

# An Introduction – Me and My Family

My name is Luke Christopher Jackson. I have brown – though a lot of the time greasy – short hair. I have it spiked with gel at the moment. You can see a picture of it on the back of the book. I have greenish blue eyes, which look like the sea. Mum says they are ‘deep’ though I know this does sound rather ridiculous – the eye is only as deep as from the cornea to the eye socket. I am often told that I am deep too. This means that I think a lot. I am quite small for my age, but so are all the rest of my family too. I think it must be in our genes.

I would like to think that I am helpful and quite kind. I am very polite; I think that is very important.

I have written this book for many reasons. As I have got older and become a teenager I have been asking all sorts of questions and encountering a whole new set of difficulties. I searched and searched the internet for books to answer my questions and there were none – none that were specifically for adolescents. There were plenty of books about adolescence, but not for people like me (I will explain why I am different in a moment). I like writing and I like to be helpful, so I hope that in writing a book myself I will have answered some questions that other adolescents are asking and at the same time helped parents and carers to under-

stand their child more. Another big reason for writing this was the hope that professionals of any sort may read it and begin to understand the many, many people who are similar to me.

So, if you are a professional, don't just put this down and think that I am a sweet kid. Please read on and learn more. I hope very much to entertain you whilst you are learning!

Before I do write more about myself though, I would like to tell you a little about my family. I think we are all pretty interesting. My family consists of seven children and my Mum. These are (in chronological order) Mum – obviously we just call her Mum but her real name is Jacqueline Carol; Matthew Richard – he is eighteen; Rachel Louise – she is sixteen; Sarah Elizabeth – she is fourteen; me, I became thirteen recently; Anna Rebekah – she is eleven; Joseph David – he is eight; and Ben Curtis – he is five.

My big brother Matthews's lifelong ambition is to join the Marines. This is so ironic because Mum never liked guns, toys or otherwise. We have never had toy guns in our house and now Matthew is going off to sea cadets each week and polishing real ones! Matthew was born really early and weighed less than 'a bag of sugar' (everyone always says that). When Ben was born and we all used to go and see him in the special care baby unit, the nurses there used to say to each other 'Do you remember Matthew? He was a twenty-four-weeker.' What a strange expression! It meant that he was born at twenty-four weeks. He is dyslexic and dyspraxic, which means clumsy. Boy, is he clumsy! He has great big feet, which are usually clad in clumpy army boots. He stoops over and resembles a troll banging about. All he needs is a big club over his shoulder and the picture would be complete! We get on well most of the time. He is a good big brother and we have fun together.

Rachel is very talented in many ways, in fact all ways. There is nothing Rachel cannot do. She is very sociable and popular, espe-

cially with the boys! Rachel sings and sings and sings. She says she wants to be a singer and she has a really good voice but I have to admit that it gets on my nerves. One thing that she is really outstanding at is art, particularly drawing. Some of her drawings are amazing and that is a huge compliment coming from me as sometimes she really annoys me. I suppose that is because she is the complete opposite of me and so we don't understand each other so well.

Sarah is talented too, but in a quiet way. She is a brilliant dancer. She was a dancing chicken in a school play recently and she surpassed everyone else in that! Sarah has a lot of funny ways and the most hilarious thing about it is that she doesn't even know! She seems to have a hearing problem. Mum says to her, 'Can you make a cup of tea please Sarah?' and Sarah looks at her meaningfully and says 'Ooh.' That is her answer to most things. She seems a complete airhead but yet I know that she thinks a lot and works hard. At school she is very quiet. She is actually a lot like me. She takes things *very* literally and beware anyone who accidentally prods her or touches her – she does not like her space invaded!

