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A How-To Guide for Young People*

Disinhibited Thoughts #1

This column is intended to be geared towards adults with TS; many of my friends comment with frustration that there is very little to be found on dealing with disorder beyond the school years. I will also try to make it quite informal, although the ever-growing academic in me may resist from time to time. Truth be known, beyond the refereed publications that I draft, and after all of the meticulously-planned, impression-managed presentations that I do are done, I need a place to vent too. I recognize, as many of you probably do as well, that I've come a long way in accepting and coping with TS, and am privileged to help those younger than myself get to my point of adjustment. Having said that, though, the journey is never over. We as adults have new and equally challenging issues to face. Unfortunately since we seem to be the "trailblazing" generation (in that we are the oldest in a time where TS is discussed and understood as never before), we don't always have a place in which to turn. I hope to help provide that "adult haven" for you. For myself, I've often found that writing is a good way to sort out my thoughts, not to mention empty my head of lingering obsessions and other assorted "head tics". Hence when I was offered this opportunity, I lunged at it. I want to encourage that strategy in those of you for which it works as well – please send me your thoughts on my column, directions you'd like to see me go, and advice on any questions I may ask. I will include my addresses at the end of every article.

I think that the first major issue that I will cover over the next few issues will be relationships. This seems to be a biggie for many adults with TS (although, in my own experience, there has been a striking difference between the difficulties that males versus females have, the former often having significantly fewer opportunities for romance than the latter. What have your experiences shown? Why do you think this might, or might not, be?). I am as of May of this year officially "back in the saddle" myself, and so How To Not Muck It Up is foremost in my own thoughts these days. An interesting twist in my situation is that my girlfriend also has TS. So not only am I continuing to learn how my own TS can cause challenges in a relationship, but I also have the unique opportunity to see "the other side" – what it's like for others when they decide to initiate a relationship with a TS'er. The journey has been enriching – being in those shoes suddenly makes the behaviours of girlfriends-past more comprehensible to me.

For one thing, tics can be annoying. Granted, of course we both are understanding of each other and joke about TS. Beyond that though there are some tics that I have that she just plain doesn't like and some in her that I find equally nerve-wracking. I want to stress that that is ok, though. If she reaches her limit of tolerance for one of my tics I don't see it as a reflection on her desire for me as a partner. To me, that would be like continually scratching my nails down a chalkboard, and then being personally wounded by anyone who chose to leave the room. Some of my tics are obnoxious, loud, piercing, strange, and generally unbearable; whether I like it or not, that's simply the way it is. It is up to me to acknowledge and accept that about myself – refusing to do so, and blaming her for her intolerance is to inappropriately shift the ownership of the problem. Having then recognized that we will not always be able to be around each other, we problem-solve. We need a bigger place to live so that we can avoid each other if necessary. We need nights alone. Ok, maybe thoughts like these aren't part of the "customary" honeymoon phase, but to deny these truths is to set ourselves up for failure, and neither of us wants that to happen.

Until next time, my friends!
Duncan

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