

# Russell Lehmann

Speaker, Author, Poet, Advocate

[www.TheAutisticPoet.com](http://www.TheAutisticPoet.com)



@Lehmann.Russell



@Autism\_Advocate\_



@Russell\_Lehmann



# Introduction: Who is Russell Lehmann?

- 28 years-old

- 2018 Reno-Tahoe “Most Outstanding Young Professional”

  - Archived in the Library of Congress

- Words have reached over 25 million people worldwide

  - Council Member, Autism Society of America

  - Board Member, Autism Coalition of Nevada

  - Youth Ambassador for the mayor of Reno, Nevada

- Former Member, Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities

  - Former Member, Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders

# This Is What Autism Looks Like for Me

## Age 7



- Began experiencing vicious meltdowns, panic attacks, depression and severe phobias
- Developed a severe speech impediment due to sucking my thumb every hour of every day

# **This Is What Autism Looks Like for Me**

## **Age 9**



- **Continued to experience meltdowns, panic attacks and severe phobias**
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) began to consume my livelihood, along with disturbing intrusive thoughts**

*Growing  
up?*



*I was a  
mess...*

# This Is What Autism Looks Like for Me

## Age 12



- Hospitalized for 5 weeks due to severe depression, anxiety and OCD
- Ordered to attend public school without receiving any support or accommodations from the school district

# This Is What Autism Looks Like for Me



- Spent the school day sleeping in the principal's office, being bullied whenever I would come into contact with others
- In 2003, at the age of 12, was finally diagnosed with autism at the University of Washington's Autism Center





baby steps...  
to big dreams.

# This Is What Autism Looks Like for Me

## Age 17



- Moved from Seattle, Washington to Reno, Nevada
- Attempted to grow my hair out, but failed miserably

