

## Hyperlexia: A first-person success story

*Editor's note: The following excerpts are from a letter Dr. Treffert received from a 15-year-old girl. The phrases in quotes are from a paper he wrote titled "[Hyperlexia: Reading Precociousness or Savant Skill?](#)"*

Hi, Dr. Treffert. I recently read your paper about hyperlexia....I'm 15 and after all these years of being patronized and convinced to believe I'm something I know in my soul I'm not, I can honestly say that Type 3 Hyperlexia describes me to a T! I know myself more than other people know me, and I know I was never autistic in the first place, even though everyone else tried to convince me otherwise. Ever since my diagnosis (I was diagnosed with Asperger's when I was 10), the school system has patronized me and treated me like someone who is "slow." Like when I was first getting into high school, the school tried to put me into classes with the "slow" kids. My mom, even my homeroom teacher at the time convinced them that I have more potential than that, and I don't blame them.....

I came across your paper and as I read about type 3 in particular, I don't know how to put it in words, but it was like I found the last piece of the puzzle, like the dots were connected and the mystery was solved. I said to myself, "it all makes sense now!" I showed my family and friends this and I asked them "does that sound familiar?" Their jaws dropped because of how accurate it described me. I've tried to educate others about hyperlexia itself, and they looked at me like I was making stuff up....hyperlexia isn't a picnic in the park when you have it. I could write a darn novel about my experiences. But let me tell you about hyperlexia from the affected person's point of view:

**"These children also read early, often show striking memorization abilities and sometimes have other precocious abilities as well."**

I could read, write and do math and play music at an age where other kids were only starting to learn the alphabet. I don't know why or how, back then it just really clicked in my mind at the time. I always had my nose in a book, even when I didn't know what the phrases meant. I just loved reading. As for the memory thing, again, I don't know why I can just remember stuff from even years ago.

**"They may have 'autistic like' behaviors, but, in my experience, they do not have Autistic Disorder"**

I don't remember much from when I was a baby, but my parents said I did everything that would look like autism, from late talking (I couldn't talk until I was 3), to the toe-walking to even echolalia. I didn't have much sensory issues, I didn't mind being hugged or anything unless it was some person I didn't know or trust. This seems out of character for an autistic person, but I actually love parties and things like that.....I used to hate sudden, big changes though, unless it was a change that I decided on.

**"Unlike children with Autistic Disorder, they are often very outgoing and affectionate with family, but reserved and distant with peers and would be playmates. They do tend to make eye contact and can be very interactive with persons close to them."**

Oh my gosh, I can relate 100% to this one. I loved spending time with my family and I was very close to them (and still am). I just didn't know what to do around new people. I was super-shy and whenever I had to work with people I didn't know well, I got scared and couldn't really think of what to say so I just said things I heard. It's not much of a problem today, but I noticed I do much better when I'm put with my friends, or at least like-minded people.

**“Over time the autistic behaviors and symptoms fade and, as it turns out, these children then are quite normal (neurotypical) for their age. These children ‘outgrow’ their autism, or more accurately, in my view, did not have Autistic Disorder or any of its variants to begin with.”**

My family and friends have watched me grow up over the years, and they noticed I eventually grew out of it all. As you can tell, I didn't have much of a conversation filter or at least the ability to put myself in the place of others. I mean, I just didn't take the time to think before I acted. I also didn't read people's facial expressions and tone of voice, but it's just that I didn't pay attention to that stuff. But, as I spent more time in the outside world, I eventually learned the ways of the world. I think of what I did in the past, and think, 'if only I knew what I know now'.

Thank you so much for helping me find the truth about myself. Hyperlexia, especially type 3, definitely needs more awareness so children in the future don't end up like me. Thank you and keep going with your studies.