

# ASPIA Newsletter May 2012

*Mutual understanding of the Asperger Marriage experience*

## **ASPIA Partner Support Group Meeting (Sydney) – Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May**

### **Learning and Memory in Asperger Syndrome**

Our wonderful web developer [Nola Norris](#) will do a recap on what she has presented previously and add some new stuff. Nola is a great educator, and her presentations are very well received.

Date: Saturday 5 May, 2012

Time: 2.00pm – 5.00pm

**The College of Nursing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
14 Railway Parade, Burwood (Sydney)

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

### **Biographical Information for Nola**

Nola Norris has had a varied career in education as a general primary teacher, K-10 Music teacher, casual university lecturer, pre-school music teacher, university administrator, and K-12 ICT Integrator. She is studying a doctorate of education investigating learning and cognition in people with Asperger syndrome. She hopes to develop a theoretical framework for teacher professional development to transform understanding of the unique learning needs and strengths of gifted students who have Asperger syndrome. In 2011, she had an article published in the Australasian Journal of Gifted Education titled "Twice Exceptional: Gifted students with Asperger syndrome" and won a scholarship for a study tour to the United States where she presented the theoretical framework for her research at a conference of educators and neuroscientists in Boston.

### **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.)

## **ASPIA Meeting Dates for 2012**

May 5	June 2
July 7	August 4
September 1	October 6
November 3	December 1

### **Central Coast Group (NSW)**

3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month

No meeting in May.

Next meeting is on 16<sup>th</sup> June at 2pm

Empire Bay Garden Nursery  
Poole Close, Empire Bay.

## **Other Partner Support Groups in Australia**

### **Brisbane:**

**Asperger Partners Support Group (APSG):** Phone Helen on 0418 761 652

Email [gaps.group@gmail.com](mailto:gaps.group@gmail.com)

### **Brisbane/rural Qld:**

Visit [www.aspiepartners.com](http://www.aspiepartners.com)

### **Gold Coast:**

Phone Tricia on 0413 085 174

Email [tricia.alaska@yahoo.com.au](mailto:tricia.alaska@yahoo.com.au)

### **Northern Rivers, NSW:**

Phone Debbie on (02) 6676 0483

Email: [northernriversasdnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:northernriversasdnetwork@gmail.com)

### **Central Coast, NSW:**

Third Saturday every month (see top of this column)

Contact ASPIA [info@aspia.org.au](mailto:info@aspia.org.au)

### **Perth:**

Phone Roz on (08) 9284 5252

Email: [rozsdesk@iinet.net.au](mailto:rozsdesk@iinet.net.au)

### **Perth:**

Email [aspiepartnerswa@hotmail.com](mailto:aspiepartnerswa@hotmail.com)

### **Melbourne:**

Visit forum at

<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/aspartnr/index.html>

and email Melissa Raine from forum homepage.

### **Adelaide:**

Phone Heike Haffer on 0431 039 136

Email [heikehaffer@hotmail.com](mailto:heikehaffer@hotmail.com)

## **ASPIA is saddened to announce**

that Ingrid, a long-time group member struggling with cancer, passed away on Tuesday 13 March 2012.

**New! \*Hot off the Press\*****ASPIA's Handbook for Partner Support**

This is our very own collection of notes, lists, essays, group brain-stormings & information gathered from partner experiences and contributions over the twelve years since ASPIA's founding activities and built on the wonderful professional support we've received from the Psychologists acknowledged in the book. This is the story of partners and partner support, and should be considered as an essential companion for the journey, with validating comments on every page and as many suggestions as we're aware of thus far.

There is something validating in just holding this book, like it makes the intangible tangible, belonging exclusively to us as a sisterhood (& a few brothers!). The following link will take you to the Lulu webpage where you can preview the Table of Contents, and purchase the book.

