

Am I Autistic?

A new book addresses the issue of being on the Autistic spectrum and looks at the benefits of a self-diagnosis rather than a clinical one.

Successful, creative and with a strong entrepreneurial streak Lydia Andal enjoys a working life as a magazine editor and journalist alongside running a career management agency.

While outwardly Lydia appeared to have it all she admits she spent most of her life struggling with feelings of being different to her peers and an inability to make herself understood.

Adopted as a child and raised in Essex, Lydia's birth mother was from Northern Ireland and two years ago Lydia, now 34, watched the Hollywood biopic of Temple Grandin, an American autistic woman who overcame many challenges to become a top scientist. Something in the story resonated with Lydia and she realised she shared many of Temple's traits.

"For years I had been wondering why I was so different from other people and then suddenly it all fell into place," explained Lydia.

After this Lydia began to research autism but found the clinical definitions didn't sit alongside the



life she enjoyed.

"I was really turned off by the clinical definition of autism," she commented. "I realised that many of my autistic traits were positive and helped me with my work. I did the autism tests online and they all came back that I was on the spectrum but ultimately I decided against a medical diagnosis."

It was shortly after this that Lydia interviewed several high profile Autism industry clinicians from the UK and US for work and spoke with Autistic adults about their experience.

Again she found a big difference between how scientists explained autism compared with how autistic people did.

"The clinical sector sees Autism in mainly negative terms, as something that should be cured whilst autistic people can see the positive benefits to having a different view on things or a special set of traits."

This discovery, combined with her

own experience of autism prompted Lydia to write her first book, 'Am I Autistic? A Guide to Autism & Asperger's Self-Diagnosis for Adults', a self-help book for those who believe they may be on the autistic spectrum.

"I wanted to write Am I Autistic because self-diagnosis is a way to identify as autistic without being labelled by the negative clinical definition of autism as a disorder and a deficit," explained Lydia.

Originally released in a digital version earlier this year the book, due to its success, is now set to be released in a print edition.

Speaking on the reaction to the book Lydia said:

"Plenty of people have said they found it helpful and that's all I ever really wanted. I wanted to highlight the positive sides of autism and the good traits associated with it and show that when supported correctly autistic people can really contribute to society."

