

OCT 2022

ISSUE NO. 1

THE DROP

**How can you
make your life
more meaningful?**

**Find out how to live
your best life!**



Sharing the vision

The purpose behind THE DROP

**Is happiness or fulfilment
the goal?**

Why happiness isn't all it's cracked up to be!

Hello Autumn!!

Original poetry to welcome in the new season

The contributors to this magazine all have autism and are non-speaking or have limited speech. They have built their skills using RPM (Rapid Prompting Method) and can spell their thoughts, one letter at a time, on a letter-board.

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MISSION & VISION 2022 AND BEYOND

The mission of this magazine is to provide a place for autistic people, without purposeful speech, to share their great ideas and insights.

The intention is for this to be positive and fun, as well as informative and encouraging. We hope you will enjoy reading this, please share with others so we can make ripples that lead to changes in how we are viewed.

-Ellen O'Shea

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Meet the Contributors	4
Making Meaning: An Introduction	9
Intial Ideas	11
Challenges and Meaning	13
Success, Mistakes and Meaning	15
Happiness and Meaning	16



What do Philosophers and Psychologists think?	19
Thoughts and Interviews	21
Well known Poem: Leisure	27
Joy, Goals and Meaning	29
Filling your life with meaningful activities	31
Seasonal poetry	33

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

ELLEN

Hello, I am Ellen. I am a young adult making my first splash into the literary world. I am autistic and have the mouth of a parrot! It repeats familiar phrases and is sudden and loud. I can spread my ideas more easily by spelling on my RPM letterboard. I am so pleased to be part of this new magazine as words have a power to them and we can use them for good.

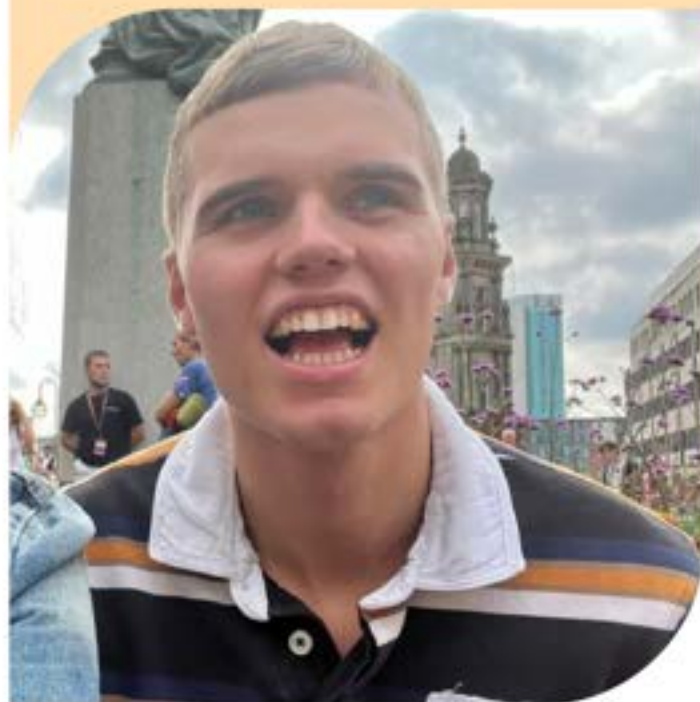


CHRIS

Hi I'm Chris. I realise that people's views about autism can often be based on our appearances and what society shares about us. I am excited to share my experiences as a non-verbal autistic man who has enormous sensory challenges, rigidity and obsessions. I really hope my contributions can help to make a different world for autistic people.

CHRISTOPHER

People are often under the impression that autistic and non-speaking people, like me, don't understand very many things. I aim to inform and inspire, opening people's minds to the assumptions they have and showing that with support we can achieve so much. I am Christopher and I'm so glad to have this opportunity.



PADDY

I am Paddy and I am the youngest of the group. I am happy to share my insights and participate in this magazine. Teaching others is something I'd love to do when I'm older so I need practise.