Anna is going to be more like Rachel I think. She is popular and tries a bit too hard to be grown up. She is a very good dancer too. One thing Anna is really talented at is writing poems. She can just think them up so quickly. I think one day she will get some of hers published. She has written quite a few about my brothers and me. She is very good at looking after Ben and I think she is more responsible with him than anyone else in the family (apart from Mum, of course). She's like a little mother. Anna likes food, especially sweets, and that is the bottom line – that describes Anna! She is actually very good to have around for us at the moment because she likes to bake and is trying out new things all the time. She makes some really good gluten- and casein-free (that's a special

diet we're on that I'll tell you more about later) concoctions. Maybe she will be a chef when she gets older.

Joseph has great problems listening and is hyperactive. He is never still and jumps and cartwheels everywhere. That has been a lot better recently though he still has serious problems listening and concentrating; AD/HD it's called. That is attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder. Since he has been on this special diet he has had quite a lot of the 'H' taken out of the AD/HD but not so much of the 'A'. The school he is at try hard to help him and find ways for him to listen and concentrate.

At the school I go to now, there is a boy in my class who acts just like Joe. He is really silly and, to be honest, very funny a lot of the time. Joe is hilarious in his antics. This boy doesn't listen either and does the most daft, impulsive things. I later found out that he has AD/HD and things just clicked into place in my mind. He was most definitely the same as Joe though a lot 'naughtier'.

Joe has the wildest imagination of anyone I have ever met. I think he would be great as a storywriter. The only thing with this is that when he tells other people his 'stories' no one ever knows which his fantasies are and which reality is. I sometimes wonder whether Joe knows either! Mum gets very worried about this sometimes because he is so believable that if he told someone something bad, other people may believe him.

I remember being with Mum when she picked him up from school a few years ago and his support worker brought him out. 'Hello Joe, have you had a good day?' Mum said cheerily. 'Oh yes thank you,' said Joe. 'My teacher didn't hit me once today.' His poor teacher went scarlet and even Mum looked shocked. If people on the autistic spectrum have problems with imagination then that certainly describes Joe – it is a real impairment not being able to work out where the line between reality and fantasy is!

Last of all is Ben. He was born very early too and had a brain haemorrhage, which caused his muscles to have problems. He used to jerk his legs about in his sleep and his body would arch backwards. It took over two-and-a-half years for him to learn to sit up. He can walk now at last though he is not very confident. He would love to be able to jump but no way can he do that. I feel sorry for him as he wobbles about when he tries to run. He kind of 'fast walks' with his head lolling to the side, looking as if his body is trying to catch up with it. When we go out, if he is not familiar with a place, he just crawls.

Ben is also autistic and can be a complete nutter at times. All he used to do was line things up and flick his fingers in front of his face. We are all on a special diet (as I have said, I have written more about this later on in the book) and Ben has changed a lot since then. He is now an 'active but odd' autistic person instead of the 'locked into his own world' kind of autistic person that he was before.

Ben has massive problems with his senses. Everything seems to be extreme with him. He spends so much time with his fingers in his ears and now he can talk better, he shouts 'too noisy' for almost everything. He also hates wearing clothes and if he does, he has to have the labels cut out. He can spot a label a mile off. Mum has done all sorts of desensitizing stuff with Ben for years and he can now touch grass and dry sand and even put up with paint after a while. These things need to be helped as much as possible because no one can spend their life with their fingers in their ears.

Ben has a lot of trouble understanding what other people are talking about but the difference since the diet is that now he wants to. He goes up to people and licks them or sings 'slim shady' in their face. He is very hard to understand and doesn't talk so well so this is very funny to watch, but I feel quite sorry for him actually. He is so confused most of the time. He is absolutely unbelievably

good on the PlayStation. So much better than Mum – but then that wouldn't be hard!

As you can see, we are quite a mix of ages and personalities. Although we get on each other's nerves sometimes and often argue, we have fun too.

I am very interested in commonly used expressions that seem to make very little sense. They are called idioms. Ones that spring to mind in relation to my family are 'Too many cooks spoil the broth' and 'Many hands make light work'. Rather than explain what each expression means throughout the book, I will make a list of the ones I have used and their meanings in the back. It's a good ploy to ensure that you read on too! So if I write some obscure sentence in the middle of a chapter – turn to the back of the book.