

Gibberish Dictionary

Summary of Changes in hearing with Johansen IAS (Individualised Auditory Stimulation) Therapy recorded over a three-year period (from December 2011- September 2014)

Jennifer Tingle, case-study with Auditory Processing Disorder

2011

December 2011 – At a Christmas fair I heard some chunks of words in the Christmas songs. Previously (like every song I heard) most of Christmas songs had been vocal slush with the odd word which made sense. For example, “Feederwor” became “Feed the World”.

2012

January 26th – I heard every word in a song for the first time. This felt astonishing.

February 2nd – Music continued to become clearer, with songs which previously sounded like gibberish having words I could hear and understand. The instrumental background become less mushy and I heard separate instruments and melody lines more clearly.

Despite my amazing new understanding of music, everyday ambient sounds and speech were often still distorted and overwhelmingly loud, coming from the wrong directions. My hearing was particularly difficult at school and I was constantly annoyed by high-pitched squeaks made by TV and computer screens and other electronic equipment.

February 8th - I was thinking more often about how I heard sounds, part of what Camilla calls the “Demystification process”. I discovered that I have Synaesthesia*. Particularly connected to my sense of hearing. Questioning my hearing more often to work out what was “ordinary” I asked my mum if it’s normal that I heard shapes coming through the ceiling from people walking on the floor above my Spanish class today. Synaesthesia explained a lot about the way I interpret sound.

*Synaesthesia is defined as “a crossing of the senses”. Extra neuron connectors in the brain can cause people to taste colours, see sounds and hear shapes, among many possible combinations. Camilla has the theory that my synaesthesia (which is mainly connected to sound/my sense of hearing) exists due to my brain trying to compensate for the aural signals which it struggled to pick up and process. Synaesthesia may be an unexpected gift which came with my Auditory Processing issues. *

February 9th and 10th – I was still struggling to cope with sounds at school and tried wearing earplugs in class. Since I discovered I have synaesthesia, I was not as disturbed by sounds which flew towards me with physical forms I couldn't see with my eyes.

February 19th - Loud sounds were not as uncomfortable as before. I started turning music up a little, and could enjoy hearing more detail.

February 25th - Bad hearing day. I came home early from a shopping trip because of sensory overload. I had nearly walked out in front of two cars because I couldn't concentrate.

March 1st – Another visit to Camilla Leslie, my Johansen IAS therapist. After an Audiogram test (which involves a lot of listening and concentration) I was very tired. Results showed that my hearing was still oversensitive, particularly to low frequencies.

March 16th - Started listening to a new Johansen CD tailored for adapting the lower frequencies of my hearing to the optimum levels for hearing human speech.

March 23rd – Still struggling to hear what people say at school, and constantly tired.

April 19th – Studying at school felt easier and I remembered more. For the first time I felt like I could cope with the workload. Talking to people at school became a little easier. I understood more speech nuances and things like sarcasm and figures of speech.

I heard my voice more clearly and realised that I sometimes slurred my speech or stuttered—especially when I was tired. My mum said that I had always sounded like this. Previously I was listening more to how my voice sounded in my head than how it sounded to my ears.

April 22nd – Now I was hearing my speech more clearly, I started to work at making it sound clearer. Previously my voice sounded far too loud, so I had spoken very quietly. Ss and Ts were also exaggerated to my hearing, so I used to make them too quiet, or slur them so that the percussive sounds seemed less violent.

April 24th - I realised that I behave oddly when I'm feeling overwhelmed by sound. Now in noisy environments I could think clearly enough put my feelings into words, instead of just making a sound like a grunt or whine to show how I felt. When I felt sensory overload, I found it hard to think in words. At school I got around this by keeping quiet almost all the time.

It was becoming easier to hear words, process them and reply quickly. Less of a timelag between my ears, brain and mouth.

I noticed more social differences between myself and other kids at school. These included:

- Repeating myself because my memory of what I just said or heard was poor.

- Using phrases and syntax I've heard from other people, or on TV to "Copy and Paste" into conversations because I didn't know what to say. Apparently people on the autistic spectrum also do this.
- Forgetting what I was talking about in the middle of a sentence, because thinking of the words was difficult.

April 28th - Out with a friend I could pick up my own voice better despite some background noise. I was aware of how my speech still sounded unclear- a little like the voice of someone who is hard of hearing. My friend was used to my voice, but I wasn't! I felt embarrassed that I sounded so strange.

