Have you ever felt a tingly sensation going down your spine when someone plays with your hair? Or when you were a child and your friend would trace letters on your back? Have you ever felt a wave of deep relaxation while watching someone focus intently on something else, like painting or cutting paper with scissors? What about while listening to nature sounds like a thunderstorm or wind blowing through trees?

These things are some common examples of ASMR triggers. ASMR (which stands for Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) is characterised by a pleasant tingly sensation that often starts in the scalp and flows down the neck and spine. It has been described as a euphoric, static-like feeling on the skin, similar to frission (when you get goosebumps from listening to a piece of music or watching a performance). On YouTube there are thousands of content creators who make ASMR videos with the sole purpose of eliciting this response. There is still limited evidence on how ASMR works, and why some people experience it and others don’t. However, despite the lack of scientific evidence, there is a massive amount of anecdotal evidence. The millions of people watch ASMR videos every day say that it helps them to relax, to fall asleep, to deal with anxiety, and more.

I first came across the term while looking for guided meditations on YouTube. When I started reading about it, I immediately recognised the sensation as something that I had experienced since I was a child, without realising there was a word for it. I remember constantly asking my dad to brush my hair, because I loved the sparkly, fizzy feeling that would wash down my back. Other childhood games that involved pretending to crack an egg on your head, or tracing letters on your back or arms, would also elicit this feeling. As an adult I experienced it at the opticians when a bright light was shone in my eyes, or when I was asked, “which lens is better, 1 or 2”.

ASMR videos became my go-to resource for helping me calm down from a panic attack or to quiet my overactive mind before going to bed. For years now I have been watching ASMR videos almost every day, and yet it remained something that I rarely shared or talked about with friends. I had wanted to start my own channel but the thought of putting myself out there was simply too terrifying. Over the summer, while looking for something to give myself purpose, I managed to put this fear of failure to the side and start my own ASMR channel. I recorded a video with just my phone propped up against the window in my bedroom and I uploaded it to YouTube that evening. The next morning I woke up to a handful of likes and comments, and 6 new subscribers. I began uploading several times a week and saw my views and subscribers slowly rise. My analytics page tells me that only a small percentage of my views come from the UK, and that the rest of my viewers come from
all over the world. In year which has been so isolating, things like that have made me feel connected. Now when I am watching YouTube or Netflix, I am aware of the fact that thousands of other people around the world are watching the exact same thing as me and that thought keeps me company. Both watching and creating ASMR has made the past year a little bit more bearable for me and for that I am grateful.

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