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The A Word

Thania Hernandez

It's happening again. One moment, I'm able to speak with others, look my friends in the eye with a smile, and just enjoy myself. Then, it all becomes too much. Rays of light from the disco ball aim themselves towards my pupils, forcing me to look down to avoid facing blindness once again. The energetic beats from the stereo dance their way into my eardrums, sounding more like a deadly explosion than the gleeful melodies my friends love so much. The smallest whiff of a strong aroma causes me to violently cough, feeling as if someone's trying to suffocate me. All those people who just yesterday questioned why I considered myself to be different are now stepping away nervously, either unsure of what to do or just embarrassed to be around me. One of my friends tries to touch my shoulder, which only triggers waves of pain to rush through my nerves. This overwhelming feeling forces me to kneel down on the ground, becoming fully still in order to calm down. This is all part of a reality I find difficult to explain in words, something which others have tried to interpret for me without any comprehension of what I truly go through, or what I can do when I'm not in this terrible state. Yet, there's one word I can use as a starting point during these difficult explanations, and that word is autism.

The Eyes Have It
Paper and mixed media collage
Marge Dady