May 6th - I watched a film at the cinema without earplugs. The noise wasn't overwhelming like it used to be, and afterwards I didn't feel confused or drained. I picked up almost all the lines in the film, and was aware of the sentences which I missed words from, or which sounded unclear.

Words which sound similar were now easier to tell apart.

May 12th - I was listening to the radio a lot now. After music started to sound clearer I quickly lost interest in pop songs. Now I regularly tuned into Kerrang! Radio.

Since music with words became clearer and much easier to listen to and understand, my music library exploded with growth.

May 13th - I heard a song on the radio which was playing in a shop the previous week. As well as music I could remember sounds and words much better.

May 14th - Yesterday my dad told me a joke and I could remember it word for word.

May 16th - I had more energy than before. I decided to go swimming and was surprised to be able to hear clearly at the pool. The last time I went, the echoing pool room and water sounds made hearing speech very difficult.

May 17th - I started being able to reply to questions while hardly thinking about it. Today I heard what people said despite background noise, processed what they said, processed what I should say, and replied. Almost instantly. It felt natural and wasn't difficult. In fact, I didn't realise I'd done it until later that day.

May 18th - I was enjoying listening to music turned up loud. It wasn't scary and I enjoyed the multisensory detail and the extra dimensions which I now knew came from synaesthesia. Before I learned about synaesthesia I was a bit freaked out by the shapes, sudden movements and sensations of sound. I had started listening to electronic music, which "looks" very vivid.

May 30th - Sounds which seemed unbearably loud were now just very loud. Life felt easier, especially in noisy environments such as the city centre. I used to have my music turned down almost to the minimum level so that I could listen to it comfortably. Now I had to turn it up because I liked the clarity of a louder volume.

June 2nd - I had an exam today and felt like it went well. My two main exams taking place this week were French and Spanish. Both involved a lot of listening, and fast-processing of other languages. In both exams I got an A.

I listened to a new Johansen CD.

June 3rd – I sang Happy Birthday at a friend’s party. For the first time ever, I wasn’t really out of tune. I could pick my own voice out from the other people singing and make the pitches I wanted.

June 6th - I went to the shopping centre and it wasn’t a really stressful experience because of noise levels. I kind of enjoyed the trip and could understand most of what the shop assistant said at the till. My mum was with me to pick up what I missed, but I didn’t need her with me much.

June 7th - I was told to turn down music I was playing in my room.

June 12th – I went to my school’s sixth year prom dance. I was dreading it. I had often sat out at school discos and sometimes avoided them altogether. Very loud sound and lots of people in the same place had always been scary. I also dislike dressing up. At dances I couldn’t hear anything that anyone said to me. It seemed that there would be very little for me to enjoy.

I discovered that dances could be fun. The music was loud, but it felt exciting rather than painful and overwhelming. Synaesthesia was something I could enjoy. I could hear some of what people said to me while dancing. Now I could see why dances can be fun, even if the music is cheesy. I realised that I hadn’t missed much back when I couldn’t hear all the words to Cotton Eye Joe and the Macarena. But it was still wonderful to be able to hear them.

June 19th – A bad hearing day- but not as bad as I was used to. Probably because I was tired speech was difficult to understand, and I could hear that my own speech sounded a bit slurred. Trying to talk more clearly took a lot of effort.

June 24th – To me, my speech was sounding really bad and I was making a conscious effort to talk more clearly. My mum said that my speech was sounding much better than before. She said that my eyes and facial expression has changed a bit- like I’m more focused and less anxious.

June 30th- On holiday in Greece with my family I learned that the colours I associate with letters of the alphabet because of synaesthesia are connected to the way they sound. Greek letters had the same colours as English letters which resembled their shape. However, when I learned how those letters sounded, their colour changed to match English letters which were phonetically similar. Theta, (which looked like a Pale blue O), became Yellow like a T when I learned how it was pronounced. This supports Camilla’s theory that my synaesthesia compensates for my Auditory Processing Disorder.

July 29th – I went to a birthday day out and could completely keep up with the conversation despite being in a restaurant full of background noise. Since my hearing got clearer, I’ve been able to listen to and learn more about what girls my age chat about. Mostly music and TV shows. I could chat all about music when we went to a CD shop after. Despite only listening to music with

words for about a year, I had managed to cram in a lot! At the party I felt “normal”, which seemed weird at the time. I fitted in and was part of the conversation. And I had a really good time.

