

Outside the Box (part 3)

By c.e.chapple

It is extraordinarily difficult to function at any age when one is different than everyone else, when one misses social cues, cannot read body language or certain facial expressions, cannot recognize distinct voice intonations, cannot recognize rhetorical questions or sarcasm, rarely get jokes or puns, and more. It is even more difficult when one is a child and undiagnosed.

This lack of social skills was my painful reality as an undiagnosed female with Asperger's, but we humans are adaptable creatures and I found a creative solution that enabled me to somehow survive the taunts of my schoolmates, the reprimands of my teachers and the abuse of my family. How did I cope with bullying both at school and at home you might ask? Through reading and creative writing!!

Within the pages of books, I could travel to far distant climes, where I could scale mountains, sail boats, sample exotic foods and garb myself in exquisite clothes. Pretending I was the character within a book, I would become witty, accomplished, multilingual, gifted, beautiful, sexy and sought-after. I could be anyone I wished in those magical pages.

Thanks to my grandmother, whom I now realize was also an Aspie, I learned to read at a very early age. The fairy tales of Hans Christian Anderson, the Brothers Grimm, Beatrix Potter, and others of that ilk were read voraciously by this lonely little girl. When my grandmother began giving me Carolyn Keene's Nancy Drew mysteries, I became convinced that girls could do anything that boys could do. When I discovered science fiction writers such as Ursula K. Leguin I realized that our bodies are only suits of clothing for our spirits. Writers such as Sidonie-Gabrielle Collete (known simply as Colette) taught me that a woman's sexual power is to be celebrated. Through books, I learned that women are beautiful, wondrous life-bringers.

At the age of eight, I began writing poetry and stories. In my stories I had unfortunate things befall those who made my life a misery. My abusive stepmother was transformed into a hideous troll who lived in a foul swamp and was forced to eat flies and frogs. A cruel schoolmate wandered into an enchanted forest and became lost in a noxious bog, never to be seen again. A boy who teased me about my figure was turned into a warty toad and was never kissed again. In my stories, I was powerful and in complete control of my own destiny.

When I became older, the Internet came into being and I often wrote stories in role-playing games. In RPGs I could be a tall, titian-haired temptress who could bring a grown man to his knees with the force of my beauty and charm. I could also be a fairy queen or a fearsome warrior queen. The only limits are our own imaginations, after all.

Although life tends to get in the way of one's creative endeavours, and I have often had long hiatuses from writing, it remains my go-to during my darkest times and is still a way of expressing my greatest joys. Writing still enables me to connect to people and my stories and poems have made a difference in others' lives too. Books saved my life. They can save yours too!

About the Author

I am both a mother and a grandmother, from southwestern Ontario and currently residing in Victoria, B.C I have two degrees, one of which is in Honours English from the University of Western Ontario. I have been writing since I was eight years old, and have had numerous pieces published in anthologies, literary journals, newsletters, newspapers, and online. Writing has kept me sane in a crazy world. I am 65 and was not diagnosed with Asperger's until I was 45, after a lifetime of never fitting in, and suffering from both depression and social anxiety. I am also a multiple survivor of abuse, much of which would not have occurred had I been



