

# MELANIE WOOD

There has always been this nagging knowing that I was different from everyone around me. For many years I never knew why. It was not until I read a blog post about Syd Barrett, one of the founders of Pink Floyd, and the theory that he was on the autism spectrum, that I began to wonder if I was also. Much that was being described about him sounded strangely familiar.

After spending several months researching Asperger's syndrome, I decided to have an assessment done. It confirmed my suspicions. At the age of 45 I was diagnosed with level 1 autism spectrum disorder.



I first picked up a pencil to draw at the age of four. When I was in kindergarten, my teacher told my parents that I was the only one in class that drew on the paper from edge-to-edge. It just makes sense. When you look at the world around you, things are not just in the middle of blank space. They fill everything within sight and that's how I drew.

My hyperfocus as a child was horses, so I drew them incessantly for years. In third grade, one of my classmates brought in a drawing of a horse that her mother had made. It was so life-like that I was inspired to learn realism. Due to my natural propensity for wanting to learn on my own, I practiced drawing and studied other artist's works until that desire began to take shape.

In my early 30s, I switched from equine subjects to human, still practicing, still studying. Now, in my late 40s, I am still practicing and studying, trying to hone my skills into something that satisfies me.