

# **ASPERGER SYNDROME PARTNER INFORMATION AUSTRALIA (ASPIA) INCORPORATED**

(Formerly **GRASP** Partner/Spouse Support Group)

*"Mutual acknowledgement and understanding  
of the Asperger marriage experience"*

## **NEWSLETTER – September 2009**

### **Our next ASPIA support group meeting will be this coming**

**Saturday 5 September, 2pm – 5pm**

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

**Psychologist Janina Szyndler** will be presenting  
**"Healthy Families – Keeping Children in Mind"**

**ASPIA Lunch Club dining together prior to ASPIA Meeting**

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

ASPIA is a support group specifically focused on the support & recovery needs of the non-Asperger partner in a relationship. Please see page 3 of the Newsletter, and also our website for information about support groups specifically for adults with Asperger's Syndrome.

### **August has been an "event-ful" month**

**Seminar on Girls & Women with Asperger's Syndrome – Brisbane 7 & 8 August**

Several from ASPIA were able to attend this seminar, and found it quite eye-opening and inspirational.

Psychologists Tony Attwood and Michelle Garnett were the keynote speakers, but four women with Asperger's Syndrome also presented with great insight and wisdom. Females are "slipping under the radar", seeming to be able to hide and camouflage better, and may have the ability to analyse and dissect social interaction and then act it out. It seems that they may experience more distress with sensory issues so that it obstructs their potential, and be more sensitive to emotional atmospheres.

In the same way that boys with AS have been likened to "little professors", girls with AS may be the "philosophers". During this seminar it became quite clear to me that when women with AS accept and embrace their own AS in a positive and constructive way they are very capable and motivated teachers, encouraging understanding and solutions.

**Workshop for Educators and Parents in Campbelltown on 13 August – Tony Attwood & Sue Larkey**

600 people gathered for this event, which was also very moving to be a part of.  
(This workshop inspired this month's Newsletter "Thought", page 3)

**Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2009 – APAC 09**

For most of this year our newsletters have been advertising this event, which was held just a week or so back on 20 – 22 August at the Convention Centre, Darling Harbour (Sydney). I was privileged to be able to attend each day, one day as a delegate and two days as part of a volunteer team of Conference Hosts, wearing a green shirt and cap and providing assistance and guidance for the 1600 delegates who attended over the 3 days. I felt proud to be Australian and proud to witness the passion and motivation of the team from ASPECT and every other organisation and speaker represented at this event.

**APAC 11 will be held in Perth in September 2011.**

When the organising Committee of APAC 09 were calling for papers last year, on behalf of ASPIA I submitted an Abstract titled "Improved Awareness within Care Systems may help prevent Family Breakdown". My Abstract was accepted, to be presented as a Poster display on the Friday of the conference. To accompany the Poster I prepared a hand-out which we have now made available on the website, calling it the

**ASPIA Advocacy Leaflet:** [http://www.aspia.org.au/pdf/2009/APAC\\_09\\_Poster\\_Improved\\_Awareness.pdf](http://www.aspia.org.au/pdf/2009/APAC_09_Poster_Improved_Awareness.pdf)

I have also produced an **extended version** which covers the concerns more comprehensively:

[http://www.aspia.org.au/pdf/2009/ASPIA\\_Advocacy\\_Leaflet\\_Extended\\_Version.pdf](http://www.aspia.org.au/pdf/2009/ASPIA_Advocacy_Leaflet_Extended_Version.pdf)

What I am hoping is that these two leaflets will be useful for advocating for ourselves and our families with health professionals and others who need to know what can happen when AS is undetected in a family situation, and where no supports are in place.

ASPIA INC

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## **ASPIA's list of self-care suggestions**

**Available now on our website at**

<http://www.aspia.org.au/pdf/2009/ASPIASelf-CareSuggestions6June09.pdf>

**Applications for Membership of ASPIA INC 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.

**We appreciate your financial support, even if you can't attend meetings**

## **ASPIA Satellite Group (Partner support) in the Illawarra/Shoalhaven**

Meets on the third Saturday of every second month in Berry NSW.

