

ASPIA

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

ASPIA Newsletter – June 2018

 Our next ASPIA partner support group meeting will be this coming **Saturday 2nd June** and our Presenter will be our Web Developer, long-time Member, and "in-house" Educator **Dr Nola Norris**. Please join us from 1.30pm for a 2.00pm start.

Nola is a school teacher and has been a member of ASPIA, and ASPIA's web developer since her husband's diagnosis of Asperger syndrome (AS) in 2005. At that time, she was working with other teachers on the differences in learning for students with AS or high-functioning autism. To learn more about this, she undertook a research project and completed a PhD in 2014.

Nola is passionate about the rich insights into thinking in Asperger syndrome that emerge from recent neuroscience research and how this knowledge can make a difference to relationships. She will present on the topic "**How and why people with AS think differently**". Along with clear explanations of the research, the session will also include discussion and opportunities to share.

Nola is now working in higher education with graduate and post-graduate teachers. She has presented her research at several conferences and seminars and is keen to reach educators and parents as well as partners of people with AS. To this end, she has established a website with further information – www.nelt.com.au.

Please join us at this **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 - \$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

- June 2
- July 7
- August 4
- September 1
- October 6

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- November 3
- December 1

eBook Recommendation

Tony Attwood's Personal Assistant has let us know about a book which may be of interest to ASPIA Members. The title is "Between you and me: personal stories from neuro-diverse couples", by Different Together. Follow link: <https://books2read.com/betweenyouandme>

Other ways 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

Email: 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

Thought

Once again, we had a wonderful ASPIA meeting on 4th May with Clinical Psychologist Jeroen Decates as our Presenter.

Jeroen used a number of illustrations to help us understand why it is such a struggle to sustain a relationship with our AS partners.

He held out his two hands to explain to us how communication has two important parts – one hand representing the words in the message, and the other hand representing the weight or meaning of the words. People on the spectrum hear one part - the words, represented by the first hand; and they are aware of the presence of the other hand (which represents the meaning), but they can't interpret or understand the meaning without help, and also processing time.

He also explained that people on the spectrum use their intellect to develop a database of the patterns of behaviour of people in their lives, and specific social contexts. This information is stored in "folders" which they draw on when they encounter familiar people and situations. From this information they develop protocols to follow in these contexts and with these people. However, when they encounter new social contexts they have no data stored in a folder, and therefore don't know what to do because they have no protocol to follow. This also adds to our understanding of why they have great difficulty coping with change. He made a comment about OCD too, that this is actually just an insistence on protocol.

Some of Jeroen's practical suggestions for partners were based around setting up protocols for the AS partner to follow. He also suggested that if there's something you want them to stop doing, offer them a new protocol to follow rather than focusing on taking away what they are currently doing.

Other suggestions he made were to ask them what they think, rather than how they feel. Or ask them what impact something has on them.

Jeroen also talked about empathy, that empathy has to do with perceptual processes. People on the spectrum have cognitive empathy, meaning they calculate a problem, whereas non-AS people have emotional empathy based on perception rather than calculation. He said the AS individual won't be aware of the social connotation of behaviour or change in behaviour, only the factual aspects.

He also suggested that as the AS individual gets older, the AS characteristics don't necessarily get stronger, but rather the resilience and compensatory factors start to wear away.

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Once again Jeroen recommended the book by Simon Baron-Cohen "The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain" and also "Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the future of Neurodiversity" by Steve Silberman.

My best wishes to all, Carol Grigg OAM, Dip Counselling, Member ACA,
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