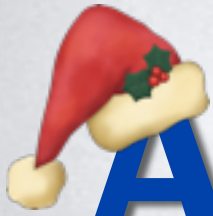


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Autism World



Magazine

**WHO SPEAKS
FOR ME?**

Holiday Fun

Supporting the GAPS diet

Adventures in Communication

Bumper Edition
100 au-some pages



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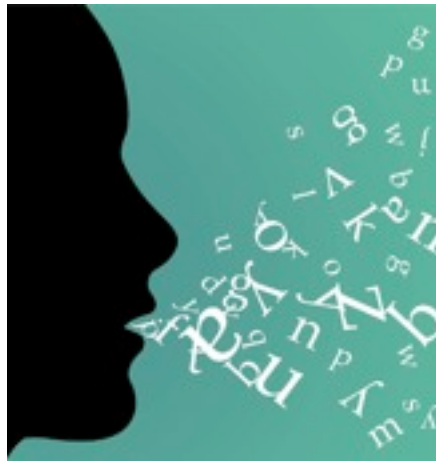
What happens to your child once they turn 18? This is the question troubling many families. **Autism World Magazine** hopes to answer some of your concerns in our 18 PLUS Section.

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Perfection
by Malcolm Mayfield

Future Employment: - Reframe the parameters of success and failure.

Future Employment: Part 3: Perfection



Malcolm Mayfield
Managing Director
Autism STAR Pty. Ltd

This series about the future of autistic employment explores the causes behind the recent AJ Drexel Autism Institute research findings that “

individuals with autism spectrum conditions have worse employment and independent living outcomes than people with other disabilities”.

In my opinion, the research failed to address the causes behind findings, which I believe to include:

Overwhelm;
Fear of getting it wrong;
Lack of self-belief;
Societal beliefs and perceptions about autism; and
Lack of experience and training.

There are very few people who are immune from the fear of making a mistake. It just seems that those of us on the autism spectrum are better at doing this particular fear than anyone else, or so we would like to think.

In truth our society is based upon fear as a motivator. You get something wrong at home, you get punished. At school, you get disciplined and labelled. At work, you get disciplined or, at worst, fired. Therefore we learn from a very young age to try to avoid mistakes at any cost.

The big paradox to this style of thinking is that we experience our greatest learnings and achievements through the mistakes that we make than through anything else. So why does society view mistakes as taboo?

In ancient times, the survival of the tribe depended on a combination of strength, innovation and resourcefulness. A single mistake could bring about the destruction of the tribe and a member could be banished if the tribe believed him to be a liability.

Examples of the negative consequences of mistakes can be found in most literature, both fiction and non-fiction, television shows, news and current affairs programs, movies, etc.



Picture courtesy: Danny O'Connor
<http://docart.bigcartel.com>

When watching a current affairs program about a negative event caused by human action, often the first question asked by the media correspondent is, "who is to blame?" The witch hunt then begins in earnest, and those of us watching the event are generally grateful that we are not the ones being persecuted. Very rarely have I heard the question, "what can we do together to fix this?"

Autistic individuals navigate their world through a series of complex social maps. At a young age, these maps are few and rely on feedback for refinement. If the feedback is negative, then the maps become negative. If you were given a map that led to an unpleasant outcome, would you follow it?

Therefore the individual learns to avoid the activity because they believe that the outcome will be unpleasant. Distraction and avoidance strategies then come into play and the individual insulates themselves from the perceived rejection and condemnation that will come from doing the action.

So how do we change this? Reframe success and failure for a start, because both terms are abstract and relative. The words really do not mean anything until they are properly defined.

The key is in solution-based thinking, which creates an ongoing process as opposed to the sudden stop of a success or a failure.

There are many examples in history where a perceived failure has led to a quantum leap in understanding and evolution. One that stands out is the story of Walt Disney, who was fired from his first job for "lacking creativity". That event did not stop him from building one of the most creative entertainment empires in our time.

Other examples are (from <http://www.bcbusiness.ca/people/11-famous-successes-that-stemmed-from-failure>):

Marilyn Monroe was dropped by her producers in the first year of her contract because they thought she was unattractive and couldn't act.

Albert Einstein did not speak until he was four-years-old and couldn't read until he was seven. His parents thought he was "sub-normal." He was expelled from school and his teachers described him as "mentally slow, unsociable and a drip forever in foolish dreams."

One of the most famous quotes about success from failure comes from Thomas Alva Edison. When asked how many times he had failed in the creation of the light bulb, his answer was "never". He had instead discovered thousands of versions that did not work and that each discovery led him closer to the version that did work. This is a perfect example of solution-based thinking.

Unless you can adequately define what lies within the boxes of 'success' and 'perfection', then do not use them as a benchmark.

"they thought she was unattractive and couldn't act."



To do so without understanding their meaning will only result in confusion, overwhelm and inflict a sense of lack.

Instead, use a process of solution-based thinking. Ask yourself questions such as:

“How can I further improve my skills and abilities to make a greater positive impact on this world?”

“What can I do right now to move myself forward?”

“What will I see when I am achieving positive outcomes?”

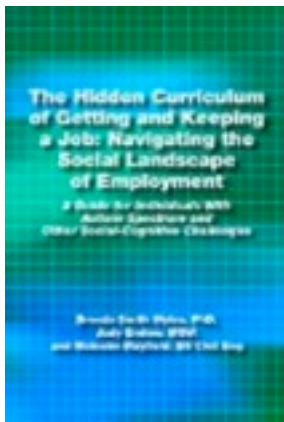
“How can I use this negative outcome to create a positive outcome?” The Third Doctor from Doctor Who would say, “reverse the polarity of the neutron flow”.

Then you may find that the ‘perfection’ box ceases to exist and that the ‘success’ box opens to reveal its contents to you.

Part four of this series next month will address lack of self-belief.



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**Malcolm Mayfield is co-author of
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Social Landscape of Employment.”**

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