

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

November 2007 News Sheet

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November Meetings

Wednesday's coffee meeting saw two new parents along, as well as parents who have not been for a couple of months. Good to see everyone and the information that flowed between parents. It showed how valuable it is for parents who have recently had a diagnosis for their child, to hear from other parents that are a bit further down the track of understanding the Aspie's world.

Thursday night featured our guest speaker Angela, who is a Naturopath and a mother of a young girl with aspergers syndrome. Angela talked about her work and the benefits of a gluten and dairy free diet for children who may have aspergers or challenging behaviours. Many parents have gone down the path of looking at their child or young person's diet to see what changes can benefit the individual and the family situation.

Angela provided the handout that has been sent out to all Support Group members and gave some handy hints on how to shop for a gluten/dairy free diet.

Other issues we talked about included employment, health insurance, picking a school, brushing your teeth (see Oral sensitivity article) and the latest in Thomas the Tank – thanks Jonathan!!

Meetings for December

- **Second Wednesday** 12th December 10 am at The Coffee Club at Macarthur Square next to Border Books, where all the new coffee shops etc are. A great opportunity to have a relaxing cuppa or one of their more creamy refreshments, a bite to eat, have a talk with other parents about what is happening in your world, and even get a last minute Christmas present (or start your shopping like “leave it to the last minute” me).
- **Second Thursday** 13th November 7pm at the Harrington Park Community Centre Fairwater Dr next to the shopping centre. Come along and see what you can gain from listening and talking with other parents or family members.

Oral Sensitivity - from Julie Bullock, OT Community Health

Oral sensitivity can have implications for eating, nutrition, speech, the brushing of teeth and general oral health.

Children with heightened sensitivity in their mouth are often fussy eaters, limiting themselves to foods with particular textures and tastes. In the long term, this impacts on the child's nutritional intake and may cause social issues when dining out or at friends' places or at school. Oral sensitivity may also lead to problems with maintaining adequate oral health, with

children rushing the job of brushing their teeth or refusing to brush at all. The following is a list of ways to assist in desensitising the oral cavity.

1. Wet your index finger and stroke firmly over the gums of the upper and lower teeth (do not stroke the palatal gum area. Your child may close their teeth together causing you great pain) Perform this once a day initially and increase to twice a day. You may sing your child's favourite song to make it more fun
2. Expose your child's oral cavity to vibration. This can be through vibrating tooth brushes, rotating lollypops. It may also be beneficial to expose your child's lips and chin to vibration. There are many vibrating toys and mini massaging devices on the market
3. Have your child coat their finger with their favourite spread and rub it over their gums and their lips. Have them look into a mirror to do this. Once they have been successful, they can eat the spread
4. Have children puff up their cheeks and pop them with their hands
5. Blow raspberries
6. Create fish faces with cheeks and mouths
7. Play with blowing toys that whistle or move
8. Put lip balm on lips and create lip prints on a mirror

How to determine if a treatment really helped?

Located on an American website www.autism.com is a checklist that can be completed on line and information on parent ratings of behavioural effects of biomedical interventions (drugs, non-drug supplements and special diets). Interesting information to inform you about treatments of autism generally and as the article stated:

It is important to keep in mind that no treatment will help everyone with autism. Although one child may have improved dramatically from a certain treatment, another child, even with similar characteristics, may not benefit from the same treatment. Careful observation along with a critical perspective will allow parents and others to decide whether or not a treatment is truly beneficial

Source Stephen M Edelson PhD www.aurim.com

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) News

Following a petition by parents and community supporters for Aspect to consider establishing a high school satellite class in the Macarthur region, they have written back to the parents who started the petition with the following information.

As part of Aspect's Education and Research Division, the Western Sydney School is currently undertaking a futures planning process to identify and manage future growth in the Western Sydney region. Macarthur has been identified as a priority area for future growth of the school, including additional new base school and satellite class sites. The futures planning committee is working towards finalising a five year plan to address future growth of the school early in 2008.

