Why I think I am on the autistic spectrum:

* I have recently read several books on autism, including one specifically about women and completed a course on autism that is accredited by the OU.
* I have always felt different, felt like an outsider.
* I do not have many real friends. I have acquaintances and people who stay friends with me because they get a better deal out of the equation.
* I am happy being by myself or with my partner.
* I am isolated and spend most of the day by myself.
* When there is a new subject that I enjoy I read everything I can, intensely for days, weeks or months.
* I am an habitual student. I have a BA (hons.) an MA in Education Management, and an HND in art. I have just done an MA in Creative Writing. I am also a reiki master. I have intense interests.
* I suffer from sensory overload – bright lights, noises, bustle. I have very sensitive hearing and can hear things that most people do not. I am also sensitive to clothes, labels, textures.
* I have been way too trusting with people in the past and as a result have been sexually and emotionally abused.
* I struggle with emotions, experiencing either ‘meltdown’ or ‘shutdown’.
* I find social situations stressful and exhausting and do not enjoy them.
* In the past I have used cannabis and alcohol as coping mechanisms.
* I have GI issues and eating issues. I have a restricted diet and will often eat the same thing every day.
* I am a perfectionist and immensely self-critical.
* I have Ehlers Danlos and POTS. ‘Reports suggest comorbidity between autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and the connective tissue disorder, Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS)’ Casanova et al, 2018).
* I have anxiety issues and sometimes depression because I feel like an alien on the wrong planet.
* I am pedantic, particularly with grammar. My instinct is to point out to people if they give erroneous information.
* As a woman I have been adept at maintaining a façade. I used to work, as a teacher and then Principal teacher and depute head. However, I retired in 2010 on grounds of ill health. Although I was super-efficient with systems and full of ideas, dealing with staff was not easy for me. I had a serious burn-out.
* Both of my daughters have EDS and POTS. They both have anxiety and OCD and are also seeking a diagnosis of autism.

**Why do I want a diagnosis?**

1. I feel that a diagnosis would help me to make sense of my past choices and experiences and make allowances for my needs.
2. My anxiety and depression have become worse over the years, along with my isolation and struggles with social interaction. Reading about autism I have had many lightbulb moments.
3. I would like to find coping strategies and support groups.
4. Both EDS and ASD are genetic and if my children are on the spectrum a diagnosis for me might help them.