

**Aspergers Syndrome Support Group
for Families in Macarthur**

August 2008 News Sheet

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Support Meetings

Thanks to those parents who came along to our meetings last month. The Wednesday group welcomed Lija from Aspect along and a teacher from one of the parents school who was interested in hearing more about Aspect. I was not able to attend but am sure people went away a bit more aware and informed – one of the aims of a support group.

Thursday night in August had one of our better roll up of parents with plenty of laughter emanating from the antidotes people had of living with people who have aspergers. Yes it is OK to laugh and makes us all remember life can be full of surprises and viewed differently by others – makes for a diverse and interesting world for all of us.

New parents are still contacting the Co-operative for the support group - both by goggling up our website or from a referral by another parent or service. It is good to see the system is working to allow parents to make contact with others in a similar situation.

September Meetings

- **Second Wednesday 10th September** 10 am at The Coffee Club Café at Macarthur Square, next to Border Books, down stairs and outside where all the new coffee shops etc are. An opportunity to have chat over a cuppa of your choice.
- **Second Thursday 11th September** 7pm at the Harrington Park Community Centre Fairwater Dr next to the shopping centre. For those who work or are busy during the day to meet other families and share their experiences and ideas.

Aspies and Driving

An issue raised by a family has been their son attempting to gain his drivers licence and whether there is any special support for him to achieve it. Drives well but has that “aspie characteristic” in following directions from the tester to the letter, which has caused him to fail the road test.

Looking up the RTA website I could not find anything specific on people who have a disability being supported through the Drivers test process, however they do have a good link to a site for young drivers that would help all young people seeking to become good drivers – www.geared.com.au

If any family has gone through the process of they son or daughter getting their P plates and would like to share any do's and don'ts please let me know and I can included them in future news sheets.

Kites for Kids family Day

The skies cleared at the right time to enable Kites for Kids to go ahead on Saturday the 23rd August at Campbelltown. The strong wind made for excellent kite flying and there were plenty of other activities to keep people occupied. This gave families from our support group the opportunity to catch up and meet other families whose child has recently been diagnosed.

A great way for families uncertain of what to do next to learn from people who have been there done that. “Kites for Kids” is the annual celebration of Early Intervention Services Awareness Week with a number of services and therapist were on hand to provide information and advice.

Helping children with Autism

The Commonwealth government has announced a number of new initiatives to assist families who have a child with autism and other prevalent pervasive developmental disorders including aspergers.

The initiatives include:

- Increased access to early intervention services, supported playgroups and Childhood Autism Advisors
- Education and support for families and carers, workshops, a dedicated website on autism disorders
- Professional development and training for teachers and other school staff
- Six autism-specific child care centres one of which has been ear marked for SW Sydney.

In addition new Medicare benefits have been introduced from 1st July 2008 that will enable families to have their child diagnosed or rediagnosed and to access up to 20 therapy sessions from allied health professionals. This will enable families to use private therapists and receive a Medicare rebate, subject to meeting a number of requirements.

Information on the Helping Children with Autism can be found on the Co-operative's website www.fip.org.au or on the Government's website www.fahcsia.gov.au/autism

You can call the **Information Line is 1800 289 177** or by email on asd@fahcsia.gov.au

Ask you GP about how your family could benefit from the above services and intervention.

Simple steps towards Effective Parent Advocacy

- Remember that you have the best knowledge and understanding of your child.
- Always highlight the positive contributions that your child can bring to the community by drawing attention to your child's abilities and interests.
- Education is the essential key to successful advocacy. Become informed.
- Take every opportunity available to broaden your understanding of the relevant issues relating to your child.
- Learn from the experiences of other parents that have achieved positive outcomes for their children.
- Share ideas, experiences and networks with other parents.
- Stay focused on the best outcomes for your child's future.
- Ensure that you have your child's best interests in mind when making decisions.
- Know your capabilities and what you can realistically achieve.
- Be aware that parents can suffer from 'burnout'.
- Remember to take care of yourself too.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help.

Source: Advocacy for Inclusion Inc web site

Just for Fathers and Grandfathers

An invitation is extended to attend an interactive workshop just for fathers and grandfathers of children with autism being held by Professor Barry Carpenter. Barry is an acknowledged leader in the field of autism working extensively with families and recognises the need for fathers to have opportunities to talk with each other.