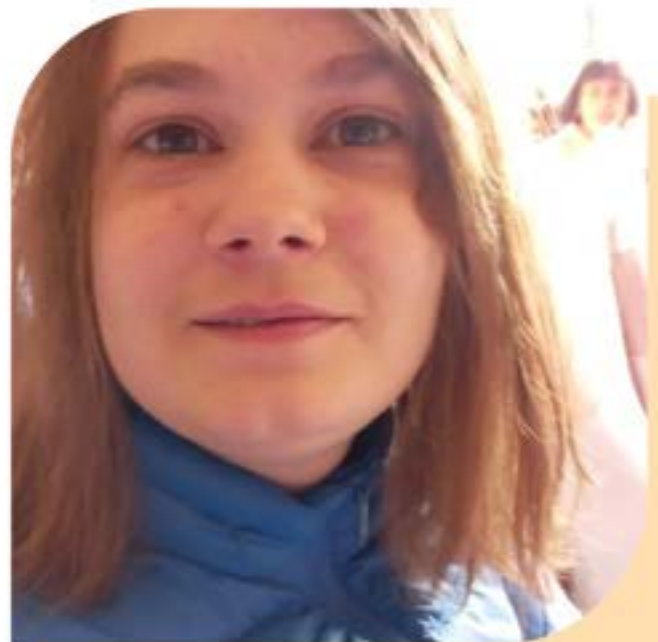


JACK

I'm Jack. I love to be part of groups where I can contribute to something bigger than myself. Having this magazine is challenging me to think about how I can help lead change for lots of quiet voices. I look forward to taking part.

POSY

Hi, I am Posy and, like the other contributors, I am often misjudged because of my baffling behaviours. Having autism forces me to create mammoth routines! Each issue of this magazine will represent that, amongst the routines, I've been able to purposefully focus and contribute to society.



TOM



Hello I'm Tom. Since starting RPM my world has opened up to more possibilities. I am so happy to make contributions so that people realise that there's more to me and others. I am so keen to develop my poetry as poems are great at sharing messages. I plan to share one each issue.

I hope you enjoy this first one.

JOHNNY

Hello my name is Johnny. I like to make films and play with people. I also enjoy making stories which I hope will be made into films. I am happy sharing my stories, thoughts and struggles with people who might benefit from them.

