

## Autism One May 2012

### A Full Life with Autism, by Jeremy Sicile-Kira

#### Outline of Presentation (will be power point with voice output)

**Introduction** I like to think like a good man once told me : you are the product of your parents and a product of your environment and the reaction you have to both. If you are a hard worker and have great parents and a good school, you will be successful.

**How I came out of darkness** Some of the writings come from a short manuscript I wrote in 2008 – 2009. The rest of the writings I wrote more recently in other articles and presentations, my college newspaper articles, my new book *A Full Life with Autism* (Macmillan March 2012) and new writings for this presentation.

#### The Early Years in France:

**Movement was Impossible** Severely autistic? For me it means being stuck in a body that doesn't work well with no way to communicate. Just think of what it would be like not being able to move your body like you want.

**Everything Was Noise** I heard noises but I could not understand that noise had meaning. Just until one day I heard nice noise coming from my mom's mouth.

#### We moved to the UK:

**Special Needs School** The mistake my mom made was to think that school was a safe place for me. The special school in the UK did not help me and I was not always happy there.

**ABA Home program** The tutors and mom used ABA to help me learn. ABA, applied behavior analysis is based on Skinner's operant conditioning and helps break down hard tasks into small steps. Behaviorism is not really the best way to learn, however it was a big help to me.

**Auditory Integration Training** I remember that mom gave me a really beautiful program where I had to sit really still every day for a few weeks, to listen to music through headphones and it opened up a world of different sounds to me.

**Everything Was Little Fragments** I think I could see better than most children.

**Using My Senses Together** It was hard to use any of my senses, but the hardest part was and still is to use them at the same time. It is hard to see something and try to listen at the same time.

#### Spelling

Once when I was little and not able to move by myself, my mom tried to help me by moving my arms to request items I wanted, for example, to reach for juice or milk. Then, she helped me learn to point to yes and no. It was like giving me the help I needed for initiating movement.

**We Move to the United States:**

**Bad Things Happened** I think you have to be brave to get over the horrible times people hurt you, and talk like you don't understand the comments they are making about you within earshot.

**I Find My Voice** Some good people have been important to my success in communicating.

**Education** Basically, if it was not for my nice mom and great teachers, my life would not be worth living.

**High School** It is a lot easier said than done when I say I graduated from high school. It took some real hard work, a lot of patience, a great team of people, and a great amount of determination from my part to show the world what I am capable of accomplishing.

**What I Needed to Learn in High School For the Next Step Up the Ladder of Life**  
The important things to my success as a young adult is I learned to understand my need for breaks and accommodations and how to ask for them.

**Schoolwork** At first, my school work was modified until I could type better. Then, I was expected to do the same amount of work but I was allowed more time to write my papers and more time to take the tests.

**I Graduate from High School** I passed the CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) and all the classes needed to get my diploma. I graduated with a 3.75 GPA. You can see the video of the speech I gave here (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8cEtand01w>).

**The Difficulties of Transitions (Big and Small) and What Helps** Unlike kind neurotypical people, when transition occurs with people with autism like me transition is very difficult.

**Strategies for Transitions** I have lots of strategies for transitions. Hope is a great motivating tool to help me through transitions.

**Behavioral Flexibility** Behavioral flexibility is the ability to select an appropriate behavior to fit different communication contexts.

**Sensory Processing Issues** Autistic people have many sensory processing issues that stand in the way of being flexible.

**The Supports and Accommodations That Are the Most Helpful in College:**

My experience as a student with a disability is a different one at college than when I was in high school. There are different rights and responsibilities for both the student and the school and college.

**Supports Needed** The supports that helped me include: having encouragement from the support staff, and having staff trained in inclusion. Learning to self advocate while in high school was important because I knew that in college I would not be allowed to have my mom advocate for me.

**Learning Test-Taking Skills** At the beginning of this semester, I had a proctored multiple choice and short answer test with a new support person. I was nervous and I had trouble controlling my motor movements to point accurately to the letters on my keyboard and even though I had extended time to take the test, I could not type fast enough, so I failed it.

### **How to Include a Person Who Has Sensory Processing Challenges and Uses Assistive Technology to Communicate**

BIO: Jeremy Sicile-Kira

Jeremy Sicile-Kira is the co-author of **A Full Life With Autism: From Learning to Forming Relationships to Achieving Independence**. He is a national Youth Advocate for the Autistic Global Initiative, a project of the Autism Research Institute. Jeremy graduated from high school with a full academic diploma in June 2010 and gave a commencement speech (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8cEtand01w>). He was highlighted in the award-winning MTV *True Life* episode "I Have Autism." To read more of Jeremy's writing, go to [jeremysicilekira.com](http://jeremysicilekira.com), or follow him on twitter @Jeremyisms.

**Chantal Sicile-Kira** is an award-winning author, columnist, and speaker on autism, as well as the founder of [AutismCollege.com](http://AutismCollege.com) which provides practical training and advice to parents and educators. Her most recent book is **A Full Life with Autism: From Learning to Forming Relationships to Achieving Independence** (Macmillan March 2012), co-authored with her son, Jeremy. The author of four other books, Sicile-Kira writes for *The HuffingtonPost* and *PsychologyToday.com*. Her and her son Jeremy's story have been covered by a wide variety of media, including NPR, PBS, MTV, *The Chicago Tribune*, Newsweek, and Fox News. [www.AutismCollege.com](http://www.AutismCollege.com); [www.chantalsicile-kira.com](http://www.chantalsicile-kira.com).