


# ASPIA

Providing support to partners of adults with Asperger's Syndrome since 2003

## ASPIA Newsletter – September 2017

 **ASPIA's August meeting** was experienced as a great time for connecting, sharing and supporting. Valuable conversations took place, tears were shed, comfort given and received, and a little humour applied to lighten some of the intensity, all within an honest and safe context. They say that Aspies choose good partners! This is certainly true. The majority of people who attend ASPIA meetings are kind, mature, intelligent, educated warm-hearted, professional, supportive ... the list could go on. I am proud to be part of such a quality gathering of human beings, and so wish it had been something other than our aching hearts and loss of hope that brought us together.

Our next **ASPIA Partner Support Group** meeting for 2017 will be held this coming **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**.

Please gather from 1.30pm for a 2.00pm start.

We will be welcoming one of ASPIA's favourite Psychologists, **Eleanor Gittins**. Eleanor has been associated with and supportive of ASPIA's work with partners for nearly 14 years with her regular educational presentations at our meetings. Many of us attribute a great deal of our learning and "aha" moments to her. She works effectively with adolescents and adults with ASD, as well as partners and couples and is on ASPIA's professional list as highly recommended. Eleanor's educational presentations were also an early and strategic influence in Nola Norris's research and learning, who herself now also provides wonderfully informative educational sessions for ASPIA.

Eleanor is presenting at this meeting at short notice, for which we are deeply grateful.

Please join us at our **ASPIA meeting** for another great validating and educational opportunity.

**ASPIA meeting location:** Club Burwood at 97 Burwood Road, Burwood (Sydney) (corner George Street)

**Who can attend:** Partners and family members seeking support from the non-Asperger perspective.

**Cost:** \$10 for non-members, \$5 for members (membership is \$55 per year and includes several benefits including borrowing books from the library and being part of a private facebook group.)

**Parking:** The cheapest and closest parking is directly behind the Club in **John Street**. Wilson car park - \$4.

**Lunch Club:** Bistro area from 12 noon for those who'd like to chat over lunch before the meeting.

**Dinner:** Staying back afterwards for a drink or dinner has become popular.

### **ASPIA Meeting Dates for remainder of 2017**

- September 2
- October 7

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- November 4
- December 2

## **Book Recommendation**

Repeated from the August Newsletter - One of ASPIA's Members has recommended the following two books as having been very helpful for her in her journey as a partner: **Understanding Women** by Susie Orbach and **What Women Want** by Luise Eichenbaum

I'd like to recommend again Michael John Carley's book "**Aspergers from the Inside Out**". Michael (who has ASD) says that Aspies need to understand AS in themselves before they can understand AS in their relationships.

**\* PLEASE SAVE THE DATE \* - Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2018 -  
Sydney**

**ASPIA will be hosting a full-day Workshop  
for partners and couples with**

**TONY ATTWOOD AND MICHELLE GARNETT**

Venue: Probably Burwood RSL Club  
All other details are yet to be confirmed

## **APAC 2017**

I have been remiss in mentioning that the Asia-Pacific Autism Conference is being held in Sydney on 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> September, and registrations are still open. Visit [www.apac17.org.au](http://www.apac17.org.au) for information and to register.

## **Other places where you can stay in touch with ASPIA**

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

**Meetup:** <https://www.meetup.com/Sydney-Partners-of-Adults-with-Aspergers-Syndrome-ASPIA/>

**Yahoo:** We have an online discussion forum (\$25 subscription) – see our website [www.aspia.org.au](http://www.aspia.org.au)

**Email:** [info@aspia.org.au](mailto:info@aspia.org.au)

**Website:** please visit our website for information and articles, recommended professionals, and a range of other information and useful contacts and links – [www.aspia.org.au](http://www.aspia.org.au)

## **Thought**

I want to talk about the **vitriolic dump**. Frequently, either at ASPIA meetings or in personal counselling sessions, partners talk about the catastrophic caustic reactions they get from their partners part-way through an obviously uncomfortable conversation. It happened to me (in the past) and very recently to someone close to me too. Within minutes the reactor returns to normal as though nothing has even rippled the surface. Like they've purged, and the re-set button has been pressed. But the recipient is left dazed, traumatized and shaking, sometimes for weeks. Perhaps just knowing it is a

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common occurrence in our AS relationships can be validating. But knowing how to better prepare or prevent this is so far proving elusive.

It would seem that the caustic reaction does provide us with information though. An indication that we have moved a conversation or dynamic onto ground where they have no capacity to meet or match us, and no comprehension to understand or answer, so they have to shut down or sabotage the exchange. Malicious words, comments and accusations, accompanied typically by intimidating body language including rage, all have the desired effect – to shut us down, dissolve the difficult discussion, put us on the back foot, leave us speechless, and too shocked and wounded to remain in the conversation, or even in the same room. Success. For them. Torture and confusion for us. They cannot recognise the wounding we take as that would require theory of mind and empathy in the moment. They just know we have stopped, and they've avoided another uncomfortable situation.

## The Vitriolic Dump, cont'd

We tend to go away and analyse for meaning all the horrible things they said. But it's probably not the meaning of the words that is the point. They have used their intellect over the years to learn what buttons to press (cause and effect) to wound and silence us, and they have this gun loaded and ready continuously for the situations described above. For the purpose of shutting us down. To bring a sudden halt to a situation that is uncomfortable for them. To them, the words are just weapons. Arrows. Bullets. Discharged to achieve a desired effect.

I know this doesn't help us heal the awful gashes and slashes to our hearts, but perhaps it can direct our analysis away from the meaning of their words, and rather to further understand and grieve the deficits and lack of capacity for reciprocal conversation and negotiation.

And again, as I've gently shared before, try to reduce the exchanges to something succinct, black and white, logical, point form, maybe by text, email or phone, or side by side on the lounge, etc, and factor in some processing time before you expect an answer. No, we are not experiencing a "normal" relationship. These strategies for communication should not be necessary. But they are. And we need to measure our own worth by all the other "normal" encounters we have on a daily basis, not this one relationship that is the most significant yet the least validating of all. Thinking of us all. Carol xo

Remember there are dozens of Newsletter Thoughts available for reading in previous newsletters preserved on our website – [www.aspia.org.au/newsletters.html](http://www.aspia.org.au/newsletters.html)

My best wishes to all, Carol Grigg OAM, Dip Counselling, Member ACA,  
[www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au](http://www.carolgriggcounselling.com.au)