulfilled and begging for more, I was hooked.

Eventually, the hospital child psychiatrist realized that I was not buying his analysis, and upon stabilization of my weight, I was released to my family, autism undetected let alone even considered.

My road has never been smooth, but eventually, I found my way to my high school track team and never looked back.

cont.



The mission of Autism Alliance of Michigan is to lead collaborative efforts across the state that will improve the quality of life for individuals with autism through education, access to comprehensive services, community awareness, inclusion efforts and coordinated advocacy.

INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING CLINICAL MATERIAL RELATED TO AUTISM? PLEASE EMAIL [NAVIGATOR@AAoMI.ORG](mailto:NAVIGATOR@AAoMI.ORG)





Running allowed me to be a part of a team doing what I love most. And while it did not eliminate my struggles with social interaction, sensory stimuli and delayed cognitive processing, my enjoyment and limited success in the sport allowed me to gain a bit of confidence and thrive while surrounded by like-minded individuals all working towards a common goal.

High school graduation was followed by four and a half challenging if privileged years at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and thankfully, more running.

Much to the bewilderment of my freshman class at U of M, I completed my first marathon in October 1989. And while I was typically going out for my run as my dormmates were returning from the bars and fraternity parties, my running provided the structure, peace and salvation that helped guide me through any number of challenging situations and opened up a whole new world and community that has continued to be a blessing in my very tormented life.

Running has remained my constant source of happiness, socially and professionally for now over thirty years with no end in sight.

So the moral of my story?

For people on the spectrum, never doubt yourself or your abilities to learn and achieve.

For supporters and community members at large never doubt a person on the spectrum. Given a chance combined with patience and support we can be valuable assets.

For aspies and neurotypicals alike, allow your special interests to remain an asset keeping in mind that discipline must be instilled to not allow these interests to overtake your lives and situations where one must prioritize desires and responsibilities.

Finally, we need more research and education about females on the spectrum.

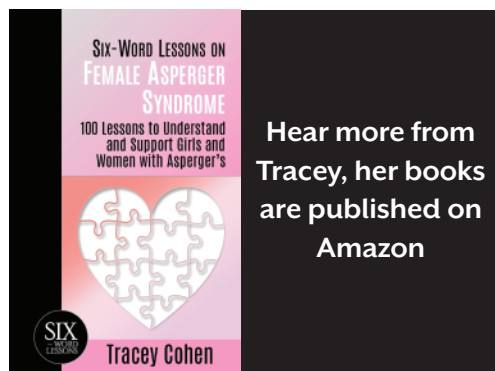
I first learned that autism existed at the age of thirty while attending a teachers' conference as one of my students was suspected to be on the spectrum.

There are no words to describe the shock and awe I felt upon hearing the presenter describe my entire life giving sound reasons for all the difficulties I face nor the shame I once again felt upon receiving another misdiagnosis by a psychologist uneducated on the female expression of autism, let alone an adult who had been battling her way through life for over thirty years.

It was not until I made the acquaintance of Dr. Tony Attwood who referred me to a clinical psychologist specializing in females on the spectrum that I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome at thirty-nine years of age.

We all have challenges to face, one no less significant than the next, but it is how we face and persevere no matter how many times we fall that will allow us to achieve happy, fulfilling lives.

Thank you for reading my story. Be bold, brave and beautiful; it's in you, I have no doubt.





## Turning 18 Checklist

*Contributed by Barbara Brish, Education Specialist, AAoM*

Far too frequently the Transition Process is an elusive process and one that individuals with disabilities and their families reflect upon regretfully for not beginning sooner. Below is a beginning checklist of high level considerations during Transition. Every teen and young adult's Transition Plan should be unique and customized to their hopes for a fulfilling future.

