

LITERAL THINKING

A LIVED EXPERIENCE ABOUT
HUMOR, HONESTY & LITERAL LOGIC

“

STILL HONEST
STILL LITERAL

”

LITERAL THINKING, REAL LIFE

I was—and still am—a painfully slow learner when it comes to Chris’s literal thinking. I knew this was Asperger’s 101, yet he’d been blessed with a wicked sense of humor. I still don’t know if it was nature or nurture, but he grew up surrounded by people who treated dry wit like a family value and chose “funny” whenever it was even remotely an emotional option.

Because of this, I’d often find myself in a delicate situation and assume that an eye gesture or a discreetly mouthed instruction would be enough for Chris to catch on and redirect whatever was coming out of his mouth. You know what they say about assuming—it makes an ass out of you and me. And in our case, let’s be honest, mostly me.

COLLEGE DIDN’T CHANGE MUCH

College didn’t change much. In an upper-division English class, a student told Chris that Asperger’s was discovered by a Nazi and thus the term should not be used. Chris dove straight into the US space program never finding success if not for Wernher Von Braun. The more the kid poked, the more frustrated Chris got. Finally, the professor stepped in and said, “Chris, this class is specifically peer-reviewed. If you didn’t want that, you shouldn’t have signed up.”

Chris responded, and I quote, “I had to take your class to graduate.” When he told me this, I tried to explain how he may have just talked himself out of graduating. (He did graduate).

STILL OUTING ME

And just last week, as a full-grown adult, he needed to talk to me. I told him I would, but to call his Grammy first because she misses him. The call went exactly like this: “Hi Grammy, I had to call you first and say I miss you before Mom will talk to me...” Fantastic. Still outing me. Still literal.

THE BEAUTIFUL FLIP SIDE

But here’s the beautiful flip side: every “I love you” or “I miss you” is completely sincere. He is incapable of bullshit. Don’t misunderstand—he’s fully capable of trying to lie or exaggerate, but he’s hilariously obvious without realizing it.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Take Christmas dinner, for example. The entire extended family is seated, everyone trying to behave like we're in a Norman Rockwell painting. Chris starts talking about something wildly inappropriate, so I give him a light kick under the table—the universal “stop talking” signal. Instead, he looks up and asks the entire table, “Why is Mom kicking me?” Perfect. Just perfect.

SAYING THE QUIET PART OUT LOUD

Or the time we were flying to Hawaii with his Great-Grandma, his Grammy, and my sister. There's a bald man sitting in front of us, and Chris keeps commenting on his head like it's the most fascinating thing he's ever seen. I give him a tiny pinch—again, the subtle “please stop” cue. He immediately yells, “Why are you pinching me?” All the women I'm traveling with suddenly become deeply invested in the ceiling, the floor, and the emergency exit brochure, while every passenger stared at me.

HONESTY WITHOUT FILTERS

Like the time he and Markus were told not to bring bouncy balls onto the trampoline. Markus, meanwhile, marched by staring straight at us with about ten bouncy balls rolled up in the bottom of his T-shirt—his stomach fully exposed, looking like a tiny smuggler who had never once considered the concept of “concealment.”

DIFFERENT IS A LANGUAGE

Kids like Chris don't hide who they are. For better or worse, they can't. Their honesty is unfiltered, their humor is accidental, their intentions are pure, and their logic is beautifully literal. The world doesn't always know how to interpret them, but they're not broken, confusing, or “too much.” They're simply divergent—and they deserve a guide that helps parents decode the moments that make us laugh, cry, cringe, and learn. Chris taught me that “different” isn't a flaw. It's a language. Decoding Divergent is how we help families learn to speak it.

**THE INSIGHT THAT
CHANGED EVERYTHING:**
Different isn't a flaw. It's a
language