

Autism, Frustration and Waitlists

By Jason Oldford

As many of you know, I am recovering from hip surgery as I type this. The waitlist was supposed to have been six months, but COVID more than doubled that. It's hard to stay optimistic in cases such as these.

I first went on the waitlist on February 5, 2020, so pre-pandemic. Six months would have been August 2020 (during pandemic), but elective surgeries that were cancelled had to be rescheduled so that threw everything into a tailspin. Many autistic people would react adversely in such cases, but I wasn't one of them because I knew and understood what was going on.

2020 came and went, as did the winter portion of 2021. Finally in late March, I got the call. Surgery set for April 15. Well, that date was changed twice, to April 20 and finally April 21, which was when the operation finally went down. On both occasions, the change was due to a lack of equipment the surgeon needed. To autistic people, changes can be frustrating, especially when you're in dire need of surgery. Everything went well and as I type this, I am six weeks into my recovery.

All of the above said, one thing you must never do when calling your surgeon's office is blame his assistant. The situation with frustration and wait lists and date changes is not his/her fault. Take time to collect your thoughts before acting. Although we on the spectrum don't like change, it happens, and sometimes at the worst possible time.

Six weeks has become two months and I am well on my way to making a full recovery. Here are some of the things I struggled with but eventually mastered after two months spent at my mother's.

1. Using a shoehorn: In the early stages of recovery, you can't bend 90 degrees so bending to put on and take off shoes is a no-no. It was frustrating at first, but I eventually got the hang of it, which leads me to...
2. Putting on and taking off socks: You could use a sock aid for this, but they can be a chore, especially when your hand-eye coordination is weak. My mother and a friend of hers, both of whom are retired nurses, recommended against this, so Mom did my socks for me until I got the OK to fully bend from my surgeon.
3. Dressing from the waist down: Also known as putting on pants. You'd need a long-handled "reacher" for this. Sometimes it can be hard to get the reacher around the waist band to pull the pants up to a height where you can reach them without bending.

All those occasionally frustrating adventures aside, though, I am back. I can drive my car again and am experiencing less pain than I did before my operation. I went from standard walker to wheeled walker to cane and one day soon I'll be able to walk without any aids. Life is good.



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).”