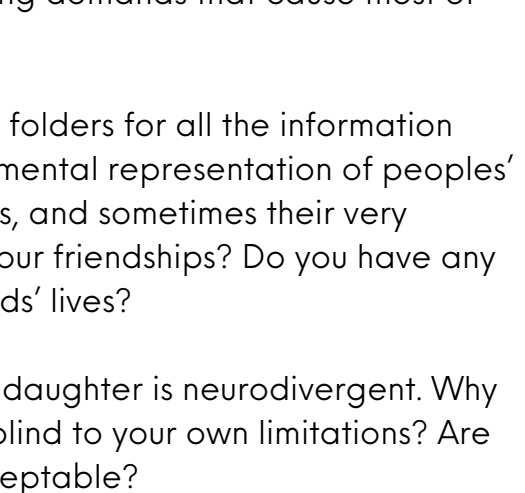




DO I KNOW YOU? Discussion Guide

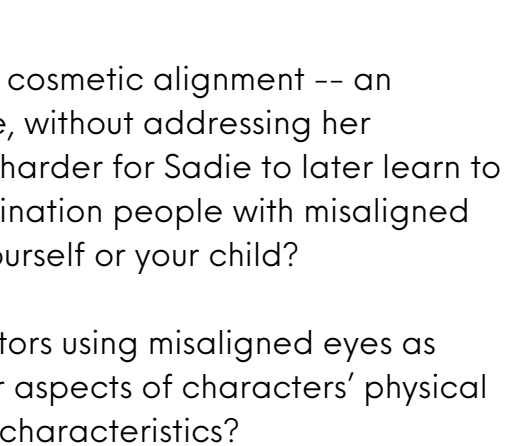
By Sadie Dingfelder

1. In the introduction of the book, Sadie decides to come clean about her faceblindness, instead of covering for it. What are some of the pros and cons of disclosing your neurodiversity? Are there situations where it's best to fake being neurotypical? What would you do?
 2. Sadie thought that she was basically neurotypical for most of her life. Some might argue that prosopagnosia isn't really a big deal if you fail to notice it for nearly 40 years. What do you think?
 3. Consider the parable of the fish: "An old fish passes by a school of youngsters and says, 'Hey, boys, how's the water?' 'What's water?' the little fish reply. How does this explain how a person might not realize that they, for instance, lack a sense of smell?"
 4. Do you suspect that your perceptions or inner life might be unusual in some way? What tipped you off?
 5. Sadie writes, "A key part of being an effective con artist is conning yourself." Do you agree? What are some truths about yourself that you were not able to see when you were younger?
 6. How is forgetting faces different from forgetting names? Why do people so often conflate the two?
 7. The human brain did not evolve to remember many hundreds of people, and their names. What are other examples of modernity making demands that cause most of us to feel like we are falling short?
 8. There's some evidence that faces serve as the file folders for all the information you know about a person. Sadie suspects her shaky mental representation of peoples' faces is why she often forgets facts about her friends, and sometimes their very existence. How important are shared memories to your friendships? Do you have any tricks for remembering what is going on in your friends' lives?
 9. Sadie's father is resistant to the possibility that his daughter is neurodivergent. Why do you think this is? What are the benefits of being blind to your own limitations? Are changing norms making neurodivergence more acceptable?
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10. Sadie argues that all her diagnoses bring strengths as well as weaknesses. Do you believe this is true of neurodivergence in general? When does neurodivergence become a disability? When might it be an advantage?
 11. The concept of eugenics rears its ugly head at several points in Sadie's journey -- starting with Joquim Bodamer's probable participation in the Nazi regime's forced sterilization and then outright murder of neurodivergent people. In what ways might the lingering impact of eugenics still influence modern medical and societal attitudes toward neurodiversity?
 12. Sadie interviews several people who share at least one of her diagnoses: Steve Wozniac, Senator John Hickenlooper, Paul Foot and Craig Venter. How are their experiences similar to hers, and how are they different? Have you ever met someone who is eerily similar to you despite obvious, surface-level differences? Did you want to be that person's friend?
 13. The early superusers of the internet were people with rare diseases and disorders. Is that still true on today's internet? Why or why not?
 14. Sadie is stressed out by clutter due to her visual impairments. Her husband Steve can't remember to put things away because of his ADHD. Who is more deserving of accommodation? (Share your thoughts at SadieD.com/vote)
 15. What drives you crazy about your spouse, romantic partner or roommates? Were you able to come to an acceptable compromise?
 16. Two childhood surgeries forced Sadie's eyes into cosmetic alignment -- an outcome that made her look normal to other people, without addressing her underlying vision problems. Indeed, surgery made it harder for Sadie to later learn to see normally. Given how much adversity and discrimination people with misaligned eyes face, would you make the same decision for yourself or your child?
 17. Why does Sadie object to cartoonists and animators using misaligned eyes as shorthand for derangement or stupidity? What other aspects of characters' physical appearance do artists use to indicate their internal characteristics?
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18. Susan Barry reports that learning to see in 3D actually changed how she thinks. As her world inflated, she noticed that her reasoning became less linear, and she became more able to imagine multiple things happening simultaneously. Can you recall a time when a shift in perspective or a new skill changed how you reason? How might changes in other senses, like hearing or touch, alter more abstract aspects of our thinking?