July 30th - I had developed a new social skill- deceit. Dishonesty still felt uncomfortable, but not as difficult as before. I was on a train and I heard the conductor ask if I was a child fare. I didn't need a repeat, I heard him first time round. My ability to reply almost instantly has also come on leaps and bounds. I said yes and saved about a pound.

Previously I was extremely literal- lying felt difficult or impossible and I had trouble understanding sarcasm and figures of speech.

Later that day a Border Collie puppy peed on my foot, which was probably karma.

August 2nd - Selective hearing was a new development. I was on a Ferry to the Isle of Lewis and I could understand everything the captain said through the speakers. In the past, loudspeaker systems sounded very unclear to me. Today I tuned it out not because it sounded like mush, but because I wasn't interested. I'd just learned deceit, and now this. I know these aren't my finest moments, but I was becoming a more complex and well-rounded human being.

August 10th – I had a walkaround of a big garden and was told facts about the plants and their long latin names. As a gardener-in-training I listened hard. I remembered a big chunk of it, even some of the new latin names, which were tricky. Learning information through listening is something fairly new and exciting.

August 11th – In general I have more energy than before.

August 12th – I have discovered Radio shows, something which before my hearing became clearer, I was uninterested in. Now I really enjoy them. Today I listened to Loz and Keith discuss the Top 10 Most Hideous Sea Creatures.

August 26th – There have been less issues with my hearing to record and write about recently.

September 8th - I was a speaker at the Movement and Learning Centre inaugural conference, talking about improvements in my hearing thanks to Johansen IAS therapy, and improvements to my balance, coordination, energy and emotional stability thanks to MLC Scotland. I had the confidence to talk in front of a group of people and speak clearly and not too quietly, my speech much improved. I answered questions at the end. I would never have been able to do this in the past, especially since I was on last after a day of listening to other speakers. Listening for just an hour used to make me feel exhausted.

September 15th – On my 18th birthday my family took me to a Chinese buffet restaurant. I could hear what they said in the noisy restaurant and chat to them just fine. A loud action film at the cinema afterwards didn't take much toll on my energy and clear thinking.

September 16th – I started listening to my final Johansen CD. From this point I gradually listened to the CD less, with more days between listening until I stopped. I thought that would be weird. Listening to my hearing CD was always the last thing I did before I went to sleep.

September 17th - I felt healthier in general. I was less prone to colds. Phone calls were easier and less stressful. Hearing clearly felt *weird*. It was wonderful and amazing, but also something I had to adapt and get used to. I had a lot of bad habits left from my past sixteen years of glitchy sound processing!

October 23rd – I had my first lip reading class at Deaf Connections. I thought that Lip Reading would help me if I have a bad hearing day. Despite being the only person in the class with no hearing loss, they all made me feel really welcome. If people with Auditory Processing Disorder aren't fully hearing, but are not at all deaf, what category would we fit in? Since APD is relatively unheard of, there is no category so far. I sometimes wished there was. Then APD would be much easier to explain to other people.

November 15th – Back at the annual Christmas fair I could hear every word in the Christmas songs playing through the speakers. Previously, hearing words in the songs had been magical. However, now that I could hear the songs clearly, I wasn't as impressed. I was still wowed by my amazing new hearing, but not as thrilled by cheesetastic Christmas classics. At home I was listening to everything from Adele to ZZ Top, and discovering what kind of music I like. I was pretty sure that Rock music was my favourite.

November 18th - I got my hair dyed bright red.

November 19th - I went to Jordan's Opticians where I found out that I had some visual processing difficulties.

November 22nd – I adopted and brought back a homeless hamster named Pumpkin. My parents had no prior knowledge of Pumpkin. She just appeared in a new cage in my room before they could do anything about it. I had told them that the box from Ebay containing the cage was Christmas presents, so they wouldn't look inside. I thought that they would be angry. Actually I think they were relieved that I proved I have the capacity to lie.

November 27th – I was starting to improve at lip reading, finding exercises at the class a little easier.

December 1st – I was listening to the last track of my Johansen CD before I started following a calendar with nights when I wouldn't listen to the CD. My final Johansen CD was called Waves 5. At the end of the CD there was the sound of waves underneath the music, but I had never associated the name with that sound before. Making connections like that was becoming more common for me recently. I could hear a word and suddenly realise why it had that name, instead

of having no association to go with it. For example: Baseball Shoes. I knew that my favourite shoes were technically Baseball Shoes, but the name had never made me associate them with Baseball until then. Words were becoming less like foreign language sounds learned by rote. I understood words much more and made connections way faster, which helped with learning and having conversations. Now that I heard more clearly, English, my first (and more or less only) language felt much more natural to hear and speak.

