

autism

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Thinking
Inside
The Box

**BULLYING: An
International
Scandal**

Puppy Love



**DISCOVERING
My Asperger's**

**Repetitive
Play**

Malcolm Mayfield

The Power of Literal Meanings

Words have power.
So be careful how you use them....
Malcolm Mayfield knows this only too well.

As a young boy aged eight I loved to talk about my interests, which at the time included dinosaurs, Star Wars and anything to do with technology and space. Actually, I didn't talk, I monologued.

My parents and siblings were used to my style of 'conversing' and simply went about their business while I downloaded my database on them. My extended family was not as skilled in the ability to deflect the monologue.

One day the extended Mayfield clan gathered for a family outing. I asked if I could travel to the destination with my Uncle, Aunty and eldest cousin, whom I looked up to as someone I could learn from. Once in the car my monologue commenced and I regaled my hapless relatives with all sorts of knowledge about my interests.

At the time, the local traffic authorities were running a signage campaign on the roads about seatbelts. Their slogan of 'Belt Up and Live' was prominently displayed on most major highways. My cousin, who was very quick to seize on an opportunity, pointed at one such sign and exclaimed, "Malcolm, that means you!" My Uncle and Aunty quickly concurred.

I got the inference and was silent for the remainder of the trip and continued to be silent on my interests for over thirty years.

I created a rule that no one was interested in my interests based on a literal interpretation of my cousin's exclamation. Did I believe that my cousin, uncle and aunty were going to kill me if I continued to monologue?



young malcolm

No, but I was confused. Why would family infer violence against other family?

Looking back with the benefit of hindsight and wisdom I realise that I created a rule at that time based on my literal interpretation of a statement made to me. How many times have we blurted out a statement in frustration without really thinking of the impact it could have on a literal mind.

I have learnt that words have power which is magnified exponentially by the order in which those words are grouped. Be responsible for the power you wield through what you say and you will build a strong foundation toward your success and for those that follow in your footsteps.

Malcolm Mayfield
Managing Director of Autism STAR Pty Ltd