

### **A review of Asperger's Syndrome and Jail-A survival guide.**

Will Attwood's book 'Asperger's Syndrome and Jail: A survivors guide' offers an important lived perspective on the challenges that an individual prisoner who identifies as being on the autism spectrum could potentially face in attempting to navigate a prison or custodial setting. In contrast to a number of other author's examinations into the subject of autism and imprisonment, Attwood as an expert by experience presents readers with a carefully structured and reflective account of his time in prison. Of particular value to potential readers who might identify as being on the autism spectrum, is the author's use of specific personal examples to illustrate how prisoners who identify as being autistic navigate a prison environment. A credit to Attwood and the book in general is the fact that whilst the books language is straightforward and unambiguous, a helpful consideration to readers who identify as being on the autism spectrum; this book lends itself to any reader with a personal or profesional interest in better understanding the experience of imprisonment.

The book is divided into 3 sections each examining a different facet of the judicial system. Part 1 entitled 'The road to jail' charts how an individual might be contemplating incarceration and potential imprisonment; before offering a more detailed consideration of the different types of jails that an individual might encounter as they traverse through the criminal justice system.

The first part is divided into 5 chapters; the first chapter considers how an individual's circumstances could potentially lead them into possible imprisonment. The second chapter offers readers an exploration of the Watch house /holding cell environment. Chapter 3 skilfully identifies that a prisoners journey through imprisonment could comprise stays in a number of different institutions including a remand prison before arriving at their placement prison to serve out the remainder of their sentence. The 4th chapter looks at how an individual might prepare for transportation between prison settings, a useful consideration for readers on the autism spectrum. Attwood considers topics of conversation and how a prisoner who identifies as being autistic might navigate conversation with other prisoners and prison officers whilst in transport. The final chapter in this section poses to readers the question of whether they should disclose their diagnosis of autism and to whom. Attwood also raises an important question for prisoners on the autism spectrum concerning whether they request that they are situated in the Special Needs Unit or with other prisoners within the main population.

Part 2 entitled 'Practical Jail' concerns itself with how prisoners might ensure that any medical needs that they might have are accounted for by prison authorities as well as considering issues relating to substance abuse. Chapter 6 'So you've arrived' begins by offering readers a practical guide to what to expect when arriving in prison and being processed into the prison system, this chapter is helpful for some individuals across the autism spectrum who might struggle with the uncertainty brought about by change and transition. The next chapter considers how to access medical help whilst in prison and recognising what could be a helpful and unhelpful means of requesting drugs and services whilst in prison. Chapter 8 describes what a normal day in prison might entail. Chapter 9 considers drug use in prison in a very matter of fact and unglamorous way. The 10th chapter concerns the issue of boredom in prison and activities offered to keep a person's mind and anxiety in check. The final chapter in this section is concerned with some of the basics of negotiating imprisonment.

The final section of the book focuses on Social navigation. This section might be of particular interest to readers who are on the autism spectrum, as it recognises that reading others body language and

perspective can be highly challenging for people across the autism spectrum. Chapter 12 offers readers some general advice on social interaction before the next chapter looks at some of the practicalities and challenges of sharing a cell with another prisoner. Chapters 14 and 15 examines interaction with other inmates and prison officers and staff respectively. Chapter 16 addresses the fact that prison environments can often be emotionally charged and ways in which potential confrontation could be avoided. Following on the next chapter is concerned with exploring how an individual prisoner identifying as being on the autism spectrum might find opportunities to use coping strategies for dealing with their stress. Finally the book concludes with an exploration of how individuals navigate the adjustment from a custodial to a non custodial environment.

Attwood's book is an informative and carefully considered book and it is well worth the read for any prisoner or professional working with offenders.