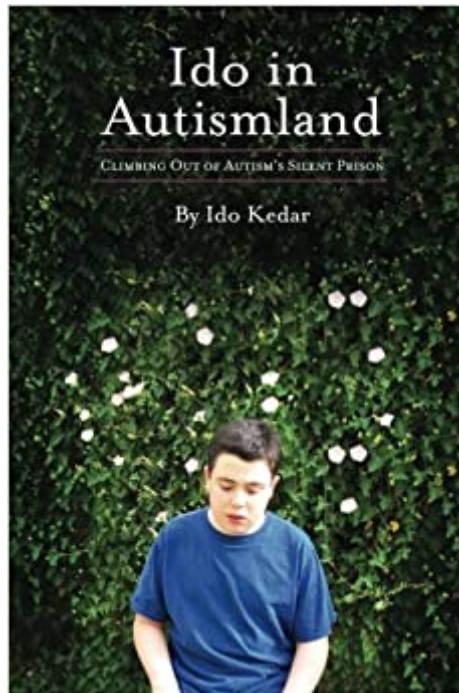




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# Ido In Autismland: Climbing Out Of Autism's Silent Prison



## Synopsis

Ido in Autismland opens a window into non-verbal autism through dozens of short, autobiographical essays each offering new insights into autism symptoms, effective and ineffective treatments and the inner emotional life of a severely autistic boy. In his pithy essays, author Ido Kedar, a brilliant sixteen year old with autism, challenges what he believes are misconceptions in many theories that dominate autism treatment today while he simultaneously chronicles his personal growth in his struggles to overcome his limitations. Ido spent the first half of his life locked internally, in silence, trapped in a remedial educational system that presumed he lacked the most basic comprehension, and unable to show the world that he understood everything. But at the age of seven, Ido was finally able to show that he had an intact mind and could understand. This led to the quest to find a system of communication that he could use despite his impaired motor control. Through the use of a letter board, and now an iPad, Ido has triumphed communicatively, enabling him to flourish in a regular high school in all general education classes. But Ido has a larger goal. He does not want to be seen as an isolated autistic exception with miraculously advanced cognitive and communication abilities. He wants people to see that thousands of other severely autistic individuals have the same capacity, but remain trapped and locked-in, as he was, unable to show their true capacities. These individuals desperately need new theories and new methods to help them break free too. Of importance to neuro-researchers, educators, psychologists, doctors, parents, friends, family and people with autism, Ido in Autismland will change our collective understanding of severe autism.

PRAISE FOR Ido in Autismland "There are doubtless many Idos in this world, unable to speak, yet possessing good intellectual ability and, most certainly, a rich emotional life. And yet, precisely because they cannot communicate, nonverbal individuals with autism are nearly always consigned to the junk heap of mental deficiency, branded as incapable of understanding language or even having feelings." - We need to help change things for this terribly neglected group.

Reading Ido's book is a good beginning." - Portia Iversen, Co-founder, Cure Autism Now and the Autism Genetic Resource Exchange Gene Bank. Author of Strange Son "Ido is a brilliant communicator. His words bring us inside the world of autism. His gift of writing enlightens, inspires, educates. Every person who loves or works with someone with autism - educator, therapist, parent, grandparent, neighbor - should read Ido in Autismland." - Elaine Hall, Author of Now I See the Moon, co-author of Seven Keys to Unlock Autism. Featured in Autism: The Musical "Ido's book touches any heart, not only because it is well written, but because it reveals a mind that has learned how to speak to the world through spelling every word on a letter board and keyboard. His book is indeed a great gift to the world. Thank you, Ido." - Soma Mukhopadhyay, Executive Director of

Education, HALO, Author of Understanding Autism through Rapid Prompting Method

## Book Information

Paperback: 170 pages

Publisher: Sharon Kedar (October 25, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0988324709

ISBN-13: 978-0988324701

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 172 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #49,967 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Children's Health > Autism & Asperger's Syndrome](#) #142 in [Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Neuropsychology](#) #181 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Neuropsychology](#)

## Customer Reviews

As a behavior consultant working exclusively with individuals with developmental disabilities, I've read dozens of books written by individuals with autism. This book has been the most helpful of all of them to me both professionally and personally. Ido's writing is very quick and easy to read. He concisely breaks down his thoughts into manageable sections for busy people. He really gives neuro-typicals an insider's view of what it feels like to have autism. He helps the reader to understand the difficulties and struggles associated with having autism, which explains some of the inexplicable behaviors often observed by professionals. He also helps professionals understand some of the negative and potentially harmful interventions that we implement 'in their best interest' because we know best from our education and experience. As a professional, it was a little painful to see myself in some of the intervention methods forced upon him by the professionals in his life. I feel enlightened and have apologized to the individuals on my caseload and have been working diligently to improve my understanding, tolerance, and behavior management assistance.

