



We've featured individuals in a wide variety of professions. Please tell us a little about your career.

I'm a radio personality doing a show on integrated health—both medical and alternative. We look at both sides with medical and the more natural alternatives—like diet—presenting both sides. Right now we're on the web, on Internet Radio, which reaches all over the world and we get e-mails from all over, too.

I do a monthly show with Dr. Evan Trost on TS. Evan supplies the medical point of view and I'm the counterpoint. It's my goal to bring a support system for parents—and everyone—who wants to learn about TS. We have live call-ins and people can also type questions and they pop up on the air immediately. Our shows are recorded and archived, so if you miss one you can go back and listen to it. It's going to be a good place for people to call in and swap stories.

I've also written *Triumph Over ADD, ADHD and Tourette Syndrome* and *Triumph Over Cancer, A Natural Approach*. I used to publish a magazine called *Concierge Magazine*. It was put in hotel rooms and told people where to eat and shop and what to see. I loved it. I got to eat everywhere. But then I got cancer—that was seven years ago—and I changed my diet completely. A really healthy diet got me out of that business. For a while I was a vegan and now I've come full circle to a more balanced diet and a more balanced lifestyle. My TS was a severe case, but since the change in my diet it is so much less.

The impact of TS varies from person to person. How have you been affected?

The negative impact was that it held me back for many years. It wasn't until I was 30 that I even admitted that I had TS. It was obvious the whole time before that—I twitch and I barked like a dog too. People would ask about it and I wouldn't tell them that I had TS. I had uncontrolled blinking and I just let them think I wore contacts. I was ashamed and so I let them believe anything they wanted to believe.

The good part was that it made me a happy, popular girl at school. I made people laugh and that got me through. I became a comedienne. And when people got to know me, they got past the symptoms.

When and how were you diagnosed? And how have you treated your symptoms?

I was diagnosed at age ten. My family doctor knew what it was and put me on Haldol. I took three pills and then threw the rest of them away. I was tripping—like a zombie—for three days. My mother never made me take any medication after that.

What about your family? They knew you had TS and yet you wouldn't acknowledge it. What did they do?

I wouldn't let them talk about it. My mother tried to be supportive and positive. She really was incredibly supportive—telling me that anything I want to do I can do. She gave me things to read about TS, but I wouldn't. My conversations about TS would take only seconds. It was very painful for her. I didn't want her help and wouldn't let her help. I was embarrassed and ashamed.

What about school?

I had a terrible time in school trying to suppress my symptoms. All my attention was devoted to it. I was always talking to myself, watching to see when I could let loose, when it would be OK to let go.

Even in college, I continued to deny that I had Tourette Syndrome. I remember barking in the library and a woman came up to me and said, "I know what you have, it's Tourette Syndrome." I told her "no" and walked away. I was in total denial.

You're certainly not in denial anymore. When did you change?

I had a boyfriend when I was 30—a wonderful man. He sat me down and made me talk about it. He held my hand and told me he knew something was wrong and it was time we talked about it. It was wonderful. I cried and talked for two hours and he still accepted me. It was like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders. After

that, everything opened up. I went from there to talking about TS to the Rotary Club, to women's groups, everywhere. I can't wait to talk about it.

I still jerk and sometimes I wish I had a whiplash collar, but I'm not ashamed of it. And I realized that I really was intelligent and creative and that there really isn't a thing I can't do. I didn't believe I was intelligent when I was in denial.

Stress has a big impact on people with TS. What do you do to help alleviate stress?

Absolutely. I do many things. I'm conscious about not getting into stress, not allowing myself to get into stressful situations. I'm conscious about what stresses me. I can also recognize when I'm getting into a twitchy mode. I do a great deal of deep breathing. I blow it (the stress) out and let it go. I do that so much throughout the day. I also work out. I rollerblade or hike. Being active relieves stress.

I'm also very conscious of what I eat. I have food allergies. I've been tested and there are certain things that make me go crazy—like dairy, wheat and caffeine. I also avoid artificial sweeteners and MSG. I don't go near those things. They are the worst. I haven't had a soda in seven years. I have to avoid anything that revs me up. The severity of my symptoms just goes out of control.

What else impacts your symptoms?

The chemicals in household cleaners—my husband went out and bought a crappy pine scented cleaner for the toilet. I just recognized it as that "out house" smell and I had out-of-control ticcing and twitching. The smell of it triggered my symptoms. So do different perfumes and the smell of magic markers. And, then there's the fast motion of a ceiling fan if I'm not wearing a baseball cap to cover the movement.

Sounds like a trigger for OCD?

Oh yes—and consciousness lets you have more control of it. My office has to be so

continued on page 6



FAMILY PORTRAIT—AGI LIDLE

neat. Around it can be messy, but my workspace has to be neat. I can't deal with too much stimulus. Becoming conscious, recognizing it and talking your way through it works, and the older I get the better I recognize what's going on and use mind control. The magic marker smell, the stimulus, florescent lights—these are all things that parents need to think about for their kids.

I also have my own theory on cursing. It's a frustration thing. I don't do it out loud, but I do it under my breath. Some pretty wild things come out. For me it's like a verbal manifestation of the out-of-control anger and frustration. Because you know bad words, because it's so annoying and because

you want to control it so bad, out it comes. It's less and less, but even last night I was twitching away, going crazy with computer stuff. It's a frustration thing.

Some of the presentations of TS in the media are more realistic and more positive than others. What do you think of the role of the media in increasing awareness?

TV and movies are ridiculous. A few things in documentaries and on talk shows have been terrific, but there's not much here in Arizona. That's why I'm getting out there.

Do you have any advice for kids with TS and their parents?

It's essential for parents to boost the confi-

dence level of the child. Let children know that they are smart and just because they have TS they should not feel ashamed. Love them, hug them and tell them it's OK.

Of course it's also the parent's responsibility to think about chemical toxins in the house and look at the caffeine in the child's diet. Try eliminating soda and energy drinks. Try it as an experiment. It might not work, but it's worth trying.

I think children should practice telling other kids what they have, so they won't feel inferior explaining it. It's really important for kids to start becoming conscious. They can start becoming aware and taking control, learning to control their symptoms by being conscious.

Any last words?

It's about living in your purpose. I really like how my life has come full circle from denying TS at a young age to being interviewed by the TSA newsletter and getting ready to be a speaker at the next conference. My goal is to become the twitching talk show host on TV. I laugh about it. You have to laugh.

CAVALCADE OF COMICS

In October 2004, TSA friends Rebecca and Don Perlin of Jacksonville, Florida coordinated the second annual Cavalcade of Comics Auction for TSA. The event raised more than \$10,000. Don was joined by other famous comic book and cartoon artists and characters who signed autographs, drew sketches and discussed their work.