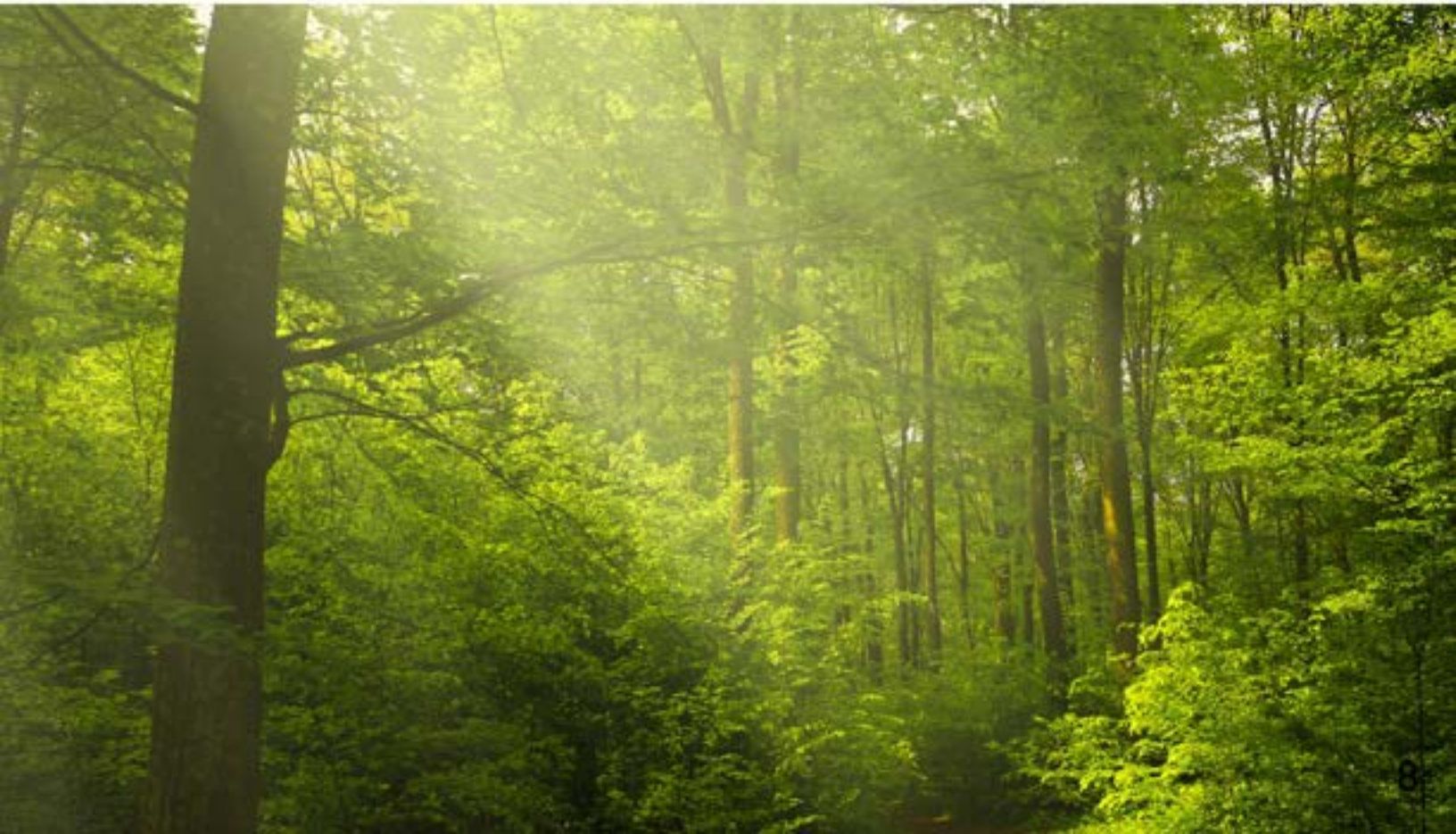




CHARLIE

Hello I am the one who took ages to develop my pointing skills but now there is no stopping me.

I am over the moon to be a contributor. Hope to inspire and be inspired.



MAKING MEANING

AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR FIRST THEME

Purpose and meaning have always interested me. Even before people realised I was capable of thinking in deep ways, I appreciated the small and big ways my life was made better. Simple things like walks in beautiful parks, going to the supermarket and trying new activities gave my life meaning. Even now these things they still give me purpose.

My aspirations for what I can achieve have shot up since I have been learning and progressing intellectually. I am excited about my future now I have more options available to me. Writing poetry and sharing insights into my life with autism has given a deeper meaning to





my life and is what led to me to think up the first theme: how do you make meaning in your life?

“
**HOW DO
YOU
MAKE
MEANING
IN YOUR
LIFE?**
”

In this issue, find out how different autistic individuals respond to this complex question. Discover philosophical and psychological views and read the poetry that made us reflect about what really matters in life.

-Ellen O'Shea, first editor

HOW DO YOU FIND MEANING: INITIAL IDEAS

Asking yourself, 'What makes my life meaningful?' can be hard to answer. It might be easier to start thinking about what is important to you, and how your life is made better. Here were some of our initial ideas:

My family
and
friends

Interests,
hobbies
and
passions

Embracing
opportunities

Challenging
myself

Understanding
myself

Weekly
activities

Important
relationships

Being part
of my
community

Having a
purpose



Progressing
towards
goals

Understanding
the world

Enjoying
my life

Contributing
to society

Helping
others

Connecting
with others

Connecting
with nature

My
spirituality
and religion

Daily
routines

Having
things to
look
forward

Reaching
my
potential

Focusing on
what is
important

CHALLENGES AND MEANING

-POSY TAYLOR

Meaning is so important as it gives a purpose to our day and even our life. Small moments, like receiving an unexpected smile can cause you to reflect on your own ability to have an impact on others. Long periods of time are spent searching for the meaning of significant life impacting issues like obsessions and Autism. Why do I have Autism? Will I be able to do something important with my life? What purpose is there in my struggles? We need meaning in our lives to give us a reason to overcome the challenges and situations that attempt to put us in a zone of purposelessness.

— “ —————
**We must step up and
inspire ourselves.**
————— ” —

One past challenge I have had was with my speech, speaking is such a normal thing for most people, if you don't speak you do question why this is and if there is a greater point in it all. What if there is no point and my speech isn't reliable for any reason at all. Can you imagine the feeling that your hardships in life have no meaning at all, how hopeless it can feel.

So we must step up and inspire ourselves.

Taking the questioning away and replacing them with decisions can help me live a productive life of meaning and purpose. We will never know if our challenges in life have been handed to us for a reason. Seeking reasons for why can be draining and confusing, so here is what I have decided to do:

I will create my own meaning out of this situation and decide what my point is. I am emerging out of chaotic misunderstanding and transforming into clear intentional writing. Seeing me point inspires others so much and this has helped me to decide that my point is to help other autistic people. I can use my challenges to show that we are far more capable than we look.

— “ —
I can use my challenges to show that we are far more capable than we look.
— ” —



SUCCESS, MISTAKES AND MEANING

THOUGHTS FROM
CHRISTOPHER
FINNES

People are obsessed with success even though it does not lead to long term happiness. The way to happiness is to fill your life with purpose, passion and people who make you happy with their presence.

Adults are prone to one huge mistake: thinking that the key to a meaningful life is found outside of ourselves. Adults can focus too much on the unimportant things that are not actually important at all.