The Principal of the Western Sydney School Giovanni Gulli 9725 5719 or Julie Hook, Project Development Manager, Education and Research 8868 8502 can be contacted in 2008 for further information

This sounds very positive news for people living in both Macarthur and the wider Western Sydney region as an appropriate education setting is essential for children and young people who are on the Autism Disorder Spectrum

Better Health

The Better Health Channel in Victoria is a great place to find a wide variety of Fact Sheets on health related issues and topics, including a number of disability syndromes and therapies. Have a look on www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Accessing the Internet

If you do not have access to the internet, you may have a friend or other family member who is – why not ask them to help you find information. It's also a good way for them to gain a greater understanding of aspergers and issues you may be facing.

Remember that the local library has free internet access – all you need is a hotmail address or the like, and they are usually happy to assist people starting out. By using the local library you have access to the latest computer gear, broadband connection, they do all the work re viruses and the like, and they can assist you getting books etc on topics around aspergers.

Trouble with Harry

On ABC Radio in November Robyn Williams presented a talk with a science teacher from the UK who has a 9 year old son with Aspergers Syndrome. I have sent a transcript out to parents who are not on the email lists for our support group. For those on the internet, you can have a look at www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor and click on the 28th October article. It can be downloaded as an audio presentation for those so inclined.

Found at Camden Library

Whilst roaming the library shelves as one does – yes I enjoy doing things like this – I came across a book titled **“What about me? the autism survival guide for kids”** by Gerda De Clerq and Athanasia Koutsis.

It is a children's book for brothers and sisters of a child with autism and by using simple language, everyday examples and great cartoon drawings, the authors discuss autism and how it can affect all members of the family. Tips and strategies are given for siblings of children with autism for making their life a little easier.

Ask your local library about it next time you pay it a visit or perhaps ask your local book shop or contact www.bookinhand.com.au to see if you can purchase it. Hopefully I will be getting a copy for our library in the near future.


Talking about the Support Groups Library


If you have a book on loan from the library - ***we need it back*** – so other parents can have a read. I am happy to come to you to retrieve books or to know that you still need it for a bit longer.

New resources have been purchased that families can have on loan for a month

- Teach me to play – CD Rom of 44 colour schedules to teach play skills by Sue Larkey and Heather Durrant

- Pic's for PECS 2007 – CD Rom of colourful symbols for visual communication from Pyramid Educational Consultants

 All Cats have asperger syndrome – the award winning book by Kathy Hoopmann

 Look me in the Eye. - by John Elder Robinson who grew up undiagnosed with Aspergers. Tells his life through his eyes and how he has coped (or not coped) at various stages. “A Life lived according to his gifts rather than his limitations”

Tony Attwood coming back to town

Friday 29th February and Saturday 1st March 2008 at the Burwood RSL Club

Hosted by ASPIA Inc (Asperger Syndrome Partner Information Australia) the two days of workshops will cover Teen Years through to adulthood and Marriage/Lifelong relationships. Workshops are open to individuals with Aspergers Syndrome, family members, couples, partners, professionals and other interested people.

Final details of workshops are being finalised along with cost of attendance. The final program will be available by the beginning of December and you can check it out on the organiser's website on www.aspia.org.au or call Carol on 0408 817 828 for registration details.

Families in Partnership Co-operative will be sponsoring a number of families to enable them to attend these workshops – so keep an eye out for our next news sheet that will contain details and mark the above dates in your diaries for next year.

The Brief – ABC TV show

On Friday night 23rd November I noticed a program on the ABC that was to feature a character who has Aspergers Syndrome. Whilst a typical British style lawyer show, it was a good insight into the world of a young adult with aspergers and the affect upon his family and people around him.

Another mainstream show providing the wider community with an understanding of Aspergers and the life of families and carers. Cannot see where it can be viewed on the internet but I will keep a look out if it becomes available.

Until next time

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