

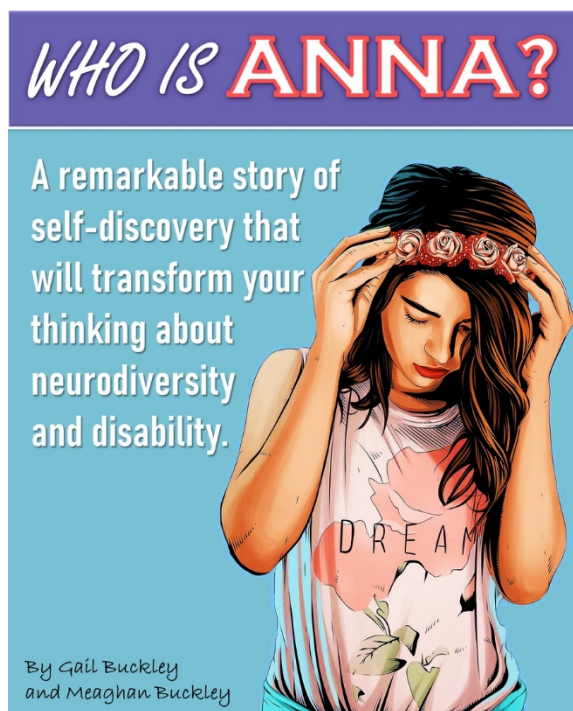
*But the thing with autism is, our brains do change. So, our compulsions come and go. Generally, they are replaced by other compulsions. I went through a hair pulling stage and a self-injury stage, when I would pinch and scratch myself. Fortunately, I got over those when I started typing and was less frustrated.*

*To look at me now, people might think, oh yes, she might be autistic but she is the exception to the rule. She can type. As if this just happened. But it didn't just happen. I would never, ever have become independent in expressing myself through typing if my mother hadn't worked like a dog to teach me. She was constantly coming up with new ideas and strategies to overcome my shortcomings. If something didn't work, we'd try something else. And if that didn't work, we'd try something else.*

*We kept trying and struggling until my brain finally GOT IT! When that happened, when I became independent in typing, my compulsions began to fade into the background.*

*This makes me wonder whether the compulsions or "behaviors" that have come to define so many of us with autism are tied to our struggle to overcome our sense of entrapment. We are frustrated, and lacking the outlets of communication and social interaction, our brain compels us to act in ways that will get us the comfort and attention we seek.*

*I wish more than anything that she and my dad had lived to see what Tom and I are doing now. After all the hard work they put in suffering through me at my worst, I would love for them to see that all their*



*love and support did make a difference. If you are a parent now and you are reading this, take heart. Everything you are doing for your child does matter.*