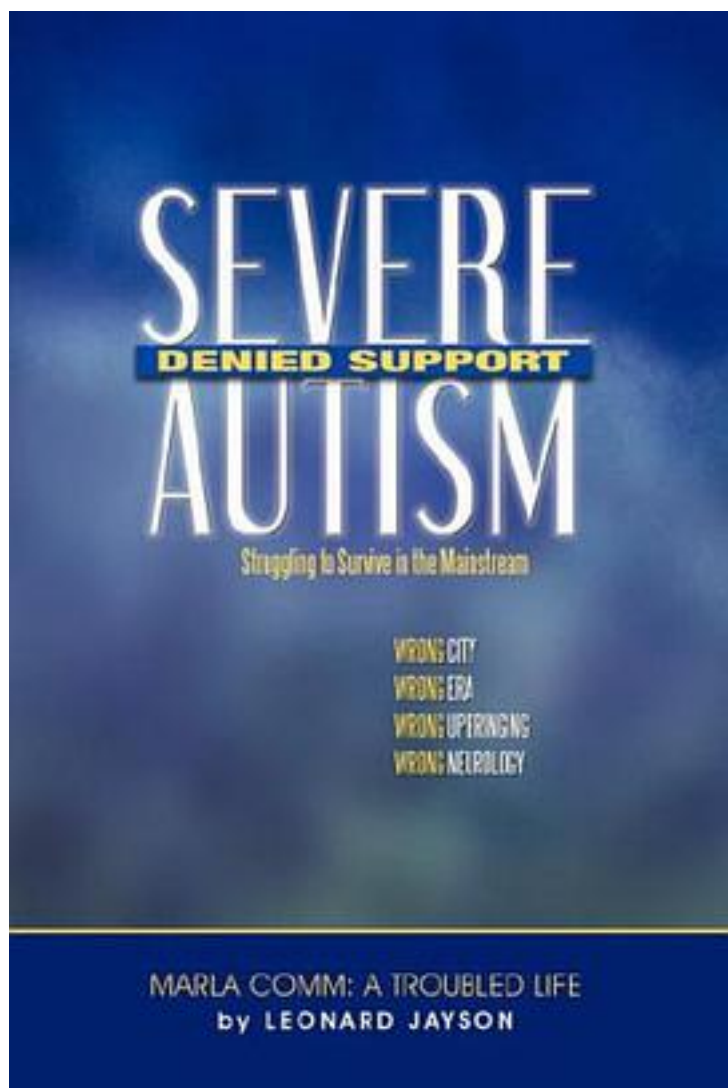


Severe Autism, Denied Support



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At age 3, Marla Comm was professionally diagnosed with autism but felt to have intellectual potential. Both parents had socially-conformist values, so that Marla's anti-social behavior was unacceptable. Verbally abused by her parents, she was disciplined to become a normal child. It was never to be; her rigid, dysfunctional personality was not susceptible to change. Now age 50, Marla's lack of social feeling, rigid routines, problematic language, poor imagination, inflexibility, repetitive tendencies, and ritualistic behaviors - are lifelong traits consistent with autism. Anxiety, one of her most debilitating symptoms, has left her unable to achieve conscious relaxation or put aside life's inevitable problems. Daily chores frustrate Marla; however, it is nothing in comparison to the anger and self-mutilation she suffers when preparing meals in the kitchen. Montreal is totally wrong for Marla. Years of struggling in the mainstream, with little or no support, have resulted in a condition of burnout, symptomatic of mental and physical exhaustion. By having a personality complex with multiple co-morbidities, Montreal's environment worsens her misery by failing to meet her needs for affordable healthful food, human civility, supportive psychiatry, and adequate social services. Inclement weather - half the year - prevents daily exercise. For Marla, it means countless days of suffering that only a loss of consciousness can relieve: call it a daytime oblivion of deep sleep, made possible with cheap wine and knock-out pills. Gifted with a keen, long-term memory and intent on learning more about her neurological disorders, she has done extensive reading, in bits-and-pieces, over the years. The reader will experience the life story of a highly intelligent autistic woman, consumed with dysfunctional behavior; the very same Marla who - in the next breath - can discuss with professional expertise the nuances of her mental disorders.

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