

## Mr K, aged 27, is autistic and now works in a theatre



This interview just ran on the 'Speak Easy' ABA WhatsApp group run by London legend and ABA professional Toks Adesanya (pictured here with Mr K). Mr K now works at a top theatre, did so well with ABA and talks here about how it helped. His family were pioneers, one of the first ever to win ABA in the UK at tribunal! Toks gives some background information before the interview:

Mr K is a 27-year-old Autistic man. He was educated on a full-time ABA program (30+

hours per week) between age 3 and 12 years. He is fully conversational, with a great personality and vocabulary. I've known him since he was about 10-11 years old. He was originally educated on a Lovass (traditional table-based) style ABA program before switching to Verbal Behaviour (Manding+NET) ABA after 3 years.

At the start of the program he only had a handful of words which were unclear. He attended a mainstream school with ABA shadows until age 11. Then he went to "special needs" secondary school. The interview lasted around 35 minutes. He is superchatty, so for some bits I've shortened or paraphrased his replies. I felt he answered most questions well and to his best ability. Mr K's mother was also in attendance.

Q: Describe yourself in a few words

I'm funny, smart, clever, (very handsome too says Mum – he agrees). I've been Autistic since I was 3 years old.

Q: How did you find out you were Autistic?

[He wasn't sure]. Mum reminds him – "Remember in [primary school] I told you if people are getting annoyed with you just say "sorry I'm Autistic". He says, Yes.

Q: Did children find you annoying or weird at school?

Yes, sometimes, especially a boy called Mustapha (now Facebook friends)

Q: Why?

Coz I would repeat things a lot and wind him up sometimes.

Q: Tell me some good things and not so good things about being Autistic?

My vocabulary is good, I have a great memory. I know what's wrong and what is right.

However, I'm not very good with money - knowing how much change to give etc.

When I was younger I found times tables hard.

Q: Can you remember being on an ABA program?

Yes, it started when I was 3. My first tutor was Anita (Irish girl she was very tall).

Q: Can you remember any of the programs you did?

He couldn't, but remembers the phrase "put with same" (we all laugh)

Q: Why do you think your parents put you on an ABA program?

To help my speech and my learning, to understand things better, to speak properly.

Q: What can you remember about the ABA sessions?

(Like I said, he couldn't remember specific programs, but remembered all tutors by name. Remembered Steve McQueen teaching him to ride his bike, rollerskating and playing video games.

Q: What were your ABA tutors like?

They were nice. He names them all, even the strict one. He remembers being shadowed at school.

Q: What was school like?

It was good. Some teachers were firm, some were nice.

Q: What things did you get told off for?

I laughed sometimes when people were getting told off. I once got in trouble for turning on the fire alarm.

Q: Were the kids nice to you? Did anyone call you weird?

School was good... I had friends and I got on with most kids except a boy called Mustapha who I seemed to annoy. I can't remember being called

names. It helped having shadows so he wasn't bullied says Mum 🙏

Q: What was the most important thing ABA did for you?

ABA helped me to learn, to repeat things to get better and to speak really well.

Q: Did anyone say ABA was bad?

No

Q: Why didn't your brother have ABA?

Coz hes not Autistic and didn't need it. Goes on to explain he wasn't as academic as his brother so couldn't go to university which made him a bit jealous.

Q: What things have you found hard?

Starting conversations used to be hard (I tell him I agree, especially when I first knew him, but now he's an expert – we laugh).

Q: What does stimming mean?

Didn't know so me and Mum explain.

He admits to talking to himself sometimes and in the past repeating questions even when he knows the answer.

Q: Are you glad you had ABA and should other parents do it for their ASD children?

Yes it will help children to speak and learn – they must repeat.

Q: How was mainstream different from special school?

It was easier at special school and I didn't have school shadows (mum didn't think he improved much academically once ABA was dropped, but he could write and read well.

Q: Who was your first ever friend?

Enrico (also his tutor).

Q: Who were your first friends at school?

He names a few children.

Q: Who are the best people at coping with your autism?

My mum and the ABA tutors. Dad is not so patient.

Q: Are all Autistic people the same?

No, we all have different abilities. Felix is Aspergers - he's great at maths, but he's not as humourous as me.

Q: What do you do now?

Works at a theatre and at my old secondary school as a classroom assistant. I like meeting up for dinners, going to the gym and watching Eastenders.

And you love Facebook I chip in 😊

Q: What are your plans for the future?

Wants to go on a safari and travel to Africa and Egypt and work with homeless people.

Q: Where there anything bad about ABA?

No.

Q: What should all ABA professionals remember?

Be patient.

Q: Mum, what would you have done differently if you went back 24 years ago with Mr K?

I would've started homeopathy with him much earlier. I believed it really helped.

Thanks Mr K and Mum.