



Society often misunderstands people who behave differently than the average person or what we call “normal”. What people tend to forget is that there are many people suffering from different kinds of disorders. One such as, Asperger’s Syndrome. Asperger’s Syndrome (AS) is a mild form of autism that can lead to having difficulty socializing and repetitive behaviors. Some people may not even know they have it, or they might have similar symptoms but ignore it because they were never diagnosed.

According to the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE), “AS was only recently identified as a diagnosis, a count of the number of individuals affected by this syndrome is still hard to come by. Recent survey results from the National Institute of Child Health and Mental Development estimate that 1 in 500 people (0.2% of the general population) have some form of AS.”

With the time and investment of up to \$25,000 I want to bring more awareness to everyone about Asperger’s Syndrome. There needs to be more research in this disorder because there is a chance there are forms of it that can develop in a person over time. I believe the best place to start is in high schools because once students get involved they would need parental permission to come to small counseling groups, because it won't be during school hours of course. This can lead to getting more support from parents after they hear about it from their kids. I can make brochures explaining what the disease is and schedule presentations in the high schools that allow me to come in. If I can get people from different schools to join and speak out, maybe they'll be less intimidated when they see people they're not familiar with. The whole point of this is so that no one feels alone and knows that there are other people who share the same struggle. All people need to do is understand one another and know that they're being understood as well.

What influenced me to do this is to help my older sister. She hasn't been diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome; however, she has all the signs and symptoms. Even if it is something that was developed but is not Asperger’s Syndrome then there has to be a connection because someone can be suffering from all the same symptoms and be misunderstood without ever knowing what's wrong with them. Although my sister wasn't born with the disorder I believe there were many factors in her childhood that caused her to behave certain ways to avoid social contact. Reasons such as, being bullied along with overprotective parents might have caused this, because it resulted in her never getting a chance to interact with others without being afraid. I don't want my sister to be afraid of the outside world because it is not something she can avoid, I just want her to go back to the social butterfly she once was and realize the outside world isn't so scary. I also want

to help anyone else going through similar problems and feeling like they're being misunderstood.