

ASPIA Newsletter - February 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 1 February 2014**
2pm - 5pm.

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

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

ASPIA continues to be privileged to have wonderful speakers supporting our work.

For this meeting, **Clinical Psychologist Steve Den Kaat** will be attending.

Steve will teach us about basic **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)** principles and explain the relevance and usefulness of CBT in helping individuals with Asperger's Syndrome and their families.

Please bring something to share for afternoon tea.

Please Note: ASPIA meetings are offered to non-Asperger adults only.

ASPIA's aim is to provide an emotionally safe place for partners who need support and education from a non-Asperger perspective.

If you have AS and you attempt to attend an ASPIA meeting you will be refused entry.

There are dedicated groups and meetings available specifically for adults with AS.

ASPIA is not one of these.

See our website & newsletter for information about AS groups.

ASPIA Meeting Dates for 2014	
February 1	March 1
April 5	May 3
June 7	July 5
August 2	September 6
October 4	November 1
December 6	

ASPIA LUNCH CLUB

Anyone attending the support group meeting is welcome to come along earlier between 12noon & 1.30pm 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.)

2014 AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS LIST

The 2014 Australia Day Honours List named Carol Grigg as a recipient of the Order of Australia Medal for 'service to families affected by Asperger Syndrome'.

To celebrate the wonderful milestone of ASPIA's 10th Anniversary, unbeknownst to her, Carol was nominated for an Order of Australia Medal. The process of the nomination to the announcement can take 18 months or more, however, we were very chuffed to learn that Carol was to be named in the 2014 Honours List. With diverse support from an ASPIA Committee member, two of our psychologist mentors and Professor Tony Attwood as referees, the nomination had strong support. As it happened, Carol had already been independently nominated by two foundational ASPIA members so no wonder she was recognised by the Governor General's Office so quickly!

Our greatest thanks and heartiest congratulations to Carol Grigg, OAM, for all the support, friendship, understanding she has given to so many of us, locally, across Australia and around the world, turning her own life challenges into the opportunity to help hundreds, if not thousands.

Carol Grigg, OAM, you're a legend!

Nola Norris
ASPIA Organising Committee

Questionnaire - "How useful is Relationship Counselling?"

See ASPIA email dated 10 January 2014 or ASPIA's homepage at www.aspia.org.au for questionnaire put together by Tony Attwood & Maxine Aston. Please participate.

Book on Parenting with a Partner with Asperger's Syndrome!!

Kathy Marshack has released a new book that I'm sure most of you will be very keen to read!

"Out of Mind - Out of Sight: Parenting with a Partner with Asperger Syndrome"

Kathy is already the author of the book "**Life with a Partner or Spouse with Asperger Syndrome: Going over the Edge?**" Practical Steps to Saving You and Your Relationship which many partners have found very helpful.

Kathy also moderates a constructive "meetup" for partners online.

See Kathy's website: www.kmarshack.com

ASPIA's Handbook for Partner Support

For copies of our Handbook, and other recommended book titles, see our book list on the website - www.aspia.org.au

Sydney Stockist of AS books, order online:
Footprint Books, Warriewood (Sydney)
<http://www.footprint.com.au>

INFO ON SUPPORT FOR PARTNERS

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 lizlpash@hotmail.com

Personal Counselling for partners

By phone, skype or email.

Carol Grigg, Dip Counselling, Member ACA, OAM
 Carol has personal experience of an AS marriage (20 years) and 13 years' experience supporting partners through ASPIA.
 For appointments phone or text 0408 817 828
www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au

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 - Tiaro, Wide Bay (Qld)**

Phone Pat on 07 4193 9239

Email davies.pat@gmail.com

• **Perth:**

Phone Roz on (08) 9284 5252

Email: rozsdesk@inet.net.au

• **Melbourne:**

Visit forum at <http://aspartneraus.org/vanilla/>
 or email Melissa meraine@bigpond.net.au

Also, Blackburn

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

• **Adelaide:**

Phone Heike Haffer on 0431 039 136

Email heikehaffer@hotmail.com

Interesting comment:

Recently on Facebook we posted the following comment by **Carl Jung**:

"Loneliness does not come from having no people around you, but from being unable to communicate the things that seem important to you."

