

Expanding Horizons

By “B”

Being on the autism spectrum, I've always found it comforting to return to my usual habits and established routines. It's not that I dislike new things, but rather my instincts always call me back to whatever I'm most familiar with, whether that being playing the same video game for over a decade or re-watching clips over and over again from a show that I love. Some people still assume that I simply can't enjoy things outside of a narrow set of niches, but this is wrong. While I can sometimes be stubborn with expanding my interests, when I do end up doing so, I'll often find myself pleased and enriched by the experience.

One such experience that my older brother has often teased me about is when I passed my driver's written exam. I put off the exam for years since I was nervous about it and, frankly, didn't care about cars or driving at all. I didn't see it as a priority to study it while I was busy with more important or interesting things. Eventually my brother did push me into completing my driver's, making sure I studied in preparation for it. I was stressed and nervous at first, but then I ended up completing the written test thanks to only a couple hours of reading. My brother likes to make fun of me for having dragged my feet for so long about something I completed so easily, but I don't mind since I've started to enjoy driving these days.

Another skill I'm developed more recently due to the COVID-19 lockdown is cooking. Although everyone else in my family knew how to cook, I was unknowledgeable outside of being able to work a microwave. After getting me to help with cooking several dishes for our dinners, my parents taught me how to start preparing whole meals for myself. I'm hardly a chef, but I've found that cooking can be immensely satisfying; both when it comes to making a meal and learning that other people enjoyed it.

Of course, the most common horizon I tend to expand is my entertainment interests. When I was younger, I had a select group of narrow interests, like dinosaurs and drawing, which everyone tended to associate me with. As I've grown older, every couple years, I find new interests and genres that enthrall, sometimes to a new obsessive degree. Among these have been hip-hop, fantasy books, ancient Chinese history, stand-up comedy, deep sea life, strategy games, and even pro-wrestling. Sometimes it feels like I'm collecting niches as I grow older, discovering all sorts of specific topics that I become wrapped around and deep dive into. At one point I even found myself watching an hour-long video essay about the history of NASCAR, despite my aforementioned disinterest in all things vehicular. These experiences I always find to be exciting and enjoyable, and so my advice to anyone else who's on the spectrum is to seize new opportunities whenever they can.

About the Author

“B” is one of Autism Canada's newest Autism Ambassadors and Newsletter Contributors. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome B to our team and we look forward to sharing B's perspectives with our community.