

ASPIA Newsletter July 2012

Mutual understanding of the Asperger Marriage experience

ASPIA Partner Support Group Meeting (Sydney) – this Saturday 7th July

Psychologist Renee Ferris will be attending and facilitating a general discussion time around the concepts of the 5 Love Languages, understanding the differences between partners in their approaches to relationships and how to navigate this as best as possible.

Date: Saturday 7 July, 2012

Time: 2.00pm – 5.00pm

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

\$10.00 per non-member, \$5.00 per member
Please bring something to share for afternoon tea.

(Group members, please remember that our meetings are not suitable for your AS partner, unless we advertise that specifically.)

About Renee:

Renee has been deeply interested in Asperger's Syndrome for some years now and previously attended ASPIA meetings because of her interest. We are excited to invite Renee to come back now and facilitate a discussion time for us. Renee and her husband Ken (who will also attend) are co-directors of Assist Psychology (Penrith & Blaxland)

www.assistpsychology.com.au

Lunch Club prior to support group

LITTLE NEPAL restaurant, Shop C,
135 Burwood Road, Burwood (Sydney)
Arrive any time between 12noon & 2pm.
All welcome. (Directions: From Burwood Station, go left & up the hill, a few shops past the Westpac Bank and then cross the road.)

Remaining ASPIA Meeting Dates for 2012

July 7	August 4
September 1	October 6
November 3	December 1

Central Coast Group (NSW)

3rd Saturday of the month

Next meeting is on 21st July at 2pm

Empire Bay Garden Nursery & Cafe

Poole Crescent, Empire Bay.

They've decided they'll try for a sunny day this month!

ASPIA has a "public" facebook page "Like" us to join

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Aspia-Inc-Asperger-Syndrome-Partner-Information-Australia-Inc/293809577377381>

ASPIA's Handbook for Partner Support has now been created into an eBook which can be downloaded immediately and costs less.

Follow this link:

<http://www.lulu.com/content/e-book/aspia-handbook-for-partner-support/12936851>

Description of the Handbook: This book contains the best support group information available for partners of adults with Asperger's Syndrome & is suitable for professionals as well who are seeking to effectively support partners, couples & other family members. It includes exhaustive lists and notes collected from support group meetings & workshops spanning more than 10 years. Information promotes understanding and covers the characteristics of AS, what a partner may experience, how AS affects a relationship and family, how to describe AS to others, suggestions and strategies for managing a relationship affected by AS, suggestions for improving self-care, essential tips for getting through conflict, as well as essays, poems & thoughts that provide much needed validation as well as comfort for partners. Book also includes samples & guides for conducting partner support group meetings. Essential & reliable information.

The paperback is still available of course, if you like a book in your hands like I do!

<http://www.lulu.com/content/paperback-book/aspia-handbook-for-partner-support/12781936>

ASPIA Membership: Don't forget to consider joining ASPIA as a financial member.

This supports our ongoing work, and is greatly appreciated. Membership entitles you to half-price meeting entry, library borrowing rights and also inclusion in our private facebook group if you like using facebook and want to connect with other partners between meetings. Annual membership fee is \$55.00 which can be paid by online transfer to ASPIA INC, Commonwealth Bank, BSB 062 340 Account 1018 1011 (please include your surname) or "send money" from your PayPal account to our PayPal email address which is info@aspia.org.au. Cheques ok by post, or cash/credit card at meetings. Donations are also always gratefully received.

Other Partner Support Groups in Australia

Brisbane:

Asperger Partners Support Group (APSG):

Phone Helen on 0418 761 652

Email qaps.group@gmail.com

Brisbane/rural Qld:

Visit www.aspiepartners.com

Gold Coast:

Phone Tricia on 0413 085 174

Email tricia.alaska@yahoo.com.au

Northern Rivers, NSW:

Phone Debbie on (02) 6676 0483

Email: northernriversasdnetwork@gmail.com

Central Coast, NSW:

Third Saturday every month (see top of this column)

Contact ASPIA info@aspia.org.au

Perth:

Phone Roz on (08) 9284 5252

Email: rozsdesk@iinet.net.au

Perth:

Email aspiepartnerswa@hotmail.com

Melbourne:

Visit forum at www.aspartneraus.org

or email Melissa Raine meraine@bigpond.net.au

Adelaide:

Phone Heike Haffer on 0431 039 136

Email heikehaffer@hotmail.com

ASPIA Meetings: Information for adults with Asperger's Syndrome

ASPIA meetings are only suitable for non-Asperger individuals. ASPIA does not have the expertise to responsibly offer education or support to adults with Asperger's Syndrome.

Individuals with Asperger's Syndrome are advised to see below for a listing of groups specifically set up to address the needs of those with Asperger's Syndrome. Thank you for your understanding.

Counselling for Partners

By Skype, Email, Phone (some face-to-face appts available in Syd or Melb from time to time)

Carol Grigg, Dip Counselling, Member ACA,

Grad Memb AIPC. Flexible appointment times.

www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au

"Like" my facebook page

www.facebook.com/carolgriggcounselling

Clinical Psychologist Steve Den Kaat has been added to ASPIA's recommended list.

