



In this newsletter

Who needs to know of the diagnosis?

Page 1

What do I tell family and friends?

Page 1

Siblings

Page 2

Grandparents

Page 2

How to be a friend to someone with Asperger's

Page 3

For parents

Page 3

Resources

Page 4

Book orders

Page 4

Workshops:

More details on website

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Hello everyone,
Talking to your family and friends about a diagnosis can be a little daunting, however if you are prepared with information and understanding the task will be much easier. Don't try and hide

the diagnosis from the child. Be open and honest and talk about the things you will be doing. Good luck.

Anna Tullemans

Who needs to know of the diagnosis?

There are a number of people who need to know about a diagnosis:

- The person with the diagnosis – they can understand why they do the things they do
- Teacher and other staff – appropriate strategies and interventions can be implemented at school
- Siblings – they can understand the behaviours they witness
- Family – they can support you in your decisions
- Friends – they can support you in strategies
- Students in the class – can support the child in class and during activities
- School community – can implement strategies to help with peers and friendships in the playground

Divulging information to the last two needs to be considered carefully. If there are no behaviour issues which impact on others directly then I would probably not divulge at this point. Remember that the level of information for each of these groups will be quite different.

What do I tell Family and Friends?

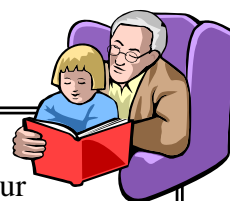
- Always give them clear, honest and concise information
 - The doctor told us he has Asperger Syndrome. It means that he may have difficulty with.....
- Give them a brief description of the difficulties that the child faces
 - He has trouble with
- Balance this with positive skills and strengths that the child has
 - He is great at doing jigsaw puzzles.....
- Explain to them some simple strategies that you already have in place
 - When he talks too much about his special interest tell him he has only 5 more minutes and then he has to read his book.....
- Give them strategies to use when the child is having a meltdown, wobbly or tantrum
 - Don't try and touch him.....
- Information on how to recognise one of these in the rumbling stages
 - When you see him do..... then you need to redirect him into doingor
- Information on what to do when the strategies are not working
 - Sometimes even when you try everything, it still may not work so don't worry, try doing.....

Siblings (© Anna Tullemans 2009)

Sometimes there is a bit of a 'tug of war' going on in the sibling. He doesn't know whether to love or hate his brother or sister. He is confused as he has feelings of loyalty and shame towards the special needs sibling. You can help them understand AS/ASD and translate that understanding to others and especially to their friends.

Following are some suggestions to help the sibling:

- Explain your child's special needs and his behaviour in a way that has meaning for his siblings. You need take into consideration their developmental level.
- Tell them they can't catch Asperger's/ASD.
- Talk to your children about how they feel and give them a chance to express and accept those feelings. It helps for them to have these feelings acknowledged and recognised.
- Suggest ideas for explaining the diagnosis to their friend. Give them the words and sentences they can use to describe the diagnosis without having to give long explanations.
- Give the diagnosis a name.
- Give them the words to describe the difficulties the special needs child has.
- Explain to the sibling that you may need to spend extra time with this child, but that it doesn't mean you love them less.
- Find separate times and separate activities for the sibling, but not so many activities that he feels like you are trying to get rid of him.
- Include the sibling in new strategies that are being implemented.
- Give them some simple teaching strategies to help engage their brother or sister and to encourage a close bond.
- Praise the sibling when he/she uses these strategies.
- Give the sibling coping strategies to deal with situations that may occur in the home or in the shopping centres.
- Give the sibling a private place where they can retreat to, to have some peace and quiet, and time out space.
- Don't expect the sibling to always act responsibly. Sometimes they need to feel free to 'act like a child'.
- Give siblings a chance to meet others in their position so they can share similar experiences.
- Don't allow the child with the diagnosis to 'get away with everything'. Siblings need to see you are fair with discipline. Fair boundaries for everyone.
- Siblings don't have to do everything with their brother or sister. For example if the child with the diagnosis can't sit still during a school play, then maybe its better if he stays at home and the brother or sister can quietly shine.



Grandparents

Grandparents are an important part of the family, and can be of great value to you and your immediate family. Remember that grandparents may feel as frustrated and confused by the diagnosis as you are.

- Help them by giving them encouragement and information.
- Grandparents can build positive relationships and bonds with the ASD child and/or the siblings. They don't have the stresses of daily care to deal with. They can take the child for an outing to make them feel special or do something that is special only between them.
 - Take the child to a special playground that is not used by the parents etc
- Remember that grandparents will not only grieve for their grandchild but also for you, as they see the impact on you and your family.
- Keep them informed about what you are doing and encourage them to use the strategies.
- Encourage grandparents' participation in thinking up new strategies to use.

