My story

* Always felt different, an outsider, from another planet
* Hyperlexic (could read and write preschool)
* Seen as a swot, nerd, geek, teacher’s pet (ok, I was Head Girl)
* Struggled with sport, social activities, team activities at school
* Had passions that I loved to research (biology, chemistry, spies and detectives, animals)
* Accused of being clever but having no common sense
* Sensory issues around sounds and smells, lights and textures
* Not good at reading people’s intentions, but get overwhelmed by their feelings
* Great with systems, not too good with managing people
* Seemingly successful at work but suffered extreme ‘burnout’
* Prefer clothes to be comfortable, cotton and tag-free
* Masked from an early age to fit in and people please
* Accused of being too blunt or outspoken
* Didn’t understand gossip or bitchiness where I had to read between the lines
* Often preferred male company
* Spent a lot of time trying to conform to norms, learn how to act, studying body language, eye contact, smiling, expected forms of greeting in different social situations
* Masked at work but did not understand the politics that were going on
* Struggled to identify and express my own emotions (alexithymia)
* Suffered with anxiety and depression at various times during life
* Recognized traits in myself but felt ‘imposter syndrome’
* Read, digested, self-identified then sought diagnosis
* Assimilation period for me and my family
* Grief at the lost years
* Celebration of my differences and being kinder to myself