

We with ADD are Square Pegs in a Round-hole World

By Deborah Morton

A true thing about people with attention deficit disorder is that the editor is often asleep at the switch. Things just fall out of our mouths. If you have a sense of humor, those things are often funny.

However, if you are a child with ADD, this propensity can make life difficult. Case in point is my grandson, Eric. He was suspended for half a day in the second grade for disrespect of the teacher.

The story he told that led to this was nearly identical to the school's version. I laughed. They didn't.

It seems that Sweet Young Thing was doing her student teaching. The assignment was about poetry, which Eric apparently thought was stupid or that she was belaboring the point because as she walked by his desk he said, "Geez! And you went to college for this?"

I told the principal that teacher just needed to grow a thicker skin because a more reasonable response to such impertinence is, "Why, yes I did – and that's why you're going to do it."

Impertinence is not disrespect, although it is unwise in any circumstance when there is no balance of power (like a classroom).

Social cues are what we with ADD often are not so good at. We didn't mean it as you took it. And, frankly, punishing us doesn't teach anything useful.

ADD is a different way of thinking. I wonder if this distractibility was a trait useful for the survival of our species. As hunter/gatherers, if one was not distracted by the world, one missed that patch of tubers just off the path. Or walked by the fruit trees over yonder.

Then humans began farming and manufacturing, which favored a focused-on-the-end-result trait. The modern world is organized on that approach. I grant you it is efficient. I also opine that it is usually boring, as well.

Living with ADD is like being a square peg in a world of grid-marked, regimented round holes. We don't fit. I certainly never did and, much to some adults' dismay, never wanted to, either. Not only that, I resisted their efforts to force me.

One of those adults was my first-grade teacher, Mrs. Ranke, whom I called Mrs. Cranky behind her back. She and I had a running battle when it came to writing.

On that paper with the red margin line, you are supposed to put "1." to the left of the line, writing your sentence to the right of it. "2." goes on the next line, etc. Sometimes that sentence needed part of another line. But rather than put the next number on the following line left of the margin, I put it immediately after my sentence's period.

My argument? "Look at all the space you're wasting."

And I stood my ground. She finally kept me from lunch and recess one day. After an hour, red-faced and angry, she grabbed my shoulders and shook me, yelling, "WOULD YOU JUST DO IT MY WAY?!"

I still remember sobbing and choking on the chocolate milk she finally let me drink.

Would it have been so hard just to acknowledge that I had a point? Usually that's all kids want. It's how I handled my own kids' impertinence – with fewer terrible fights.

"Yes, it does look like wasted space, but there are certain ways of doing things, called conventions," she could have said. "Putting sentence numbers at the margin is one of them. It makes your paper easier to read. You don't have to like it. You just have to do it."

Older now, I've acquired a certain degree of wisdom. I accept that some conventions must be followed, regardless of what I think about them. I am still a square peg in a world of round holes, but I maintain I would fit in one of those stupid holes if they were just a little bigger.

Get over it, world.

I raised 5 kids as a "side-tracked home executive" (a book I read) during 13 years as a home daycare provider. Impending divorce led back to college where I majored in Communication, specifically Public Relations with a minor in Printing and Publishing Arts. I was awarded Pacific Lutheran University PR Student of the Year when I graduated in June 1995. I worked an assortment of internships before starting with the Pierce County Sheriff's Department in Tacoma, Washington, for whom I have worked

as a Corrections Deputy since January 1998. Quite struck by the similar skill sets used in day care and Corrections.

-Deborah Morton