

Lining up: An Exercise in Frustration

By Vicky McGrath

It was 2019, and my family and I were walking through the airport to the check-in line for our flight to Florida when we saw the mass of humanity that were already in line ahead of us. I rushed up to join a line that seemed shorter than the others and we waited, for what seemed hours, with the line going no-where! I hate lines, I hate waiting and even worse, I can't handle the frustration of not being able to change the circumstances of waiting in a line! "Go for a walk, Vick" said my husband, Jeff, to help me avoid a complete meltdown.

When I walked away, I saw an airline staff person and asked her why it was such chaos and she said "Trump! He automated the check in process and people have no idea what they're doing!" Sure enough, as I looked at the front of the lines, people were bewildered, sweating, putting their luggage on the conveyer and then pulling it off without success. I then approached another airline staff person and said "Is there no one to help people!?" Thankfully, the staff person walked to the front of the line and began assisting people and finally the line started moving.

We did make our flight, got to Florida and had a wonderful vacation, just before COVID closed everything down in spring 2020. The point of this story is not actually the terrible experience at the airport, this is a common scenario for any traveller anywhere! The point is that my husband knew to tell me to take a walk just in time to avoid me having a meltdown. This is something he has come to understand about me after 30+ years together and, particularly, since my autism diagnosis in 2019. It is not easy for a neuro-typical partner, I'm sure, to figure out the best way to support their neuro-diverse partner, and I thought it might be helpful to outline some of the ways Jeff has learned to accommodate my autism. Fortunately for me, Jeff is very kind and does everything he can to make everyone's life easy. Waiting in lines is a real trigger for me, I just can't wait, I get so frustrated and flustered by the lighting, the heating or cooling and the energy of the people around me that I almost always make a scene and leave without what I came for. Now, with COVID, more than ever, waiting in a line is a frustration too great to handle. As a result, Jeff has taken over almost all domestic duties requiring a line, including grocery shopping. So far, this has made my life substantially better and I'm sure Jeff is happy to have a wife who is not in a rage coming in the door after a shopping experience!

What are some ways your loved ones have made life easier for you?

About the Author

Vicky McGrath is a wife, mom, and business owner and was diagnosed with ASD in 2019, at 50 years of age. Vicky has an undergraduate degree from Trent University and a master's degree from Cambridge University. Vicky spent 20 years in the government sector in the environmental field before making the jump to business ownership. Currently, she is owner of a private home care company, caring for elderly clients in the safety of their own homes and also a professional speaker.

Vicky is also a runner and triathlete, having completed several marathons, half marathons and triathlons including half Ironman and three full Ironman triathlons. It was during a long training ride in 2006, before her (not to be) third Ironman that Vicky crashed her bicycle, broke some ribs, punctured her lung and sustained a concussion and launched her path of self-discovery, resulting in her autism diagnosis in 2019.



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