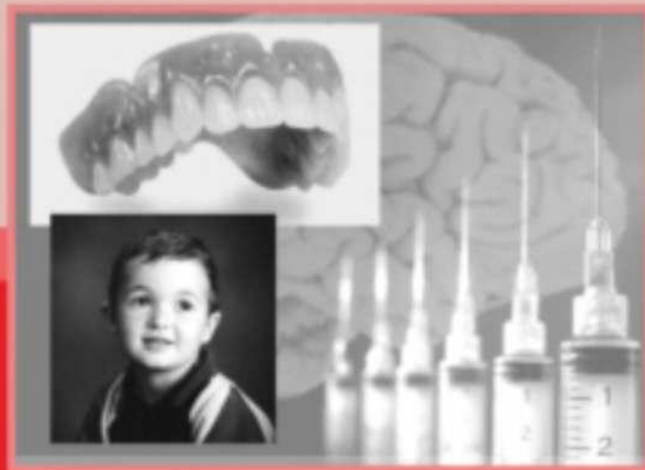


**AUTISM,  
AMALGAM  
AND ME**  
Jodi's Journey  
Continues



Jean Shaw

**(Sample chapters)**

# **Autism, Amalgam and Me**

## **Jodi's Journey Continues**

**(the link between autism and  
mercury)**

**By**

**Jean Shaw**

## Foreword

Firstly let me make something absolutely clear. I am not a scientist, have no medical training and did not study for any degrees. The knowledge I am about to impart comes from the School of Life – my life!

It has been gained through necessity rather than desire, and the information in this book is for educational purposes only.

It is neither meant to diagnose, treat or cure any known illness and if you have any specific health concerns you must ALWAYS consult your health practitioner.

That said I hope this book will save you hours of research and point you in the direction of help should you need it.

There is a lot of information and misinformation out there.

PLEASE check things out for yourself and make your own mind up.

## Introduction

If you haven't read my first book called, I'm Not Naughty – I'm Autistic – Jodi's Journey, I'd better introduce myself.

I am Jodi's mum and this book, unlike the original, has been written as though narrated by both Jodi and myself.

My son Jodi has autism and does not use language. He uses odd words, which is not quite the same thing, but manages to convey a great deal of information nevertheless.

This book deals with two different subjects; why I think Jodi is autistic and mercury toxicity caused by dental amalgam.

It continues from where the last story ended, and has been written partly because of genuine interest in Jodi, but mostly because of an amazing sequence of events, which have proved incredibly beneficial to our lives.

We will share them with you so you can see how the two topics are connected.

If you're interested, read on ...

## Jodi - 1

Well, here I am – back by popular demand. That’s probably putting it a bit strong but several people have been genuinely interested in me and have asked my secretary, (good old mum), when the next book is coming out.

Anyway, the fact you're reading this most likely means you want to know how I’m getting on now I’m a fully fledged teenager. Well, at the ripe old age of fourteen years I'm much different from when I was a mere child of twelve.

My voice has broken for a start and when it first started to change my mum kept asking if I had a sore throat. Of course, I didn’t answer her so she kept putting her hand on my head to see if I had a temperature and checking in my mouth for signs of a white tongue or red tonsils.

It’s a major problem when mum suspects I’m ill because I can’t tell her how I feel or what hurts. She just goes through the motions of checking for any visible signs of illness or pain, and if I’m off my food and drink, have a change of temperament, or sleep more than usual, she takes me to the doctor for an expert opinion.

With the voice episode though it was just the sounds coming from my mouth which regularly changed tone and sounded really strange, and bearing in mind my brother, who is only twenty one months older than me, had relatively recently been through the voice breaking stage, it was a bit surprising my Mum was so slow in picking up the signs.

However, it’s not that surprising because many people wrongly assume a person with a disability won’t develop as quickly as so called “normal” people do, whereas many actually develop earlier. Also along those lines it’s amazing how many people talk down to disabled people – well, me anyway, as if I'm a baby.

I appreciate language is important and has to be clear and concise but sometimes it gets ridiculous. My grandmother is the worst, but to be fair I don’t see her very often as she lives miles away and only occasionally comes to stay for a holiday.

If I get a bit noisy she asks if I’ll “go down for an hour” as if I'm a baby needing a sleep. I don’t think she realises I'm fourteen and have never gone “down for an hour” even when I was a baby.

