



# AUTSCAPE

## Effective Living

Tuesday 18 – Friday 21 August 2009

West Wickham, London

## Section 2: Programme

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## Presentations

### Tuesday

#### 16:30–17:15 **Orientation**

Please come to this brief session to get information about the new venue, learn what has changed this year and understand how Autescape works.

#### 17:30–18:30 **Art Workshop recycling/jewellery/object making – Suzi Superglue**

I will offer an art workshop based on recycling/jewellery and object making.

Art, with emphasis on jewellery, is my medium to create an ongoing process between creator, user and spectator – art as a unique way of telling the stories of our lives.

During the workshop, I will offer basic techniques and an introduction to jewellery/object making for beginners, with different materials such as wood, metal, *etc.*

The workshop will be an open space, where participants can freely express themselves – experimenting, inventing or just being there and observing.

Parallel to the workshop, there will be an exhibition of my jewellery. Participants are welcome to add their own art pieces from the workshop to this exhibition.

There might also be an opportunity to exhibit art pieces from this Autescape art workshop at the Myscape project in Glasgow 2010, an art exhibition from people on the autistic spectrum.

### Wednesday

#### 09:00–10:30 **Not All in the Mind (with thanks to Dr. Richard Mackarness) – ouinon**

What we eat has a profound effect on our mental health, including our cognitive functions. This can range from ‘sickness behaviour’ induced by chronic immune system activity (*e.g.*, the result of sensitivity or intolerance to common foods); overload caused by detoxification – ‘backlog’; feelings of unreality/alienation/spaced-outness, among other things (from food-opioid-peptides), to metabolic disorders of the thyroid, adrenal glands, *etc.*, which have an impact on mood, *etc.*, and the anxiety, irritability, depression, *etc.*, associated with ‘sub-clinical’ deficiencies of certain vitamins and minerals, as well as the ‘brain fog’ connected with systemic *candida* infection.

Diet affects everybody’s mental health, but it is possible that it has a particularly powerful effect on Aspergers and Autists because so many of us have Sensory Processing Differences/Disorders: hyper- or hyposensitivity to the environment – which includes food. People on the spectrum also produce lower amounts of carbohydrate-digesting enzymes than the general population, and their detoxification pathways are often compromised.

I will be presenting material from scientific studies, literature and case-work, personal anecdote, as well as my own experience.

#### 11:00–12:30 **Anxiety, stress and the autism spectrum – Ava-Ruth Baker**

Though a modicum of anxiety may be healthy and even ‘help’ effective living, anxiety to the degree many of us on the autism spectrum (AS) experience it is for many of us a major hindrance to effective living. Solutions offered are often unsuitable for people on the autism spectrum: for instance, it may be difficult to find a suitable medication type or dosage, therapy sessions are rarely affordable or adapted to autistic needs, and advice usually comes from a neurotypical basis.

This presentation will cover the connections between AS, executive function issues, stress and anxiety, and a range of approaches to living with these, drawing on both the presenter’s own ongoing struggles with these, and her professional work. Including some simple self-help ideas, holistic health approaches and CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy).

**14:00–15:30 *Police awareness of autism and how to deal with the criminal justice system – Perry Gwilliam***

The first half of this presentation will be about how police perceive risks in situations and common misunderstandings of mental health issues and how, as a consequence, police can make mistakes.

The second half will be practical advice for the audience on how they can deal with the whole criminal justice system, not just the police, in order to ensure that they, as witnesses or victims, can get the best chance of justice.

**16:00–17:15 *Success Stories in Self-Advocacy and Practical Empowerment Advice – The Empowerment Project, Finland***

The Empowerment Project is a living example of how people on the autistic spectrum can empower each other and produce tangible, practical results. Two years ago, we shared how we managed to organise ourselves, apply for funding, and hire two organisers. We would now like to share our subsequent success in finding and managing volunteers, organising weekly meetings, nurturing new peer groups, producing a yearly conference, and launching an online tri-weekly magazine with a readership in the thousands and growing. We will share all of our methods and principles, and do our best to show you how to duplicate our success.

The presentation will first detail our success and then explain the ways we have achieved it, with emphasis on practical tips. We will also set aside time for questions, and hold a separate media workshop. Outside the presentation and media workshop, we are happy to answer questions as well. Those interested in asking questions about our jobs, or in volunteering for our magazine's Autescape issue, can approach us at any time during Autescape when we are wearing the reporter badge of our magazine.

Those interested in the media workshop are invited to bring any material that they are interested in contributing with them, but no prior preparation is necessary. You may also bring any equipment (e.g., camera, laptop, notebook, communicative devices) that you wish, but rest assured that the only requirement in taking part is to be interested.

