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**Website:**

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Sensory • ODD • IED/'Rage'

**Publishing:**

*Nix Your Tics! Eliminate Unwanted Tic Symptoms:  
A How-To Guide for Young People*

## Disinhibited Thoughts #2

One of the “reasons for my rage” when first learning to deal with my TS was what I call the “why me” phenomenon. What had I done to deserve these problems? I felt that I was a good person, dammit, but every time I tried to show it, I seemed to screw up. If I didn't have Tourette's, I told myself, I would have so much more, and getting it would be so much easier. Girls would like me, I would be cool, I wouldn't fight so much with my family. For awhile I lived with a fellow who seemed to be the spitting image of me, except WITHOUT the TS. HE had a girlfriend, HE had a great life. That he seemed to take these things for granted only infuriated me further – he didn't even seem to know how lucky he was! Normalcy is wasted on the normal, I concluded, and stewed.

As I learned to like myself and accept my TS as part of me, I also began to learn that I could have all of the things that I wanted regardless of my disorder. I learned that while people will inevitably see and react to the TS, I have the power to control their perceptions of it, and me. Until now I had thought that I had resolved all of my “why me” issues, and was busy patting myself on my back for my accomplishment. Until now.

When my present girlfriend and I got together, I was shocked to find those old feelings of resentment welling within me again. It had never occurred to me before now that I could harbour any resentment towards one of “my own” – aren't we supposed to be in this together, both in partnership and in neurobiology?? I guess I wasn't as far down the path to enlightenment as I had so foolishly assumed....

She was identified with TS early in life, relative to myself. She had enormously supportive and proactive parents (her mother is currently the President of the TSFC). I found that my anger was not at HER, but at what she represented to me: the things I felt I should have had. Relatively speaking, she grew up in lots of good times, feeling that she was understood, loved and accepted. That foundation enabled her to date with ease, and helped her to develop into a warm, trusting, individual. Compared to her, I am a hardened, bitter soul with road to travel.

What eventually became clear to me though is that I was setting myself up. I had assumed that she had all of my good qualities, PLUS these extra things, thus putting her higher than me. I used to do this sort of thing all the time with people at school – rather than comparing myself to the whole person, matching us each quality by quality, I would ONLY compare myself on qualities that I hated about myself. I would also ONLY pick people who were the very best examples of that quality to compare myself to. For example, if I was crummy at sports (and I was!), I would pick the school's biggest jock to hold myself up against. And I would be so busy kicking myself for not being the amazing athlete he was I would not notice the things I was better at than him like drumming.

Once I realized that I was doing this again, I began to see that through my background, I have developed valuable skills and qualities that she does not have just as she has developed qualities that I lack. It helped me for the first time to really recognize that some of the tough stuff I went through I should really value, because it made me the successful person that I am now. In being forced into autonomy, in needing to rely on myself to learn about my disorder, and how to effectively deal with it, and through other challenges I have grown strong, smart, and deeply motivated. I owe her a great debt of gratitude for this.

It was a lesson in treasuring one's experiences, good and bad. They all help you to learn and grow. She is not better than I am, and I am not better than she is. Whether one, both, or neither partners in a relationship has TS, each brings to the relationship different and equally valuable gifts, borne of their upbringing. Over time she will help me to trust again, and to dismantle my walls. I will help her to recognize, face and deal with her disorder more. Together we will grow, and we will both be stronger for ALL of our experiences together.

Until next time, my friends!

Duncan

February 1999