19. Have you personally experienced the U-shaped happiness curve, where people are happiest when they are young and old, and least happy at midlife? This tendency crosses socioeconomic, cultural and even species boundaries. What do you think is driving it?

20. Sadie's dad harbors so much guilt -- even though Sadie and her brother turned out fine. If you're a parent, do you have anything you still feel guilty about? Would confessing help you feel better? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask your parents, but you don't want to imply criticism or make them feel bad?

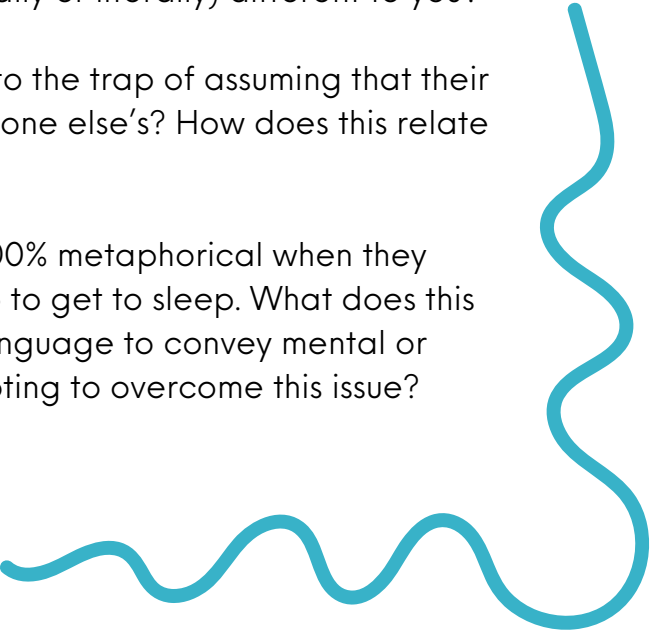
21. What are some of the problems with trying to observe one's own thoughts? Do you think introspection can ever be part of objective science?

22. How are scientists beginning to triangulate what we claim is going on in our own heads?

23. If you could beam into any person or creature's lived experience, what do you think it would be like? What might look (metaphorically or literally) different to you?

24. Why do even great philosophers often fall prey to the trap of assuming that their conscious experience is basically the same as everyone else's? How does this relate to the parable of the fish?

25. Sadie always thought that people were being 100% metaphorical when they suggested things like visualizing and counting sheep to get to sleep. What does this tell us about the limitations or challenges of using language to convey mental or sensory experiences? How is Russell Hurlburt attempting to overcome this issue?





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26. Hurlburt has found that most people split their time between five different styles of thinking: inner seeing, inner hearing, feeling emotions, sensory experience and unsymbolized thought. However, there are tons of individual differences, and you can do any number of these things simultaneously. How busy is your inner life? Do you think it's more or less clamorous than average? (If you want to try out Descriptive Experience Sampling, Hurlburt's app, [iPromptU](#), is available for free in the Apple app store.)

27. Can Sadie blame SDAM or aphantasia for the fact that she failed to see obvious-in-retrospect signs that her boyfriends were cheating on her, or is this just the classic problem of love making you blind?

28. A year after learning to drive, Sadie is still using her "student driver" signs. Is it OK for her to ask other people to hold her to a lower standard? Should she get "stereoblind driver" signs instead?

29. SDAM and aphantasia are two closely related, overlapping phenomenon, and yet people seem to see SDAM as tragedy -- something that limits their enjoyment of life -- while aphantasia is largely seen as a difference rather than a disability. Why do you think this is? What does it say about the power of language and the problem with labels?

30. At the beginning of the book, Sadie discovers that she's a faceblind reporter. At the end, she learns that she is also an amnesiac memoirist! How do her conditions help or hinder her in her professional life?

