

FRIDAY 7TH APRIL 2023

With Lavinia Donling

WORLD AUTISM ACCEPTANCE WEEK

I told you a few weeks back we were commissioned to write a piece from Havas in partnership with Ambitious about Autism. The charity was set up with education in mind and won some funding to work in partnership with Vanish and Havas to promote greater understanding around Autism and ADHD. They launched it on Sunday celebrating World Autism Acceptance week. Our article was uploaded and you can read it on the 'Ambitious about Autism' webpage titled 'Every superhero has their choice of fabrics, and being Autistic is no different.'



OFF ON OUR TRAVELS

On Monday John, Tye, Monty and I left Anglesey to head towards Lancashire. The boys went for a walk whilst I met a young client face to face. It was such a positive experience and a first for TMW, since my days at CAMHS, completing an assessment as the young person felt unable to cope with it online. We over ran (oops) as we got on so well and they had so much to tell me with the parent adding they had never heard their teenager be so chatty towards a professional. It was a really lovely visit and when John collected me, he informed me that another parent had bagged our only other face to face slot left for our trip through Newcastle!

On Tuesday I held a clinic from my luxury Travel Lodge hotel room overlooking Arthur's seat in Edinburgh. Felt strange to be back in Edinburgh some 30 years after I had lived there and would walk previous dogs, now in Rainbow heaven, around the seat and various parks dotted over the city. We had a lovely location which the boys loved. John pointed out another dog - an aging Irish Setter - and when their owners spotted Monty - they were excited as it is such a rarity seeing two types of the Setter breed in one place, let alone in the same hotel.



Even more surreal was walking from the city car park off the university and passed Greyfriars Bobby - a small dog statue at the top of Candlemakers Row where I used to work. Opposite is the Museum and the Psychology department where I had dreams of one day coming back to talk about my research. At that time era I only had 5 O-grades and a Nursery Nurse qualification to my name having repeatedly been told I would never go to university. I trusted that young girl enough to leave the chaotic toxic environment and emigrate to England to fulfill my aspirations. What I learned returning to Edinburgh was that it had been my family that had caused such toxicity with their negative and abusive opinions that was getting in the way of me flourishing, and actually I missed living in Edinburgh for its most eye catching architecture, and the aspirations it had given me from living in Fife, Leith and walking the dogs in a favourite haunt of Cramond (where we collected Monty from some 4yrs ago).

I digress..... we walked to the restaurant to meet for the first time face to face our Scottish NED, Wendy, who was armed with gifts for us and our pets. We did a trade of flowers and gift bags - although it was not till we got home did I realize Wendy did more of a trade. Such a sweet lady - we loved meeting her in person. Wendy is, behind the scenes, helping us monitor our data in a variety of ways - her first task of monitoring how fast we turn around reports, and how fast parents respond to corrections. It was not all talk about TMW, as we were keen to swap life stories to learn a bit more in such a lovely restaurant.



Wednesday was busy and nerve racking in that I was in Cameron Toll shopping centre. I had done a little experiment. The first hour the banners promoted Mental Health and whilst lots of people looked at the stall - nobody wanted to talk to me. However, John came to provide me some coffee and I started putting up stickers and notice saying "ask me about Autism, ADHD and PDA". That changed instantly where I had lots of individuals and families ask me questions. I left some six hours later very tired and a bit burnt out by it all, but it had been so worth it raising the profile of TMW and helping families with their questions. John drove us through the Scottish borders and Sunderland for our next Travelodge stay in Sunderland.

Monty and Tye quite liked Sunderland and were very comfortable with the routine, although we were a bit thrown by the fire alarm going off one evening. Everyone had to use the stairs and one lady asked incredulously 'is that an English Setter?'

followed by 'you don't see them very often'. Monty quite often sneaked on to the bed whilst I was on zoom and was reluctant to get off when John would return and admonish him..... poor Monty.

On Friday I had my last client following my radio slot with Ferndale. This threw Steve who had to call me on my mobile rather the landline which means it is not so clear to hear on the radio, but it was another interesting discussion about mental illness of Bipolar, undiagnosed ADHD sharing similar traits as Bipolar, and Border Personality Disorder showing scarily similar traits to PDA..... John drove us through Durham, and the gorgeous Yorkshire Dales National Park - stunning. We had a brief stop in Kendal before staying in our final destination of Morecambe and learning about the area. We had the best fish and chips from Bare, and a couple of lovely walks before retiring to bed.





Saturday was winding our way through Lancaster - we want to do more of this next year - and heading back home to Anglesey. It is lovely being home - but transitioning has to be done slowly - which I think we did well. Our week was so busy with lots of changes - it was interesting and informative - we learnt lots - we met some lovely new people - we did clinics that provided respite in being familiar with our regular clients. Now we need to recover but it is approaching Easter and clients are on holiday so the pressure is not so intense. Now we need to focus on our next road trip which will be Gloucestershire, Somerset and Devon in June where we will be meeting up with Steve and Mike doing an outside promotion of our show for the Armed Services day. Exciting.

EXCITING NEWS

My final bit of news is very exciting. Whilst TMW is very precious to me - I remain being the sole Director of it to ensure its authenticity and how we do things. However, I am always interested in the research side of things and so Emotional Problem Solving was relaunched 2yrs ago. However, I cannot do justice for EPS with keeping my eye on TMW. So, I am very happy to announce that another Director is joining me with EPS but will be the main Director to ensure its success. You all know him as Business Manager of TMW, but he has reduced some of this role so that he can focus on EPS. Charlotte, our Accountant, asked us to wait till the new financial year before John officially steps up as Director to EPS. You can read his bio shortly. We wish him every success in his role raising the profile alongside her sister company, as well as promoting our research, training and publications.

Have a lovely Easter weekend, everyone, I hear lots of people will be celebrating with chocolate.