Actually, that’s not strictly true.

When I was a baby, pre MMR, I slept normally. It's only since I haven't appeared to need much. Apparently when we flew back to UK from Brunei back in 1990, my mum was a bit concerned about me being awake on the long flight.

We were spending a few hours shopping in Singapore before catching the connecting flight to UK so the journey was extensive. Mum expressed her concerns to the sympathetic doctor in Brunei, and he gave her some medicine for me to take on the 'plane, which he assured her would knock an adult out within half an hour.

Thirty-six hours later, when we eventually arrived at Heathrow, it worked!

Until I was eight years old I didn't allow my mum to get much sleep either because I would be in her bed. Oh she tried to get me to stay in my own bed and would sit for hours with me holding my hand, waiting until I fell asleep, or she'd get in bed with me and gradually extricate herself from the bed in tiny movements over a long period of time.

It must have been really frustrating for her to go from lying comfortably next to me in the bed, to sliding over to the edge, slipping one leg on to the floor, then another, to kneeling down with her head still on the pillow and then, when she was sure I was sound asleep to very carefully get up and creep silently and stealthily out of the room, only to find that as soon as she got within two yards of the bedroom door, I would wake up.

She gave up in the end and I just slept in her bed.

She found this a bit confusing though because I didn't want to cuddle her at all, I just needed to know she was there.

I would throw out my arm or leg and provided I felt another human being I would sleep. Cuddly teddies and toys were no substitute and the only thing I would take to bed was a video box.

When my dad was home we used to play musical beds. Sometimes he would sleep with me in my parents' bed and mum would be in mine; and others, I would sleep with mum, and dad would be in my bed. This probably partly explains why I have no younger brothers or sisters.

However, it was my older brother who solved the problem. At the wise old age of ten, he suggested I was probably lonely and thought it would be a good idea if I slept in his room.

At that time both Daryl and I had double beds and he thought I might just feel a bit lost and cold in mine.

Now Daryl has a big room but it was not large enough for two double beds so initially I slept with him in his bed. This was fine and I would lay quite a distance from him but close enough to check with my arm or leg that he was there.

Mum and dad were pleased because it finally meant they could have their own bed to themselves but were concerned I shouldn't get too used to sleeping with Daryl, as they knew as he got older, he wouldn't appreciate my presence.

They weren't sure how I'd react to being kicked out again though so they bought me a single bed and put that up alongside Daryl's double one. With a bit of maneuvering of furniture it fitted in well, and I stayed in his room for a while.

However, although I stayed in my bed, I didn't sleep all night long and when I was awake I chatted – a lot.

Needless to say this didn't go down too well with Daryl because my chattering wasn't something he could join in with.

It wasn't as though we indulged in brotherly conversations. I just used to burble away for hours and Daryl would stick his head under the covers and try to sleep. I'm surprised he didn't suffocate as he was under there a long time.

One weekend when I went for respite care, my parents decorated my room in my favourite colour blue, and moved my bed back in.

They reasoned if I was able to sleep in a single bed on my own when I was at respite, there should be no problem with me doing the same at home.

They were right, and I've remained in my own bed, in my own room ever since, much to everyone's relief... especially Daryl's.

For Christmas last year, my parents bought me a new bed. It's a three quarter size one and they had it made three inches longer than normal because I've grown considerably in recent months. I'm taller than my mum now and almost as big as my brother.

I think my mum gets a bit embarrassed sometimes when we're out because if we're walking by a road she makes sure she's really close to me so I won't jump out in front of the traffic, and I often put my arm around her or hold her hand. I've heard her say people must think I'm her "toy boy".

She should be so lucky!

Now, I'm sure you've all heard about the strange rituals for which people with autism are renowned, but I don't actually have many now. However, I do have a sort of routine when I go to bed.

I usually go to bed sometime between nine and ten o'clock because even on weekends and school holidays I still get up early. There's no such thing as a lie-in at our house, except for my brother of course who's at the age where he could sleep all day.

My mum watched a programme on television once about teenagers. It said during puberty and adolescence there was a tremendous increase in brain activity so about eleven hours sleep was needed each night.

Unfortunately though, it's also the time when most teenagers want to stay up late, which explains why they're usually so grumpy and unsociable— not enough sleep.

A lot of parents seem to remark at a certain age they put their friendly young offspring to bed only to find when they get up the next morning they've turned into a different species who can't string sentences together and continually raise their eyes to the sky when asked to do something.