December 2nd – Wearing my new glasses from Jordan’s Opticians (Jordans Opticians were also speaking at the MLC Scotland conference in September) made everything easier to see. My family looked much better than I thought and I could see the whole of their faces with just one look. People were smaller, rooms were bigger, and lines seemed sharper and straighter. I have close to 20/20 vision, but my visual processing could be a bit wonky. Apparently it’s common for people with one specific learning difference to also have processing difficulties in other areas.

December 15th – At a college class I was talking to a middle-aged woman who had some learning differences, most likely Asberger’s Syndrome. She was a nice person but somehow didn’t quite fit in with most of the class. She needed extra help in class. As an adult, her differences were much more obvious than in someone my age (although until recently, perhaps those differences wouldn’t have been as noticeable to me). I realised that without Johansen and MLC therapies, that could easily have been my future.

December 19th – I was listening to my favourite songs and heard new instrumental parts and the words sounded even clearer. The way I heard music was still improving!

December 25th – I could hear almost everything at the table for Christmas Dinner and my family are a noisy bunch. There were lots of us and a lot of background noise, but I could follow conversations and join in.

December 31st – For New Year’s Eve we all went to a family friend’s house. All the parents chatted upstairs while us younger ones played Mario Kart downstairs. I have no aptitude for driving video games of any kind. I hadn’t been to a party in ages and didn’t realise how much my hearing and social skills had improved since then. Chatting felt easy and I didn’t have to look away from the screen to tell what my friends were saying. Still, I drove my virtual vehicle into ditches many times.

2013

January 6th – Recently I had been sleeping very well. After therapy from MLC Scotland, I stopped having terrifying nightmares where I died horribly. However, until recently I was still used to some very scary dreams at least a couple of times a week.

January 11th – Traffic sounds came from the right distance and direction. For the first time ever, I felt confident crossing the road.

January 15th – I did well at lip reading today and my teacher gave me the cherry on top of the cake we ate at tea break. I love my lip reading friends. They make me feel at home and have always accepted me.

February 2nd - After a busy day I went to the cinema with my parents to watch a film. It was really boring. Boring is a new thing for me. I used to feel too tired or swamped to get bored. Now when I'm stuck for two hours watching a deep-and-meaningful-but-nothing-happening-drama I know I could be having more fun somewhere else and want to do something to fix that.

February 13th – My last visit to see Camilla. My test results were hugely improved. My old results were very, very poor scores. This time I got some scores in the 98+ percentile! My worst area (listening to two words simultaneously) went from a percentile rank of 1- meaning that 99 out of 100 people would hear this better than me, to a 5! In fact, Camilla said that if it was still the old test, I would have got a 16! My mum was there too and she remembered sitting in during my first test with the very low scores. We were all grinning when we saw my new results. During the visit I didn't struggle to keep my attention focused on Camilla while she was speaking to me. I didn't need to rely on my mum to hear and remember most of what she said. Camilla said that out of her cases so far, I was the most complex, with a very challenging profile. Now, my Auditory Processing abilities were good enough to no longer be classed as a Disorder. I still had Difficulties in that area, and probably always will. But every person in the world has something that they find difficult. Thanks to Camilla and Johansen IAS therapy, I could reach much more of my potential and have a better quality of life.

I admitted that until this session, I often just pretended to hear what she said when I visited. "I know", she said with a smile.

February 18th – I no longer needed to listen to Johansen CDs.

February 23rd - My first hamster, Emily died yesterday. My synaesthesia was very vivid and overwhelming today. This made me think that there is a link between emotional state and the vividness of synaesthesia.

March 1st – I can't remember whose idea it was, but since we were all over 18, my group of friends decided that it was about time we went to a pub. It was really noisy inside. I could hear myself stutter nervously as I asked the bartender how to get a drink, feeling a little bit stupid.

Socially I was very different from before. In the noisy pub I heard almost everything my friends said and my reaction to what they said was real and spontaneous. Previously, when I heard what people said to me I would have to think through my options of how to react to find the right one. Now reacting felt easy and natural. Whether that reaction was laughing or groaning at a rubbish joke, I just seemed to know what to do without thinking about it.