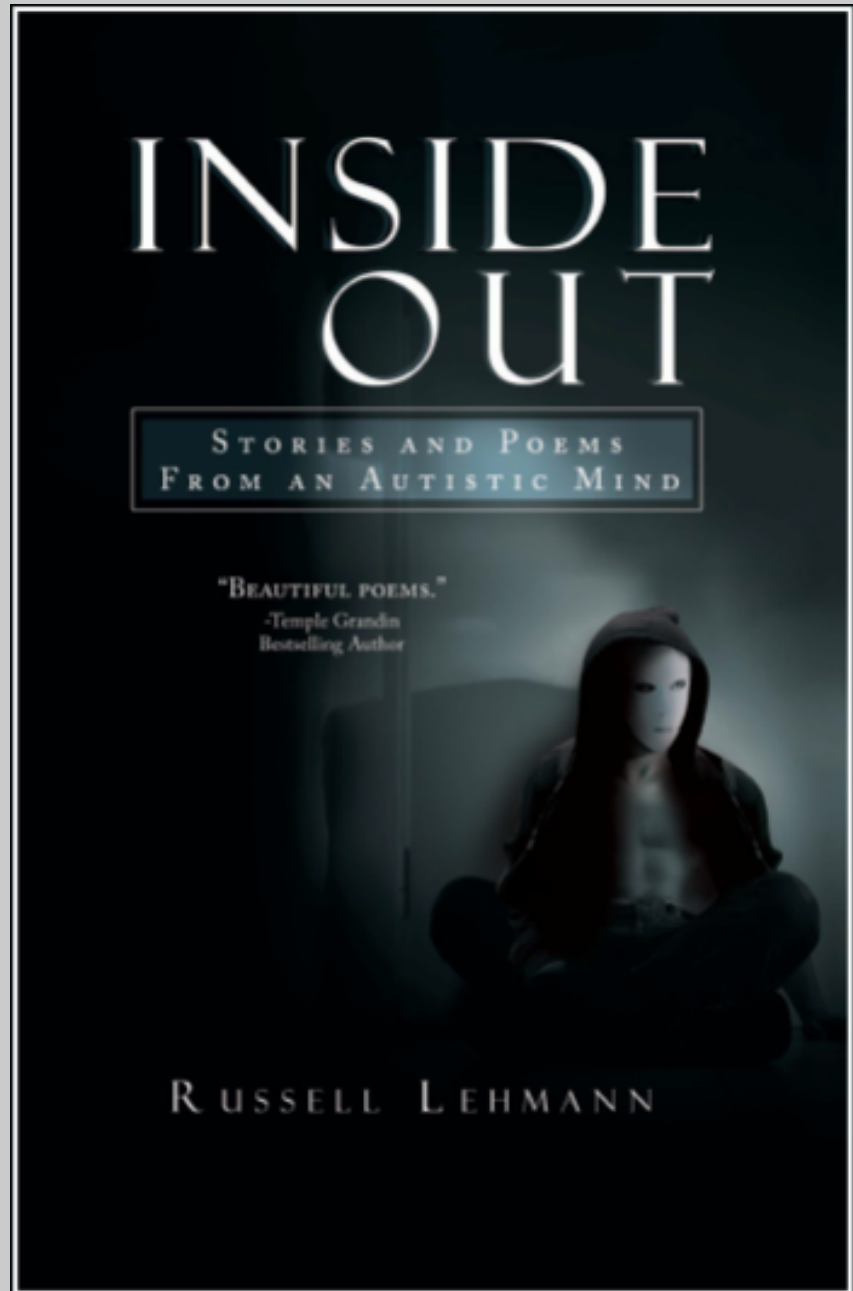
**2011  
(Age 20)**

•Honorable Mention at  
the 2012 NY Book Festival

•Featured in LA Times

•Read by Temple Grandin

•Won literary award in  
Vancouver, Canada in  
2013

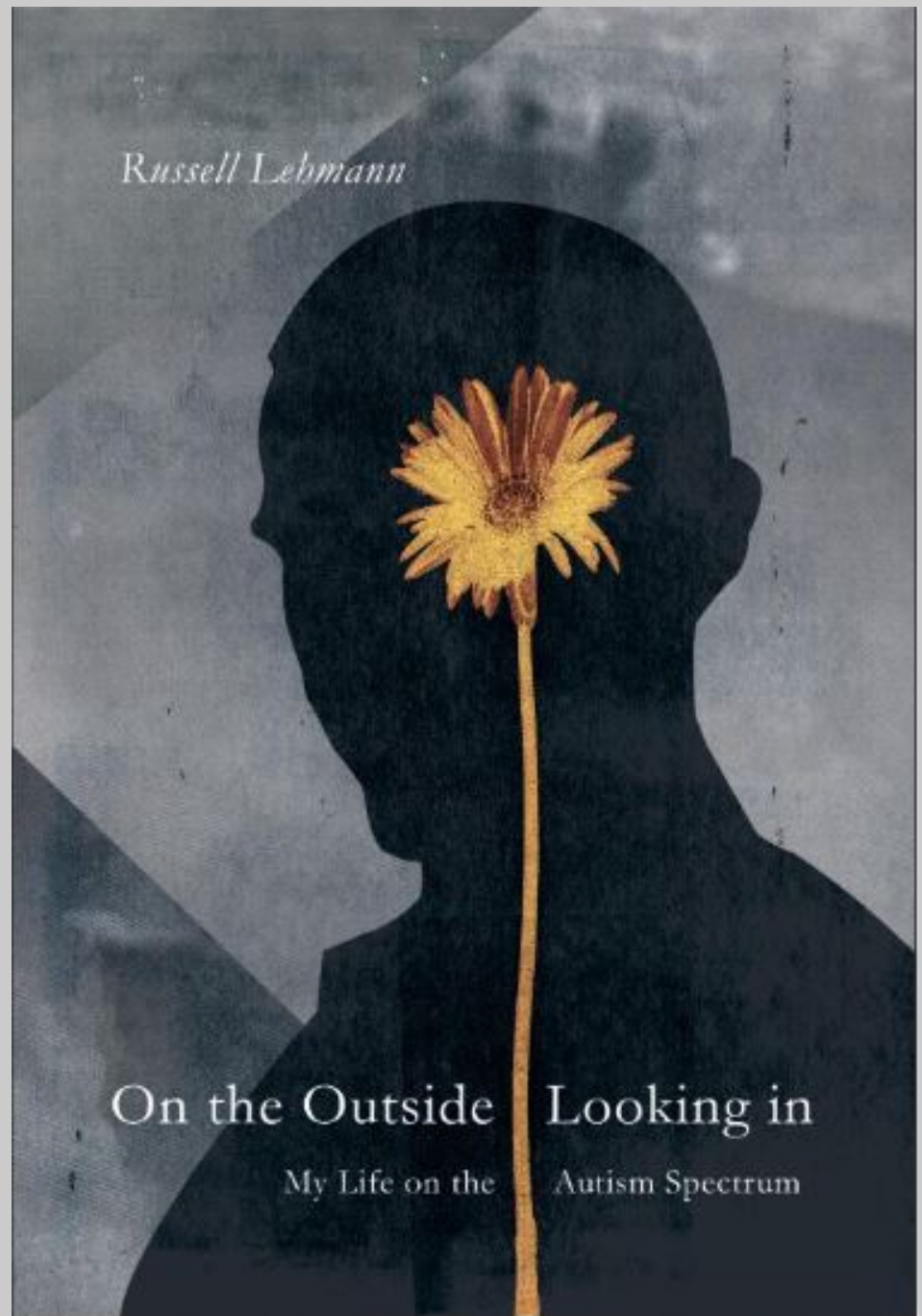


# ***On the Outside Looking In***

- 450 pages of utterly transparent view into world of autism and mental health
- Over 80 powerful and emotional poems
- Unique & intriguing layout
- Shared are lessons learned and insights gained

~~\$35~~

**\$30**



# **This Is What Autism Looks Like for Me**

## **Age 21**



- **Sunk into a severe depression with suicidal ideations**
- **Developed anorexia**
- **Didn't leave my house, shower or even change clothes for 56 straight days**
- **Voluntary admission to local inpatient psychiatric hospital**

Compassion  
is a verb.

