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Brain Work

Because of the rise in Autism Spectrum Disorder and the mainstreaming education of children *on* that spectrum and due to the significant increase of medical and neurological scientific information, the average person now knows a few things about how a mind that works differently, works at all. It is the Functional MRI that has been the game changer for many of us. We parents of children young or adult whose brains look and function differently than other people, now have the evidence we longed for since they were babies. We have the answer to a question that haunts us every single day. When it comes to doing things, is it that he/she can't or won't? Now we know. It is that they don't, period. The proof is lighting up in brain scans of real live human brains in labs all over the country. We see how neurons fire and misfire, we see areas that light up too little or too much and now we know...yes now we do really know.

I will describe to you a brain function abnormality that I share with my daughter, that has just this year been recently verified by the MRI, as an eye/brain malfunction. The insight comes at age 65 for me, 29 for my daughter (and is not diminished for me by the long wait). As a little girl, I remember sometimes being asked by my favorite uncle (a retired Naval Captain, electrical engineer, and naval architect) to go into the basement and fetch a tool for him. My father's workbench and tools were in good order. Each hung in a proper, unchanging place. I loved my uncle but dreaded this task. I could never, I repeat never, find the tool no matter how ordinary or obvious it was. I could not pick out the one he wanted. My daughter's childhood despair at not being able to pick out what we wanted her to in her room was the cause of our worst interactions. As it turns out, the eye's inability to identify items against a larger visual field is an actual brain function (in layman's terms) "thing" and not necessarily a behavioral "thing".

When coupled with an inability to break down a large job into smaller sequential tasks, this neurological glitch in the eye/brain connection can turn a simple task into a complex nightmare. It kept me out of the basement for 15 years. Will this new insight help despairing parents? Let's do a brain scan and find out!