March 2nd – After being diagnosed with serious Auditory Processing Disorder I was getting used to knowing about my hearing difficulty. I was Jenny with Auditory Processing Disorder, and I thought

of myself like that every time I misheard something. After Johansen therapy maybe I could just be Jenny. I was looking forward to finding out all I could be.

March 13th – I was still sleeping well and mostly having good dreams.

March 15th – I had more energy to care about my appearance. I went to the hairdressers and got a fringe.

April 21st – Text looked blacker with my Jordans Opticians glasses on. Less synaesthesia colour association with the letters. Synaesthesia is caused by extra neuron connections in the brain. Perhaps the glasses cause information to bypass these extra clumps of neurons, instead taking a more direct route. Less colours, but faster processing of information.

May 12th – While I was at home I talked almost constantly, as if I was eighteen going on three. It didn't matter how trivial something was, I just had to say it. Apparently it's normal for small children to do this when they learn to talk, and since I was a very quiet kid, (so quiet I got sent to Guidance twice for not talking enough!) I never really got round to it until this point. My parents were very patient during this period.

May 15th – My Jordans glasses really helped in my biology exam. It was a tricky paper and the long, wordy questions are difficult to misread. The first time I sat Higher Biology I got No Award (less than 30%). This time I got an A.

May 23rd – Talking to other girls was getting easier. Girls have more complicated social skills than boys, and bullying at school has made me wary of making friends with girls my own age. I didn't hear a lot of what they liked to talk about at school and I wasn't sure what to say. Still, it's not as hard to talk to new people anymore. Tonight I was at an indoor rock climbing group. The inside of the climbing centre was really noisy, but I chatted to a group of people and made some new friends.

June 6th - I found out that I might be going to a nightclub for a friend's 19th birthday. Instead of feeling pure dread at the idea of a small place full of people and noise, I wondered what to wear.

June 8th - I was surprised to find myself on a day out with some friends. We went to a bar bearing the slogan "There are no ugly people, Only too little vodka" then dozed in the sun on the lawn at the Botanic Gardens. It was a really good day. I was going out with friends much more than I used to.

June 9th – No longer scared of loud noises, I started playing drums and discovered that I love it.

June 10th – My family weren't enjoying a few hours of beginner drumming, but I was. As far as I was concerned, this was the best thing ever. Tonight I went on a girl's night out, had some drinks,

went to a club and wore heels (which makes it an even rarer occasion). It was fun, although I don't have many other club nights to compare it to. This might have been my first club night out.

June 11th – My first hangover.

June 23rd – Not only was I cured of my fear of loud noises, I also quite liked listening to Metal.

July 7th –Summer sounds were not as loud as before. Particularly I remembered the sounds of buzzing insects as being scary. The buzzing sound of insects (sometimes a metre or more away) used to sound as loud as a lawnmower and seemed to come from inside my ear, making me panic in case the insect had got inside of my head. Now that nothing was so overwhelmingly loud anymore, I was more like "Oh, there's a bee. That's nice" and could get on with my life.

Understanding the lyrics in metal music requires very good hearing.

July 13th – I went to a Ceilidh on the Isle of Lewis with my aunt and uncle. My uncle was in the band playing fiddle. The band were playing out of love for music and the kindness of their hearts and were paid mainly in booze. My uncle showed me how to open a bottle of cider with a spoon. I wasn't worried about dancing with my aunt and a whole bunch of strangers in a noisy hall hundreds of miles from home. I could hear pretty clearly despite the noise and chatted to people at our table. I also had to defend myself (and my drink) from a woman who was convinced that I was about sixteen and underage.

August 2nd – Until the last few weeks I had chronic cold-like symptoms for as long as I could remember. Then I stopped eating dairy. Ian Jordan of Jordan's Opticians suggested I might be allergic to milk. I tried avoiding foods with milk in and my nose stopped running almost constantly. I could breathe much easier at night- my nose didn't feel so blocked. I didn't feel thirsty most of the time, or have a sore throat, and I stopped having lots of stomach aches. When I was little I used to eat cereal for breakfast and always feel sick afterwards. I never thought that queasiness could be because of milk allergies.