They also seem to become very clumsy, which is because their limbs grow so fast and that upsets their sense of balance.

I'm changing a bit I suppose because my sense of balance isn't what it used to be and I'm not quite so active these days. I'm not grumpy though, but then I've never really needed much sleep.

Ideally I like everyone else to go to bed when I do because of the noise factor but I'm not too bad now at letting people stay up if they have to.

In the past when we've had guests and it's been time for me to go to bed I've been known to give them their coats and open the front door.

Talk about a subtle hint!

Anyway, when it's bedtime I get a cup of water, go upstairs, turn the duvet on mum's bed back, put her television and bedside light on, go to the toilet, wash my hands, clean my teeth and put toothpaste on mum's toothbrush (I can't have her kissing me goodnight if her breath isn't fresh can I?)

I then rush into my room; half close the door and get in to bed pulling the covers up to my chin.

When my mum comes into the room, (breath smelling nice), I indicate I want her to pull the covers down at the foot of the bed.

Now I've told you my bed is three inches longer than normal so this used to be a problem, because although I had a double size duvet, if I pulled it up to my chin, it didn't overhang the bottom of the bed, and if I was satisfied with the bedding at the top, I was unhappy with the gap at the bottom.



The problem was resolved by getting me a king size duvet which now overhangs the sides and the bottom of my three quarter bed, which makes it lovely and cosy. Great!

When I'm happily tucked up in bed, my mum leans over me, gives me a kiss and says "Good night, sweet dreams, see you in the morning", which I repeat. If she forgets, I remind her by saying it first.

She then switches off the light and asks me if I want her to close the door. I always say, "Open", so she turns to leave and before she's walked halfway along the landing to the stairs, (a total distance of five of her steps), I've slammed the door.

I used to have to get out of my old bed to do it but with this new one ,which is slightly wider, I've discovered if I leave the door half open when I get into bed, all I have to do is sit up, reach out and give it a hard push.

Why do I do it? You tell me. Perhaps it's about having control.

Anyway, the door remains shut and I remain awake until everyone in the house is in bed and fast asleep.

Now if you didn't read my last book called, I'm not Naughty – I'm Autistic – Jodi's Journey – why not?

No it's all right, it's just when I finished the book I was hormonal and about to go into hospital to have a tooth out which was surplus to requirements. If you have a copy of my first book and look on the front cover you can actually see it at the top left of my mouth.

My brother hates that photograph of me. He says it doesn't look natural and of course it isn't. How many people do you know who just stand still against a wall and smile?

The one of mum on the back cover isn't any better even though she's not smiling, but in her defence she wasn't feeling very well at the time.

Anyway, mum was planning my tooth removal with military precision. She rang up the hospital and arranged with them that the day before my operation we should go in to look at the ward and have an explanation as to what would be happening.

At the same time the doctors were supposed to give me some cream so mum could put it on my hand at home the following morning, before I left for the hospital.

This would have allowed sufficient time to numb the area, as by the time I'd been documented, weighed, and had my blood pressure taken, I could be given the required anaesthetic and drift off to sleep.

The plan was good - it just didn't work.

You see the day before my operation was my birthday – thirteenth actually, and as there was no school, mum decided to take my brother and me ten pin bowling. The rink is in Ely, about five miles from where we live and in the same city as the hospital.

That sounds very grand doesn't it - city? Actually in terms of other cities in this country it's very small with the minimum amount of shops, etc. but does have a nice river and an absolutely wonderful, very famous cathedral, so warrants the title.

I love going in there – the echoes are amazing and if you stamp your feet on the marble floors the sound carries really well. I'm not so sure the other visitors to this marvelous building, which is well over a thousand years old, appreciate my sound effects though.

The last time I was in there was in January and in order to distract me from shouting my mum got my brother and I to follow the maze on the floor just inside the entrance to the cathedral.

If you follow it all the way round it's the equivalent of walking all the way up to the top of the tower and far less exhausting.

But now back to the bowling and mum booked a lane for 11 o'clock and we played for an hour. I did extremely well getting two strikes despite my rather unorthodox way of bowling.

I walk up to the line, hold the ball in both hands, and with legs astride, I bend my knees and roll it down the lane, usually very slowly.

However, I am quite accurate and although sometimes it seems the ball will never get there, I do usually get some good scores.