**17:30–18:30 *Clearer Goals, Brighter Future – using art to explore our dreams and ambitions – Selina Postgate***

Life is a journey: you have to start from where you are, but it also helps if you know where you'd like to get to. This workshop offers participants a chance to use visual art (drawing, painting and collage) to look at alternative futures and think about "what you really, really want" out of life. Various methods will be offered to facilitate this self-exploration, but the workshop will be informal and relaxed. If all you want to do is to make some art, that's fine too – and be assured positively no artistic talent or experience is required to join in, just a commitment to letting your creativity run wild, and having some fun!

**Thursday****09:00–10:30 *Using complaints to improve services – Yo***

This session will combine a presentation with an interactive workshop. The presentation will explain how to use effective complaints to improve services. In the interactive workshop participants will have the opportunity to apply these techniques to real examples from their own experience. Participants will learn to make and sustain more effective complaints which can influence services towards real change.

**11:00–12:30 *An Introduction to how visual processing disorders affect ASD for non-professionals – Ian Jordan***

Often the worst problems experienced in ASD are related to sensory processing problems. Visual processing disorders cause misery to a large number of people on the spectrum. We will show how to recognise visual processing disorders, and what options are available.

**14:00–15:30 *Managing Family Life – Kalen***

Many single autistic people are afraid to consider having a family because they fear they would not manage. Others already have a family, but feel they don't engage with their family members ideally. Some may be satisfied with their family lives and wish to share strategies with others. This presentation will include some general discussion and practical strategies for coping with the inevitable stresses of living with others, parenting responsibilities, and home management. The role and scope of formal and informal support in effectively managing family life will also be included. Participants will come away with a better idea of what living in a family involves for autistic adults and suggestions for how to manage family life more effectively.

**16:00–17:15 *Artistic Autistics – Larry Arnold (for Nikola Woodbridge)***

Nikola Woodbridge made a film for her University Dissertation called "Artistic Autistics".

She made this film in collaboration with Larry Arnold of Birmingham University to show aspects of the daily lives of autistic people in a different way to the normal media portrayal.

She has concentrated on the positive aspects of autism by showing the participants engaged in their hobbies in an interesting and new way, incorporating dance, music and poetry.

The film also demonstrates that autistic people can be in love and have relationships.

**17:30–18:30 *Organ Recital – Philip Bricher*****Friday****09:30–11:00 *Effective Personal and Political Action in a Mad World – Matthew Hawkins and Dinah Murray***

We will look at the differing strengths of autistic and neurotypical people, and discuss how to harness the best qualities of both in order to act most effectively in society. The workshop will suggest tactics for carrying out effective actions from a position of apparent disempowerment, focusing on dealing with incompleteness, uncertainty and inconsistency in a world fraught with arrogance, hypocrisy and ignorance. A case study will be presented illustrating how potential autistic effectiveness can be thwarted by neurotypical (NT) cultural norms. We will discuss the steps which were taken in this case to build up alliances and harness the rules and structures of the NT world to empower autistic advocacy.

Topics covered will include how to

- devote minimum energy to maximum effect
- identify useful allies and connect fruitfully with them
- understand others' agendas, when they only partly overlap with yours
- maximise credibility
- minimise risk and damage
- minimise hostile attention
- adapt to the private/public boundary
- apply maximally useful pressure while creating minimum turbulence
- communicate key information so it makes a difference.

In general, arrogance and hypocrisy cannot be combatted directly, but ignorance can. The cultural climate does change, and this workshop will help us become more effective at changing it in our favour – and thus creating a world in which we can all be more effective.

**11:30–12:30 *Annual General Meeting (AGM)***

This is a meeting for all Autescape members, where the new committee will be elected and various Autescape matters will be discussed.

## **Presenters**

### **Ava-Ruth Baker**

Ava-Ruth was diagnosed autistic in adulthood. A gifted but 'odd' child, she was obsessed with other cultures and languages, resolved to be an interpreter but trained in medicine and mental health, and after a circuitous life journey, found her current niche interpreting between different autism perspectives (insider versus outsider), different medical paradigms (orthodox versus holistic), etc. Her work includes autism diagnosis and support within a New Zealand holistic healthcare practice. She was a contributing editor and writer for the book *Women from another planet?* and co-founder of ASK, a charitable Trust offering support for and by autistic adults in New Zealand.

### **Dinah Murray**

Co-author with Ann Aspinall of *Getting IT: Using information technology to empower people with communication difficulties*; editor and contributor to *Coming Out Asperger – Diagnosis, Disclosure and Self-Confidence* (both published by JKP), Dinah is a tutor and has written course material for Birmingham University's CPD (Continuing Professional Development) courses in Autism, recently updating the unit on IT. Dinah co-founded Autism & Computing in 1995, making an Arts Council funded free video. Via its website it has campaigned since 1998 for recognising autistic people as part of natural human diversity. In 2006 she started the Posautive Youtube group, with hundreds of videos portraying positive images of autistic potential. In 2008 she launched [www.autreach.it](http://www.autreach.it) and curated the video *Something About Us*.

### **The Empowerment Project, Finland**

The two staff members of the Empowerment Project, the project manager and the project planner, advocate and empower their fellow members of the autistic spectrum for a living. They both live in Helsinki, Finland.

