

# **AUTISM - MY TWIN VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY**

**By ADAM FEINSTEIN**

## **Abstract for the autism conference in Krasnoyarsk in November 2015**

In this presentation, the distinguished British author, poet, translator and autism researcher, **Adam Feinstein**, will outline the fascinating history of autism, tracing the changes and progress witnessed over the past eight decades, but also the many misunderstandings. Feinstein will make use of the interviews he has conducted in more than one hundred countries with the true pioneers - including Leon Eisenberg, Leo Kanner's closest colleague; Maria Asperger Felder, Hans Asperger's daughter; Lorna Wing, who introduced the concept of the 'autistic spectrum' as well as the term 'Asperger's syndrome'; Michael Rutter, Simon Baron-Cohen, Uta Frith, Rita Jordan, Patricia Howlin and Gary Mesibov. Feinstein will emphasise the primordial role played by the parents of autistic children - genuine heroes who opened the way to a deeper understanding of autism with their iron-willed struggle against social stigma and against the erroneous and harmful psychogenic ideas of Bruno Bettelheim. In this context, he will detail the history of the associations of parents of autistic children in all five continents, also using the interviews he carried out with these parent-pioneers. Feinstein will analyse the significant advances in scientific research made in recent decades (including genetic and neurological studies) and assess the greater social acceptance of autism in many parts of the world. At the same time, he will demolish some of the most persistent myths which still surround the condition today, citing some striking and telling examples of serious misconceptions and abuses (including some in First World nations). He will also depict the history of the principal educational methods and the most important neuropsychological theories. Apart from the many surprising discoveries he has made in his professional life as a researcher and autism historian, Feinstein will also pinpoint the lessons he has learned from his personal experiences of living with a son with autism – especially the importance of emphasising the skills and capacities of individuals with autism, rather than their deficits.