I remember once though being taken to a tenpin bowling alley at an American airbase with a group of people from a local church group.

Two of the members were volunteers in the Son-rise programme, which my mum was running for me at the time and so everyone was aware of my problem.

They knew my bowling wouldn't necessarily be like theirs but I think even they were surprised when my ball went so slowly it actually stopped.

I just walked up the lane, retrieved it and took another go. Many bowlers panicked because apparently it was dangerous. I didn't know that though as I have very little sense of danger, although it seems to be getting better.

Apparently, I might have been transported down the lane and scored a strike myself, but somehow I don't think I would have come back along the conveyor belt thing that returns the balls, do you?

After that, whenever it was my go, mum hovered about two feet behind me, arms at the ready, just in case!

Sorry, got a bit side-tracked there so back to my thirteenth birthday and my bowling treat. My brother won which really pleased him because he understands the concept of competition and when you do a sport or play a game the idea really is to win.

I couldn't care less as long as I enjoy myself. I'm not a bit competitive and am still coming to terms with the fact in tests the idea is to do as well as you can and thus impress people.

It's quite nice to hear "well done" and "good boy" though.

We rounded off the bowling session with a drink and some nice curly chips for lunch, and then headed off to the hospital.

It was closed. Well that's not strictly true. The hospital was open, but the ward we needed to visit and from where I was to obtain my cream was closed. It seems they'd got through that day's operations early and so had all left half an hour before we got there.

Mum hadn't actually arranged a time to call in at the ward and no one had thought to tell her it wouldn't be open all day.

Yet another example of how important clear communication is.

We hung around for a while deciding what to do and explained the situation to the nice receptionist and a passing doctor asked if he could help.

I bet he wished he hadn't because it took a lot longer than he'd anticipated and I expect he kept his surgery waiting.

However, he kindly took us up to the ward and let us peer through the window of the locked door so we would know where to go the following morning.

He said that if he could find the key and obtain permission from the dental staff at Cambridge he'd get us some of the cream we needed, as it wasn't dangerous and easy to use.

He even gave mum verbal instructions and a demonstration of how she should apply it, but it was all in vain.

He couldn't find the key, so he didn't get the cream, and we left empty handed with mum wondering how things would work out now her plans had been scuppered.

I should explain at this point that the Princess of Wales hospital is only used for day care and minor surgery now, although at one point it was a big RAF hospital.

Most of it has sadly now turned into a housing estate. Addenbrooke's which is the main hospital for the region is based in Cambridge, a very famous university city about twenty miles from where we live.

In order to make it easier for the patients from this area, teams of doctors, dentists and nurses travel to what's left of the hospital in Ely once or twice a week to perform minor surgery.

It makes life much simpler especially for those people for whom transport is an issue, and also, you don't have to pay to park at the hospital in Ely, which is a good thing. It's bad enough having to go for an operation or a hospital visit anyway without having to pay to park as well.

Still, there was no need to panic because prior to this hospital trip mum had been working on a strategy, which involved explanation and visual clues as to what would happen when I had my tooth out.

I had a video about a crocodile called Albert who had toothache and the fears he had about having his tooth removed. It ends when a kind dentist, removes the source of his pain from Albert's mouth, with the words "It's out Albert".

The crocodile hadn't felt a thing. It's a bit of a childish video I suppose, not at all age appropriate, but I was encouraged to watch it regularly prior to my hospital visit.

I was also encouraged to look at the calendar and see that on 3rd April 2002, I was going to the hospital to have my tooth taken out by the dentist there.

The next part of mum's strategy was to do a bit of role-play. She mimed rubbing cream on my hand, giving me an injection, falling asleep, having my tooth pulled out, and then smiling.

This routine was accompanied with the words "Cream – injection – sleep – It's out Jodi". Then she added, "Okay?" for luck.

We went through this ritual often so when we turned up at the hospital I knew exactly what to expect. I soon held my hand out ready for the cream and was no trouble at all getting undressed or having my blood pressure taken.

The machine was really neat as I could see the numbers flash up before me, and it made a noise when it acquired the two figures required to confirm that my blood pressure was normal.

Mum discussed things with the dentist and anaesthetists and it was agreed I could be first on the operation list, so about an hour and a half after I first arrived at the hospital, I walked, suitably attired, into the operation room.

Mum came too with her hat, gown and plastic shoe covers on.