Next meeting will be Saturday 19 September 2009

2pm-5pm (\$5/\$2) Contact Sylvia 4295 7327 or email [janetgittins@hotmail.com](mailto:janetgittins@hotmail.com)

## **Wendy Lawson**

During the closing session of the APAC Conference Tony Attwood referred affectionately to Wendy Lawson as a "wise elder of the Asperger Community". Wendy is a warm hearted, funny and insightful woman with Asperger's Syndrome and an amazing story – visit her website at <http://www.mugsy.org/wendy> .

Wendy has written quite a few books, and two that I'd like to recommend are: "Friendship" and "Sex, Sexuality and the Autism Spectrum". If you want to understand friendship, relationship and sexuality from the perspective and experience of someone with AS, these are great.

By request, Wendy is presently working on writing an information sheet specifically for ASPIA.

## **Additional support through ASPIA**

For anyone who is unable to get to a support group meeting, or who would like an opportunity for a personal "chat", we are now offering this additional service for a small fee.

Please visit the "contact us" page on our website for a description of this service, availability and fee.

For those who like to read, one of our Members passed through two very interesting books recently for me to consider. I'm not going to make a comment because I have only glanced through them, but my curiosity is aroused. They are "Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking your life back when someone you care about has Borderline Personality Disorder" by Paul Mason and Randi Kreger, and "It's all YOUR fault: 12 Tips for managing people who blame others for everything" by Bill Eddy. The tips and solutions in both books sound like they could be very helpful for us. Anyone read these books already, or have any comments?

Don't forget to see "**Adam**" the movie before its season finishes. Cinemas include Dendy Quays, Hoyts Broadway, Cremorne Orpheum, etc. See major newspapers.

... remember to "plan around the reality" ...  
(self-care suggestions)

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Interesting comment from book “Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking your life back when someone you care about has Borderline Personality Disorder” by Paul Mason and Randi Kreger ...

“What’s left when we must consistently walk on eggs with someone? Superficial small talk, strained silences, lots of tension. When safety and intimacy are gone from a relationship, we get used to acting. We pretend that we’re happy when we’re not. We say that everything is fine when it isn’t. What used to be a graceful dance of caring and closeness becomes a masked ball in which the people involved are hiding more and more of their true selves.”

**Support groups and resources for adults with Asperger’s Syndrome**

Please refer to items listed below or on our website at [www.aspia.org.au](http://www.aspia.org.au)

**Support group for Adults with AS – Burwood, Sydney**

Next meeting Saturday 12 September 2009 then Saturday 14 November 2009  
(no meeting in October)

Contact Eleanor Gittins on 0408 954 358 or email [janetgittins@hotmail.com](mailto:janetgittins@hotmail.com)

**Support Group for Adults with AS – Nowra area, NSW**

Meets on the last Saturday of every month, 10.30am Nowra Central Library.

Contact Eleanor Gittins on 0408 954 358 or email [janetgittins@hotmail.com](mailto:janetgittins@hotmail.com)

**Support group for Adults with AS – North Shore, Sydney**

Visit website for announcements [www.jdpsy.org](http://www.jdpsy.org)

Or call Jeroen Decates on 0402 028 588

Aspect also has resources for adults: Email: [infoline@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto: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.

Thought ...

**“Without an understanding of Asperger’s Syndrome  
people make a moral judgment”**

Tony Attwood, 13 August 2009

I was present when Tony Attwood made this comment during one of his recent presentations, and it has continued to resound through my whole being ever since. He was referring particularly to what happens to people with Asperger’s Syndrome when society doesn’t understand them or their behaviours.

On thinking it through, I believe this can also apply to the experience of a partner or parent or other family member. People not only judge the person with AS, they judge family members as having contributed to or caused or neglected to prevent the behaviour in some way, and the family member is made to share the shunning and isolation that the AS person experiences. Ironically, then when we’ve tried to get help or tell our story we’re disbelieved, and judged as being malicious or neurotic.

Increased awareness of Asperger’s Syndrome within society is so vitally important. It makes all the difference when behaviours and situations are viewed through the “lens” of understanding of Asperger’s Syndrome.

... Carol Grigg

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