

ASPIA Newsletter – July 2015

“Providing support to partners of adults with Asperger’s Syndrome since 2003”

July Meeting – this coming Saturday 4th July

We continue to meet in our new venue - **BURWOOD RSL CLUB**, 96 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood (Sydney). There is free parking on site and in the street which makes things a lot easier, although for those who come by train, it will be a bit further to walk. Basically walk past the College (former venue) and continue to the next corner and turn right into Shaftesbury Road. It’s a couple of blocks up on the left.

We will be using a meeting room on Level 1. Don’t forget the usual sign-in for clubs, and unfortunately for those who live in the Strathfield/Burwood area you will need to join the club to enter. I think it’s only \$2.00 to join the club. The rest of us can enter as temporary guests.

Time: 1.30pm for 2pm start, concludes 5pm.

Cost: \$10.00 for non-members, \$5.00 for members (membership is \$55 per year, includes library)

We are obligated to use the club facilities to purchase our refreshments, so please do not bring food to share.

Topic for this meeting: Tell your story; share your wisdom.

When we have a presenter, we don’t always get a chance to tell our stories and share ideas with each other, so for this meeting we are going to give everyone an opportunity to talk. Depending on numbers, we may break into smaller groups so everyone has a chance to share and be heard. I feel a meeting like this is particularly important at this time because of all the new people who have been attending this year who haven’t had much of a chance to share and get to know others. A topic of interest that recurs constantly in every context is “communication” so perhaps we can share with each other what works for us.

ASPIA Lunch Club prior to meeting: Lunch Club is now meeting at the RSL Club too. Head for the bistro area and hopefully everyone will find each other.

Anyone attending our support group meeting is welcome to come along earlier to the lunch club from about 12 noon to join us for a coffee or bite to eat. Then we can head upstairs to our meeting room at 1.30pm.

Dinner: The Club facility also makes it really convenient for anyone to stay on after the support group meeting and have a drink and/or some dinner together like we did after the June meeting. This is a nice way to end a great day with our ASPIA friends.

ASPIA Support Group Meeting dates for 2015		
4 July - Discussion	1 August – Steve Den Kaat	5 September - Discussion
3 October – Natalie Black	7 November – Eleanor Gittins?	5 December – Discussion

ASPIA Membership Renewals for 2015/2016 are due.

ASPIA’s online Yahoo discussion group

This online forum is growing and lots of great conversations are taking place. \$25.00 annual subscription. Visit ASPIA’s website at www.aspia.org.au/contactus.html to join.

ASPIA’s website contains information on other support groups, professionals, etc:

Helpful literature: <http://www.aspia.org.au/information.html>

Recommended Psychologists, Counsellors, etc: <http://www.aspia.org.au/professionals.html>

Other Partner Support Groups in Australia: <http://www.aspia.org.au/groups.html>

Support for Adults with Asperger’s Syndrome: <http://www.aspia.org.au/groups.html>

Other support and useful links: <http://www.aspia.org.au/links.html>

Events and workshops: <http://www.aspia.org.au/events.html>

Other up-coming events of interest

Girls and Women with Asperger's Syndrome - Sydney - July 17, 2015. Tony Attwood and Michelle Garnett will be presenting this full day workshop. *“The seminar is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of the female presentation of Asperger's syndrome (AS) and share strategies and ideas found to be useful in clinical practice.”*

To register, click on this link: <http://www.mindsandhearts.net/index.php/workshops-and-seminars/girls-and-women-with-as/sydney>

The App Guide to Emotions and Autism - Sydney (Epping) – July 23, 2015. Tony Attwood and Speech Pathologist Bronwyn Sutton will be presenting this full-day workshop with a focus on children and teens 4 – 17 years. Visit www.learningappguide.com for more information.

Social Thinking - Sydney – 31st Aug/1st Sept – Internationally renowned Michelle Garcia, developer of “Social Thinking” (teaching the thinking behind being social). This 2 day workshop will also be held in Melb 3rd/4th Sept.

Expressions of interested invited: Visit <http://www.spectrumspeech.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Expressions-V8-SYD.pdf>

Research Project through Macquarie University

“A Study about the nature of intimate relationships between people with Aspergers and their partners.”

Please consider supporting this study to help build up the existence of empirical research on relationships affected by Asperger's Syndrome – it's the lack of empirical evidence that contributes to partners being disbelieved when they speak to counsellors and psychologists.

Visit https://mq.edu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_aaY4dWPvalk9jM1 or contact Naomi Millar-Powell direct at Naomi.millar-powell@students.mq.edu.au or on 0425 284 355.

Thought ...

The thought that has been on my mind the past few weeks has been how we all seem to have a natural expectation that as soon as we find the right strategy for reaching our AS partners, they will suddenly become neurotypical and we can get on with our relationship. We seem to have a subconscious belief that somewhere tucked away deep inside our partner is a neurotypical person who will emerge once we find the key or the right method to reach them. After all, each day we do see some little glimmer that keeps our hopes and efforts alive.

Sadly this is a very difficult reality to have to come to terms with, that even if we do find some methods or strategies that improve our communication and interaction, our AS partners will still have AS. They think and operate differently. Like Clinical Psychologist Jeroen Decates reminds us whenever he comes to our meetings – the difference between a neurotypical partner and an AS partner is like the difference between a PC and a Mac. They are completely different operating systems. And they can't talk to each other without interpretation or assistance. Much the same with us and our AS partner.

We need knowledge. It is imperative that we read and learn. The ASPIA website has many articles that countless partners have found helpful and I always recommend ASPIA's handbook as essential reading too. There are many definitions and descriptions and interpretations listed in the handbook that will help partners to understand the different way their partner thinks and operates. I would also strongly recommend reading the Diagnostic Criteria in the DSM 5 – it is reproduced on the Autism Speaks website - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/diagnosis/dsm-5-diagnostic-criteria> (this lists the social (pragmatic) communication disorder criteria also which is absolutely relevant too!).

One of ASPIA's greatest strengths as a support group has been to provide education and we are so privileged to have quite a few psychologists and other presenters who attend our meetings to teach us and keep us up to date with knowledge about Autism Spectrum Disorder. This has been a great strengthener and enlightener for those who attend.

We need professional support. I don't know how any partner can hope to know how to negotiate daily life with an Aspie without at least a few consultations with a psychologist or a counsellor for guidance and support, especially in the early days of learning.

And peer support. How many of us have had our sanity saved by being able to talk to other partners? Of course, the face to face support group context that ASPIA provides in Sydney (and other groups in other capital cities) is the ultimate experience but for those who live too far away, we have the Yahoo group (email based discussion). Financial members of ASPIA also have access to a private facebook group for daily support.

We have been reminded many times in our workshops and support group meetings that we cannot manage a relationship with an adult with Asperger's Syndrome without knowledge, understanding, professional help and support. We don't have the knowledge naturally. Our natural instinct gives us the ability to relate to other neurotypicals, but to relate to those on the Spectrum we need specialized learning.

Carol Grigg OAM, Dip Counselling

President, ASPIA Inc

Just a reminder about my article "Crucial Communication Clues" which is available for \$5.00. Includes lots of "dot" points, discussion guide and worksheets. www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au/information.html