Interview with Rudy Simone, author of 22 Things a Woman Must Know: If She Loves a Man with Asperger’s Syndrome

Rudy Simone is the author of 22 Things a Woman Must Know: If She Loves a Man with Asperger’s Syndrome, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Rudy Simone is a writer and Asperger’s Syndrome educator who lives in Western New York.

How did you first become involved in your work with Asperger’s Syndrome?
I was in a relationship with a man who was displaying some pretty hard to figure out behaviors and while I have plenty of those behaviors myself it’s much easier to see the quirks and anomalies in others. A family member mentioned that he thought my boyfriend had a mild autism which led me to do some research and the first things I discovered were books by Maxine Aston, Sarah Hendrickx and Barbara Jacobs as well as several websites on Aspergers. Every single thing they said just fit my man and my relationship to a ‘t’. I then started on a journey of discovery about Aspergers and I slowly came to be aware that I was on the spectrum myself and I’ve since had that confirmed. It became a round-the-clock obsession with me and I started a website called help4aspergers.com as a resource for people on the spectrum and their loved ones. I solicited interviews with people through that website and through my Youtube videos and in other ways and I just started asking them about their relationships. I talked to men with AS and I got their opinions on different aspects of relationships. While I was doing that I found out about the unemployment issue—the rate is thought to be as high as 85% for those with ASDs so I started on my 2nd book “Working with Aspergers: an essential guide” and now I’m already on to a third. In true Aspergian fashion I have become very focused and driven and I really want to be a force for change in the world of Autism spectrum disorders. I now give lectures and train staff at autism centers.

Your new book is called 22 Things a Woman Must Know If She Loves a Man with Asperger’s Syndrome. Is there anything a man with Asperger’s Syndrome should know if he loves a neurotypical woman?
Well yes there’s lots he should know! I’m not neurotypical but I am a woman and I would say that many AS women will still have certain romantic expectations. Possibly a lot of that is social conditioning; many of us possess a very
 naïve Jane Austen/Walt Disney approach to love. Much of what he would want to know about dating any woman would be found in my book 22 Things. There are things that she’s going to want from him and he’s not going to know what they are or why they are necessary so he needs to do his research. It’s like if you’re going to another country-- you want to do a little investigation before you go, so that you know what the customs, rituals and expectations are. There are differences between men and women to begin with, but I also firmly believe that people with ASDs are a subculture. The more I get involved in this world the more I realize that. If we’re going to co-mingle, cohabitate and coexist, we really have to engage in an ongoing cultural exchange of ideas and traits and be very open-minded and willing to listen to one another and to try participating in the other sides’ cultural activities and norms.

If you could only give one piece of advice to women in a relationship with a man with Asperger syndrome what would it be?
I would say ‘love yourself as much as you love him’. He’s going to have so many wonderful qualities (because people with Aspergers do!) that you will fall in love with. He will also seem vulnerable in many ways and because women are caretakers you’re going to have this tendency to be motherly and to sometimes ignore your own needs--this applies to AS women as well because we tend to do the same stuff. Love yourself as much as you love him --that’s the advice my own man gave me.

Who or what most inspires you?
I am inspired by the people that I talk to all the time that have ASDs. They inspire me when they’re down because I want to help them and I can’t rest until I’ve made some kind of difference in the world. They inspire me when they’re thriving and successful; that gives me hope, because I too still struggle daily with trying to get along in this world. So we’re all in this together, pulling each other up. There’s a wonderful burgeoning sense of community in the world of ASDs which is amazing because of the isolation inherent in autism.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?
I work about 12-14 hours a day writing, marketing, planning lectures, updating my website, so I don’t have much of it. I watch films. Like a lot of people with autism spectrum disorders I’m not terribly good around others for long periods of time so I tend to need to unwind and just zone out with a film. But I love getting physical exercise so I tend to do a little roller blading with my dogs. That’s about it; I’m a pretty simple person. I’d like to say that I was a mountain climber or something but I’m not really all that adventurous. Before I knew I had AS, I did travel the world in search of belonging, but that was pretty overwhelming as you can imagine due to sensory and social issues. Now I tend to just hang out on my deck in nature and remember all the beautiful places I’ve been – including England and Wales where I lived for many years.

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22 Things a Woman Must Know: If She Loves a Man with Asperger’s Syndrome was released May of 2009 and is available for purchase.

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