

OUR AMAZING MINDS

Celebrating Differences and Sharing the Adventure of Autism

WRITTEN BY JEFFERY AND LAURA MAY

ILLUSTRATED BY ANASTASIYA HALIONKA



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Published by Our Amazing Minds Publishing
Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

ISBN 979-8-9988211-1-0 (hardcover)
ISBN 979-8-9988211-8-9 (paperback)

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WRITTEN BY JEFFERY AND LAURA MAY

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Hi, there!
My name is Jackson, and I'm so happy to meet you!
Let me tell you a little about myself.
I absolutely LOVE sports—soccer is my favorite!



I'm always running around and having fun with my amazing friends.
Today, we are going on a field trip to the children's museum!



My friends and I are Autistic,
which means we have something called Autism Spectrum Disorder.
This makes our brains work in special ways!
Sometimes, it can be amazing,
but other times it can be tricky.
It impacts how we think, learn, and see the world.

But guess what?
Everyone is different in their own way,
and autism is just one of the many ways people can be different!
Are you ready to meet my friends? Let's go!



Sometimes, loud noises bother her, but she has headphones that help her feel calm and comfy. Oh, and guess what? Lily LOVES pizza—she eats it every day! Every. Single. Day.

Lily creates beautiful pictures with her favorite color—PINK! She loves feeling squishy paint on her fingers, so most of the time she paints with her hands.



The tablet has symbols and pictures that he uses to tell everyone how he's feeling or what he needs. Martin loves it when I tell him funny jokes. How do I know? His laugh! It's the BEST!

Martin is an awesome dancer!
If there's music playing,
you can bet he's grooving to it!
Martin doesn't use words to talk,
but he has a cool tablet
that helps him communicate.

Sofia is a science whiz! She loves doing science experiments, but don't interrupt her or she might get a little frustrated.



Oh, and she can name every species of shark from memory!
There's one thing she DOES NOT like...
the smell of crayons. EWWW!

The bus is here! This is my first time going to a children's museum, and I'm feeling really nervous. I'm not sure what kind of things we'll see or how loud it will be or if it will smell weird... These are all things I think about anytime I go to a new place— it makes my tummy feel all twisty. But I'm going to try to be brave and think about all the fun we're going to have. That will make me feel a little better. Okay, deep breath, let's go!

MUSEUM



Wow! Look at this place—it's HUGE!
There are so many fun things to explore and do!
Now that I'm here, it doesn't feel quite as scary anymore.
Actually, I'm starting to get excited!



Can you tell? I'm flapping my hands!
That's something I do when I'm really happy or excited.
It's called stimming. It helps me feel calm and more comfortable.
There are lots of different ways Autistic people can stim
and lots of reasons why, too!

When Lily gets excited,
she loves to hop in one spot
or spin in circles.




When Sofia is focused,
she taps her fingers.



Martin squeals with joy when he's happy;
but when he's mad, he makes a grunting sound.




Some people stim by fidgeting, rocking back and forth,
humming, laughing, and many other ways. Everyone is unique!
Oh, look! Let's go see what Lily is doing at the water table!



Wow, this water table is SO AWESOME!
There are funnels, pipes, and spinners everywhere!
Lily loves the way the water feels on her hands.

Can you hear her saying
“splash, splash” over and over? Some Autistic people repeat
words or phrases when they talk. There are so many ways
that Autistic people communicate!




Sometimes, I talk to myself.
Talking about what I see around me
helps me feel calm.




STOP

**TOO
LOUD**

Lily says short phrases,
like “too loud.”



Martin uses his tablet
to show what he needs, and
he even knows sign language!



Sofia feels nervous
around others,
so she likes to write
down what she’s thinking
or points to what she wants.
Autistic people have
many cool ways
to communicate!

It looks like it's time for lunch!
Uh oh, turkey sandwiches?! Grosssss!
I do not like the way turkey tastes! It's slimy and weird.
Lily's not going to be happy either...
this is NOT pizza. And Martin doesn't like
the way turkey smells. But look, Sofia loves her sandwich!



Autistic people can be very picky about food.
The way it looks, smells, feels or tastes
can be a big deal! We like to eat foods that feel safe
and make us happy. For me, I'm just going to eat my fruit.



It's time for the reptile show!
Martin got picked first to hold the boa constrictor,
and he's being so brave! Oh no!
Sofia is having a meltdown. It looks like she wants to go
to the science table and not come to the show.
When she sees something she loves,
that's the only thing she can think about.



Sometimes, Autistic people can face challenges
that others may not even notice.
Trying new things or changing what we do every day can be hard.
We might not like bright
lights, strong smells, loud noises, or the way things feel.



It can also be tricky to know if
someone else is happy, sad, or mad,
and how we should talk to them.
But we try to find ways to work through these things!



I like to take walks or breaks when I'm feeling nervous. Lily always has her headphones with her if noises get too loud.



Martin plays his favorite games on his tablet when he's overwhelmed. Sofia likes to spin her fidget toy when she's frustrated. Everyone has challenges. It's important to find the things that help you feel better!

Oh, look! Sofia finally decided she is ready to join us for the end of the reptile show. I'm so happy—I knew she'd love it!



