ASPERGER SYNDROME PARTNER INFORMATION AUSTRALIA (ASPIA) INCORPORATED

(Formerly GRASP Partner/Spouse Support Group)

"Mutual acknowledgement and understanding of the Asperger marriage experience"

NEWSLETTER – June 2009

Remembering Christine . . .

ASPIA has been deeply saddened by the passing of one of our dear members Christine on Tuesday 12 May 2009, following a long and distressing illness. Christine began attending support group meetings in February 2006 and we were moved and inspired by her determination to find emotional wholeness again within her personal circumstances. In the latter part of 2007 Christine shared with us that she'd been diagnosed with cancer. Although she fought long and hard, Christine was not able to triumph over this wretched disease. Apart from a few months when her treatment and discomfort was at its most extreme, Christine continued to attend our meetings even up until April this year. We will miss her gentleness and warmth, but the inspiration her courage has given us will continue.

♥

Our next ASPIA support group meeting will be this coming
Saturday 6 June, 2pm – 5pm

We recognise that this weekend is a public holiday but it's also our 6TH ANNIVERSARY
We want to celebrate with a special afternoon tea.
I'll bring a cake, but if others could bring something to share that would be great.

College of Nursing, 14 Railway Pde, Burwood, 2nd Floor.
$2 Members / $5 Non-Members (covers room hire, etc)

This meeting will be informal with a couple of segments planned, mixing reality and humour. One of our new members has asked if group members can share their own ideas about self-care. We'd also like to have a little tribute to Christine, and to Margaret her carer & friend.

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ASPIA Lunch Club dining together prior to ASPIA Meeting

Upstairs at the rear of the Avondale Hotel, Burwood Road, opposite Hungry Jacks.
Arrive any time between 12noon & 2pm. All welcome.

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ASPIA is a support group specifically focused on the recovery needs of the non-Asperger partner in a relationship. Please see page 2 of the Newsletter, and also our website for information about support groups specifically for adults with Asperger's Syndrome.

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ASPIA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

1st May marked the beginning of ASPIA's new Membership Year.

Membership Applications are invited from partners, ex-partners and others who identify as needing support, information and understanding from the non-Asperger perspective. This is not in any means to be seen as discriminatory, but focused on the needs of one group of people with a shared experience and who have no other safe or relevant place to discuss issues and gain insights (parents of adults with AS are also welcomed).
Membership is $55.00 per person/family per year and entitles members to discounts, library borrowing rights and inclusion on a peer support contact list.

Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2009 – APAC 09.
This Conference will be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Sydney,
20 – 22 August 2009. Theme is Connecting Today: Inspiring Tomorrow.
Visit the website www.apac09.org for further information.

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Support groups and resources for **adults with Asperger's Syndrome** are available. Please refer to items listed below or on our website at www.aspia.org.au
On Saturday 23 May Eleanor Gittins held an "Expression of Interest" meeting at Burwood for adults with Asperger's syndrome who would like to be involved in a group. This meeting went extremely well and the next meeting is planned for Saturday 11 July 2009. It is essential for anyone else who is interested to first contact Eleanor on 0408 954 358 or email her at janetgittins@hotmail.com .
Jeroen Decates is also commencing a group on the North Shore for adults with Asperger's Syndrome on Saturday 13 June. **Please see PDF file attached**.
Aspect has resources for adults: Email: infoline@autismspectrum.org.au or Phone: 8977 8377. For regional callers: 1800 069 978
Other groups and workshops may also be available from time to time through Julie Peterson, Noël Boycott or Liz Dore. See our website for contact details.

ASPIA Satellite Group in the Illawarra/Shoalhaven
Meets on the third Saturday of every second month in Berry NSW.
Next meeting will be Saturday 18 July 2009
2pm-5pm ($5/$2) Contact Sylvia 4295 7327 or email janetgittins@hotmail.com

Support Group for Adults with Asperger's Syndrome – Nowra area
Meets on the last Saturday of every month, 11.30am Nowra Central Library.
Contact Eleanor Gittins on 0408 954 358 or email janetgittins@hotmail.com

Liz Dore will be presenting a workshop for parents of teens
"A Practical Approach to Teenage Private Stuff"
Thursday 18 June, 10am–12.30pm or 6pm–8.30pm.
Woodstock Community Centre, 22 Church Street, Burwood (Parking avail via 93 Fitzroy St)
Cost is $60 per person, or $100 per couple. Enquiries email lizdore@bigpond.com

Some thoughts ...
I recently read the following comment in some Course notes I was studying:
"Being heard by another person greatly influences the way all of us think about ourselves and organise our lives." I couldn't help but think how true this is for us.

Lately, there has been much trouble and unrest in the online parts of the AS & NT communities. Groups like ours have been accused of stereotyping people with AS, being "hate" groups and "Cassandra Cults". Many incorrect assumptions have been made about what ASPIA is doing.

It is true that our group represents only troubled relationships, and that therefore we are only observing negative examples of AS/NT relationships. What is also true though is that the partners who attend our meetings have been struggling for years with a dynamic in their relationship that they did not understand and did not know how to respond to. The discovery of Asperger's Syndrome seems to have brought the clue that was missing, or removed the cork from the bottle, and many are now finding that they are beginning to be able to emerge from the tangle of confusion that has characterised their marital relationship and family life.

We are not blaming all the relationship problems on the partner who has Asperger's Syndrome. In virtually every case they have not been aware of Asperger's Syndrome either and have struggled with their own confusion. Experience has shown us that once the non-AS partner is believed and validated they are then emotionally able to explore their own issues as well. We believe that awareness begins to make the difference. Then with the right information and support, combined with mutual participation to find solutions, many NT/AS couples can begin their own journey towards a more mutually satisfying level of fulfilment within the relationship. This requires honesty and a desire for growth and change by both partners, not just the non-AS partner.