

ASPIA Newsletter – October 2014

"Providing support to partners of adults with Asperger's Syndrome for more than 10 years"

ASPIA's next Partner Support Group Meeting

This coming **Saturday 4 October 2014**

1.30pm for a 2pm start - 5pm.

The College of Nursing,
2nd Floor, 14 Railway Parade,
Burwood (Sydney)

\$10.00 per non-member, \$5.00 per member

Please bring something small
to share for afternoon tea.

Presentation by Psychologist Eleanor Gittins

Topic: "Is he depressed or what?"

Men, in general, are good at concealing depression, but in men with AS it can be even more obscure.

Eleanor will provide a guide for recognising depression in male partners and ways we can respond while still taking good care of ourselves.

Eleanor's presentations are always very informative and we're looking forward once again to a great educational and supportive session.

Non-AS partners only

ASPIA Meeting Dates for 2014

October 4	November 1
December 6	

ASPIA LUNCH CLUB

Anyone attending the support group meeting is welcome to come along earlier between 12noon & 1.00pm to join us for a coffee or bite to eat at the **LITTLE NEPAL Restaurant**

Shop C, 135 Burwood Road, Burwood (Sydney)

(From Burwood Station, go left & up the hill, a few shops past the Westpac Bank and then cross the road.)

Special Announcement

**ASPIA is hosting a Workshop with
Tony Attwood on 7 March 2015**

Topic: "Asperger's Syndrome in Couple Relationships"

Who can attend? NT & AS partners, couples, friends, family, professionals, anyone with an interest in relationships affected by Asperger's Syndrome.

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, Sydney CBD

Early bird rate available until 15 Dec 2014

To view the flyer and to register, please follow this link to the "events" page on the ASPIA website:

www.aspia.org.au/events.html

A well-stocked bookstall will be provided by Lorraine from "Resources at Hand".

Please help us advertise this workshop event by passing the flyer on to doctors, counsellors, psychologists, lawyers, social media, anyone or any organisation who could or should be interested. Thanks heaps.

Phone Counselling

Specialising in support for partners

Carol Grigg, OAM, Dip Counselling, Member ACA
Carol can provide validation for partners as well as helping partners explore ideas and options for responding to relationship challenges.

For appointments phone or text 0408 817 828

www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au

Grief Counselling

Epping (Sydney)

Liz Pash is a Social Worker, Counsellor and Educator, with understanding of relationships affected by Asperger's Syndrome

Contact Liz on 0498 964 275 or

Email lizpash@hotmail.com

For recommended Psychologists, see the "Professionals List" on ASPIA's website

OTHER PARTNER SUPPORT GROUPS in Australia

• Central Coast, NSW

This group will now meet **every 3 months**

Dates: 15 March, 21 June, 20 September.

Empire Bay Garden Nursery & Café,

Poole Crescent, Empire Bay

Contact ASPIA info@aspia.org.au

• Newcastle, NSW: Possibility of new group forming. Anyone interested contact ASPIA.

• Northern Rivers, NSW:

Phone Debbie on (02) 6676 0483

Email: northernriversasdnetwork@gmail.com

• Brisbane:

Queensland Asperger Partners' Support Group (QAPS):

Phone Helen on 0418 761 652

Email QAPS.group@gmail.com

• New - Toowoomba Asperger Partners' Support (TAPS Group)

Phone Sheena on 0418 790 216

Email the.taps.group@gmail.com

• New - Tiara, Wide Bay (Qld)

Phone Pat on 07 4193 9239

Email davies.pat@gmail.com

• Perth:

Phone Roz on (08) 9284 5252

Email: rozsdsk@iinet.net.au

• Melbourne:

Visit forum at <http://aspartneraus.org/vanilla/>

or email Melissa meraine@bigpond.net.au

• Melbourne, also Blackburn

<http://www.aspergersvic.org.au/partners/>

SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

For recommended Psychologists see the "Professionals List" on ASPIA's website.

