



LEARNER CASE STUDY



Learner: JW from the 21/22 Cohort

Programme: Achieve Lifeskills - a course designed to empower and support young people in everyday fundamentals for living life more independently. Learners work towards a Diploma in Independent Living Skills, an employability award as well as English and Maths Functional Skills.

Centre: New Meaning Warwickshire
(Stratford-upon-Avon)

Everyone can grow

Jay's parents noticed that he was struggling at school in the last few years of primary school and they tried hard to pursue an assessment. Their efforts continued through secondary, until eventually at the age of 14 he was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. Academically, apart from some extra time and being allowed to use a laptop during exams, there was little extra help for his GCSEs. Jay had 100% attendance at school and achieved a B for Maths, C for Art, D for English and C for Science.

Things started to slip after secondary school when Jay started college on a media course. He struggled with his relationships with other people on the course and his tutors found it challenging to maintain his attention. His attendance slipped and eventually Jay switched to a two year art course which resulted in him achieving a degree in art.

Once 19, the next stepping stone didn't seem so clear for Jay. He was no longer obliged to be in education but was struggling to identify where he wanted to go with his life. That was until Jay joined the New Meaning Warwickshire Achieve Life Skills programme in November 2021. Here Jay was encouraged to think about starting with a volunteer job with the hope it would lead into a more permanent job in the future as his confidence grew.

Well practised at talking with education settings, his parents shared as much information as they could, explaining that he was always very particular in his patterns and did not like changes. As with many people with Asperger's, he would stick to the same routine, food habits and very rarely would start a conversation, especially with people outside his household. At first Jay came to class in silence and would sit down on his chair waiting for us to tell him what to do.

Jay was the kind of student that has inspired New Meaning staff. His progress during this year, with the guidance, encouragement and reinforcement, showed us that a person can change little by little. It was around Christmas time when his tutor decided to have a one to one conversation with him about what he wanted to do in his life and how he wanted to be. The tutor asked him if he wanted to break his routines and whether he wanted to try to be different in the way he was around people. It was a pivotal moment. He began to open up and explained that he really wanted to feel more confident about being around people.

He wanted to be able to start conversations and to be able to maintain eye contact with other people. Many more little conversations like that took place after that day. He opened up about what was worrying him about these social situations and talking helped him to realise that those things were not that terrible. We were delighted to see that Jay started to say good morning when he arrived to the classroom everyday and made decisions about what to start doing, often an initial activity to start the day in a good mood, like watching videos of funny animals or colouring mandalas. This student was very passionate about animals and art so he did not find very difficult to choose what he wanted to do to start his day. We always encouraged to make his own decisions and to talk, which was not easy for him at the beginning, at all. Nonetheless, we always gave him the time to think about his response, calmly, without rush.

Jay started to show more confidence after three months of being with us when he got a presentation ready about animals, his chosen topic for his Speaking, Listening and Communication assessment. It was very refreshing to see his confidence blooming. He told us so many things about his favourite animals, things he loves about animals, animals some people hate and phobias to animals. His conversation flowed during his presentation, asked us questions related to his topic and answered questions spontaneously. It was awesome to see him talking and conversing that way.

Jay came every Tuesday with us to the supermarket to buy the ingredients for the meal he chose to cook that day. He always followed us quietly and let us do everything at the beginning but we decided he should start looking for the ingredients himself and do the check out part. With he ended up doing very well. But the biggest achievement was to ask the staff for three brownies for his peers. He bought three brownies for his peers. We congratulated him for a whole day for that. We told everyone, his parents and even the manager of the centre. What a day that was! We were so proud of him.

"I wasn't quite sure where to go to ask this, I've asked dad if he could help with this, i was thinking as a way to say thank you for everything you did this year and to show my appreciation for how much i enjoyed my time with you this year/ for you being the best teacher/ tutor I've ever had, i would like to make a painting for you, but I'm not fully sure what to do so was wondering what you would like/what are your interests/ likes that i could do, as well as your favourite colours, animal, pet etc"

"Yes I thought it was very sweet when he mentioned it and Josh is naturally very kind hearted and has best intentions at all times, he just needs to be given a chance in life and that has been our frustration as he just needs a leg up and seriously how you have helped him gain confidence over the past year has not gone unnoticed by any of us, just hope we can build on your good work. Please give us some ideas and it'll be good to see what he comes up with"



As a way to thank us all the work his tutor did with him, Jay decided to draw a picture for her.