

# ASPIA

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

## ASPIA Newsletter – August 2018

 Our next ASPIA partner support group meeting will be this coming **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August**. **Our speaker** for this meeting will be long-time educator, supporter, and friend of ASPIA **Psychologist Eleanor Gittins**. Eleanor is regularly providing counselling support to partners and couples, as well as adults who are affected by Asperger's Syndrome. I have asked Eleanor to share with us some of the **ideas and strategies she uses or suggests for those who seek her counselling and relationship support**, based on the common or typical areas of relationship difficulty people bring to her.

**Biographical Information:** "Eleanor is a Registered Psychologist in private practice in the Sutherland Shire area of Sydney. She has had over twenty years clinical experience with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect), formerly the Autism Association of NSW.

Eleanor currently counsels young people over 13 years of age, as well as older adults and/or couples who are impacted by the presence of Asperger's Syndrome (now an Autism Spectrum classification).

Eleanor has a Degree in Social Science and Psychology, with a Post Graduate Degree in Adolescent Psychology. She is an Associate Member of the Australian Psychological Society and has been a well-known "speaker" and supporter of ASPIA's developing life since before 2005 when the group was then known as GRASP.

Eleanor is very familiar with the dedication of Carol Grigg, Founder of ASPIA, and her on-going commitment to ease difficulties for families affected by the presence of Asperger's Syndrome.

Eleanor will continue to support ASPIA members as needs arise."

**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 - \$5.

**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's remaining Meeting Dates for 2018**

- August 4
- September 1
- October 6
- November 3

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- December 1

**If you wish to know more about ASPIA**, read previous newsletters, other information and articles, or find the contact details for recommended professionals, etc, please visit our website:

[www.aspia.org.au](http://www.aspia.org.au)

## **Thought**

For our meeting in July, we were privileged to have Osteopath, and Mindfulness Teacher, Stiofán Mac Suibhne (pronounced Stioforn MacSweeney) attend. Feedback was that the content was timely and extremely valuable.

I have sought to capture the essence of what he shared, as follows:

**"Mindfulness** means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." It concerns freeing oneself from misperceptions, thinking patterns, and self-imposed limitations that impede creativity, clear seeing, and optimal mental and physical health. It is the gentle effort to be continuously present with experience. To be both present in one's experience, aware and curious. It is a regular aspect of human consciousness, not a supernatural state.

Our minds can have too many tabs open at once, like a computer, and our thoughts can be seductive – we fear they'll disappear if we don't think them then. It's important to not always follow our thoughts because they can lead us into a lot of negative thinking.

The individual has the intrinsic capacity to be mindful, and with intention and practice, mindfulness can garner strength and stability.

**Resilience** means being able to cope well with high levels of ongoing disruptive change, to bounce back easily from setback, to sustain good health and energy when under constant pressure, to overcome adversity, to change to a new way of working and living when an old way is no longer possible. The ability to adapt, recover and grow, not just survive. Some people rebound more quickly than others. People who report greater purpose in life recover more quickly. Purpose may help them "reframe stressful situations more productively".

It is important for us to acknowledge our own pain/suffering and its burden, but to then enrich our lives so that pain can no longer commandeer it. (I couldn't help thinking how partners have been so incredibly resilient, but eventually we become so worn down.)

Stiofán described Three Emotion Regulation Systems:

**Achieving – "doing mode" – blue zone.** Go getting, wanting, striving, succeeding. Drive, excitement, pleasure, "buzz", vitality. Hormones – dopamine.

**Threat – "doing mode" – red zone.** Fight/flight/freeze. Seeking safety by running away, giving in, withdrawing, attacking, shutting self off, or rejecting others. Anxiety, anger, aversion, isolation. Hormones – adrenaline, cortisol.

**Soothing – "being mode" – green zone.** Soothing & contentment, calm & connect, rest & digest. Feeling safe, relaxed, not wanting – just being, closeness with others, fun, play, kindness, compassion. Survival of the kindest. Content, safe, connected, peaceful. Hormones – oxytocin, endorphins.

People with stressful circumstances often bounce between achieving and threat (blue & red zones), with no soothing time. (We can certainly relate to this!)

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Stiofán's message became strongly about finding and nurturing your "green zone" – to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system (see again "Soothing – "green zone" above). Body based soothing practices, perceptual rather than conceptual, being mode rather than doing mode.

What is meaningful for you? How can you create opportunities to be in your green zone? Plan and prioritise to ensure you can protect your long-term health and well-being.

Cultivate kindness to self and others, self-compassion and self-care. Kindness is unique to the human race, kindness is the key to survival.

Further reading: [www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk](http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk) For appointments with Dr Stiofán Mac Suibhne, he practices in Abbotsford Medical Practice, 409 Great North Road, Abbotsford (NSW). Phone 02 9713 7988. He is a Musculoskeletal Osteopath & Western Acupuncture Practitioner, as well as a teacher of Mindfulness workshops.

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