Once inside I was allowed to check out all the machines and look out of the window. They invited me to “hop onto the bed”, (which is a bad expression to use on autists who do tend to take things literally).

Fortunately, I knew what was expected of me though and so obliged by climbing up onto the bed.

I did make the mistake of trying to put my head on the pillow the wrong way though. Instead of lying on my back and resting the back of my head against it, I stuck my bum up in the air and put my forehead on it.

Hospital gowns are open at the back so I don't expect it was a pretty sight for the theatre nurse. Well, the instructions weren't very clear. I was just told to put my head on the pillow.

No one told me which bit.

Anyway, they sorted me out and then I spotted the mask type machine, which I'd used on a previous occasion. Once before I'd had some baby teeth out and been given gas to send me to sleep.

I decided I must need it this time as well, so although the gas wasn't turned on, I took the mask, held it against my mouth and whilst I was attempting to breathe in the non-existent gas, the anaesthetist stuck the needle in my hand and that was it.

I went to sleep, snoring rhythmically.

My mum left the room and an hour later I was sitting up back in the ward complete with excess tooth in a little fairy envelope.

Actually it's well over an inch long and looks like a fang – not at all the type of thing you would put under the pillow for the fairies to collect. Mum has it in her jewellery box instead.

Apparently my grandmother had a similar high tooth removed from her mouth when she was a child, so I guess this genetic thing everyone talks about must account for something.

She didn't have any anaesthetic at all though – brave thing.

I was wheeled back to the ward on my bed as I certainly couldn't walk back from the theatre and the sides were put up making it look as though I was in a cot.

It was a precautionary measure to make sure I didn't fall out as when I initially came round I was a bit disorientated. I knew I wanted to go home though and soon attempted to search for my clothes.

I had a drink of water and declared, "It's out" a few times, got dressed and wobbled about as I tried to make a quick exit.

However, there was no escape until I'd convinced everyone I wasn't going to be sick. Once I'd satisfied everyone on that score, mum was given instructions how to keep an eye on me for the next twenty-four hours and told to give me regular painkillers.

She was asked what we had in the medicine cupboard at home and what I would take, as they wanted to give me some straight away.

Mum had good old Calpol but they recommended something stronger now I was a teenager, so I ambled over to the medicine cabinet and decided which painkiller I'd take.

I chose a nice orange flavoured one with a proper medicine spoon as opposed to those little plastic measuring cups you often get these days.

I make it sound as though it was self-service which of course it wasn't. The nurse showed us the options and having tasted the Nurofen for children, the choice was easy.

I licked my lips with my tongue, told her it was "delicious" and then I was allowed home. The hospital rang up that afternoon and the following day just to check on me and said I had been "brilliant".

Mum had worried needlessly but is still adamant that preparation is vital. I think she's been watching too many DIY and gardening programmes personally, but have to admit that because of our little routine, I did know what to expect.

No truthfully, the more an autistic is prepared for a situation the better. Some people make the mistake of thinking if a person doesn't speak, he or she has nothing to say, or worse, that they won't be able to understand things.

I don't say a lot although my vocabulary is increasing. I have a badge on my school bag, which says, "I'm more intelligent than people think" and I'm sure you'll find that's the case for most people with autism.

For instance when my mum decided I'd accumulated far too many videos in my room, she put some up into the attic. When she did so, she wisely showed and told me what she'd done so I wouldn't think they'd been sold or given away and want to replace them.

That used to get pretty expensive when I was younger and I know my mum still bears the mental scars of many horrible shopping excursions involving videos I didn't really need.

Now, though, whenever I decide I need to watch some of the videos in the attic, I type or write the titles out on a piece of paper and put "ladder" by the side of each.

Mum then gets the ladder out from the garage, (although I've been known to get it myself when she's been a bit slow on the uptake). I go up into the attic, retrieve the required videos and mum assists me down as I balance them all on one hand. She says I would make an excellent waiter.

If you read my first book, you may recall my mum was a bit concerned about how she'd be able to explain to me about not examining or fiddling with my private "bits" in public.

It's easy to explain to 'normal' kids. A family friend found her son looking at his penis in their lounge one day and demanded to know what he was doing. He was embarrassed, but replied as quick as a flash that he was "checking for lumps".

His mum told him to check for testicular cancer somewhere else, preferably in his bedroom or the bathroom, but my mum wasn't sure those instructions would work for me so she had to find another way.

