

## Things I Need You to Know . . .

by Mitch Abblett, Ph.D.

I need lots of attention.

Even when I swear at you, I still need your attention.

I will talk endlessly about stuff like video games because that's all I'm really good at.

I will do odd, quirky things that always seem to get weird looks from people.

And when I tell you I don't care, it really means I just don't know how to let myself care.

The four letter word that makes me the most uncomfortable is "SPED."

I don't want to be here because it means I failed in order to get here.

I've never belonged to things much in the past.

I learned a long time ago to reject you before you can reject me.

Did I mention that I want your attention?

I'll be looking for ways to get control by hitting your buttons,

And by "splitting" you against one another,

And against my family as well,

And by sparking other kids to get in trouble,

Because control is something I've been without for quite awhile.

My file says I'm not retarded but I think I am.

My diagnosis crawls through my file like some sort of bug I want to squash.

You WILL misunderstand me.

You WILL assume I'm being "lazy" or "manipulative" or "nasty" on purpose.

I really just don't know what else to do to not have to feel the way I feel.

Every day, my medication is a reminder of how I'm sick but you can't see how.

Bald kids with cancer get cards and warm smiles.

I get blamed and punished because I'm bad.

And even if you tell me I'm not bad, I won't believe you.

It's your job to say nice things to me, so again, I won't believe you.

But did I already say (because it's hard for me to focus on things and I forget) . . .

I really want your attention?

I just want a chance to fit in; to do something right once in a while.

I just want to feel okay for a day.

I just want my family to be proud of me for once.

I just don't want to have to remember all the bad stuff from before all the time.

I just want you to follow through on your promises to me (because others haven't).

I just don't want you to confuse my actions with who I really want to be in the future.  
And yes, before I forget, the future means almost nothing to me.

I will try to embarrass you.  
I will try to make you angry.  
I will try to make you nervous.  
I will try to make you hate me.  
Because then I will know I'm not crazy for feeling these things myself.  
Because then I will know who I can begin to trust.

And trust is five letters because it's better even though it's hard.  
Four-letter words are just easy but if I can get to five letters then . . .  
Maybe I can make it to six, and then . . .  
Maybe I can start CARING. . .

And then maybe, just maybe, I'll let myself believe I deserve your attention.

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