

So... I'm Officially Autistic.

This whole thing of trying to get back into a writing routine is going well. Actually, strike that, it's going awfully.

A mixture of not being able to sleep for love nor money, having random appointments with hospitals or other places at least twice a week (How do people who are employed full time manage this if they have complex health issues? Answers on a postcard.), and struggling to find motivation to do things in amongst the noise and chaos which is a general aspect of where I live, and I'm getting to where I want to be, incredibly slowly. It also didn't help that for almost two weeks my left wrist had a wonderful bout of carpal tunnel and weekend nerve / tendons, meaning that I was reduced to typing either in a splint, or with the speed of 5 year old me...

... On top of that, I have so many things I'm supposed to be working on all at once, including

- Vol.2 of my book (Progress is very slow, but I'm about to cover a lot over the weekend).
- Editing and publishing podcasts (Even slower, aided only by finding audio equipment recently)
- A response to Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, whom apparently want to hear my concerns about my time at Bushey Fields Hospital, even though they have this?!?! I'm at 9320 words and about half way.
- Blog posts, which I have 10 on my list to write about, at some point soon,

One of those many aforementioned appointments that I had was an Adult Autism assessment with Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, who despite cancelling what should have been my appointment 7 weeks ago at the last minute, seem to be from the more 'with it' side of the trust. I was scheduled to have a video appointment lasting up to 3 hours, which I was told was just standard fare to ensure that everything was covered. More than 3 hours were actually required.

I'm actually awaiting an adult ADHD assessment alongside this Autism assessment, of which I have been on the waiting list for since pre-COVID. This is one thing which I can't blame on my favourite NHS Foundation Trust in the land. The list for both ADHD and Autism Assessments is exceptionally high, with 4 years in a post-COVID world being the norm, and [one lady being told that her wait in Buckinghamshire / Oxfordshire / West Berkshire could be 16 - 18 years](#). Whilst the latter is the first thing one found with a Google search, waiting almost a decade to complete the process is sadly something this generation has to wait for.

This is in part for a number of reasons. First of all, awareness of both ADHD and Autism has grown exponentially in the past 20 years, especially as the conditions have started to be seen less negatively. There is an entire generation of people, including me whom were not tested as a child, either due to lack of will by parents, lack of understanding, or behaviours being put down to other developmental reasons, or simply due to being 'a disruptive child'. As I said in my assessment, it was in **my childhood** that the charity Scope which 'campaigns to change negative attitudes about disability, provides direct services, and educates the public' changed their name from the National Spastic Society. Why? Because when I was in school, the phrase spastic was used as a catch all playground insult to describe anyone 'different', both physically and non physically.

Therefore in some ways, I was lucky to be seen as quickly as I did. I had my pre-assessment back in

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2021, which meant that legally I could say that I displayed autistic traits which provided protection under the Autism Act and the Equalities Act, but that had about as much weight in society as being able to drive a sports car due to time spent playing Need For Speed Underground. It's the full diagnosis people need, as well as the support that can be gained as a consequence of this.

The Actual Assessment

As mentioned, I had a 3 hour appointment via video link. Thankfully, this was one of those times when NHS systems and MacOS worked without any issues at all, so kudos to the NHS for that one at least! There was lots of preamble, including a very stern reminder not to record any of the session, as well as what the four possible outcomes of the assessment were. This ranged from:

- A non-diagnosis,
- Something inconclusive,
- A concrete diagnosis, or;
- A mini MDT to discuss the case further.

Because I had already had a pre-assessment, as well as the written questions and input from my then CPN and GP, I was lucky as the assessor had a decent starting point with plenty of history. [She hadn't had the opportunity to read my book which would have helped her further, but never mind in this case!](#) [/ShamelessPlug]

The assessment seemed to do a number of key things:

- Assess how I am in a number of day to day circumstances, including how I cope with these normally, what external factors trigger me, and what I have done consciously / subconsciously to try and mitigate any triggering factors. A good example of this would be the fact that I wear noise cancelling headphones every time I'm out and about to reduce the trigger of noise, especially screaming kids and people who have yet to work out how to use a mobile phone to communicate the way that it was intended.
- The links and differences in my behaviour between autistic traits, and traits more in keeping with an ADHD diagnosis, even though this was NOT an ADHD assessment in any way.
- What would be specific autistic behaviour, and not just learned human behaviour. A lot of this came down to routine, working out ones' day, living and so on.
- Childhood experiences, and reflecting on them some 25 - 30 years on. A lot of this had to remove the layers of parental abuse to look at my actual behaviour and desired outcomes.

It's lucky that my assessor had all this pre-material, otherwise there's a chance we could still be on that call, almost a week later. When all was said and done, I was placed in category 4: An MDT review with colleagues, to ensure a correct diagnosis. This was the outcome I was most expecting, as although I'm a complete mess-up as a person, I'm a complete mess-up as a person, meaning that you're having to pick between trauma, behaviours, built in self defence and more. I was told that I'd get an appointment the following morning nice and early, to discuss the results of the assessment

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and the MDT.

Assessment Outcomes & Discussion.

Unless you didn't read the title of this blog post, you would know the answer to this already. I've officially been diagnosed with Autism, and am still awaiting an ADHD assessment. Official letter to come in the post in the next few weeks.

Was I surprised by this?

No. In fact, I pretty much expected it.

Has my life suddenly changed by this?

Also no. At 36 years and 357 days at time of writing, I think who I am is who I am, and although I will use many a resource to try and work around this diagnosis to my benefit, there's no new me which is emerging.

Does some of my previous moods and behaviours now make more sense?

Definitely! It's as though there's a reason why I find inner peace in writing really long letters about things I need to raise. It's also why I find it hard to communicate my exact feelings with others when I am at a pre-crisis / crisis point, and the behaviours which I sometimes demonstrate as a part of this. It doesn't **excuse** my behaviour, it just helps rationalise it a bit more.

Luckily(?) I've known about autism for a long time. I'm incredibly lucky to have worked on Sim Racing Commentary with a man called Aaron Likens, who has not only written about his life as an autistic male, but has done incredible work informing and training police forces and other public bodies across the US about how to deal with autistic persons, especially in potential crisis situations, where behaviour may be more erratic and different from the norm. Aaron now is a flagman for the NTT Data Indycar Series, realising his dream of waving the green flag / checkered flag at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Realistically, I'm the same Wil as before, just with a diagnosis to help in certain circumstances where I may potentially struggle to communicate / navigate certain processes. Even though I believe that I am a good communicator, that's because of the 'Wil Vincent' persona I have built around me. Really, at times I'm nothing more than some man in an emerald kingdom, just with a laptop / microphone which I can use to my advantage. I've already tried pushing further to learn more about the practicalities of what being a fully diagnosed autistic person means in society, but a large part of this comes down to some of the last words said to me by my assessor: 'It's been a privilege to talk to you, keep on being you'.

Peace, Rage And Love xx