

## Q & A

1 Watch the first section of the video (to 0.29). What five things do you find out about Joshua?



2 Now watch the rest of the video. Note down the 5 main questions that Joshua asks his mum.

3 Watch again.

- What do you think each question Joshua asks might tell you about his life?
- What do Sarah's answers tell you about the relationship between her and Joshua?

4 **AVOIDING REPETITION:** We often miss out words or phrases if the meaning is clear (ellipsis). Look at the following extract. What words are 'missing' that could be in the brackets [ ] ?

J: Have you ever lied to me?

S: I probably have [ ], but I try not to lie to you even though sometimes the questions you ask me make me uncomfortable.

**In fact, Sarah often includes words or phrases where others might miss them out. People with Asperger's can have difficulties in inferring meaning, and this may be a strategy she has developed. Look at these examples and bracket [ ] any words or phrases Sarah uses which could be omitted without changing the meaning.**

1 J: On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you think your life would be different without animals?

S: I think it would be about an 8 without animals because they add so much pleasure to life.

2 J: Have you ever lied to me?

S: I probably have, but I try not to lie to you even though sometimes the questions you ask me make me uncomfortable.

3 J: I think it feels like everyone seems to like Amy more. Like, it seems like she's, like, the perfect little angel.

S: Well, I can understand why you think that people like Amy more....

**5 READING** Read the following short text about Asperger's. Which features of the syndrome does Joshua appear to have?



Children with Asperger's syndrome are just as intelligent as other kids but they can have problems communicating with others, and with social skills. Although they understand what people are saying perfectly well, they often only understand the literal meaning of what is said. This means they may not 'get' jokes, or understand non-verbal communication.

It may be hard for them to understand if someone is just teasing them in a friendly way, or being unkind. They can also be very blunt, not realising that while what they are saying may be true, it may not be polite or tactful. Because of these communication difficulties, they can have problems making friends, though as friends they tend to be very loyal.

They often have particular interests, such as dinosaurs, collections, space etc. Most kids are interested in these things, but a child with Asperger's is REALLY interested, and may find it hard to understand that other people aren't as interested as they are. Kids with Asperger's like things to happen the same way all the time, so they may get upset or even angry and aggressive if things change too much. They are often targeted by bullies because it's easier to upset them.

- Why do you think children who are different can have 'a tough time socially'?
- Sarah says 'The people who take the time to get to know you, love you.' How can schools help children to understand and get to know each other better?

**6 SPEAKING** Imagine you were going to interview a parent (or other close family member or friend) for Storycorps. What questions would you like to ask? Write at least 5.

- Can you guess at any of the answers to your questions? How would you or your partner answer these questions?
- If you're a parent, what have you learnt from your child?
- If you're not a parent, what do you think your parents have learnt from having you?



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## Key and Transcript

1

Joshua is in the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade (12-13years old)  
 He's an honors student (doing very well academically)  
 He is having a tough time socially (having some problems with his social life)  
 He has Asperger's Syndrome, which affects ability to socialise.  
 He is obsessed with animals.

2

On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you think your life would be different without animals?  
 Have you ever felt like life is hopeless?  
 Do you have any mortal enemies?  
 Have you ever lied to me?  
 Have you ever felt like you couldn't cope with having a child?

3 This is obviously subjective, but here are some suggested answers:

On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you think your life would be different without animals?  
*Joshua is obsessed with animals, so obviously wants to talk about them.*  
 Have you ever felt like life is hopeless?  
*He's having a tough time socially and may be a bit depressed. That's clearly how his mum interprets the question.*  
 Do you have any mortal enemies?  
*Mortal enemies are enemies who want to kill you (or you want to kill them). Probably he is thinking about someone at school who has been bullying him.*  
 Have you ever lied to me?  
*He needs to know he can trust his mum. Also, people with Asperger's tend to be very truthful and find it hard to distinguish when others are lying or telling the truth.*  
 Have you ever felt like you couldn't cope with having a child?  
*This is a typically blunt question (people with Aspergers are often very blunt). He is clearly feeling insecure.*  
  
*His mother's answers are both honest and very loving.*

4

J: Have you ever lied to me?  
 S: I probably have [ *lied to you* ], but I try not to lie to you even though sometimes the questions you ask me make me uncomfortable.