August 8th - I phoned a friend of a friend to ask for her address to pick up some gardening equipment. While my friend was on holiday I had to babysit some potatoes which were part of a scientific experiment. Long story. I had to ask for a repeat of her address over the phone. I explained that I had some hearing difficulties and she was happy to help. I used to think that telling people about my Auditory Processing difficulties would make them dislike me. I discovered that actually it's the opposite. They understand why I may be a little different and that makes us closer because I've shared something about myself.

August 11th - I got red streaks in my hair. Now I feel as if I look more like myself. I really like colourful hair, but was always scared of people looking at me or noticing me in a crowd. Previously I avoided wearing anything which made me stand out. Interacting with other people is not so difficult anymore, and it's my hair. It's just some stuff which grows on my head and I can do what I like with it.

August 18th – Keeping a diary of improvements in my hearing for almost 2 years had taught me how to touch type.

August 29th – Today I saw a friend I hadn't seen them in ages. Since then, my hearing and social skills have improved a lot. We chatted properly for the first time. It was easy for me to chat to someone I knew. In the past I would have just gone through the motions- making rhetorical small talk and pretending to understand what they said. My friend said I seemed really different- and much less confused. I remembered feeling confused all the time. It seemed like a lifetime away. I was getting used to hearing clearly now. Being able to talk to people is amazing.

I had wanted this for my entire life, and now that I had it, I kind of had to sit back and think events over to make sure that it was real.

September 3rd - My first class of British Sign Language Level 1. I liked my classmates. One of the first things we had to do was sign our names and say if we were Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing or Hearing. I wasn't sure which one I was. Officially was Hearing, but had issues with that area. I tried finger spelling A-P-D and Auditory Processing Disorder, but no one had heard of it.

September 10th – At BSL class tonight we got our sign names. Usually sign names are given to you, but we got to choose our own. We went round the room. My classmates' new titles included Glasses, Bagpipes, Dentist, Drummer (who was in a band with Bagpipes), JD (Jack Daniels), Fringe, Heart (f.k.a. Book), Princess and Tattoos. Drummer was taken and I didn't want to call myself Red in case I got fed up of dyeing my hair. In the end I named myself Happy.

September 15th - I turned 19 and felt like I could actually be that age.

September 25th – Today I got an email from a woman who went to the MLC inaugural conference. Her daughter was nine years old and has Auditory Processing Disorder and Retained Reflexes like me. She had contacted my mum, asking if she could chat to her and me about changes in my hearing with Johansen IAS therapy. She wanted to know about changes her daughter would go through as her hearing improved, and to know what my life is like now. Until I got this email, I hadn't really considered that my Auditory Processing had affected my whole family. My parents were worried about me sometimes, and I needed a lot of extra help.

I talked to my mum about it and asked her what it was like. She said that sometimes she'd felt alone, not sure how to help me. Other mothers were busy organising activities and sleepovers for their kids while she was trying to help me just struggle through school. She felt guilty when she wondered if there was something "wrong" with me, and wondered if she could do more. It must be really stressful being the parent of a kid with learning differences. Hard seeing your child's classmates thrive while they struggle.

I saw how fortunate I was to have a family who had always supported me when I was struggling. I didn't realise it, but throughout my time with Johansen and MLC therapies they had been on this journey with me. Sometimes it must have been hard for them too.

October 26th – My cousin got married. This was the first wedding I'd ever been to. The Bride and Groom signed the document to "Nothing Else Matters" by Metallica, or Metta-leeka, as the bemused Reverend pronounced it. The party was in a huge tent. The wedding band was really loud and there were about 100 people there. Everyone was struggling to hear each other. My mum asked if I needed help when I started talking to someone beside me at the table. I was fine. My hearing was working as well as anyone's and Lip Reading really helped. I had an awesome night.

I had just made Gibberishdictionary.com and this was the first Auditory Processing Disorder-related post I wrote.

October 29th – My emotional intelligence was now really improving. After the MLC Scotland and Johansen IAS therapies, I had good coordination, balance, health, sleep, hearing and mental processing. That gave me room for developing not just social skills, but also my personality. I hadn't had much mental room to think about how I felt. Everything was kind of tuned down to the bare minimum so I had less to deal with. Now I was starting to know how I felt about anything and everything. Used to feeling fairly neutral apart from emotional extremes, emotions for everyday things were sometimes hard to get my head around, but I really valued this new dimension to life.

November 2nd – Job hunting. I had a training night at a local Chinese restaurant. It could have gone better. I was nervous and couldn't understand the Manager's strong Chinese accent. I accidentally dropped a plate down loudly in front of a customer, who shrieked at me for nearly giving her a heart attack.