My son is also non-verbal with autism. We started with RPM about three years ago, and it has opened up a world of communication, but he, at 9 years old, still is needing his hand to be steadied because he prefers his iPad over the letterboard. We have encountered the paradox between his thoughts and brilliant mind and his body able to obey it. As his mother, I saw my own son described

eloquently in these writings, and I so applaud Ido and his family for being pioneers to show that non-verbal autism does not mean low-intelligence. The conversation with educators and therapists certainly needs to change, and I am asking my son's team to please read this book. He has communicated similar things with me about feeling so very frustrated at school with the matching, the drills, the simple lessons that he can't master but fully understands. I've felt his angst as his behaviors increased at school. Ido is a real inspiration to us for what's possible, and for persevering when there is so much telling you to settle for less. Everyone deserves to communicate, and if that way is found (almost always thanks to a Soma's RPM in this vein of autism, I notice), it's cruel to deny our kids a shot with what works instead of forcing them into old paradigms. This real, firsthand account of someone with autism advocating for his fellow students is a labor of love!

Ido Kedar is angry. And it's awesome! You can't blame him. For the first 12 years of his life, Ido Kedar was stuck in an uncooperative body, unable to communicate. Even now, as a teenager, his communication is limited to pointing to letters on a keyboard. But don't assume his lack of speech equals a lack of intelligence. As Kedar points out: "The erroneous theory is this: to speak is to understand. Tell that to Stephen Hawking." Ido lives in "autismland," as he calls it, a scary place fraught with communication problems, sensory issues, and severe anxiety. Kedar's book, *Ido in Autismland: Climbing Out of Autism's Silent Prison*, is a firsthand account of what it's like trapped at the "low functioning" end of the autistic spectrum. This collection of essays published in 2012 when Kedar was 16 years old reveal the author's beautiful mind, poet's soul, and warrior heart. Kedar is a person, a mind, a soul fighting to be heard. And, once he finds his voice, he doesn't mince words. "The experts mostly never get it right. They assume we are some autistic, retarded stim-machine, not a trapped, thinking person who has a neurological illness. | Do I sound angry? Well, I am. It's time autistic people told the experts that they have made mistakes." Kedar breaks down many of autism's odd behaviors. Why are autistic kids so attracted to water? "Because in the water I can feel my whole body," Kedar explains. He also explains the motivation behind the repetitive pleasure/torture of self stimulatory behaviors. "In my Health class we are learning about drug abuse and alcoholism. I

can't help but see a similarity in autistic stims. Stims are the drug of the trapped. Kedar is both baffled and troubled by the "flight impulse" that sometimes overcomes him. It's a common autistic trait in my son, so at school they call it "elopement." Sadly, it's the same impulse that recently got autistic student Avonte Oquendo killed. "Traffic is visually stimulating. It may invite some kids to move toward it. I can't explain that one, but I have felt the impulse to bolt suddenly." It's not due to ignorance or idiocy. It is the impulses and too weak a body control to fight them off. It doesn't matter why. We still need supervision to be safe. When Kedar writes about the frustration of having a body that won't respond to his will, he sounds like a philosopher. "I'm stuck like a stump and my brain is thinking of what it wants my body to do. It ends there. Thinking, not responding. In other words, what good is my free will if I am like a thinking man in a straight jacket?" Later in the same passage he shows courage beyond words. "I fight the temptation to despair because I really want to free myself. It's my job to free my soul. Hopefully one day my body will be free too." Ido writes with a wisdom and maturity well beyond his years. "I'm not a brave person. I am scared of being in front of cameras or interviewers. I have decided to speak out anyway. It's not my goal to be well known. I like being anonymous, but I am determined to say what has to be said. It's not always our choice if we are brave. Sometimes it's important to do, even if you're scared." Like a Zen master who spends decades alone in contemplative silence, Kedar has achieved a kind of enlightenment. It's no pity party for Kedar. He's got himself together better than most. "I think a lot of it has to do with expectations. If you think life owes you something, you can't appreciate what you have ... The way to appreciate your good fortune is to notice your blessings." I see that to hate your life dooms you to a wretched one, even if the life you have is hard. The truth is I don't need to be normal to make my life meaningful. I need to have freedom to think, loving friends and family, and a recognition that no life is perfect. In spite of an illness I wish I didn't have, I actually have it better than many people. Kedar's "secret to happiness" is "stopping self pity," and he reveals the heart and soul of a true writer when he discusses the healing power of words. "As I

write, I see what I should work on. I will continue to write my journey for myself because now I see that writing heals me. Amen to that, Brother Ido!

Such a MUST read for anyone who works with or supports non-verbal people with autism. Through typing on an ipad, Ido tells the world that there is a very intelligent person, with the same hopes and dreams for his life as anyone else his age. He provides insight into why some people on the autism spectrum behave in the ways we see. Ido expresses great theory of mind, (despite this supposedly being absent in people with autism), and shows his awareness of others' emotions. I thoroughly believe Ido's writings, as recently my own son learned to express himself on a keyboard. So many myths regarding the intelligence and thinking of non-verbal people with autism are challenged. Ido can be seen on YouTube typing independently, for those who cannot believe in his abilities. The greatest lesson I take from this book is that, despite seeming severely autistic, many - perhaps most - non-verbal people with autism have intact minds, but are trapped in a body that does not obey to perform the motor tasks, (such as speaking, pointing to specific objects, etc),

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