

ASPIA NEWSLETTER

October 2015

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

October Meeting

This coming Saturday 3rd October

BURWOOD RSL CLUB, 96 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood (Sydney).

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)

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.

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

Topic and Speaker for this meeting:

Natalie Black, one of our long-time ASPIA members will be presenting for us again. Natalie has an Honours Degree in Psychology and currently works as a Lifeline crisis support worker.

For this meeting Natalie is going to talk about the neuro-cognitive aspects of autism spectrum disorders, which is, how Aspie brains are wired differently to neurotypical brains and what this means for how they think, learn and respond to the environment.

Natalie is happy to answer questions, provide guidance around navigating the mental health care system, explain different types of therapies and how we can care for ourselves.

In previous presentations, and other general meetings, Natalie has a clear and gracious way of teaching us about boundaries, healthy responses and how to understand and better care for ourselves.

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 from about 12 noon or so 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		
3 October – Natalie Black		
7 November – Eleanor Gittins	5 December – Discussion	6 Feb 2016 – Nola Norris

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>

New Book Recommendations

- **Marriage and Lasting Relationships with Asperger's Syndrome** (Autism Spectrum Disorder) by Eva A Mendes (foreword by Stephen M Shore), publisher Jessica Kingsley Publishers – available through Footprint Books www.footprint.com.au **Footprint Books are currently offering 20% discount** if you buy two or more mental health titles. Enter code MHS20 in the coupon code box at the online checkout.
- **The Secrets in their Eyes** by Dr Melvin Kaplan. A partner has recommended this as a book of interest. It is about transforming the lives of people with cognitive, emotional, learning or movement disorders or Autism/Aspergers by changing the visual software of the brain. Dr Kaplan uses “visual management therapy” evidently with amazing results. I don't have information about how to source this book.

Interesting article shared recently in our online group

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/neuroscience-sheds-light-on-why-people-with-aspergers-syndrome-lack-empathy/>

Reminder: Groups available for adults with AS and also couples

Clinical Psychologist Jeroen Decates runs groups for adults with AS and also for couples, and now Psychologist Eleanor Gittins has informed us that she is once again running an adult group in Surry Hills and a couples group in Menai. Please refer to the professionals list on the aspia website for their contact details.

“Thought”

Love – Fact or Feeling

The topic of love has come up many times in my counselling with partners lately.

“Does my Aspie partner love me?” Also, “Why do I still have such strong feelings of love for my Aspie partner when the relationship has been so difficult and painful and my partner has rejected or neglected me in so many ways?”

I’ll just talk about the first one in this newsletter. I’m still exploring the second one for myself.

How do we know if our Aspie partner loves us? They still come home to us every day. They find refuge within the walls of the house we share with them. They share resources with us. They chose us in the first place which means we had qualities and characteristics they admired and wanted in a partner. I’ve shared a number of times that Aspies choose their partners well. We often hear too that they say wonderful things about us to others.

I’m sure I could list more things, but I think the gist of what I’m saying is that perhaps love needs to be seen as more of a fact. It exists. There are signs that we can interpret that indicate love is there. Perhaps it’s more of a loyalty thing. A belonging to each other. A co-habitation. A status – “married”, “partnered” or “family”. Tony Attwood has shared with us that they do love, but it’s not love like we know or experience it. Perhaps it’s up to us to recognise the symbols and just believe love exists.

Sadly for many of us the behaviour and attitudes of our Aspie partners seems to indicate an absence of love and that we are in fact sources of irritation or stress.

However, there will likely be a few things they do that demonstrate their love to us, perhaps tasks like making us a cuppa in the morning, driving us to appointments or somewhere we’d like to go, working to earn the family income, taking out the bins, fixing things, etc. My recent partner worked very hard to earn an income, he bought me clothes in the “courting” phase, he brought me a cuppa every morning and he cooked a delicious dinner for us each evening. I was lucky.

How ungrateful would it be of me to notice all the unloving things he did do or loving things he didn’t do! I’m sure this is how most of us feel. We are grateful for the few loving things they do and feel awful focusing on all the aspects that are missing, but we’re dying with starvation for love, real human love that is more than a symbol – “love in action” - for loving gestures, for kind words, for a smile and a touch of affection, to share a moment, to catch each other’s gaze with an “I like you” look, to hear an unprompted “I love you”, to know he or she will remember a promise and follow through, to feel considered in the plans, to be “the one” he/she talks to about things that matter, to be consulted in decisions, to be his or her “favourite” person to be with, to share a laugh and walk hand in hand and side by side, not just keeping in step or running to catch up.

It does help to step back and recognise the ways that our Aspie partners are showing their love, even if it is just in the form of loyalty or belonging or a few practical gestures. These can give us a glimmer of reassurance that it’s us they want to be with, that they like us in their space, that they did choose us after all. We never expected to have to teach someone how to show love but perhaps we can gradually ask for what we need and tell them how to do it or show it. One small thing at a time.

Carol Grigg OAM, Dip Counselling

www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au