November 12th – Pumpkin the adopted hamster died in her sleep. At night it was so quiet without her. Two years ago, before I had hamsters rustling about at night covering up ambient noises, my hearing was so oversensitive I used to get kept awake by the fridge downstairs, my family's breathing through the walls, distant traffic which seemed as loud as planes and occasionally, my heartbeat. Tonight I didn't hear any of that. Any passing traffic was quiet and our house seemed weirdly peaceful.

November 13th – I had learned a new social skill. My mum said it's called Wheedling. Wheedling (ideally accompanied by a sad face) is required when you want another hour of drum practice and your family really don't.

December 18th – Today I put on my fluorescent anti-death jacket and cycled to my dentist appointment. I hadn't cycled on the road previously. Hearing the direction and distance of approaching traffic used to be impossible, and I would have been too overwhelmed by traffic sounds to be on the road safely. Now my hearing while cycling on the road was fine. I could tell where the cars were approaching by listening, (but I also look- I'm not daft!) and could focus on where I needed to go. I was a bit confused by traffic lights and roundabouts, but everyone's got to start somewhere!

2014

January 1st – My year started with a hangover and bruises from falling off a friend’s skateboard last night. I don’t know how to skateboard, which is part of the reason why I fell off. I have a social life now. Every so often I go to a friend’s house or a party.

January 6th - Before therapy from MLC Scotland got rid of the Retained Reflexes/Neuro-Developmental Delay I had, I chronically used to be too scared of the dark to sleep. Now was finding it hard to get to sleep sometimes because I was so happy. There was so much stuff I enjoyed and wanted to do, and lots of music I loved and wanted to learn to play. Life felt good.

February 2nd – I was used to sleeping well almost every night now. Because I didn’t sleep well last night, this made me want to complain about being tired. Sleeping well was something essential which I now almost took for granted.

February 18th – For a friend’s 20th birthday I went to a Tea Party. I didn’t know anyone else there, but I found it easy to chat to them. Background noise wasn’t a problem and I could pick and choose between conversations to join in. Since as long as I could remember I used to look at happy, chatting groups of kids and wonder “how do they do it?” Now these things come naturally to me.

March 15th – Out at a club with friends I had a new social situation to deal with: a clingy 40-something man who kept trying to get my attention. He sat down with my group and started talking to me. I still didn’t really understand social norms (it’s unusual for strangers his age to talk to people my age) but he was on his own and I have a soft spot for people who seem lonely. He hung around for hours and kept wanting to dance with me. I hadn’t encountered anything like this before. I refused to go outside with him on my own and take off my coat. (My coat and beanie stayed on, despite the temperature inside the pub) I could hear what he said in the club, but had no idea what to do in this situation. At first I thought he was just a friendly stranger but soon found him creepy. My friends helped me out and I got home safe. Eventually the creepy guy moved on. I felt so at-sea with the situation I didn’t think to just tell him to go away. That’s what I’ll do if there’s a next time. I learned that being polite is pointless if it puts you in danger. Sometimes the use of two magic words can be required for your safety.

March 19th – I went to see Heaven’s Basement. The first gig I’ve been to since my hearing was fixed, and my second gig ever. It was amazing! The sound was so loud I could feel the bass, and I was down near the front, crammed in with jumping, screaming, arm-waving people. The volume wasn’t scary and I loved the atmosphere. One of the best nights I’ve ever had.

March 21st – I went to Edinburgh to visit some student accommodation I might live in when I leave home to study full time. I didn't need my parents to help me listen to the staff member who gave me a tour. I made the trip myself. It seemed like quite a nice place to live.

March 22nd – I would love to find a band to play with. I spent some time searching for and replying to drummer wanted ads.

April 3rd – I started working for a local gardening company. I had a job. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I wasn't worried that my Auditory Processing Disorder might be a problem.

April 7th – I applied for a student loan. I still planned to move to Edinburgh in September to study full-time. Before Johansen and MLC therapies I hadn't really thought I would ever have the energy, health and social wherewithal to get a job and leave home. I had gone through the motions and made plans, but often had my doubts. I wasn't sure my parents used to think I could cope with adult life either.

April 13th - My dad is from Leeds and has a Leeds accent, which I was starting to notice more. It was becoming easier to hear the subtle sounds which make accents different from each other.