But now it's time to get on the bus and head back to school. I'll be honest, it's been a fun day, but I'm really excited to have a normal day again tomorrow. I love my routine at school and the lunch my mom packs for me. No turkey sandwiches!



Even though we all had some hard things to work through today, we each have awesome strengths and special talents we bring to the world! Autistic people can have great memories, find cool patterns, and even see little details that others might miss. Because we see the world in our own way, we can come up with super creative ideas!

Thank you so much for joining me on our field trip today!
I had so much fun introducing you to my friends
and sharing more about autism.

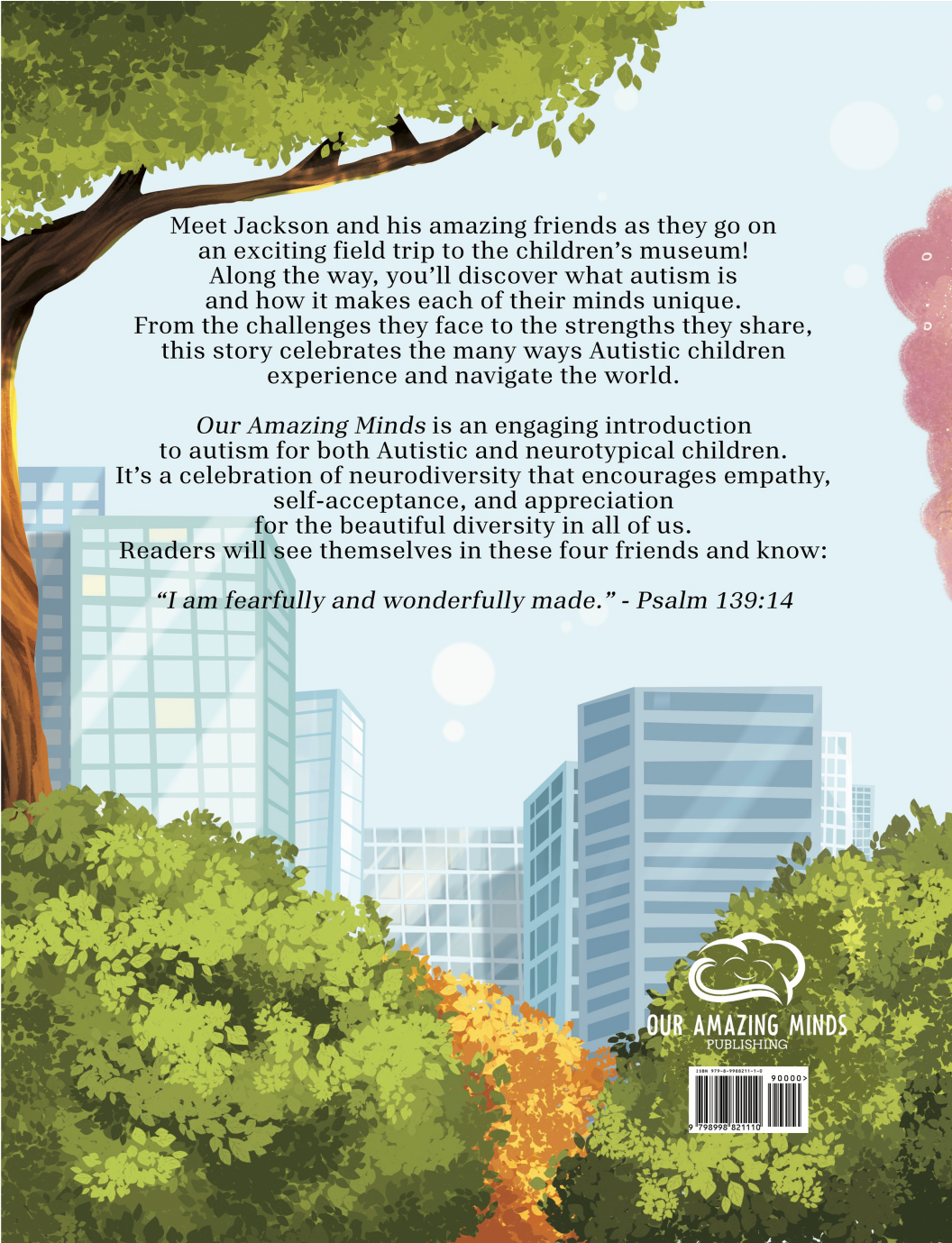
So, the next time you meet someone who's Autistic,
I hope you'll take the time to see what makes them really cool!
The world needs all kinds of people,
and we're really proud of our amazing minds!



DEAR reader,
Thank you for reading
my book And Learning
About Autism. Be kind
TO others, everyone
is smart, brave, and
you can do this! Thank
you for ALL the support!

- JACKSON





Meet Jackson and his amazing friends as they go on an exciting field trip to the children's museum! Along the way, you'll discover what autism is and how it makes each of their minds unique. From the challenges they face to the strengths they share, this story celebrates the many ways Autistic children experience and navigate the world.

Our Amazing Minds is an engaging introduction to autism for both Autistic and neurotypical children. It's a celebration of neurodiversity that encourages empathy, self-acceptance, and appreciation for the beautiful diversity in all of us. Readers will see themselves in these four friends and know:

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." - Psalm 139:14



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