### **Ian Jordan**

Ian Jordan is a researcher, optician, author and developer of visual sensory techniques, instrumentation, etc.

### **Kalen**

Kalen is an autistic woman undertaking the daunting task of raising three girls, at least two of whom are neurotypical, jointly with her ex-husband. She has undertaken a number of parenting courses and frequently shares experiences with autistic friends who also have families. Kalen manages family life with the help of both formal and informal support systems. She has presented at previous Autsapes as well as at venues throughout the UK and in Portugal. She has also undertaken academic research on various topics relating to Autism Spectrum Disorders.

### **Larry Arnold**

Larry is an NAS Councillor and was the first autistic Board Member of the NAS (National Autistic Society). He also facilitates a local social group for adults and is active on disability rights issues. He has a particular interest in video and is currently doing research on "Video as Education Tool in Autism" for his doctorate at Birmingham University.

Larry is standing in for Nikola Woodbridge, who originated the project that he will be presenting. Nikola is a final year student at Coventry University with an ASD. Nikola has been involved in various groups in Coventry and has volunteer experience working with severely autistic children.

### **Matthew Hawkins**

I was diagnosed autistic eleven years ago when I was fifteen. I got passed around from foster home to foster home until I was finally abandoned. For several years I struggled to stay alive in a hostile environment, as I was homeless and frequently subject to harassment by small-minded bullies, including the police. For the past seven years I have spent my time trying to

make my local authority assess my needs and stop their patterns of discrimination, negligence and abuse. Slowly but surely, working closely with an informal support network, we have gained an awareness of what is effective and what is not. Slowly the tide is turning.

### ***ouinon***

ouinon has an Honours Degree in Psychology and Biology, but it was not until seven years after graduating that she discovered the role of nutrition in physical and mental health. This discovery enabled her to overcome mood disorders, specifically hypo-mania and depression, as well as anxiety (and a myriad of physical problems). She has spent the last seventeen years passionately reading about the subject and experimenting with various dietary approaches.

When she found out about AS two years ago it was like finding the last missing piece in a puzzle, because it explained why some things just wouldn't go away with diet, whereas depression, 'brain fog', anxiety and fatigue did.

### ***Perry Gwilliam***

Perry Gwilliam is a Metropolitan Police Chief Inspector who has three sons, one of whom is autistic. Perry has been a police officer for nearly 20 years, working in West and Central London. He currently commands around 280 uniformed officers in Ealing Borough who provide a response on a 24-hour basis. He has worked on the issue of police awareness of autism for ten years.

### ***Selina Postgate***

Finally diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in 2007, Selina has spent a lifetime perseverating on 'what makes people tick'. As well as having much counselling and related experience, she holds an IDHP (Institute for the Development of Human Potential) Diploma in Psychotherapy Group Facilitation and is a Master Practitioner and Certified Trainer of NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming). She is also a practising artist.

### ***Suzi Superglue***

Suzi studies at London Guildhall University (formerly called the City of London Polytechnic) and at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy of art and design in Amsterdam, Department of Jewellery Design.

Selected exhibitions and projects:

- Silo Gallery Amsterdam
- Chiellerie Gallery Amsterdam
- FOC Gallery Zürich
- International Design Festival Berlin
- Workshop at Autscape 2007

Selected Publications:

- Roboduck, special cartoon edition (NL)
- International Jewellery Compendium (NY/Cologne)

Prizes:

- 2007 Amsterdam Prize for Art and Culture with OT301 (Overtoom 301)

### ***Yo***

Yo was diagnosed (Asperger's Syndrome) eight years ago and has two children who are both also autistic. She has extensive experience of using complaints to improve services for herself and her children. She has been through multiple complaints processes with social services, the NHS, education, other public bodies and private companies. She also provides advocacy services to other autistic adults and children in North West England to assist them in obtaining, managing and complaining about services. She also runs training sessions on Autism for local charities and businesses. Yo has a Masters degree, is currently working towards her PhD in Educational Research and regularly presents at academic conferences.

## Scheduled Meetings, Discussions and Leisure Activities

Listed below are the activities we knew about at the time of writing, many of these will occur after the evening meal. You can find out more about these activities and when they are scheduled to take place at Autescape.

Each day – Discussion relating to a morning presentation, singing rounds, socialising (alcohol permitted after 8pm in the lounge)

Other activities

- Film
- Discussion: Autism and university
- Discussion: Buildings and Barlines
- Discussion: Adult autism strategy consultation discussion
- New-comers questions and answers session
- Feedback session
- Entertainment evening
- Workshop: Basic MANDALA design

Other activities may come up during Autescape.

You will be able to suggest activities by using sign-up sheets at Autescape, or do so in advance with the participant-led activities questionnaire at <https://www.autescape.org/questionnaire/>

There will be board games to play and sensory equipment to enjoy. You are welcome to bring board games.