April 23rd – Tonight I tried out for a band in Clydebank. I loved the sample of music they sent me. I was really nervous. They were really nice people. Talking to them was easy, although background guitar noise in the studio made it a little difficult to hear everything they said. We got on well, and I could fit in with them playing drums. They're brilliant musicians and they want me to come back. I might have joined a band!

April 26th - At an RSPB conference I was, ironically, the ears of the operation. I was with a friend who runs a garden charity (and whose first language is Spanish) to take notes of what speakers said. I had to concentrate and quickly sift through spoken information to write down just the important bits. It wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be. They also had the best free buffet I had ever encountered.

Cycling home from an uphill junction, a motorcyclist behind me shouted "You've got gears, you know!" He was behind me, his voice was muffled by a helmet, and there were ambient traffic sounds. After a long day of listening, my hearing and mental wherewithal was still good enough to process this and shout back "You've got an engine! It's alright for you!"

May 5th – My gardening job was physically very tiring. My Auditory Processing wasn't great today and I had to ask my supervisor for a lot of repeats. I really like my gardening supervisors and funnily enough, they're all drummers. One of them gave me a pair of Hot Rod sticks. I found my job physically hard, but loved the people I worked with.

May 11th – I still couldn't believe my luck with joining that band. Playing with a band might have been the most fun I've ever had. Learning songs required good listening and memory skills, but I managed.

May 20th - I sent my boss an email asking to leave my job. I felt exhausted and struggled to hear my supervisors clearly because I was so tired. I wasn't that big and strong compared to most of the workforce. I really liked the people there, but the job just wasn't for me. White van gardening requires a lot of stamina and I seriously respect people who do that for a living.

June 14th – I went to a party. It wasn't really my kind of thing- just lots of drinking and they barely talked to me. Now that I had the capability to hear clearly, I realised that they were being rude. My feeling that night was Fed Up, so I left early.

July 5th – I started selling crafts at Sloan's Market. I brought in my display stuff and a suitcase of crafts on the train. The traders at Sloans are really nice people. They helped me get set up and told me how to get more customers. I learned that I shouldn't pester potential buyers about products when they get to my stall. Instead I should chat to them and be there if needed to help them choose an item to buy. I didn't make much money by the end of the day, but I realised I could learn a lot of people skills here. My plan was to be a trader at Sloans every weekend until I moved to Edinburgh.

August 22nd – August 29th – I went to Mallorca with two friends for a holiday. Between us we organised the flights, taxi to the airport, currency changes and holiday package. Mallorca is an amazing place.

September 2nd – A trip to IKEA to buy some stuff for my new home. Now I had a new duvet cover and my very own toilet brush. Adult life here I come.

September 3rd - Life outside of the Auditory Processing bubble which I used to live in is complicated. But I realised that I don't want it to be simple. Now that I was feeling balanced, could hear clearly and had energy. I felt up for the challenge.

September 7th – My family drove me and my stuff to Edinburgh. I wasn't that worried or emotional about it because Edinburgh is just a couple of hours' travel from home. Anyway, I would be back visiting next weekend for my 20th birthday. The only thing I was nervous about was if my flatmates would like me. I shouldn't have worried. I met one of them in the hall and she was really nice. I got my stuff into my room and said goodbye. That night I went with my new friend to a party.

September 8th – My first morning in my new city was sunny. I went exploring and bought some groceries.

September 11th – I went to a gig. Nightmare Frequency was the first industrial EBM/Industrial band I'd ever seen. It was amazing. The electronically altered sounds combined with my synaesthesia gave their music the effect of an arson attack in a fireworks factory.

September 12th - My first attempt at busking. Edinburgh is full of street performers. To fight performance nerves for my band's (I'm in a band!) approaching first gig, and to make a little money, I took my flute out onto the Royal Mile. It seemed really scary at first, but soon I found that since I was part of the street scenery, people paid me less attention than when I had to play at school recitals. I had never played to so many people just on my own! Some people put money in my flute case. This was much better than school recitals where skill and technique were evaluated and at the end everyone stiffly applauded. No one in the street cared about how good a player I was. I had been given coins for making people smile. Busking felt really worthwhile.

September 16th - First day of my course. My classmates are nice and the course sounds interesting. Work experience at Edinburgh Botanic Gardens will be amazing. Interestingly, Horticulture students have a higher proportion of people with learning differences than students learning most other subjects. I feel like I could really fit in here!