

Chris Cooke is a 34 year old accountant working in London and living in Folkestone with his wife (me) and one yearold daughter. Chris has been wearing his filters for over a year now and they are part of every day life, though you would never catch him without his filters on, even going to the toilet in the middle of the night! So how did it all happen? Well, it all came to a head the day before Christmas Eve, 2006, driving to my parents house to drop off Christmas presents, me singing away to the radio and I turned to see Chris in the passenger seat looking sad and upset. I stopped singing and asked what was wrong and he said he couldn't cope any more. "What do you mean" I asked and then he explained. Chris felt the world was coming at him, everything kept moving, he was feeling sick and hated going to unfamiliar places, especially if they had bright lights. A week after this, having talked over and over about what was happening we started looking on the internet and researching Chris' symptoms.

As Chris has Aspergers Syndrome we started there, but could only find support and help for children. He then came across Irlen Syndrome. Chris went through the check list and had almost every single one of the symptoms suggested, could be a sign of Irlen so we rang the doctors. Two days later Chris got an appointment and we discussed what we had found. The doctors did not recognise Irlen Syndrome and although he looked it up on the internet while we were there, could not help.....

As I am a teacher I knew a child at school had Irlen Syndrome and wore filters, so I traced the child' parents and asked if they had a contact number. That is how Chris got his initial screening, the screening that would change our lives and the life of our unborn daughter forever. Before finding out and getting filters for his Irlen Syndrome Chris was a typical man on the outside but inside everyday was hard work and heavy going. From a young age Chris was a competitive runner but as he go older it became harder and harder to concentrate on his running when "the world was coming at me" the pavement moved like an ocean and trees and building would come at him as he ran. The world became too scary to run so he gave up a promising running passion and, as with many of the things Chris liked, hid from it. Now since having his filters Chris has started up running again and found it a relaxing and enjoyable experience, so much so that he has started to run competitively and hopes to run the London Marathon next year. Chris now describes it as ' the world now stays still and the only thing moving is me'.

Living in Folkestone and working in London the journey isn't pleasant for anyone, but Chris used to describe his journey to and from work as hell, when you listen to the details of the lights flicking and chairs flying at you, patterns of the seats swimming around in front of your eyes and the people coming from nowhere, I think it truly was. Chris would get home from work most days with a head-ache and throw up, his eyes would always be very red and sore. Now Chris still doesn't enjoy his travel to work but with his filters everything is how it should be, and this is useful time he uses to study for promotion at work and reading. Studying and reading sound like simple things everyone can do, but when you have to fold a newspaper into tiny parts to read it you can understand the joy this brings and now Chris likes to hold the broadsheet as wide as possible to take it all in (a little extreme and annoying but what a change).

In 2006 we got married and as we planned to have a family we decided Chris should learn to drive. Sundays from then on were awful, Chris hated driving and had no perception of where the car was on the road and cars seemed to come at him. We now know what a danger Chris would have been to himself and others and thank goodness he recognised something wasn't

right and said. Since Chris has had his filters he has been driving and is amazed that everything seems a lot simpler and is going to be starting his lessons up again soon.

When we had our daughter in 2007 we were very grateful for Chris' filters and he feels without them he would not have been able to cope. He says that without his filters he would not be able to look after her, change her nappy or push the pram. But with them he is a fantastic Dad. Chris' filters have helped in so many different areas of our lives it is hard to share them all but being able to wash up without five breaks, mow the grass without the blades of grass and trees coming at you and no longer being 'scared of heights' as everything moved when he looked at it. All this stopping has changed our lives. The initial assessment was a little scary as we had no idea what would happen, it was also an emotional time to openly admit to these problems for the first time. The full assessment was amazing, Chris describes it as 'The day I opened my eyes and saw the world the way everyone else see it'. The process is very exciting and clever and to watch your husbands' face go from sheer fear, looking at a picture, to smiling was a moment I will never forget. I just wanted to share with you one of the best things that has happened to our little family and hope that sharing our story may help someone else to 'see the world the way everyone else does'.