

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

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

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

## **NEWSLETTER – February 2011**

Our next support group meeting will be on  
**Saturday 5 February at the usual time and place**

2pm – 5pm

College of Nursing, 14 Railway Pde, Burwood, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

\$2 Members / \$5 Non-Members (covers room hire, etc)

**Dr Julie Peterson** will present and facilitate questions/discussion time.

Topic still TBA.

Please bring something to share for afternoon tea

ASPIA is a support group specifically focused on the support & recovery needs  
of the non-Asperger partner in a relationship.  
Please see page 3 of the Newsletter, and also our website for information about  
support groups specifically for adults with Asperger's Syndrome.

### **\*PLEASE NOTE\* Change to ASPIA Lunch Club VENUE**

ASPIA Lunch Club meeting before support group meeting

**Now at LITTLE NEPAL restaurant**

**Shop C, 135 Burwood Road, Burwood (Sydney)**

From Burwood Station, go left & up the hill, a few shops past the Westpac Bank  
and then cross the road.

Arrive any time between 12noon & 2pm. All welcome.

### **ASPIA's list of self-care suggestions**

**Available on our website at**

<http://www.aspia.org.au/pdf/2009/ASPIASelf-CareSuggestions6June09.pdf>

### **Other partner support groups/contacts in Australia**

**Brisbane + rural Qld:** Visit [www.aspiepartners.com](http://www.aspiepartners.com)

**Brisbane:** Email [Helen@timelessvideos.com.au](mailto:Helen@timelessvideos.com.au)

**Gold Coast:** Phone Tricia on 0413 085 174

**Northern Rivers, NSW:** Phone Debbie on (02) 6676 0483, Email: [northernriversasdnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:northernriversasdnetwork@gmail.com)

**Central Coast, NSW:** possible informal group to start, contact ASPIA

**Canberra:** Phone Anita on 0434 165 604

**Perth:** Phone Roz on (08) 9284 5252, Email: [rozsdsk@iinet.net.au](mailto:rozsdsk@iinet.net.au)

**Perth, \*new group\*:** [aspiepartnerswa@hotmail.com](mailto:aspiepartnerswa@hotmail.com)

**Melbourne:** Visit forum at <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/aspartnr/index.html> .

**Adelaide:** Phone Heike Haffer on 0431 039 136, email [heikehaffer@hotmail.com](mailto:heikehaffer@hotmail.com)

### **Book Supplier – Footprint Books**

For books on a wide range of topics relating to Asperger's Syndrome, including relationships,  
visit Footprint Books (Sydney) [www.footprint.com.au](http://www.footprint.com.au) . Online ordering available.

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<b>ASPIA Meeting Dates for 2011</b>	
January – no meeting	February 5
March 5	April 2
May 7	June 4
July 2	August 6
September 3	October 1
November 5	December 3

**Family Law Web Guide**

A Family Law website has been recommended to us.  
It is a website specially set up where ordinary people can raise issues  
or ask questions in relation to Family Law matters.  
Visit <http://www.familylawwebguide.com.au>

**Research: How do people with Asperger Syndrome think and learn?**

22 January 2011

How is it that people with Asperger Syndrome can struggle at school or have a learning disability and yet be so gifted and knowledgeable in their areas of special interest? A doctoral student from the University of Wollongong is researching how people with Asperger Syndrome think and learn. This is a new area of research as previous educational research has focused on social and behavioural issues at school, rather than learning.

**The researcher, Mrs Nola Norris, is a member of ASPIA** and is looking for participants who are interested in sharing their experience on this topic. Participants will be adults diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and/or people close to them such as partners, parents, adult siblings, teachers and so on. Young people, aged 14 or older, are also sought because of their current or recent school experience.

Involvement will be an audio-recorded interview, lasting up to an hour, which will be an opportunity to share thoughts and experiences relevant to learning and Asperger Syndrome. If they wish, participants may also share items of interest which express their thoughts and feelings on the topic, for instance, emails, blogs, diary entries, photos, drawings. If a face-to-face interview is not suitable, alternative communication such as email/chat can be used.

If you are interested, or know someone who might be, please contact Nola Norris by email at [ngn01@uow.edu.au](mailto:ngn01@uow.edu.au) or by leaving your contact details on (02) 4647 5333. She will send you more information to help you decide whether you'd like to be involved. Participation is voluntary and all personal information is kept strictly confidential.

The results of the research study will be used to develop a framework for understanding how people with Asperger Syndrome learn and become highly accomplished in certain areas and for professional development of mainstream school teachers who teach students with Asperger Syndrome.

