

Autism and *Anxiety*

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Past Affiliations:

Principal, Morgan Stanley

VP, State Street Global Advisors

VP, AANE Board of Directors; (Co)Facilitator of Support Groups

Massachusetts Special Commission Relative to Autism

Executive Committee, AFAM ***frequent event speaker/panelist***

Disability Law Center's Cross Disability Advocacy Coalition

Board of Directors, Massachusetts Moderators Association

Massachusetts Democratic State Committee

Currently (retired):

Alford Town Moderator

Board Member, Autism Connections

UMass Medical Shriver Center Community Advocacy Council

Instructor, Berkshire OLLI (adult education)



"Our next speaker looked into the abyss and made a few notes."

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Autism and *Anxiety*

What is the **Cause** of *Anxiety*
in **Autism**?

What is the **Cure** for *Anxiety*
in **Autism**?

Autism and *Anxiety*

What is the **Cause** of *Anxiety*
in Autism?

Being Autistic

What is the **Cure** for *Anxiety*
in Autism?

Slow Down!

Reminder

Questions may be submitted at any time during the Webinar by using the **Q&A** or **Chat** functions at the bottom of your screen.

These questions will be taken up (as time permits) near the end of the scheduled time.

Things You Might Already Wonder About

- What is it like to be Autistic?
- Would you please describe your Anxiety Cycle?
- Why is adolescence such a difficult time of life?
- Who are your favorite autistic heroes?
- Is it true that autistics invented
 - computers?
 - the corona virus?
- What do you think of the Intense World Theory?

[\[http://www.mfw.us/blog/2013/12/17/my-thoughts-on-markrams-intense-world-theory/\]](http://www.mfw.us/blog/2013/12/17/my-thoughts-on-markrams-intense-world-theory/)

My Anxiety Cycle

◆ Stress

Stress could arise from one traumatic event, or a series of small things that add up, or sensory overload, or some combination of these things.

◆ Trigger

There comes a point when the stress load become intolerable. The “trigger” may be an obvious trauma, or it may simply be the final straw, which might be known to me, or it might be an unaccounted for snapping under the cumulative weight of too much stress.

◆ Reaction

I experience a strong, visceral response in my desire to relieve the stress; the activation of the oft-discussed fight or flight syndrome.

◆ Action

My actual response. If I give in to my first impulse, my action could be a verbal lashing-out, or it might involve a fit of rage, or fleeing the scene. Or, it could be some or all of these things – or, none of them. I have a choice.

◆ Depression

My time of healing. Depression is a lovely, self-indulgent experience. It is a time when I withdraw from the world, feel sorry for myself, and entertain thoughts that perhaps this is the way I deserve to feel. There is little I can do to hasten the end of this part of the cycle. Of late, though, I have learned to lessen its impact. I simply repeat the mantra, “this, too, shall pass.” After all, the worst part of the cycle is behind me. The bad stuff has already happened.

◆ Resolution

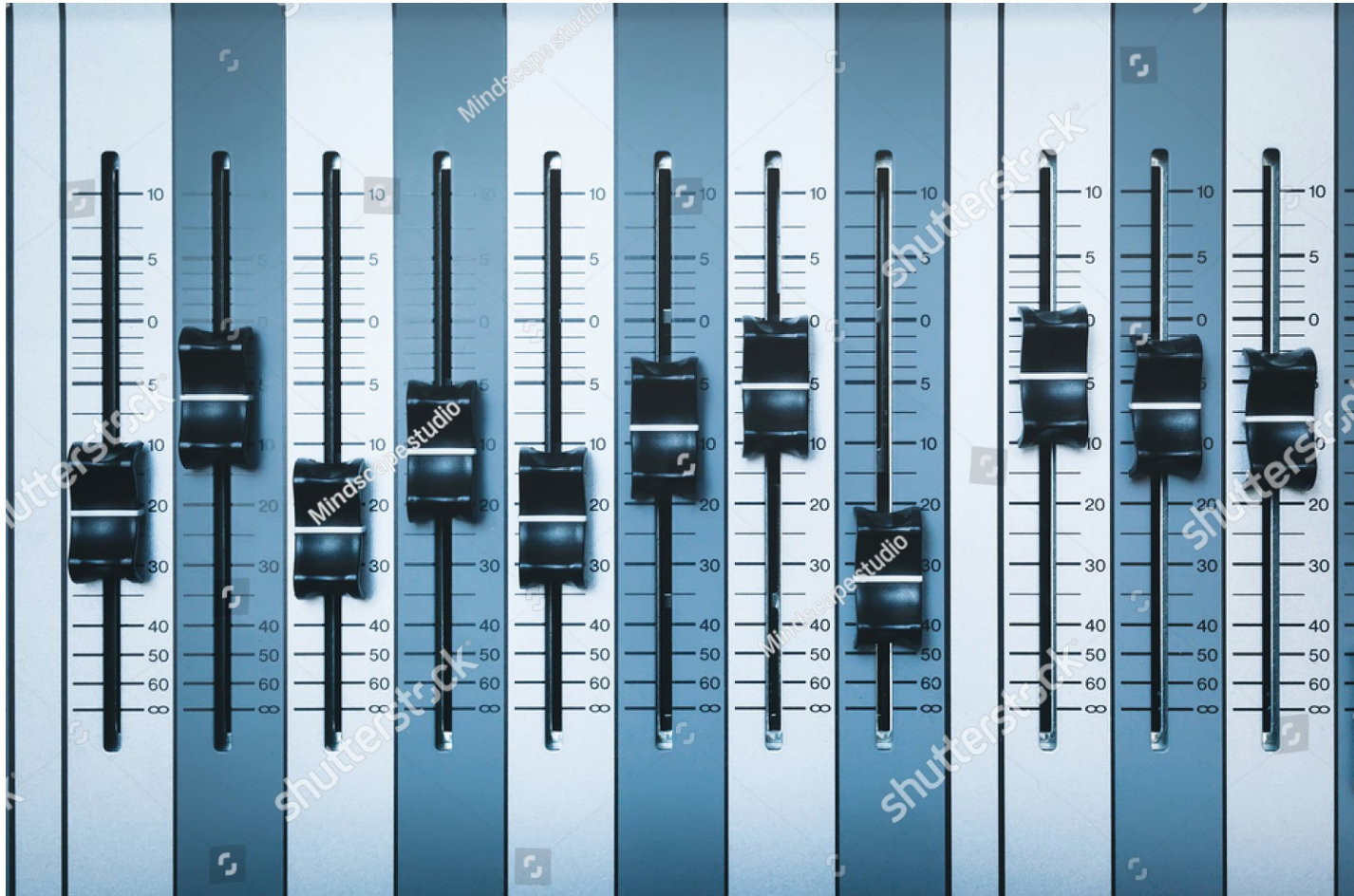
I'm ready to face the world again.

