Musician-Poet Morgan Harper Nichols Reveals She Has Autism

For years, Morgan Harper Nichols suspected she might be living with autism. At age 31, she's been diagnosed.

March 8, 2021 By Alicia Green

Musician and poet Morgan Harper Nichols was recently diagnosed with autism after speculating for years that she might fall on the autism spectrum, reports People.

"[Four] years ago, when I was 27, I asked my primary care doctor if he could refer me to a specialist because I thought I might be on the autism spectrum," Nichols wrote in a blog post on her website. "Without even looking up from his clipboard, he smirked and said, 'You have nothing to worry about. You're perfectly normal.'"

Nichols took his word for it. Meanwhile, she continued to struggle with issues that she believed were her fault, such as sensory, social and communication problems and difficulty paying attention, organizing, prioritizing and staying focused—all skills associated with executive functioning. Nichols thought she just needed to try harder and be more responsible.

"Since I was young, I always struggled with sensory issues," she explained. "Everything from the texture of clothes to the brightness of light to the volume of music had a profound impact on me."

For Nichols, even hearing conversations is difficult if loud music is playing nearby. She often closes her eyes when she watches movies because of the bright light. The "smallest things can lead me to sensory overload which has a great impact on how I function," she said.

She also noted that simple tasks like brushing her teeth or washing her face can be daunting. The same goes for answering emails, phone calls or texts.

When it comes to relationships, Nichols said she always experienced difficulty making friends, maintaining friendships and understanding social cues.

"To this day, I will prepare a script for every conversation I am about to have, even when it comes to conversations with people I speak to on a regular basis," she said. "I'll prepare answers to questions they may ask me, and questions to ask them, and even a joke or relevant story to share."

Nichols said a TikTok video led to her diagnosis. After seeing a video on the social media platform of a woman sharing her story about learning as an adult that she had autism, Nichols found more women on YouTube who related their stories. Eventually, she tracked down specialists in her area who treat adults with autism.

“After giving me tons of information about my diagnosis, the specialist I have been working with ended by saying, ‘….and it’s not your fault,’” Nichols said. “I immediately burst into tears.”

Now Nichols accepts that this is just who she is. Despite the many challenges in her life, she calls autism a “unique experience” that has allowed her to find “beauty and joy.”

“I am so grateful to finally have language for what I’ve been going through all these years and if I could help one other person feel seen, then that’s what matters,” she wrote. “If I could help one person who has been blaming themselves or has felt shame for their struggle or has been afraid to seek help, then to me, that’s what makes this worth it.”

For additional news about autism, read “Adults With Autism Have a Higher Rate of Chronic Health Problems” and “Delays in Autism Diagnoses Especially Harmful to Black Children.”

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