My "play" room has a two way mirror in the door so mum is always able to see what I'm up to and she'd noticed me with my hands down my trousers, playing with myself, or studying my manhood as I watched a video.

She was a bit worried I might do a similar thing when I was out, or when there were other people around, so she sought the advice of my social worker who'd experienced this sort of thing before. Sheila came up with the idea of using picture cards – a method which had been tried and tested and had been quite successful in a number of cases.

The idea was there would be a sequence of pictures covering masturbation, showing where it is acceptable to do it and how.

You see not all people with special needs understand just what to do to achieve some sort of relief from the unusual sensations they're experiencing, and it's not the kind of thing you usually get someone to demonstrate to you personally either.

My brother is usually pretty good when mum says, "Just show Jodi how to ....." but somehow I don't think either of them wanted to try this one. We took Sheila's advice and had some pictures photocopied.

The first picture showed someone going into a bedroom. The next one was the person shutting the door, followed by him taking down his pants and trousers. He then sat on the bed and started to rub his erect penis.

The next picture was of him ejaculating, followed by a picture of him clearing up the mess with a tissue. He then got dressed, washed his hands and left the bedroom.

It's all clever stuff really and so sensible.

Obviously it can be used in all sorts of different situations and scenarios, and will change for boys and girls depending on the need for the pictures. Apparently the system is useful for girls when they start their periods.

Anyway, mum decided it might be a good idea to transpose my head onto the boys body in the photographs so I would realise it was supposed to be me.

She planned also to take a photograph of my bedroom so that I would know where to go if I felt the urge to play with my “willy” as she put it.

Sheila also visited my respite care home to discuss having photographs taken of all the bedrooms there as well. This was because whenever I go to respite I sleep in different rooms, so if I got the urge to fiddle whilst I was over there I might get a bit confused as to where to go.

To date we've never used the photographs but it's a good idea don't you think?

At school we're also dealing with the subject in our “Boys” group and have so far watched a video, which deals with privacy in relation to growing up, and discussed it. Well, the rest of the group did. I was there, just didn't contribute verbally.

Apparently there are various resources available to help reinforce the message about when and where it's appropriate to touch one's own body and remove clothing, etc.

My teacher is using words and symbols to reinforce this message, which apparently is so “important” and mum is getting involved too. I can't see what all the fuss is about personally, but then I don't get embarrassed, either for myself or other people.

Change of subject now.

A few weeks after my hospital date, I had another trip to the dentist. This time because of what my mum perceived to be toothache.

I'd been particularly noisy for some time especially at the dining table and more than intolerant towards my brother Daryl. I'd even hit him on a few occasions, which made him declare that he would “kill me”.

He didn't mean it of course, but was justifiably annoyed at regularly being whacked very hard for no particular reason.

He did go through a phase of winding me up though by touching my hair every time he went past me, and he also took some chunks out of my hair a couple of times when he decided to cut out a solitary grey hair I had.

Thank goodness he's not going to be a hairdresser when he leaves school as I ended up looking as though I had alopecia.



I'd also become more of an embarrassment to take out shopping, as I would suddenly scream at the top of my voice for seemingly no reason and without giving any warning.

Anyway, on the Saturday before Easter, mum and I went to Tesco's, which was an unusually silly move on her part.

Picture the scene. The bank holiday is looming and the shops are going to be closed for one whole day so everyone is panic buying.

Wives have dragged their husbands and children out and trolleys are laden with goodies. Anyone would think the country was about to experience a famine. It's crowded and noisy particularly for anyone with sound sensitivity.

I was dutifully pushing our trolley very slowly and carefully, although I do confess to speeding up when mum removed her hand, which was restraining me a bit.

This wasn't a pleasant experience. Usually my mum takes me shopping when there aren't many people around and it's generally not noisy or crowded. I can then scoot down the aisles with one or both feet on the trolley if I want to.

Anyway, I spotted a clearing by the fruit and vegetable stand, sped over to it and stood and screamed out once at the top of my voice. This resulted in everyone jumping and a few people held their hands against the top of their chests.

I can never understand why people do that. It won't stop them having a heart attack.

Hushed silence followed and everyone turned to look in my direction, except of course for the woman who was retrieving her tomatoes from the floor where she'd dropped them and the couple who were apologising for bashing their trolley into the man in front.