Groups and other Contacts:

"Joining Hans" Group for Adults with AS

2nd Saturday every month Burwood, Sydney

Registrations essential: Contact Eleanor Gittins

Ph 0408 954 358 or janetgittins@hotmail.com

Support group for Adults with AS

North Shore, Sydney

Visit website for announcements www.jdpsy.org

or call Jeroen Decates on 0402 028 588

Forum-workshops for ASDian adults on selected Wednesday afternoons at Hamilton South (NSW), 1.30pm-4pm. Call Leigh 02 4966 1717 or email aut_s_pport@yahoo.com.au

ASPECT also has resources for adults email infoline@autismspectrum.org.au or phone 8977 8377

Aspect's Adult Social Group – for adults with Asperger's or high functioning autism. Contact Caroline on 0409 603 582.

adultsocialgroup@autismspectrum.org.au

For more information:

www.autismspectrum.org.au/adultsocialgroups

Workshops on Relationships, social skills, sexuality

Liz Dore www.relationshipsandprivatestuff.com

ASTEEN - Teen social/support group

includes yahoo group. Contact Adrienne De Morais on 0413 890 311, email

ademorais@optusnet.com.au or Keren Day on

0416 182 531, email kerend@live.com.au

Thought ...

Known for exceptions not exceptionality!

I'm wondering how many of us feel like our AS partners have an opinion of us that is different or opposed to who we believe we are, or the feedback we usually receive from other family members and friends who know us?

I've been wondering this for a while and have been analysing hard to try and work out how this could be happening. I found myself placing myself in my partner's shoes or trying to see things through his eyes (that good ol' empathy thing!) and trying to imagine things from his perspective. I know this empathy thing tends to be far too one-sided than would be necessary in a "healthy" relationship, but in this situation it wasn't about altering my responses yet again to defer to him or his needs, it was just about my "investigation".

We've discussed before the likelihood that they only seem to recognise a quality about

us if it's something they actually value or can measure on their own scale. This could mean that they may be blind to, or that they discount, the many qualities we possess and live out every day = blank space (from their perspective). Additional to this, they do not appear to recognise the part they are playing in every interaction or dynamic of a situation and do not seem to be able to tell when their behaviour is offensive or hurtful or inappropriate, in fact they may not be recognising that they are behaving at all, good bad or indifferent = blank space (from their perspective).

So what do they notice? Is it possible that they are only noticing the comments we make or behaviours we display when we are seeking to address their "unacceptable" or hurtful behaviours?

Are they building up an analysis of us only according to our responses or reactions to their hurtful or poor social behaviour? We painfully understand that certain behaviours or deficits are part and parcel of Asperger's Syndrome, but the impact on us cannot be minimized or rationalized away just by saying "it's how Asperger's Syndrome is".

To respond or react in some way to offensive behaviour is instinctive; logical and "normal" in relationships in an effort to eliminate harm and maintain healthy boundaries and respect. It is only right for us to want to address offences for the purpose of seeking change and improvement and an opportunity to grow and deepen the relationship, mutually. The ability of couples to do this respectfully is part of a loving, reciprocal "healthy" relationship, and love supplies the motivation to make changes to our behaviour, all within reason of course.

It's frightening to think that our efforts to improve the relationship might actually be undermining it. This hits us yet again with that awful sense of helplessness to nurture and grow this relationship even though we are investing our souls into it every moment

of every day. From our perspective our gestures of love and nurture far outweigh any negative. We know in our hearts that this is a fact, but perhaps in our partner's eyes this is not so.

It's confronting and devastating to think that our partner's filter is only allowing him/her to pick up negative feedback from us, and that this over-rides every other positive thing we do or say, and who we actually are.

Is this yet another gaping hole of loss, with the overwhelming sense of grief that comes with it? Every moment of every day we care and give and function relentlessly according to who we really are, our values, character, priorities, mode of loving, living, giving, and our partners benefit directly from these qualities, constantly. We cannot help being who we are, this is part of being true to our own integrity.

Once again, I am writing these things to acknowledge and validate the experience of partners. It is difficult to know what solutions or strategies to suggest, apart from just being aware. Our experience in the ASPIA support group is that partners are intelligent and constantly seeking to learn, so everything I write is with the hope that it adds to the knowledge base of each and everyone of us. Part of sharing.

But the message we can draw from this, once again, is to ensure you do not allow yourself to lose who you are because of this one relationship. It may be your primary relationship, but it doesn't need to lead to you depriving the rest of your family, your friends, your colleagues, the rest of the world, yourself, of the "you" that you really are. Continue to have the courage to live this.

Carol Grigg OAM
Dip Counselling