

JOHN PENDAL MONSTER

A.R.S.E

The acronym I use at the end of the show with is "A.R.S.E." – which stands for:

Active Consent

Raise

Self

Esteem

In other words, it's not enough to say "I consented to something so it was okay" – as it's possible to consent to things that are bad for you. You need to ask "is it consensual?" and also "does it raise your self esteem?"

If the answer to either of these questions is no, please remove yourself from the situation as safely as you can and seek help.

AUTISM

Autism is a lifelong disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. There are approximately 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK, who all have difficulties with communication and social interaction.

Autism is a spectrum condition. This means autistic people have varying and complex needs, from 24-hour care to simply needing clearer communication and a little longer to do things at work and school. Although everyone is different, people on the autism spectrum may:

- Be under or oversensitive to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours, which can make everyday life extremely difficult
- be unable to or find it harder to speak, need longer to process information or find it hard to hold conversations
- experience intense anxiety around unexpected change and in social situations
- become so overwhelmed that they experience debilitating physical and emotional 'meltdowns' or 'shutdowns'.

Without the right support or understanding, autistic people can miss out on an education, struggle to find work and become extremely isolated.

I took several online tests to see if I was on the autistic spectrum, including:

www.aspietests.org/ and www.autismag.org/autism-test-online/

If you are autistic you are not alone and there are many organisations that can help you. The National Autistic Society has an online directory of services at www.autism.org.uk/directory.aspx

COUNSELLING

Throughout the show I mention a relationship counsellor who has helped my partner and me over the last few years. We found her via an organisation called Pink Therapy:

Shame is something we're all exposed to, but for people whose sexuality, gender or relationships are not mainstream then there is often an added layer to deal with.

Pink Therapy is a UK-wide organisation which helps people find therapists who won't judge someone for embracing their diversity and who understand some of the social and cultural pressures they may be under and they can provide some useful additional support when things might be tough or when it's hard to figure out one's situation. www.pinktherapy.com

More information about the show at

www.johnpendal.com/monster.html | Facebook @leathercomedy | Instagram @johnpendal.comic

FUNDAMENTALISM

From the age of 15 to 22 I became a fundamentalist, evangelical Christian. In 1999 I wrote an essay about my journey into and out of fundamentalism at www.iml2003.com/wr3.htm

'GAY CONVERSION' THERAPY

If you need support and would like to talk to someone here are a couple of organisations:

Switchboard LGBT+ provide an information, support and referral service for the LGBT+ communities and can be contacted online: www.switchboard.lgbt or by phone: **0300 330 0630** (10am – 10pm every day)

Samaritans are also available if you need someone to talk to. You can call them for free at any time on **116 123** or visit www.samaritans.org

If you've experienced someone trying to change your sexuality and would be interested in sharing your experiences as part of research backed by the Government Equalities Office please visit: www.coventry.ac.uk/conversion-therapy-study

GLUTEN FREE

I was diagnosed with coeliac disease at the age of 19, which means I can't eat gluten in wheat, rye, barley and a similar protein in oats (even oats marked "gluten free" make me ill). Symptoms vary from person to person, but they can include diarrhoea, constipation, vomiting, stomach cramps, mouth ulcers, fatigue and anaemia.

Coeliac UK, the national charity for people who need to live gluten free, has more information at www.coeliac.org.uk And if you think you might have coeliac disease, please take their online assessment to see if you should be tested www.isiticoeliacdisease.org.uk

GUILT AND SHAME

Brené Brown is a researcher into shame and vulnerability. I found it very useful watching two of her TED Talks ("The power of vulnerability" and "Listening to shame") and a Netflix special ("The Call to Courage"). She has also written many books about her research including best-seller "Daring Greatly". Her website is www.brenebrown.com/

INTERNATIONAL MR LEATHER

"International Mr Leather" is an annual contest in Chicago each May which began in 1979. I was the 25th winner in 2003, the only Briton who has ever won. The official website for the contest is at www.imrl.com

SEXUAL COMPATIBILITY

Dr Meg-John Barker says: "The important thing to say about sexual incompatibility is that it's the norm rather than the exception. We're sold the fairy tale that romantic partners will automatically be completely sexually compatible but very few actually are. The majority will have big differences in the kinds of thing that they're into sexually, and the amount of sex they want to have. Think of it like two overlapping circles: there may be some things in the overlap, but there'll probably be many more things in the separate parts of the circles. Differences in desires will most likely fluctuate over the course of the relationship as well. Many relationships become less sexual or non-sexual over time."

"The vital thing is that nobody should ever have sex they don't want to have because they feel like they should: if you do that you tend to end up wanting sex less, not more. You can read more about all the ways of addressing sexual incompatibility in the book 'Enjoy Sex: How, When, and IF You Want To' by Meg-John Barker and Justin Hancock, or on our website www.megjohnandjustin.com"

WEIGHTED BLANKETS

On the advice of my counsellor I bought a weighted blanket and I absolutely love it. I bought one from www.senso-rex.com (other manufacturers are available).

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