It didn't bother me of course. I just looked across at my mum and said in a normal voice, "No shouting" as though she'd done it.

She looked me straight in the eye from where she was standing and replied in a kind but firm voice, "That's right Jodi – no shouting".

It's very important to make eye contact with people with autism but I think mum found it preferable on that occasion to look at me rather than at anyone else.

We just then carried on as if nothing had happened, but I did notice that we didn't buy any more shopping and she removed her hand from the trolley as we headed directly and speedily to the checkout.

My mum didn't really know what was wrong with me and put it down to hormones but then I kept saying things like "Ouch", "tooth", "hurt", "it's out" which were pretty good indicators that just maybe I had some dental problems.

Also, I was sleeping during the day, which was unheard of, so she rang my dentist to see if he could possibly examine me.

Unfortunately, my dentist was on holiday so Margaret, his receptionist, tried to book me into the dental unit at the hospital in Ely but they didn't have a clinic until the following week. She made several telephone calls and was finally able to get me an appointment with the community dentist in Cambridge.

I was told to turn up the next day as close to 10 o'clock as possible and they would fit me in. Margaret stayed late in the office arranging all this which mum said was service over and above the call of duty, so she bought her some flowers as a thank you.

Anyway, the next morning, my grandad drove mum, my brother and me to Cambridge for the simple reason mum was worried if I had any treatment I might need some comfort on the way home. She was concerned about being in the front seat driving whilst I was distracting her from the back of the car.

We arrived five minutes early and I was seen more or less straight away. The dentist and nurse were lovely as they had lots of experience of autism and for them I even lay down properly on the reclining seat so my teeth could be examined.

My regular dentist had never managed to get me to do that although he is really kind and gentle, so mum was pretty shocked.

The dentist told me I had beautiful teeth and none of them looked bad. She suggested I have an X-Ray and asked my mum whether I would oblige. As she's not really a mind reader, mum replied I might do if she demonstrated what was expected of me first, so that's exactly what happened.

Whilst mum put on the heavy safety apron, gripped the handrail and positioned herself so the machine could circle her head and take a photo, I stood with the dentist behind the screen watching. She explained to me what was happening and then told me it was my turn.

Suitably gowned, I stood still long enough to have a very clear X-ray taken whilst mum, also suitably gowned, stood by my side with her hand on my back, making encouraging remarks and telling me what a good boy I was.

The photo clearly revealed I was teething and was obviously in a lot of discomfort. The dentist said my second tooth was ready to burst through but my baby tooth was hanging on and there was very little room. She explained to my mum it was a bit like a baby teething only much worse.

She said the baby tooth would fall out eventually, but I'd previously been in a situation where two didn't and eventually I had to have them removed under anesthetic, hence my knowledge of the gas mask when I went into hospital.

The dentist said I had two choices. Either I could just leave it and let nature take its course in which case I should apply very strong teething gel to my gum and take some painkillers, or, she would take it out for me then and there.

As soon as I heard her mention “out” I went through the “cream-injection-sleep-it’s out” routine so mum thought I might as well have it done, but then she was informed the dentist could only use local anaesthetic.

This would have meant sticking needles in either side of the tooth to be removed in order to numb the area, but I’d be conscious of the whole operation.

Mum decided the risks just weren’t worth it. For the first time in my life I’d actually laid on a dental chair and had my teeth examined properly so she didn’t want to do anything to frighten me, cause me pain and put me off visiting the dentist in the future.

The dentist also explained if mum did decide for the latter and I struggled, she would discontinue the process, so I might have gone through a bad experience for nothing.

Mum decided to let nature take its course and a week later my tooth was out and my temperament improved.

Mum felt able to take me shopping again.

Daryl, my brother, went through a phase where he kept getting headaches and said his eyes kept going funny. My mum picked up on this because she noticed he had some work in his schoolbook, which wasn’t in his handwriting.

When she questioned him about it, he said someone else had written it for him because he (Daryl) couldn’t see the board.

Mum booked an appointment at the opticians for the following Saturday morning and he presented himself for his examination at the required time.

Mum signed the form for him, as he was still a minor and decided it might be wiser to take me shopping rather than sit and wait in a room full of expensive spectacles and frames, although I did quite enjoy looking at myself in all the mirrors they had in the room.

She arranged to meet him back at the opticians in twenty minutes, and we went next door to Woolworths.

