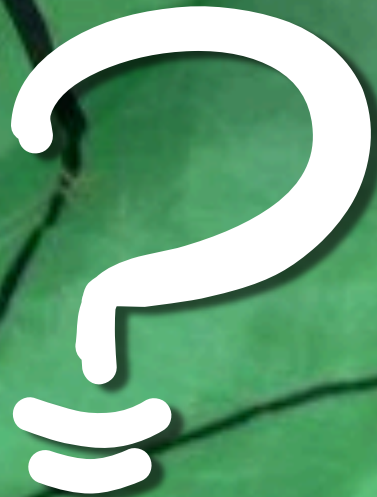


AUGUST 2013

# Autism World

Magazine

*Need a  
haircut*



# Autism World

Magazine



**MAGSWEST**

iPUBLISHING BY DESIGN

© Copyright 2013

MagsWest  
PO Box 99  
Mosman Park  
Western Australia 6912

E-mail: [info@magswest.com](mailto:info@magswest.com)

Web: [www.autismworldmagazine.com](http://www.autismworldmagazine.com)

FB: [www.facebook.com/worldautism](http://www.facebook.com/worldautism)

#### STATEMENT OF POLICY AND DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in any articles included in this publication are not necessarily those of Autism World Magazine or the publishers MagsWest Pty. Ltd. Autism World Magazine and the publishers do not promote or recommend any specific therapy, treatment, institution or professional viewpoint. Please check with a doctor when changing any diet or major nutritional change.

# The Power of Words



by Malcolm Mayfield

***There is a debate raging in and around the global autistic community regarding ‘person-first language,’ where the so-called condition is associated with the person, such as “person with Asperger Syndrome,” rather than worn as a label like “autistic individual.”***

One side regards person-first language as a sign of respect and regard for an individual’s humanity. The other wants to associate with their condition and believes that to be deprived of their label will diminish their identity. This faction will use examples such as “person with Malcolmness” or “person with Australianism” to prove their argument that person-first language is, in their words, ridiculous.

It is interesting that the conflict is about the use of words. If you were to ask any of the protagonists, they would likely say that they want to be referred to in the manner of their choosing. While this is reasonable, it is not realistic. Why not? Because most people will not tell you what their preferences are before you speak to them or about them. They expect you to already know, and when you get it wrong you will be judged accordingly.

In Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), this peculiar phenomena is called the 'mind read.' Because I have preferences, you should know what they are and respect them, or else. In academic circles studying autism, this is referred to as 'theory of mind.' I have witnessed this effect in autistic and neurotypical individuals alike, so it looks like we all have theory of mind issues.

If we flip the lens and look back the other way, do you respect the preferences of the people that you talk to, or do words of your own choosing flow naturally from your mouth, irrespective of the person sitting across from you? If you were honest, you would answer the latter. You would speak from your preferences. Even if you tried really hard to speak in the other's preference, some of your unconscious language patterns would slip past.

So how do we solve conflicts founded on the power of words? First, we remove ourselves from the conflict by seeing words for what they are; a means of communication. Create a filter which converts the speaker's language patterns into your language patterns. You already choose what you want to hear, why not also choose the way in which you hear it?

This first step already occurs when we come across someone whose native language differs from our own. A greater effort is made to clarify the communication and little if no judgment is placed on the words used. Isn't that interesting?

Second, drop the notion that you can control what other people say. You will spend your whole life fighting a losing crusade. Yes, you can educate the people in your immediate vicinity, but do they always get it 'right'? I think not. Then, if you berate them often enough, the relationship that you have with those people will begin to crack and eventually shatter.

The path of control can be hazardous and ultimately lonely. Ask yourself; do you like it when others attempt to control you by telling you what to do and when to do it without you asking for such advice in the first place? If you answered honestly, then what makes you think that you have the power to control the words of others?

Words are a means of communication. Furthermore, there are few people on the planet who could be considered expert linguists. This means that there are a great many people using words in the written and verbal form in a casual, thoughtless manner. I use the word 'thoughtless' literally, because little conscious thought goes into the choice of words.



***respect the preferences of  
the people that you talk  
to?***





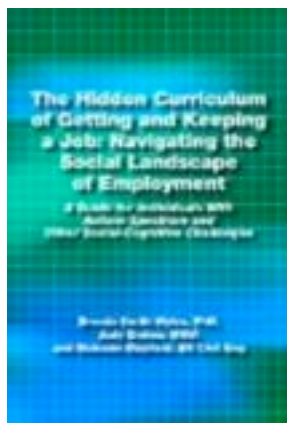
We often know what we mean to say. We just suck at saying what we mean. Accept that as truth and you will have a much more peaceful, stress free life, at least where words are concerned.

**Words have power. It is up to you and only you to determine how words empower or disempower you.**

*Malcolm*



**Malcolm Mayfield**  
*Managing Director*  
*Autism STAR Pty. Ltd.*  
[www.autism-star.com](http://www.autism-star.com)  
 Adelaide, Australia



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

***Click on book  
 picture to order***

Got a question or issue you'd like Malcolm to address in 18+?

Or a story to share with other members of the global autism community/

You can contact us by this email:  
[contact@magswest.com](mailto:contact@magswest.com)