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## **8 more survey participants needed!**

Earlier in 2010 we were asking partners to participate in a survey being conducted by Clinical Psychologist **Jennifer Bostock-Ling** on the health and well-being of female partners of adults with Asperger's Syndrome. The survey was re-opened in December due to ongoing interest, and needs just 8 more participants for completion.

For anyone who did not already complete this survey you will find it at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GCBMQLL>

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

### **Support Group for Adults with AS – Burwood, Sydney**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday every month**

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**

Visit website for announcements [www.jdpsy.org](http://www.jdpsy.org)

Or call Jeroen Decates on 0402 028 588

### **AS Social Group "Social Steps" – Wollongong**

Now on the first and third Wednesday of every month, 6.00pm – 8.00pm

The Palm Court Hotel, Corrimal.

Please contact Samantha at [asd.support@hotmail.com](mailto:asd.support@hotmail.com)

### **\*New\* Brisbane – AU-SOME Women and Girls' Group**

Contact Camilla Connolly [camillaconnolly@optusnet.com.au](mailto:camillaconnolly@optusnet.com.au) or

Rachael Harris [Rachael.counsellor@gmail.com](mailto:Rachael.counsellor@gmail.com)

New website [www.camillaconnollyasd.com](http://www.camillaconnollyasd.com)

Aspect also has resources for adults: Email: [infoline@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto:infoline@autismspectrum.org.au) or Phone: 8977 8377

Workshops on Relationships, social skills, sexuality – Liz Dore, [www.relationshipsandprivatestuff.com](http://www.relationshipsandprivatestuff.com)

## **Repeated Advertisement from November Newsletter – participants still needed please**

### **Giving Neurotypical Partners a Voice**

Dr Lisa Abel & Dr Vicki Bitsika from Bond University (Australia) are conducting research into the mental health outcomes for those individuals who are (or recently have been) in an intimate relationship with someone who has been diagnosed with (or is suspected of having) Asperger's syndrome. The aim of the research is to investigate the influence of fatigue, resilience, and stress on depression and anxiety in partners of individuals with Asperger's. While the impact on mental health and well-being in relation to parents with a child with Asperger's syndrome is being researched in earnest, little empirical research has been carried out in relation to the experience of partners of individuals with the disorder. Just as the demands of parenting a child with autism-based difficulties can often tax the emotional and physical resources of caregivers, it is anticipated that being intimately involved with someone with Asperger's syndrome would present its own set of unique challenges and difficulties.

The project involves the completion of a questionnaire and an interview (optional). If you are interested in participating, please contact Dr Lisa Abel via email ([label@bond.edu.au](mailto:label@bond.edu.au)) or alternatively access the questionnaire using the following URL:

<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=137615&Label1=EnterData>

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Thoughts . . .

I recently experienced a startling reminder of the unexpected and unpredictable difficulties that can occur when communicating with a loved one with Asperger tendencies.

This opening sentence in itself describes two of the most anxiety-producing aspects of communicating with someone with AS, 1) that problems in communication happen when we're least expecting them, often over seemingly simple things or when things seem to be going along ok, and 2) that problems in communication happen unpredictably – sometimes they happen, sometimes they don't, they'll come from left-field and prevention seems so elusive.

What was highlighted in my recent experience was how difficult an AS person finds it to accept the validity of the meaning someone else places on a situation or experience when it is different to the meaning that same situation or experience has for them. In fact, the very existence of an opinion at variance to their own appears to represent a great dilemma for them, and even a threat to their emotional well-being. I watched as panic set in in this dear one's eyes and demeanour. It was as though the very existence of a perspective different to their own meant to them that their own experience was entirely invalidated and that their personal rights and choices would be lost.

I felt cruel, yet all I wanted was to have my own perspective acknowledged as valid and equally worthy of existence alongside theirs.

What is so devastating and frustrating in relationships is that these episodes of "communication gone haywire" can end up being incredibly destructive to mutual trust and respect, and a residue of suspicion and mistrust begins to build up. It's particularly sad when this may just be due to a difference in the meaning each person ascribes to an experience.

When a place of mutual understanding and acceptance of differing perspectives cannot be reached, no compromise or agreement can be negotiated or resolution found and we are left with a breach or chasm that defies repair and de-stabilises the relationship at its deepest core. Sadly this is a dynamic that seems to be occurring frequently in AS/non-AS relationships, leading to a snowballing of unresolved issues over many years. Most couples need help and education to be able to untangle the gridlock that these experiences establish over time.

Thankfully in the situation I have described we had the benefit of understanding AS and were able to re-visit the matter when emotions had settled, talk objectively about the process that had taken place, recover our communication and build on the experience.

How I wish I'd had that sort of understanding 25 years ago. I know I'm not alone when I say "What a difference that could have made." Carol.

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