- ☐ **Guardianship:** At age 18 a student reaches adulthood or the age of majority. They will then become their own guardian unless the family seeks guardianship. Guardianship can be that of: (1) Full Guardianship (full decision making rights); (2) Partial Guardianship (decision making rights in certain areas); (3) Durable Power of Attorney/Power of Attorney (health care decisions); (4) Conservatorship (manage finances); or (5) Representative Payee (manage SSI or SSDI benefits).
- ☐ **Agency Representation:** If a community agency or representative would be beneficial to the student, then the local school district must invite the outside agency, with consent from the parent or the student if they are their own guardian. Consent would be required for each and every IEP during which the transition plan is developed. It may be determined that there is no need for a community agency representative.
- ☐ **College Bound or Employment Bound:** Students who are College bound should contact the Disability Rights or College Supports Office at the College or University they are planning to attend in advance, to disclose their disability, and to determine if accommodations or supports are needed. Those who are not headed for College, but rather Employment, should prepare early, through volunteer opportunities, attending and speaking at IEP meetings to develop self-advocacy skills, and through employment opportunities both before and after graduation.
- ☐ **Independent Living:** Young adults who wish to live independently will need to determine the type of housing that will be needed, learn how to access supports, and use public transportation if they do not drive or own a vehicle.
- ☐ **Health Care Considerations:**
  - ☐ **Skills:** During transition to adulthood, care providers will need to consider whether the young adult with a disability will be able to meet their own health care needs or require assistance. This decision-making includes considerations of: 1) their understanding of their disability, 2) whether they are able to take responsibility for their medication needs, 3) ability to make and keep medical appointments, and 4) understanding of medical insurance coverage.
  - ☐ **Coverage:** Individuals with disabilities and their families should confirm the chronological age to which they will be covered under a private insurance company or government funded insurance program. Each have policies that vary regarding the age that is covered under a plan. Transition and enrollment take time.
  - ☐ **Providers:** Young adults may need to identify new health care and social support providers as they reach adulthood. Individuals should know in advance how long a provider is able to service a client, to allow them time to seek the appropriate referrals and to transition care. Insurance policies, state policies, and professional licensing policies all play a role in determining the age that a young adult with a disability will be required to transition to adult providers. For ease of transition, clinical providers should collaborate and share records and strategies as able.





# SEPTEMBER AT A GLANCE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
Please visit our community calendar for full event listings at <a href="http://www.navigators.autismallianceofmichigan.org/events">www.navigators.autismallianceofmichigan.org/events</a> .					1 The Fowler Center Fall Camp (Mayville)	2 Autism Family Days- Arts, Beats & Eats (Royal Oak)
3 Autism Family Days- Arts, Beats & Eats (Royal Oak)	4 Autism Family Days- Arts, Beats & Eats (Royal Oak)	5 BWCIL Cooking Class (Port Huron)	6 Understanding the Content of the IEP (Cadillac)	7 Great Start Macomb Parent Coalition Meeting- Back to School (Clinton Twp)	8 Amy Nuttall RAIND Brown Bag! (East Lansing)	9 Taylor's Beach Campground (Howell)
10 Sensory Friendly Sunday at Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum by My Turn (Ann Arbor)	11 Michigan Works Annual Conference (Mt. Pleasant)	12	13 Kayaking at Stratford Beach (Midland)	14 Campfire Night - Adaptive Recreation (Leonard)	15 Spartans Stores YMCA Family Hope Program (Wyoming)	16 Camp Zip Winter Cooking (Ann Arbor)  Test Ride a Pony (Davidsburg)
17 Blessing of the Animals, Farm Olympics and Silent Auction (Free Soil)	18 Learn, Know, Act: Making a Difference in Your Community (Battle Creek)	19 The Fowler Center All Camp Open House (Mayville)  OUCARES Aspie Women Talk Life (Rochester)	20	21 Welcome to Medicare Workshop (Newberry)	22 Autism: Functional Analysis (Detroit)	23 Getting My Own Address: Provider Presentation (Detroit)  The ABCs of ABA (Southfield)
24	25 DWMHA Care Coordination Training - Autism & ABA Benefit (Detroit)	26 MAFF Community Stakeholder Meeting (Warren)	27 OUCARES Social Connections for Adults (Rochester)	28 Common Ground Legal Aid Clinic (Pontiac)	29 Autism Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation & Differential Diagnosis (Detroit)	30

## How to get involved with AAoM:

If you are an individual or family member of a person with autism

Have you reached out for free MiNavigator help?

Have you completed AAoM's Registry?

If you are an autism professional or provider

Have you added your resources to our Neighborhood Directory?

Have you attended a Provider Partner meeting with AAoM's clinical leadership?

Have you signed up for the MiNavigator newsletter?

If you are a community partner

Have you volunteered at an AAoM event?

Do you have a connection to a local business who might host a small fundraiser for autism?

If you are a woman interested in reaching others have you joined AAoM's 'Women Advocating for Autism' group?

Do you follow AAoM's social media?