My Autism Hall of Fame

- Bach & Beethoven {NOT Mozart!}
- Isaac Newton & John Couch Adams
<http://www.mfw.us/blog/2017/02/13/another-candidate-for-my-autism-hall-of-fame-john-couch-adams/>
- Thomas Jefferson
- Steve Jobs
- Alan Turing <http://www.mfw.us/blog/2013/11/04/the-turing-problem/>
- Ted Williams <http://www.mfw.us/blog/2013/12/06/ted-williams-another-candidate-for-my-autism-hall-of-fame/>
- Who said this? *“I am slow to learn and slow to forget that which I have learned. My mind is like a piece of steel; very hard to scratch anything on it and almost impossible after you get it there to rub it out.”* <https://tinyurl.com/autismhof>

What is it Like to be Autistic?

Answer: Extreme Everything



Throw Out the DSM!

- Highly developed sense of social justice and/or Sense of indignation
- Being Different and not knowing/caring
- Hanging out with neurodivergent castoffs
- Sensory Issues (reactions to medications)
- Inquisitive about EVERYTHING!
- Georging and other weird hobbies
- Emotional dysregulation (meltdowns)
- Knowing Everything and Sharing That
- Working Memory Overload: Learning/Socializing

What are some sources of stress?

- Being told we are doing things wrong
 - Going “outside the box” [Boundaries]
 - Monologuing (controlling the environment)
 - Non-linear thinking [mental tour of all possibilities]
 - “Literal” thinking [NEED TO BE TOLD]
- Sensory overload
 - physical
 - slow processing (e.g. speech)
 - social or other information overload

Techniques

- Being Present (things that require/assist focus on the here and now)
- Meditation
- Yoga
- CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy)
- Exercise
 - Walking Hiking Skiing
 - Running
 - Horseback Riding

Solutions

- ✓ The Power of Positive Thinking!
- ✓ Stress Recognition and Avoidance
- ✓ Impulse Control (Medication)
 - NOT Reacting
 - NOT Running Away
- ✓ (Self) Perspective-taking
- ✓ Multiple Realities (Imago Therapy)

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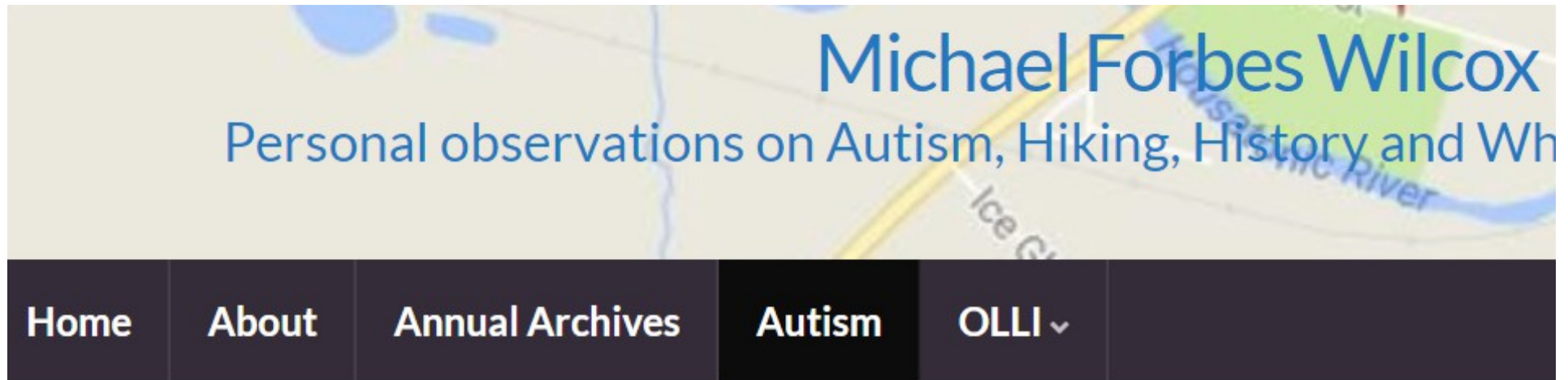
Use Mindfulness & Purposefulness



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Autism

Anxiety: How I Have Learned to Put it Aside — A talk given in 2010

Autism and Anxiety: Slides from a talk