

Autism World

Magazine



MEET NOAH

Advocacy in Action

Will 2014 be a good year?

Chantal Sicile-Kira
on Understanding Autism

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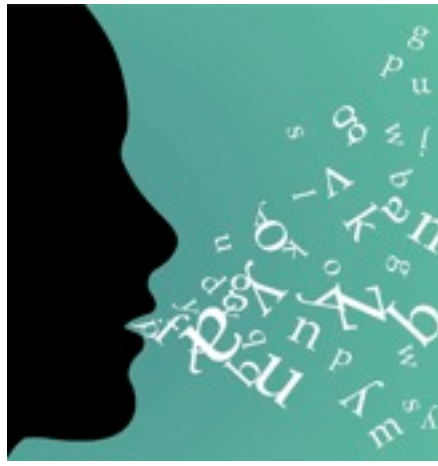
What happens to your child once they turn 18? This is the question troubling many families. **Autism World Magazine** hopes to answer some of your concerns in our 18 PLUS Section.

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by Malcolm Mayfield

Future Employment: - Reframe the parameters of success and failure. We need to rethink our doubts and self belief.

Future Employment: Part 4: Self belief



Malcolm Mayfield
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This part four of the future of autistic employment explores lack of self belief as one of 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.

There have been many things that I could have achieved in my life and in my career that have never come to pass because of my doubting my ability to succeed. Then there are many more things that I have achieved because I did the necessary actions in spite of my doubts.

Doubt and lack of self-belief affect everyone to varying degrees and have no bias towards disability, ethnicity, gender or age. We experience doubts from the moment we are born to the time of our death; they are with us for the whole of our lives. But then so is breathing, yet how many people do you see paying any attention to their next breath?

Doubting and lack of self-belief affect us because we pay them too much attention. We make doubts more valuable than truth and spend a great deal of our lives worshipping our doubts instead of getting off our collective butts (sic) and doing something.



Does this mean that I believe it is wrong to doubt? Certainly not. I believe the value of a doubt is in finding an error. It is a tool to be used for one purpose and then to be put aside ready for the next tool to be used. This is where most intentions come undone as most people will instead use their doubt to beat the error with, and then turn on others and beat them as well.

Last month's future of employment article focused on the fear of getting it wrong. Where do you think this very fear comes from? Doubt and lack of self-belief.

So then, if you follow the blame path further back, where does doubt come from? It is not an easy question to answer because doubt is what I call a box word; it cannot be directly defined.

A wise man once said that doubt is knowledge, wisdom and intelligence in an anaemic state, where anaemic means lacking power, vigor and vitality. Doubt lacks momentum. Therefore to tackle doubt with reflection is an exercise in futility because reflection also lacks momentum.

Doubt is tackled at the point of action, not reflection.



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

Our doubts are traitors, and
make us lose the good we oft
might win, by fearing to attempt

William Shakespeare

So how does all of the above relate to the Drexel findings on autistic employment? A lack of self-belief is opportunity buried under a mountain of doubts. Most of those doubts have been piled on through the expectations and opinions of others.

For example, I have many clients who believe that they cannot be helped. Why? Because they have been told as much directly and by inference by their parents, their peers and their teachers, bosses and other professionals. Why have my clients been told these things? Because all of those other people doubted that the individual could succeed, promoting the individual to buy into that doubt as their own.

How could these people possibly know that the individual could not succeed? Is there a crystal ball out there that can give the scryer 100% certainty of another's future? I certainly doubt it? So why masquerade a doubt of a person's potential as truth? If you are going to lie to that person, make it one that empowers rather than one that disheartens.

My first focus with any of my clients is to reinstall their belief in their own ability. How do I do that? Through action, namely my action of demonstrating my belief in my client. I help them to lift the first few doubts off of their mountainous pile and then watch with pride as momentum topples the rest away.

In Measure for Measure, William Shakespeare wrote, "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt."

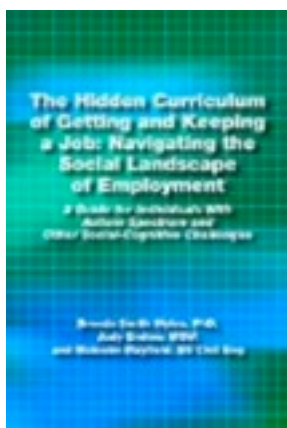
It takes one positive action to start an avalanche that will bring that mountain of doubts toppling down. Make that positive action be your first step towards success? Which way do you step? Any direction at all, because before this you have been hunkered down under a mountain of inactivity – to move will be a success. To keep moving will be a victory.

Do not fear to attempt. Allow your doubts to test and not to torment. Believe that you can do and set yourself goals that you can achieve. Then build on those successes a little at a time until you have a mountain of success.

Then go and climb that mountain and, when you reach the summit, you will begin to realise that your achievement is but the first of many.

Part five of this series next month will address the labels of autism.

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Malcolm Mayfield is co-author of "The Hidden Curriculum of Getting and Keeping a Job: Navigating the Social Landscape of Employment."

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