~Thich Nhat Hanh

# #BeLikeDavid





“You yourself, as much  
as anybody in the entire universe,  
deserve your love and affection.”

- Buddha



# Heraclitus: The Weeping Philosopher



- **6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Pre-Socratic Greek philosopher who believed:**
  - **Everything in the universe came into being through strife**
  - **All things are in a state of flux, or change**
  - **“Nothing endures but change”**




**I may have a disability, but I *refuse*  
to let my disability have me!**



## PERSEVERANCE

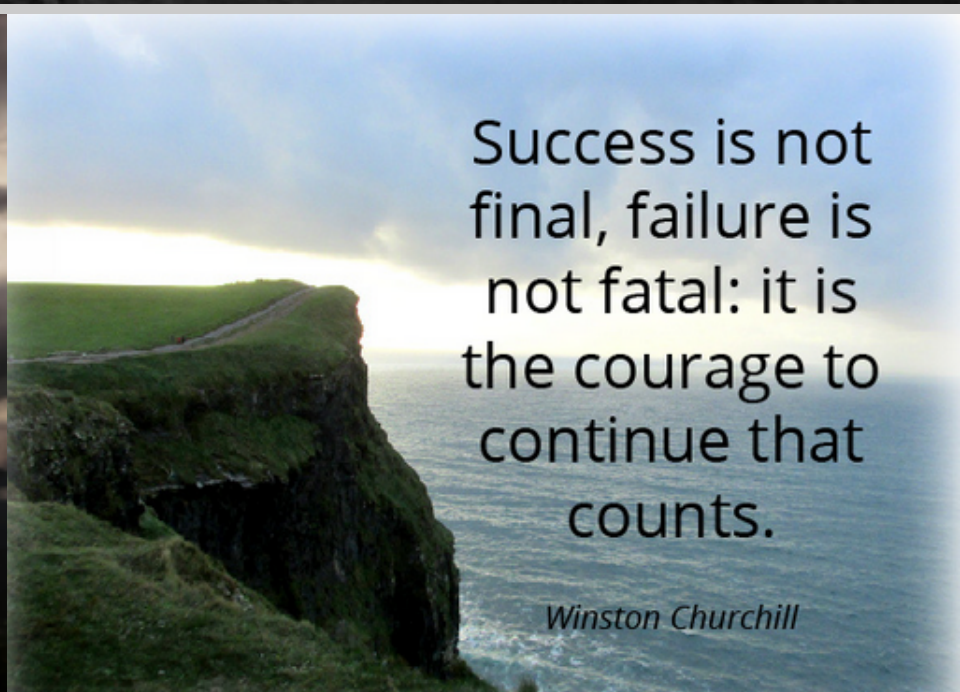
noun

1. steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement



Without fear there  
cannot be courage.

Christopher Paolini



Success is not  
final, failure is  
not fatal: it is  
the courage to  
continue that  
counts.

*Winston Churchill*

# Faith



***“Faith consist in believing when it is beyond the power of reason to believe”***

**-Voltaire**



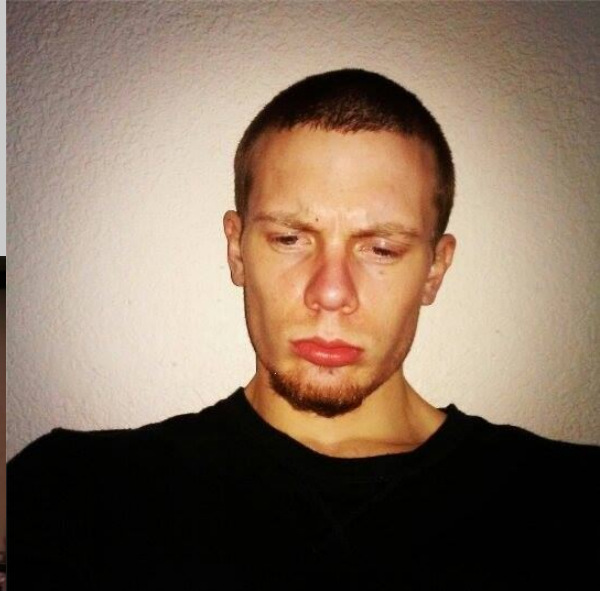
Hospitalized due to mental breakdown

# This Is What Autism Looks Like for Me



Meltdown in the parking lot before a speech

10 Minutes later presenting in front of 300 people



Severe depressive episodes and meltdowns on a weekly basis



•Continue to battle my autism, depression, anxiety, OCD and eating disorder on a daily basis

•Learned to embrace my challenges, and to not run from them, but *towards* them

# This Is What Autism Looks Like Now Age 28



**Travel across the country spreading hope, awareness and understanding by sharing my experiences, and the lessons I've learned from them.**

**I appreciate and encourage network referrals!**

**Please contact me at [www.TheAutisticPoet.com](http://www.TheAutisticPoet.com)**



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