HAPPINESS AND MEANING

-ELLEN O'SHEA

I want to educate people about autism and how to help. I think too many people think we should just be happy and calm but it is important for us to be challenged too.

If everyone always focused on me being happy and calm, we would have made no progress. My calmness is mainly related to my hormones so there's no point waiting for me to calm down before you help me learn. You may have to wait a long time and I still could have made progress on different skills in that time.

— “ —
**I don't want my only aim,
each day, to be happy.**
— ” —



Some people think we should all just be happy. They feel that we are not capable of developing any skills. I am capable though, and i don't want my only aim, each day, to be happy.

— “ —
We don't want our lives to be mediocre.

— ” —



I can contribute much to society and I want to, even if it's hard sometimes. Realising that we all want to improve and develop ourselves and, also make an impact on society, is so important as we don't want our lives to be mediocre.

— “ —
Happy lives are not always fulfilled lives.

— ” —



Happy lives are not always fulfilled lives. I would rather be challenged and produce work that I'm proud of, than sit around doing sensory activities involving lights and toys to fiddle with. I may look happy doing these things, but my sensory system is easily pleased.

**I really have to be
FUTURE FOCUSSED
and not let
INSTANT EMOTIONS
take over.**

-JOHNNY CURRAN



WHAT DO PHILOSOPHERS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS THINK?

Casey Woodling, a Professor of philosophy believes that a meaningful life is not in the living of life, but the reflecting on it. We asked our contributors if reflecting *really* is important.

Ellen: Yes, it helps you to develop a strong sense of who you are and what actually matters.

Posy: Reflection opens your mind and heart to your possibilities, missed opportunities and true feelings.

What is the danger of not reflecting?

Chris F: That you waste your life on things that don't matter.



Friedrich Nietzsche (don't worry, we can't pronounce it either!), a German philosopher, questions if humans are in a position to even think about this question! After all, the universe is so vast and we are so small; how can we possibly begin to understand what our lives mean and how we can create meaning?

Ellen: We are so limited in many ways, it is important to recognise that.

Posy: Really interesting to think about the question from this angle.





We also researched Viktor Frankl, a psychologist who survived the Holocaust. While in Nazi concentration camps, he decided he wanted to write a book about his experiences; this created meaning and a reason for him to keep living. After the war, he was able to publish a book about his experiences, 'Man's Search for Meaning'.

He noted that other survivors also created meaning, whether it was to help others after the war or to try and reunite with family. We asked our contributors what they could learn from this.

Ellen: My hope is to share my writings with the world and this keeps me going.

Chris R: Aspirations keep humans aiming for more than what they have. Personal aims, which we can achieve, shine a light onto our lives.

Posy: Surviving through the toughest times needs purpose and belief that you will make it.



COMMUNITY AND MEANING

-JACK ARMSTRONG



Community is how I found more meaning in my life. Learning from others and being part of something a lot bigger than me has helped me to be a member of society. Going to activities adds structure to my day and I enjoy participating even though it is tiring. I get so much out of being in the community.

A tip for new people:

If you're worried about attending new clubs, I'd encourage you to go along and observe to give yourself a chance to get used to it.



WHAT GIVES A PURPOSE TO YOUR DAY?

AN INTERVIEW WITH PADDY CURRAN

What gives a purpose to your day?

Days autistically have a purpose when you work on goals. It makes you focus and achieve.

Is there a reason why you used the word autistically?

Having autism means you have a lot to work on.

What else makes your life better?

My family I'm including them as these relationships make a difference to me



CAN SHARING CREATE MEANING?

THOUGHTS FROM JOHNNY
CURRAN

What could you teach people about?

I'd teach people about awesome parts of the world and shock them with information they had never seen before.

Dangerous, strange and scary places that might excite them.

What could you share?

I'd get movies out there for everyone to enjoy.



We asked our contributors:

WHAT MAKES YOUR LIFE BETTER?

THOUGHTS FROM TOM GRABIEC

The main themes are,

- Having real hopes for my future
- Having time with my family
- Seeing friends

What has improved your life?

Starting RPM lessons suddenly reignited my passion for education, turning my restless misery into seeing possibilities.

My self-esteem has improved and I am interested in so many topics. My education is important.



THOUGHTS FROM CHARLIE
MCGOWAN

- My kind friends
- My journey from Sensory silence to sharing my thoughts
- Going out and enjoying my surroundings

— “ —

My journey is knowing
who I am now and finding
who I can become

— ” —





THOUGHTS FROM CHRISTOPHER ROCHFORD

What makes your life better?