Ph: 0402 274 465

Web www.diverseinds.com.au

Email admin@diverseinds.com.au

Aspect's report on the "We Belong" study for adults with Asperger's and high functioning autism is now available. This report was featured in our last newsletter, but the report link has been updated. Download the report at http://www.aspect.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=632:people-with-autism-say-qwe-belongq&catid=94:media-releases

The following is a list of Support groups and resources for adults with Asperger's Syndrome

"Joining Hans" Group for Adults with AS

2nd Saturday every month Burwood, Sydney

Registrations essential: Contact Eleanor Gittins

on 0408 954 358 or email

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

Social group in Sydney for diagnosed adults

(co-ordinated by ASPECT) Contact Annie Sloggett on 0409 603 582 or asloggett@autismspectrum.org.au

Workshops on Relationships, social skills, sexuality

Liz Dore www.relationshipsandprivatestuff.com

ASTEEN - Teen social/support group

includes yahoo group Contact Christine Ayo christinefayo@gmail.com Ph: 0469 577 723 or Lyn Starr randlstarr@bigpond.com Ph: 0408 445 019

Sue Larkey often holds workshops with Tony Attwood and her website has lots of useful tips www.suelarkey.com

The Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE at Hornsby is offering the program “**Social & Occupational Communication skills for young adults with Asperger’s Syndrome**” in 2nd Semester. Email Simon.Piggott@det.nsw.edu.au

At ASPIA’s meeting last month we enjoyed a wonderful presentation by Lisa Abel on her research on Stress & Coping. Lisa has asked if we can now participate in her next research project on the topic:

NT-AS Relationship Dyads

Information: Dr Lisa Abel & Dr Rebekah Doley from Bond University (Australia) are conducting new research, this time into the relationship experiences of both partners within neurotypical – Asperger relationship dyads. Specifically, the aim of the research is to investigate the extent to which each partner perceives there to be a match between their expectations about how relationships function and the reality of their own relationship. Questions regarding the match between relationship ideals and relationship reality, partner ideals and partner reality, as well as conflict resolution ideals and conflict resolution reality are the focus of Part 1 of the research program. The second component of the research program (Part 2) focuses specifically on partners’ experiences with relationship counselling. Specifically, we are seeking to investigate couples’ experiences with

counselling when that counselling has taken place with a psychologist.

The inclusion criteria for Part 1 of the research program is that the AS partner have a formal diagnosis of AS or there has been a formal recognition by a mental health care professional (e.g., psychologist; psychiatrist) that the partner meets most of the diagnostic criteria for AS.

The inclusion criterion for Part 2 of the research program is that the individual has attended therapy with a psychologist either on their own or with their partner specifically for relationship counselling / assistance.

Part 1 of the research includes a questionnaire and interview component; partners can complete one or both components. Part 2 of the research is an interview only; either partner may complete this component.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Dr Lisa Abel via email (label@bond.edu.au) or alternatively access the questionnaire for Part 1 using the following URL:

<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=147628>

Newsletter thoughts ...

I’ve had a few thoughts this last month (an understatement of course!). Asperger’s Syndrome creates “topics for talking” almost constantly. That’s why we can never stop talking in our support group meetings!

My attention was drawn to that matter of emotions and reactions again recently. Particularly focusing on what we’ve learned in our meetings about the person with AS not actually recognizing the emotions they are experiencing, or even recognizing that they are experiencing emotion, and certainly not being able to pinpoint or describe which emotion they are feeling. It’s quite sobering to learn that this is the reality.

Sad that they can’t experience and enjoy “surfing” (Julie Peterson’s term) their emotional experiences like NT individuals can. Not that we necessarily enjoy the experience of every emotion though, as none of us like to feel angry or sad or afraid, etc. But once one learns that there are those who don’t recognize what they are feeling, one becomes grateful for the capacity to feel and to know what one is feeling

and to be able to express it appropriately for the context.

The reason I'm writing about it though is because I believe we (as partners) are probably fairly accurately recognizing the emotions that our AS partners are experiencing because of the behaviours and attitudes they are expressing. We read their body language. Body language expressed as irritation, intolerance, anger, frustration, a need to correct, instruct & control, avoidance, shutting us down, etc. Many of these expressions probably indicate high anxiety on the part of the person with AS, but upon suggestion by us that they seem anxious or up tight, we are met with denial, and often the accusation that we're criticizing or attacking them, yet again.

Sorry to let you down, but I don't really know what to suggest. We often just absorb the expressions hoping they'll pass, knowing that if we comment it will probably just make it worse. So many days and special experiences end up being wasted by this. So hard not to feel let down, and disappointed.

I wondered about having some small cards in one's handbag that we can just discreetly put in front of our partners rather than saying the words to their face. Cards with words like "You seem anxious", "You seem angry", "Am I annoying you?", "Is something bothering you?", etc. Maybe offer a blank card for a response. We could send a text, to which they could reply. I know it seems so unnecessary if it were just up to us, but I know we're always looking for more effective ways to avoid conflict or meltdown, and I'm always thinking, as I know most other partners are too, every moment of every day.

I know for sure that in most cases they will deny that they are feeling the way we suggest, but perhaps it might get them thinking, and with practice they might become a little more aware of what their body language reactions mean to those around them. Carol.