Sadly, this is a subtle but significant factor in relationships affected by AS. (Carol Grigg)

Find ASPIA's public facebook page:

ASPIA Inc (Asperger Syndrome Partner Information Australia Inc)



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

(copy & paste into your search field)

Important: Just remember that if you “like” the page, this will come up in your newsfeed and be seen by your “friends”. Consider if you wish to disclose your interest in AS and ASPIA to those on your friends list.

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

Thought ...

I've been thinking a lot lately about how things are tracking re the spreading of awareness of Asperger's Syndrome within society.

From the day our support work began we always hoped that eventually everyone would have heard of Aspergers and have some sort of awareness of what it involves, with the ultimate dream that this would lead to greater acceptance, compassion and support being shown towards those affected, and their families.

I do wonder sometimes if perhaps using a “label” puts people off? I guess when something has a label and is able to be “diagnosed”, people automatically assume it should be obvious that the person has a problem. But we know that this isn't the case. Apart from someone seeming a little “different” which is quite ok, the characteristics can easily be played down by those who don't “get it” and the deficits are intangible, and we find ourselves powerless to really convey what it all means. It's subtle in society's eyes, but so significant in ours because we know what it feels like and what we have to do to counteract its influence in the family.

What is your experience in relation to public awareness now?

Certainly, most people seem to have heard of it. Some know a bit about what it is, or they can relate to a TV programme or movie that depicts it. A small few hone right in and have that “I get it” look in their eyes, and they tell you quietly that their nephew or godson or sister has it. You know they probably do “get it” fairly well and for once you don't feel like a spiteful deluded outcast.

Then there are the professionals. Doctors, Counsellors, Psychologists, Psychiatrists and even Lawyers, etc. They've all read a journal article or

two by now, or have done some Professional Development training in it I'm sure. When you mention it in a clinic setting, they at least know what it is. Some get that look of "oh" and you can see their understanding is profound and they are instantly open and supportive. Please show your deep gratitude to these ones, and encourage them in their learning.

Others? I fear that a theoretical understanding based on education only without extensive clinical or personal experience may make them over-confident and blasé in their ability to identify it but still be inclined to miss real-life situations that present with subtly confusing family dynamics. Situations where the AS individual seems confident and clear about what the problems are, and that they're not the problem, and the non-Asperger individual presents as a nervous, weeping wreck trying to explain things in a way that sounds far-fetched and malicious. God help us.

The AS individual is sent away from therapy with a professional opinion that there's no way they have "it" (!) which they then wear as a medal with pride, and we know they'll never set foot inside a therapist's room again and we'll never secure their co-operation in recovering the relationship that means so much to us, and to them too by the way! Little do they realise that everyone loses, and the therapist has done untold damage, in ignorance, not to mention reinforcing the stigma that already prevents so many people with AS from being honest and seeking help.

Theory without genuine understanding of Asperger's Syndrome is dangerous. It's worse than complete ignorance.

Unless a professional understands, or is willing to understand the subtle and all-pervasive deficits of Asperger's Syndrome (and not just the amazing strengths and skills), and how these deficits impact on every aspect of the individual's life, marriage and family life, then they cannot work effectively with either the individual with AS or the family and they should refer on to professionals who can.

I believe there should be a register of professionals who've not just done the theory but who have extensive clinical and/or genuine personal experience. This could save so much heartache, as well as so many wasted years, resources and

relationships. So many stories shared in ASPIA meetings testify to these sad and often avoidable losses. Carol Grigg

As mentioned in our December Newsletter, ASPIA's website is to be updated soon:

If you would like to recommend some great websites, book suggestions, facebook pages, professionals, information, etc that have helped you, and that you'd like to see listed on or linked from ASPIA's website, please let us know by return email or info@aspia.org.au

In conclusion ...

I would like to say thank you, so deeply, to my loyal supportive friends in ASPIA for secretly nominating me twice for a Medal of the Order of Australia, and to our wonderful mentoring Psychologists who supported the applications. I feel so very honoured, humbled, excited, validated, grateful ... and am hoping that this Award can help to bring further credibility to the message that all of us have been trying to convey for so long - that Asperger's Syndrome is real, it happens to normal families, it's subtle but very significant and that families affected by it need acknowledgement and appropriate support.

Carol Grigg, OAM