

# ASPIA Newsletter – June 2015

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

## **June Meeting – this coming Saturday 6th June – NEW VENUE!**

From now on we will be meeting at **BURWOOD RSL CLUB**, 96 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood (Sydney). There is free parking on site which will make 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.

The sign board in the Club foyer will list which meeting room we are using on level 1.

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 and Presenter:** For this meeting we are privileged to have **Clinical Psychologist Jeroen Decates** attending to share with us his latest ideas about relationships affected by Asperger’s Syndrome. Jeroen works in private practice providing individual and couple counselling. He also organises couple groups and runs groups for adults with Aspergers. Jeroen is highly experienced and highly recommended by ASPIA for referrals.

Jeroen is also always keen to answer questions and facilitate a discussion time, so please come prepared with your questions. As usual, this meeting is for non-Asperger partners only.

**ASPIA Lunch Club prior to meeting:** Lunch Club will now meet at the RSL Club too. Head for the bistro area and hopefully everyone will find each other. I have been of two minds about whether to continue at the Little Nepal Restaurant for the lunch club until we can talk about it as a group, but perhaps for the parking convenience, we should just head straight to the RSL Club and keep things simple for ourselves and each other.

So, 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 will also make it really convenient for anyone to stay on after the support group meeting and have some dinner together. This is a nice way to end a great day with our ASPIA friends.

<b>ASPIA Support Group Meeting dates for 2015</b>		
	<b>6 June</b>	4 July
1 August	5 September	3 October
7 November	5 December	

**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](http://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**

**Sydney - July 17, 2015.** Tony Attwood and Michelle Garnett will be presenting a full day workshop on Girls and Women with Asperger's Syndrome. *"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."* Visit [www.mindsandhearts.net](http://www.mindsandhearts.net) for further information and to register.

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

### **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](https://mq.edu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_aaY4dWPvalk9jM1) or contact Naomi Millar-Powell direct at [Naomi.millar-powell@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:Naomi.millar-powell@students.mq.edu.au) or on 0425 284 355.

### **Free Self-Help Anxiety Group**

I have received some information about a free 12 week program being held in Burwood to help people recover from anxiety and anxiety disorders. It is being run by the Mental Health Association and the contact person is Linda June, email [selfhelp@mentalhealth.asn.au](mailto:selfhelp@mentalhealth.asn.au) or (02) 9339 6093.

Anyone is welcome to enquire.

### **Thought ...**

During this past month I have been busy with many conversations and counselling sessions with partners.

A couple of common threads continue to stand out to me. I will talk about one of them here.

It is our "natural" response to become emotional with our AS partners when we are hurt or offended by them (which of course is natural in any relationship). As offences and conflict build up over time and are not resolved (which tends to be the pattern in relationships affected by ASD), we naturally become more upset and emotional, which is a normal response on our part. It is "normal" to need resolution, not to just go on as though the issue doesn't exist anymore which is what the partner with ASD seems to do.

What is hard for us to come to terms with is that in a relationship affected by ASD, the more emotional and verbal we become, the more likely it is that the ASD partner will shut down or retreat, or the opposite, emotionally or verbally "out-escalate" us even to the point of aggression so that we are overwhelmed or frightened and we back down. The situation is then restored to what they can cope with. And they go on as though nothing happened, while we are left more upset and distressed or traumatized, still with no way of finding a place of resolution or having our needs met.

This leaves us feeling very powerless, unable to address legitimate hurts, offences or even everyday situations, and all of us can relate to this feeling of sheer and desperate frustration and helplessness.

The fact is, the adult with ASD is unable to cognitively, emotionally or verbally meet us at a place of resolution. And displays of emotion by us are in fact futile in securing what we need from our partners.

What are our options? Not very many I'm afraid. But perhaps the first and most important one is to reclaim ownership of our own emotional state instead of allowing our partner to be in charge of it. When stress and emotional distress go on indefinitely our mental and physical health will

definitely suffer, and prioritizing the relationship and our partner's needs may not be worth the devastating toll this is having on us. We cannot look to an AS partner to heal us emotionally.

You are a beautiful and worthwhile person. Your partner may be the one you chose to share your life with, but they are only one person in a vast world, and many of us have come to the conclusion that we wouldn't even choose our partners as a friend if we knew what we now know about their attitudes and behaviours. Are you doing yourself justice by allowing them to be the one who has the most influence over your emotional well-being and also how you feel about yourself?

Save your emotional energy. Change your expectations. Try to reduce the extent to which their contribution matters to you. Find alternative solutions. Look to your healthy and normal friendships and family connections for your emotional nurture. Channel your nurturing into yourself and those who reciprocate your care. Develop your independence and value yourself.

I know this is not what any of us really or ultimately want for our relationships, but perhaps this is the only way to ensure our own emotional survival. And one never knows, if we back off and just quietly step away from them emotionally, they may notice the change and move back towards us just a little.

Carol Grigg OAM, Dip Counselling

President, ASPIA Inc

Just a reminder about my latest 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](http://www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au/information.html)