Yes, I know in my first book, after a particularly bad experience in the shop with me, mum declared she’d buy a long blonde wig and never set foot inside the door again, but time is a great healer. Besides she was losing her memory.

More on that later though.

Daryl actually works there at weekends now so I guess his bad memories about the store have also healed.

True to form I headed for the video section and managed to find another title to add to my collection. Mum had no objection to me having it and we went up to the counter with the empty box so that I could get the actual video and pay.

Whilst we were waiting I said "Fun Time Favourites". Mum asked me to repeat it, so I obliged.

She looked and couldn't see anything so she asked the shop assistant whether they had a video called "Fun Time Favourites" and explained that it was a Thomas the Tank Engine one.

An autistic friend of mine had borrowed it from the library once when I had been to visit him and although it contained episodes that I already had on my vast collection of other Thomas videos, I wanted it.

The assistant said she didn't think they had it and had never heard of it so I elaborated a bit and said, "I want Fun Time Favourites, please".

This time my mum followed my gaze to the bottom shelf behind the counter where there were lots of black videotapes standing on their ends. They all looked identical except for the labels that you had to tilt your head at an angle of ninety degrees to read.

Sure enough, there on the bottom shelf partly hidden by a cardboard box was the video I'd been searching for at every car boot sale for weeks. Mum was so astounded she bought me that one too and I happily returned to the opticians to find Daryl waiting patiently for us.

His eyes had changed a bit but not sufficiently for him to need glasses.

When mum recounted the Woolworths video story to her friend Jane, who happens to be the mother of the autistic boy I've just mentioned, she remarked that I was "incredible".

Jane says I'm like one of those half men, half machine, people you see in movies with their X-ray vision. I do seem to be able to tune into some things much faster than everyone else but then maybe they just don't like Thomas the Tank Engine as much as I still do.

Mum read an article once about why autistic children seem to like Thomas and his friends so much, and apparently it's because the faces of the engines, etc., are so big and expressive.

Also, in the stories it's only the big main characters that move whilst the background remains still so it's less confusing for us.

When my first book was published there was quite a lot of local interest and things changed yet again for me when my photo appeared on the front of our local paper.

That evening my mum was sitting quietly in the kitchen having a well-deserved cup of tea when she received a telephone call from a strange lady.

Actually she's not at all strange but mum had never met or even heard of her before and her first question after the initial introduction of, "Hello, I've been following your story on the radio and in the newspapers" was, had mum had ever considered I might not be autistic?

That was a weird question considering the reason why the photo was in the paper in the first place was because my book had just been published clearly entitled, "I'm not Naughty – I'm Autistic – Jodi's Journey", and my mum, my brother, and I were posing beautifully to promote it.

That would hardly suggest anyone thought me anything other than autistic.

My mum is very polite though and talks to anyone – even in waiting rooms at the doctor and dental surgeries.

She always tries to see the best in people.

My dad and brother are always asking how she knows the person she has just spent the last few minutes chatting to, or greeted in the street.

Invariably she doesn't know them at all and dad often tells her off for speaking to strangers especially if they are men, but she says it costs nothing to be nice to people.

She says also that she remembers vividly all the times she felt so alone and desperate for conversation when I was the toddler from hell.

No one ever came to visit us when I was little except social workers and my grand parents. Mum spent most of her life talking to the walls so I suppose that memory helps.

Unsurprisingly therefore, she asked the obvious question "Why?" and thus began the conversation that changed her life and mine.

Pam, the lady on the 'phone, suggested I could be mercury poisoned. Actually, the correct term is "mercury toxic" as it seems the powers that be don't like the word "poison" very much.

Wonder why? It seemed it had something to do with teeth, not mine but my mums.

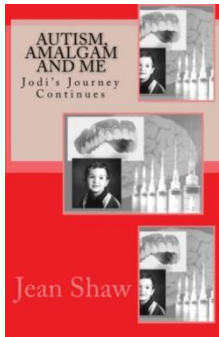
Anyway, mum chatted for a while and arranged to visit this lady and her husband at their home to find out more. What she was to discover was very interesting and

because the sharing of knowledge makes you immortal, I'm going to let her pass it on to you.

Right, are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll hand you over to my mum and I'll be back later.

I hope you've enjoyed this brief excerpt.

You can read the rest of **Autism Amalgam and Me - Jodi's Journey Continues** in either the paperback or the Kindle version at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



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