



# *Unpacking My Brain*

Why is EVERYTHING so  
LOUD

Hamish Guthrie

## Forward

This story has been written with my son at the heart and forefront of things as he journeys through his day-to-day life.

Why Is Everything So Loud follows the perceived journey that my son has been walking since he was old enough to comprehend the world around him. While the story is told by me, his father, it is told with my son as the storyteller.

Interestingly, when I have read chapters out loud to my son, there have only ever been minor, seemingly trivial, corrections to what I've written and honestly, there are so many aspects of this book that have made me cry when I've read them back knowing that there are likely so many truths that my son lives every day.

Aside from 'just' being a story, I've tried to weave some creativity into the story so that it can seek to become a toolbox for him to help answer any questions that he has about his brain - why he gets angry, why he feels frustration, why there are times where he feels that he's not worthy, and asking the age old question of "why am I even here".

So, wherever you are, and whatever your step of the journey you might be experiencing, thank you for choosing this book.

# THE SEARCH FOR ME



## Chapter One

*“Sometimes you have to read a hundred wrong pages before you find the one that feels like your own.”—Me, today.*

I’m eight and a half. I like facts, noodles, and David Walliams books. I can already tell you the capital of 46 countries, the difference between a stalagmite and a stalactite, and how to outswim a crocodile (hint: **don’t** swim in crocodile water).

But here’s the thing: I still don’t know how I work.

Not really.

Today at school, Miss Leary said we’re starting inquiry-based learning. We get to choose our own big question and try to answer it with research. Everyone else was writing things like *“How do volcanoes erupt?”* or *“Can penguins fly if they try hard enough?”*

I wrote:

**“What’s wrong with my brain?”**

Miss Leary blinked when she saw it. Not in a mean way—more like when someone bites into a muffin and finds **CHILLI** in it. Then she smiled and said, “That’s... a very personal question. Are you sure that’s what you *want* to explore?”



I nodded. My face was *HOT*. Not because I was embarrassed, but because *The Volcano* inside me was already bubbling. Not angry yet—just pressure. Thinking of all the times no one could answer that question. All the times I couldn't either.

At lunch, I opened my Chromebook. I typed words I've heard grown-ups say when they think I'm not listening:

**NEURODIVERGENT, AUTISM SPECTRUM, ADHD, ANXIETY.**



I read articles and kid blogs and even a comic strip that made me snort-laugh in the middle of the library.

A n d t h e n . . .



T h e r e i t w a s .

A sentence.

*A child with high intelligence and emotional sensitivity may show traits of autism and anxiety but not meet the criteria for diagnosis.*

That line hit me like stepping into sunlight after being inside for years. Like the first deep breath after crying.

It didn't *so*lve everything. But it felt like a breadcrumb trail I could follow.

I think I found a piece of me.

I've always felt like my brain was playing a different game than everyone else's. At daycare, when the other kids built towers or dressed up as superheroes, I'd sit with the books. I taught myself to read when I was three.



Miss Carla, the early intervention lady, used to smile like she understood me. She gave me “tools” like breathing techniques and “turtle time” (which is when you go inside your shell and try not to explode).

**But *The Volcano* still erupted.**

It would happen when things didn't make sense. When another kid skipped the line. When I was told I was wrong even though I *knew* I wasn't.

I'd cry—not because I was sad, but because the world wasn't behaving the way it should. And because no one seemed to hear the part of me that was screaming inside:

***"I'm trying so hard."***

There's another character who lives in my brain: ***Captain Perfect.***

He wears a white cape, polishes his shoes every day, and never makes mistakes. When I do something wrong—even just a little wrong—he points a big finger at me and says, “Unacceptable.”



He's the reason I get scared to try things unless I know I'll be good at them. The reason I re-do drawings twelve times. The reason I can't stand losing at Uno.



Then there's **Shadow Boy**.

He's the one who **sits by himself** at lunch. Who **WATCHES OTHER KIDS** play tag but **never** asks to join. Who curls into bed with a book because it's **safer** to be somewhere else.

I didn't know his name for a long time. But now I do.

And knowing their names helps. A bit.

I remember in Year Zero—the first three months of school before summer—the teacher said all kids started reading at **ZERO**. I was already reading chapter books. I remember thinking, "Well, this is going to be **slow**."

They didn't believe me when I said I could read. Not until I read aloud from the noticeboard.

That should've made things better.  
But instead, I got bored.

**Really bored.**

Like, **counting-ceiling-tiles-and-naming-them BORED**.



Here's what I've found *so far*:

- My brain is like a computer running three programs at once with twenty tabs open.
- I feel everything at **VOLUME 11**. Happiness, frustration, fear—it's all loud.
- I'm not bad. I'm **not** *broken*.
- I just need people to **LISTEN** before they fix.
- And sometimes, I need to name the parts of me **before** I can talk to them.

I've still got a **LOT** to learn.

But I'm not afraid of the question anymore.

Because now, I know the question isn't:  
"What's wrong with my brain?"

It's:

**"What's right with it?"**





Then came **Year One**.

A **phone call** happened. I got bumped up a year level. Everyone said it was “for the best.” I didn’t argue.

But that year I learned something else:  
**I didn’t have friends.**

I mean, I had people around me. But they didn’t talk to me. I didn’t get invited to parties.

I sat alone most days and no one really noticed—until much later.

That was the year of **Shadow Boy**. He grew taller than me. Took up more space.

This year though, I’m a senior. I got to go to camp. We did raft building and kayaking and made bread over fire. I bunked with my noisy friends, and it was awesome (except for the snoring and sock smell).

At school, I’m back doing maths with the older kids again. It’s the only time the numbers make sense faster than the feelings.



And now, this inquiry project—it might be the biggest one yet.

I’m going to unpack me - page by page.

Enjoying the story so far? **GREAT!**

In the next parts of our story, our champ's inquiry topic helps him to uncover gems that help him to

**HARNESS HIS SUPERPOWERS, defeat his oppressors, AND BECOME A CHAMPION!**



Next Instalment Coming Soon!