



# Six Years After Diagnosis: How I Am Today

by David K Williams

When I was diagnosed exactly six years ago, I felt a mix of fear about the future changes ahead, but relief that it not only answered and confirmed so many self-questions, but also meant I could now access some needed real help.

One thing I was instantly advised to do was “not to work again or be sectioned”. They knew so many work places had caused me much mental damage so I’ve not worked since then, although many say my talents could do a lot for companies, preferably in a part-time position. I won’t rule that out, perhaps someday I’ll be offered somewhere right for me.

That said, my week days have become very much like work days. I live in supported independent accommodation in Leigh, run by Compassion in Action which I’m very lucky to have; they have been very helpful and done a lot for me. Each weekday morning, I pick up litter around their site and I help them out with other little odd jobs, as and when required.

There are often so many meeting groups I attend as an Autism Advocate, most notably via the Autism Partnership Board with Wigan Council. They have many sub groups in such areas as Housing, Criminal Justice and Employment, the latter which I am very vocal about. I’m involved with both their Autism Engagement Group and Autism Friends training and events too.

I attend a monthly Autism drop-in group in Wigan British Legion and on another monthly day, at the same time, I’m split between both Autism groups for Employability Group and a Creative Writing.

Then there’s also the online meeting groups run my Pathways, plus I occasionally visit and volunteer at Embrace in Platt Bridge (and attended some of their socials), and via them I joined the “What’s Up” group meetings too. I’ve visited More Than Words in Wigan too and will attend their “Boogie Nights” socials.

Finally, I’ve recently started attending Man Leigh’s drop-in meetings in Leigh and I recently did a podcast for them, talking about my experiences. I think that’s all my groups so far!



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I do get a lot out of attending these groups and meetings. They are both opportunities to meet other people like myself along with those with proper understanding of our condition, and to share my life experiences and advice too.

After so many years of suppression, I'm exploding with so many things to say which are hopefully both beneficial to myself and to the others around me.

Many say I should never have had the traumatic past experiences I've had; some are surprised I survived at all, but are proud that I did and want me to write my memoir. I may start one day!

It's only in recent years that I'm finally learning to love myself, although I sometimes still beat myself up about past things. I'm still learning about myself, but I understand myself better too, such as what triggers my meltdowns and how these can be avoided.

I feel like I don't have to rush around trying to please everybody all the time and no longer I am forced to live a lie like a have about who I am whilst receiving all the negative labels I once did.

At times if I do need to back away and be alone for a time, those I see today seem to understand this. I'm slowly learning what real friendships are, distancing myself from those ignorant about my condition. I feel like I'm on some crusade to help improve understanding and acceptance of Autistic people.

In a perfect world, people would help and embrace us more and realise the huge contribution we can make to this world. But there is still a very, very long way to go to achieve this and remove the ignorant narrow-minded people who make us "sufferers" of this condition.

If I can say I've made a big contribution to help make a better world for people on the spectrum, I'll be very satisfied with that.

**David K Williams**