

# **ASPERGER SYNDROME PARTNER INFORMATION AUSTRALIA (ASPIA) INCORPORATED**

(Formerly **GRASP** Partner/Spouse Support Group)

*"Mutual acknowledgement and understanding  
of the Asperger marriage experience"*

## **NEWSLETTER – July 2009**

### **Our next ASPIA support group meeting will be this coming**

**Saturday 4 July, 2pm – 5pm**

College of Nursing, 14 Railway Pde, Burwood, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
\$2 Members / \$5 Non-Members (covers room hire, etc)

Our topic "**Are all men like that?**"

**How do we know when a behaviour is from having Asperger's Syndrome  
or from just being "blokey"?**

Brainstorm and discussion facilitated by male group member  
involved in men's counselling and group facilitation



#### **ASPIA Lunch Club dining together prior to ASPIA Meeting**

Upstairs at the rear of the Avondale Hotel, Burwood Road, opposite Hungry Jacks.  
Arrive any time between 12noon & 2pm. All welcome.



ASPIA is a support group specifically focused on the support & recovery needs of the non-Asperger partner in a relationship. Please see page 2 of the Newsletter, and also our website for information about support groups specifically for adults with Asperger's Syndrome.

**Applications for Membership of ASPIA INC are invited** from partners, ex-partners and others who identify as needing support, information and understanding from the non-Asperger perspective. This is not in any means to be seen as discriminatory, but focused on the needs of one group of people with a shared experience and who have no other safe or relevant place to discuss issues and gain insights (parents of adults with AS are also welcomed).

Membership is \$55.00 per person/family per year and entitles members to discounts, library borrowing rights and inclusion on a peer support contact list.

**We appreciate your financial support, even if you can't attend meetings**

### **ASPIA Satellite Group (Partner support) in the Illawarra/Shoalhaven**

Meets on the third Saturday of every second month in Berry NSW.

Next meeting will be Saturday 18 July 2009

2pm-5pm (\$5/\$2) Contact Sylvia 4295 7327 or email [janetgittins@hotmail.com](mailto:janetgittins@hotmail.com)

### **Seminar on Girls & Women with an Autism Spectrum Disorder**

**Brisbane, 7 & 8 August 2009**

Asperger Services Australia is proud to be able to present the World Inaugural Seminar on

**"Girls and Women with an Autism Spectrum Disorder"**

Friday 7th August and Saturday 8th August

Venue: The Holiday Inn, Roma Street, Brisbane (Transit Centre).

Keynote Speakers

**Prof Tony Attwood** (world renowned Clinical Psychologist)

**Dr Michelle Garnett** (Clinical Psychologist, proprietor of Minds & Hearts Clinic)  
and other guest speakers

For more information please click on the link below  
or phone Asperger Services Australia on 07 3865 2911

[http://www.asperger.asn.au/News/Archive/09-06-24/Girls and Women with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.aspx](http://www.asperger.asn.au/News/Archive/09-06-24/Girls%20and%20Women%20with%20an%20Autism%20Spectrum%20Disorder.aspx)

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Newsletter July 2009 – Page 2

**Support groups and resources for adults with Asperger's Syndrome**

Please refer to items listed below or on our website at [www.aspia.org.au](http://www.aspia.org.au)

**Support group for Adults with AS – Burwood, Sydney**

Next meeting Saturday 11 July 2009

Contact Eleanor Gittins on 0408 954 358 or email [janetgittins@hotmail.com](mailto:janetgittins@hotmail.com)

**Support Group for Adults with AS – Nowra area, NSW**

Meets on the last Saturday of every month, 11.30am Nowra Central Library.

Contact Eleanor Gittins on 0408 954 358 or email [janetgittins@hotmail.com](mailto:janetgittins@hotmail.com)

**Support group for Adults with AS – North Shore, Sydney**

Next meeting Saturday 18 July 2009 see website for announcements [www.jdpsy.org](http://www.jdpsy.org)

Or call Jeroen Decates on 0402 028 588

Aspect also has resources for adults: Email: [infoline@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto:infoline@autismspectrum.org.au) or  
Phone: 8977 8377. For regional callers: 1800 069 978

Other groups and workshops may also be available from time to time through  
Julie Peterson, Noël Boycott or Liz Dore. See our website for contact details.

**Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2009 – APAC 09.**

This Conference will be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Sydney,  
**20 – 22 August 2009.** Theme is Connecting Today: Inspiring Tomorrow.

Visit the website [www.apac09.org](http://www.apac09.org) for further information.

**“ADDults with ADHD”**

For information on ADD and ADHD in adults visit [www.add.org.au](http://www.add.org.au)

**Some thoughts ...**

Recently I read in some study notes: “There is always an emotional climate of respect and acceptance when there is empathy. This allows us to feel safe and free to reveal ourselves as we are, without the defensive barriers which we have erected over the years.” Don’t we all long to be in a family, group or community where this takes place, mutually?

I’ve been thinking a lot about empathy. So many things we read about Asperger’s Syndrome state that people with AS do not have empathy. Some people with Asperger’s Syndrome dispute this. I am wondering too.

Do they just appear to lack empathy because they are not reading the cues and non-verbal clues such as facial expression and body language? Some have suggested that they do have empathy but they just don’t know how to express it. If they’re uncertain about what is expected, perhaps it’s safer not to risk getting it wrong. Some say they have so much empathy that it overwhelms them and cripples them. Perhaps all of these possibilities are true. We know from testimonies that some people with AS are devastated when they finally realise how their actions or words have been hurting their partners. Sadly, others continue to combat every suggestion with denial, and some continue to remain absorbed only in what’s happening for them.

Over the last two months I have been exchanging emails and thoughts with some adults with AS who accept & understand their own AS. I have been noticing that there is a significant flow of empathy in these exchanges that has surprised me and warmed my heart. It has occurred to me that, rather than being a barrier between partners, perhaps a computer screen could actually become a conductor to re-connect the hearts and minds of people who were once friends. In our meetings we mention that writing to or emailing our partners could assist with communication. It seems to be face to face situations that are too much for an AS person to process - the words, the tone, the volume, the facial expression, the body language, the emotion – all at once. Emailing eliminates most of these aspects and allows time for thought and response.

I know we long for meaningful face-to-face communication, but perhaps there are some things we have to accept in our journey to understand AS. Maybe emailing can provide a stepping stone to new possibilities.  
... Carol

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