It is on Wednesday 17th September in the Oscar Lounge at the Marconi Club
- Prairie Vale Rd Bossley Park from 7 pm to 9 pm – meet for a coffee from 6.45 pm

It is free and you can register with John on 9582 6326

Ten tips to Manage Time from Sue Larkey

For all our Students mastering the concept of time and encouraging autonomy and independence is important. It is even more important for children with ASD that 'time' is managed in a way which is visual. Time Timers are excellent for this so I have listed 10 ideas how to use Time Timers in a busy classroom or at home.

1. **CONSISTENCY!** We have all been guilty of saying 5 more minutes and then get distracted, this can cause confusion for many students etc
2. Pre-warn: How long to do an activity (both favourite and "non preferred")
3. Pre-warn: Time until finish, pack away, stop or start an activity
4. Finish: Create finish routines without constant adult prompts
5. Time to do an activity
6. Develop concept of time
7. Create Routines
8. Self monitor (independently finish activity without adult prompts)
9. **KEEP to your time!!**
10. TIME TIMERS^(TM) WORK FOR ALL STUDENTS!

Sue Larkey says:

"Typical strategies often do not work for ASD kids BUT ASD strategies work for typical kids!"

This is particularly true with the Time Timers^(TM). I am using them at home for my children at bath time, computer, TV, homework, getting ready for school and more.

I have used **Time Timers^(TM)** for many years and I am so excited that I am now able to supply them directly to you. The reason Time Timers^(TM) are so wonderful is they show visually how much time is left. The CD'S are amazing as the student can be using the computer and visually see on the computer how much time they have left. You can actually select the sound, even has a train sound! (OH and you can LOCK the timer so they can't change).

To see more about Time Timer go to the website www.suelarkey.com

Tips from a parent member

I know there is definitely some foods that do "set off" kids, and they would not only have to be Aspie's to have these reactions either, however from my own experience I certainly avoid some foods/drinks with my son and his behaviour does change/improve.

- We avoid all cordials/soft drinks and limit juice to 1 glass once a day only – water/plain milk is offered
- We only buy natural confectionary Company lollies only if we were to have a sweet
- Anything "Blue" like a push top is out of the question - ***think Tasmanian devil***
- We try to limit processed foods.

We have adopted this for the whole family to do so it's not alienating for our son and also benefits everyone.

Hyperactivity Attention Deficit Association (NSW) Inc

The term ADHD describes children and adults who are inattentive, impulsive and frequently also very active at levels higher than expected for their mental and chronological age. Not all with ADHD are hyperactive; nonetheless, many still show these symptoms.

It is mostly hereditary, although it can occur in families with no prior history of the disorder. It appears to be a chemical imbalance which combined with an immaturity in part of the brain, may cause difficulties in:

- Concentration
- Short term memory
- Aspects of behaviour
- Self esteem
- Speech and language
- Learning difficulties
- Muscle coordination
- Self organisation
- Relationships

How common is ADHD?

Debate exists over the incidence of ADHD. It appears to affect roughly between 6 and 10% of all children. It is generally agreed that the disorder occurs more frequently in boys than girls with a ratio of 6:1.

There is no cure for ADHD but certain management options can improve the child's ability to concentrate and or gain more control over their behaviour. Interventions include Counselling in behaviour management, diet - eliminating the offending foods, EEG Biofeedback – a non-drug alternative. Medication may improve the child's ability to concentrate and gain control over their behaviour and help with learning (requires close monitoring with cooperation of your doctor)

The Association in NSW

Was established in 1976 in response to an expressed need by families and sufferers of ADHD to inform, network and in any way assist people who want to know more about ADHD. They produce a comprehensive newsletter bimonthly and members can access their resource library and a telephone help line.

It has been found that many children who are diagnosed with Aspergers also have characteristics of or also diagnosed with ADHD.

Contact

Phone 9411 2186 email hyperadd3@bigpond.com www.users.bigpond.com/hyperadd/

Autism: the growing Epidemic Conference

Being held on the 18th October 2008 at the Rydges Hotel Parramatta – organised by the Autism Advisory and Support Service who are a parent lead group in SW Sydney. Check out their web site on www.aass.org.au

For a full information pack and more details contact 0432 327 096 or 0421 245 839 or email info@aass.org.au

Until next time Bob Lester 4648 1593 or 0400 481 520 or email coordinator@fip.org.au Check out www.fip.org.au for more information