1 J: On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you think your life would be different without animals?  
 S: I think [it would be] about an 8 [without animals] because they add so much pleasure to life.

2 J: Have you ever lied to me?  
 S: I probably have, but I try not to [lie to you] even though sometimes the questions you ask me make me uncomfortable.

3 J: I think it feels like everyone seems to like Amy more. Like, it seems like she's, like, the perfect little angel.  
 S: Well, I can understand why you think that [people like Amy more....]

5

Just as intelligent as other kids (or more)  
 Problems communicating and with social skills  
 Being blunt  
 Particular interests (animals)  
 Targeted by bullies

J: On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you think your life would be different without animals?

S: I think it would be about an 8 without animals because they add so much pleasure to life.

J: How else do you think your life would be different without them?

S: Well I could do without things like cockroaches and snakes.

J: Well I'm okay with snakes as long as they're not venomous and can constrict you or anything.

S: Yeah, I'm not a big snake person.

J: But the cockroach is just the insect we love to hate.

S: Yeah. It really is.

J: Have you ever felt like life is hopeless?

S: When I was a teenager I was very depressed and I think that can be quite common in teenagers who think a lot. And that are perceptive.

J: Am I like that?

S: You're very much like that?

J: Do you have any mortal enemies?

S: I would say my worst enemy is sometimes myself. But I don't think I have any mortal enemies.

J: You don't have like a (inaudible)

S: No, I don't. But I'm sure when I was probably in middle school there were people there that made me feel the way you feel about him. But to be honest I don't really remember that.

J: Have you ever lied to me?

S: I probably have, but I try not to lie to you even if sometimes the questions you ask me make me uncomfortable.

J: Like when we go on our walks? And some of the questions I might ask?

S: Yeah. But you know what? I feel it's really special that you and I can have those kind of talks, even if I feel my self blushing a little bit.

J: Have you ever felt like you couldn't cope with having a child?

S: (Laughs) I remember when you were a baby you had really bad colic and you used to just cry and cry—

J: What's colic?

S: It's like when you get this stomachache and all you can do is scream for hours and hours—

J: Even louder than Amy does?

S: You were pretty loud, but Amy's was more high pitched.

J: I think it feels like everyone seems, like, to like Amy more. Like, it seems like she's, like, the perfect little angel.

S: Well, I can understand why you think that people like Amy more, and I'm not saying it's because of your Aspergers Syndrome , but being friendly comes easily to Amy, whereas I think for you it's probably more difficult. But the people who take the time to get to know you love you so much.

J: Like Ben or Eric or Carlos?

S: Yeah...

J: It's like I, like I have better quality friends but less quantity?

S: I wouldn't judge the quality, but I think really the quantity of friends isn't what matters, it's the quality of friends.

J: Like Amy, like two years ago, like, it seemed like, first it was like Amy loved Claudia then she hated Claudia, she loved Claudia then she hated Claudia.

S: Yeah. . . You know what, part of that's a girl thing, honey. The important thing for you is that you have a few very good friends, and really that's what you need in life

J: Did I turn out to be the son you wanted when I was born? Like, did I meet your expectations, and. . .?

S: You've exceeded my expectations, sweetie. Because, you know, sure, you have these fantasies of, you know, what your child's gonna be like, but you have, you have made me grow so much as a parent because you think--

J: Well I was the one who made you a parent.

S: You were the one who made me a parent. That's a good point. But, but also because you think differently from, you know, what they tell you in the parenting books.

J: Yeah

S: I really had to learn to think out of the box with you. And it's made me much more creative as a parent and as a person, and I'll always thank you for that.

J: And that helped when Amy was born?

S: And that helped when Amy was born, but you are just so incredibly special to me, and I'm so lucky to have you as my son

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