- The people in it
- Walks in my local park
- Enjoying senses
- Learning
- The progress I make
- Seeing the sunshine always improves my day
- Hearing that my knowledge may help others makes my challenges have meaning too

What advice would you give to others?

Everyone needs a purpose to peacefully see the meaning in their life



**DO ANY WELL-KNOWN POEMS
COMMENT ON FINDING MEANING?**

Leisure

-WILLIAM HENRY DAVIES
(this poem is in the public domain)

**What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.**

We asked our contributors for their views :

Ellen: We all need to slow down and appreciate the world

Posy: Autism is excellent at rushing me, so I find it hard to “stop and stare”. I feel that this message is important though; we can spend so much time on things actually don't add to our filament. We can rush around doing one thing after another without realising that they don't add meaning to our lives.

Chris R: If most people can control and direct their senses purposefully then they should make the most out of this beautiful world

Chris F: It is very valuable to spend time understanding the forests, fields and flowers,
reflecting about the progress you're making while enjoying the seasonal changes.
You can find a greater part of yourself during your time outdoors.

Jack: The message is very important because we need to remember what is *actually* important!



JOY, GOALS AND MEANING

JACK ARMSTRONG

Do you have things that bring you joy?

I mean things such as activities and hobbies and interests, trips out with family and friends? I am now realising just how important enjoyment is in my life and I want to help you see that you need to remember to have fun too!

Having fun helps you enjoy your life so it does bring you meaning. It doesn't just make you feel better, it has also been proven to improve your relationships, make you smarter, reduce stress and even make you more youthful.



One thing that I love is going to different places. Do new places excite you or make you feel dread? I know I might be a bit odd but it's enjoyable for me because walking around a new place just gives me so much to think about. Recently I read an article by 'Push Doctor' and it stated that visiting new places is 'a



great way to keep your brain active', which is true!

I love being around people who make me laugh. It makes such a difference to your day when you are having a good laugh with friends, even when you are doing something hard. My sense of humour and ability to laugh is really important to living a good life.



I want to point out that it is still important to work towards your goals.

My goals bring me great purpose, and aspiring to do more does create hope and ambition.

However, if we just focus on work, then things are likely to become stressful and our enjoyment fades. The goals that have given us purpose suddenly bring us pain.



A realistic goal is fulfilling to meet, but don't let your whole world revolve around it as you will be miserable.

FILLING YOUR YOUR LIFE WITH MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

-CHRIS ROCHFORD

The more I think about this theme, the more I realise that it's so important to fill your life with meaningful activities, interests and goals. Therefore I want to give everyone the chance to start thinking, 'what makes my life meaningful?'

I asked my peers the following questions to see if this would help to inspire them:

- What are your main interests?
- What do you want to get better at?
- What activities do you enjoy?
- Would you like to try anything new?



Responses

- What are your interests?

Tom: Poetry, science, history, philosophy... I like all sorts

Posy: Poetry, writing and topics that get me thinking.

- Is there anything you'd like to get better at?

Tom: Yes I'd make my reading skills improve so that I could make myself more knowledgeable. I want to learn about the rest of the world.

- What activities do you enjoy?

Tom: I do enjoy walking.

Posy: My routines can make my life hard. I feel like running is the only one.

- Do you want to try anything new?

Tom: I want to do more walks that are new.

Posy: At the moment it's hard, but I'd love to try everything. Routines need to calm first.

If you would like to have your responses to these questions shared in the next issue, please send them on!



THE TALE OF SEASONS

A POEM BY CHRISTOPHER FINNES

Sad that summer is no longer here.

Autumn has crept in silently,

Catching me unaware

Like a small mouse which scurries around unnoticed.

All of a sudden, leaves fall from their summer homes,

Colours change into dramatic hues,

Animals busily gather food,

Preparing for the coming of snow next season.

The tale of seasons carries on each year

So why are we surprised at all?



AUTUMN IS HERE

A POEM BY ELLEN O'SHEA

**Autumn cracks out of the green,
Rusty red forcing its way onto leaves,
Amber exploding into vibrancy,
Yellow tearing a mustard sun,
Burnt brown breaking through the fire,
Rusty, fierce and bold.
Autumn shakes the green away
and fills our eyes with change.**

IN MY CAR

A POEM BY CHARLIE MCGOWAN

**Outside is my eyesight,
Wandering down the meadow,
Swimming down the river,
Watching the sunset.**



NATURE

A POEM BY TOM GRABIEC

All around
I can hear the sounds.
Nature calls
and nature falls.
I see the leaves,
person under the trees,
stepping into the light:
meaning of life.
Nature settles me,
outside I'm free



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we'd love to hear from you too.



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