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

**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.

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

**"Joining Hans" Group for Adults with AS**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday every month** Burwood, Sydney  
 Registrations essential: 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

**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](mailto:aut_s_pport@yahoo.com.au)

**ASPECT** also has resources for adults email [infoline@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto:infoline@autismspectrum.org.au) or phone 8977 8377

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**Social group in Sydney for diagnosed adults**  
 (co-ordinated by ASPECT) Contact Annie Sloggett on 0409 603 582 or [asloggett@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto:asloggett@autismspectrum.org.au)

**Workshops on Relationships, social skills, sexuality**  
 Liz Dore [www.relationshipsandprivatestuff.com](http://www.relationshipsandprivatestuff.com)

**ASTEEN - Teen social/support group**  
 includes yahoo group  
 Contact Christine Ayo [christinefayo@gmail.com](mailto:christinefayo@gmail.com)  
 Ph: 0469 577 723 or Lyn Starr  
[randlstarr@bigpond.com](mailto: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](http://www.suelarkey.com)

Next month ...

**ASPIA's June Meeting – Saturday 2nd June  
Presentation of Research Findings – Dr Lisa Abel  
& Dr Vicki Bitsika, Bond University**

**Stress, coping, and resilience: An investigation into the well being of partners of individuals with Asperger's syndrome: Research Findings**  
 Recently, Dr Lisa Abel & Dr Vicki Bitsika from Bond University (QLD) conducted research into the mental health outcomes of individuals who are in intimate relationships with someone who has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome (AS). The aim of the research was to investigate the influence of fatigue, resilience, and stress on depression and anxiety in partners of individuals with Asperger's. The results of this research indicate that there are significant mental health outcomes for partners in neurotypical – AS relationships.

The presentation of research findings at the ASPIA meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> June will be an overview of the questionnaire and interview data and will focus specifically on the changes in physical and mental health that participants report experiencing within the context of their relationships.

**Counselling for Partners**  
 By Skype, Email, Phone (some face-to-face available)  
 Carol Grigg, Dip Counselling, Member ACA (Level 1), Grad Memb AIPC. Some weekend & evening appts.  
[www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au](http://www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au)

**Clinical Psychologist Steve Den Kaat has been added to ASPIA's recommended list.**  
 Web [www.diverseminds.com.au](http://www.diverseminds.com.au) Ph: 0402 274 465  
 Email [admin@diverseminds.com.au](mailto:admin@diverseminds.com.au)

## **New Research Project – please participate** **Topic: NT-AS Relationship Dyads**

Dr Lisa Abel & Dr Rebekah Doley from Bond University (Australia) are conducting research 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](mailto:label@bond.edu.au)) or alternatively access the questionnaire for Part 1 using the following URL:  
<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=147628>.

### **SPELL Framework**

I recently saw this term "SPELL" when reading an advertisement for a workshop on Autism and Asperger's Syndrome in children. I googled SPELL and arrived at a site for the National Autistic Society in the UK.

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SPELL is a framework that has been developed for understanding and responding to the needs of individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

S = Structure

P = Positive (approaches & expectations)

E = Empathy

L = Low Arousal

L = Links

Rather than me trying to interpret what each of these points mean, you may like to read the article at <http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies-and-approaches/spell.aspx>

### **Newsletter Thoughts ...**

#### **The Flip Side of ability**

While reading our new Handbook during this past week, I had one of those light-bulb moments again.

ASPIA's primary purpose has been to bring information and support to partners to help us develop understanding of Asperger's Syndrome and how it's affecting our relationships. Of course, this has been with the aim of helping us cope better and manage the difficulties more effectively with less trauma. A few wry smiles.

What confronted me so brutally as I read this narration of our experiences was how our own abilities may actually now be disabling us and our understanding be disempowering us.

We may have come back to life as a result of discovering AS and having our life stories validated, and we've found some clarity in understanding the role that Aspergers is playing in our relationships, and some effectiveness in managing trouble spots.

But what does that understanding do now?

Does it just further kick into play all of our neurotypical qualities that extend mercy to those who seem less able, adaptability around the needs of one who seems more needy, flexibility around the inflexibility of one who seems stuck, compassion for one who seems more fearful, submission to one who seems to need to control, deference to one who insists more strongly, relinquishing of preferences to one whose preferences are far more prescribed?

Are we in danger of losing ourselves all over again?

What was instinct before is now prescribed as necessity, if we choose to stay.

Partners, it is absolutely reasonable to remember and value yourself. Carol, 30 April 2012.