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Freaks, Geeks & Asperger Syndrome - A User Guide to Adolescence
by *Luke Jackson* (2002)
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Foreword by Tony Attwood

At last we have a book for adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome, written by a thirteen-year-old who has a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. Luke Jackson is an expert on the challenges encountered by his peers. He examines topics that range from the value of a personal explanation of the diagnosis through to experiencing bullying and the dating game. The author has become a mentor to fellow adolescents and writes as though he is having a conversation with the reader. The research evidence on Asperger's Syndrome suggests that such individuals have difficulty conceptualising the thoughts and feelings of other people, yet Luke has a clear insight into the thoughts of fellow adolescents and the concerns of parents and teachers. He also has a distinct sense of humour that will appeal to fellow adolescents.

The chapters include explanations and strategies that are not available in other texts. Luke explains the importance of having a diagnosis and adopts a very positive attitude; he writes, "I have what some people would call a disability but I call a gift". His analogies and descriptions are unique. He covers topics such as fascinations and fixations, sensory perception, diet, sleep, teenage language, problems with socialising at school, homework, dealing with bullies, the do's and don'ts of dating, moral dilemmas and an explanation of idioms that are particularly confusing for those with Asperger's Syndrome. My reactions on reading the manuscript ranged from admiration of his ability to describe typical life experiences with eloquence that is quite remarkable, to recognizing the value of his recommendations that will be of considerable benefit to parents, teachers and professionals. I will now benefit by incorporating Luke's wisdom into my clinical work.

The book is dedicated "to those of you who feel that you don't belong". Always remember that difference is cool." Adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome who have low self-esteem, sometimes feel anxious, depressed and annoyed will find that Luke's book becomes an emotional restorative. His style is entertaining and educational but I would add that it is also therapeutic. This book will enhance our understanding of Asperger's Syndrome, change attitudes and replace bleak despair with insight and laughter.