

## The Autistic and the Big Box

By Jason Oldford

Some autistics aren't crazy about going grocery shopping. Many of them have sensory issues that are so bad that they can't stand the music being pumped through the speakers. I'm comfortable in grocery stores such as Sobeys, Superstore, and Loblaws because, well, they're not that big and things are easy to find there. However, I can't say I'm a big fan of big box stores like Home Depot or Costco. They're cavernous and often you can't find things there but there's always someone willing to help you if you ask (of course, more often than not they'll ask you first if they think you look lost).

I haven't shopped at Costco often although I did get a membership there last weekend to purchase a couple of pairs of glasses. Costco is huge and, in my opinion, disorganized; you get your things and then you don't know where you're supposed to line up to pay for them. This situation was only compounded with COVID and its social distancing requirements, but that aside, in stores like Costco, although the environment can sometimes be uncomfortable to an autistic person, there's always someone there to lead you in the right direction, but big box stores are one place where you'd be hard-pressed to find people on the spectrum because of their sensory issues.

There are also furniture stores such as The Brick, and then there's IKEA. I've never been in an IKEA store, but I hear that they make The Brick look like a one-room schoolhouse; they're that big and easy to get lost in—and getting lost is another thing that'd rattle an autistic person, sometimes to such an extent that they might react adversely.

One thing I find that a lot of autistic people are doing these days is having someone pick up their groceries for them or ordering them online and either picking them up themselves or having them delivered. For autistic people lucky enough to have a driver's licence and a car, a curbside pickup is always an option in that it'd keep them out of the store and away from the sensory issues it can bring. That said, if you're on the spectrum and want to buy groceries or a computer or a TV and a big box store is a place where you find the best deal, the best bet would be to order it online and pick it up at the store when it comes in. No sensory issues.

I close this article by saying that this will be my last submission for a while. I will be undergoing surgery and focusing on my recovery once the operation is completed. However, I fully intend to be back in the summer with more articles for you to enjoy. Until then, I bid you farewell for now.



### About the Author

My name is Jason Oldford. I work as a translator for Lionbridge. I have been on the autism spectrum since the 1970s, and back then not much was known about autism. I learned to read by the time I turned three so I guess you could say I got a head start as I entered school. I was a year late doing that, but it was for the better.

Although I am one of your shy, introverted types of autistics, I do have a knack for memorizing things like license plate numbers, dates, facts and figures, and I fell in love with pop music at a young age. I love listening to countdown shows from the 80s, remembering the old songs, and being able to count them down from 20 to 1 with computer-chip accuracy (and remembering the numbers of some memorable tunes further down the charts)."