How to be a friend to someone with Asperger's /ASD (for students in the same classroom)

Excerpt from: *Talking to Family and Friends about the Diagnosis* – Anna Tullemans

Explain to students in the class how they can be a friend to the child with Asperger's/ASD. They can do this by:

- Accepting their differences
- Protecting their friend from situations that annoy and frustrate them
- Joining in with their friend in games and activities that interest the child with Asperger's Syndrome/ ASD
- Inviting their friend to play, but also understanding that sometimes he will say no and that they need to ask again later.
- Inviting their friend to play, but also understanding that he will need some time out and space during the play session
- Sitting near their friend and noticing when he might need help.
- Keeping him away from the bullies.



For Parents

- Be kind to yourself. You can't be perfect all the time, and you will make mistakes. Making mistakes is fine, its part of being human. Learn from this mistake and move on.
- Remember that what works for your family is just fine, no matter what others may think.
- Choose your battles carefully. Don't waste valuable time and effort on changing people's minds if they're not going to play a pivotal role in your child's life.
- Think about what you want to achieve by divulging the diagnosis. This will help with finding the right words to use.
- Don't be afraid to invent new or to modify existing strategies.
- Have an activity or interest outside of your home. This will help keep your stress level contained.
- Positive reinforcement is the key:
 - No matter how small the step, keep encouraging. Family and friends will be more inclined to keep using strategies if they think they are doing well.
- Don't overload family with too much information or too many strategies. Use the KISS method. (Keep it Simple Stupid).
 - Keep information simple and concise until they are ready to understand more.
- Always answer questions honestly:
 - If you don't know, tell them.
- Don't expect family and friends to understand everything:
 - Give them time to fully digest the information you've given them.
- Know and understand as much as you can about the disability, that way you can explain it in more simple terms.
- Finally, take time to 'stop and smell the roses'. Celebrate small successes and appreciate the little things in life.

Excerpt from: *Talking to Family and Friends about the Diagnosis* – Anna Tullemans

Resources

available through Book in Hand at Redcliffe: 073885 8525

For the person with ASD:

Asperger Syndrome, the Universe and Everything – Kenneth Hall

This is Asperger's Syndrome – Elisa Gagnon and Brenda Smith Myles

Mystery of a Special Kid – Josie Santomauro

Freaks, Geeks and Asperger's Syndrome – A Users Guide to Adolescence – Luke Jackson

Succeeding in College with Asperger's Syndrome – John Harpur

Asperger Syndrome What Teachers Need to Know – Matt Winter

For Parents and Siblings

The Asperger Parent – Jeffrey Cohen

Brotherly Feelings - Sam Frender and Robin Schiffmiller

Asperger Syndrome – A Guide for parents and professionals – Tony Attwood

All Cats Have Aspergers Syndrome – Kathy Hoopmann

Parenting a child with Asperger Syndrome – Brenda Boyd

Australian Autism Handbook – Benison O'Reilly and Seana Smith

For students in the class

The Sixth Sense – Parts one and two – Carol Gray

Can I Tell You about Asperger's Syndrome? – Jude Welton

Special People Special Ways – Arlene Maguire

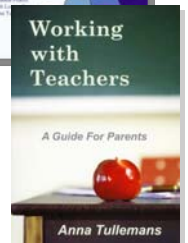
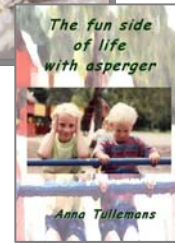
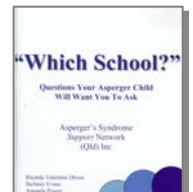
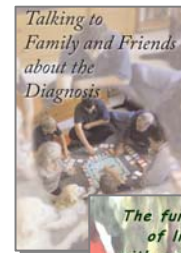
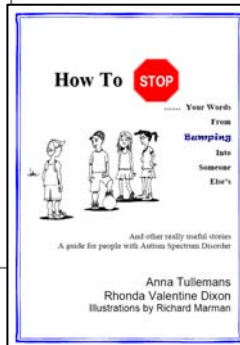
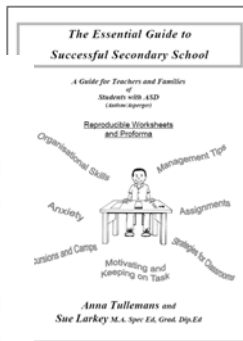
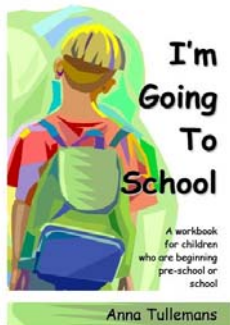
Amazingly Alphie – Understanding and Accepting Different Ways of Being – Roz Espin

Learning to be a Good Friend – Christine A. Adams

Everybody is Different – Fiona Bleach



Books authored by Anna Tullemans – see www.annatullemans.com



To order books please email Anna on: annatullemans@gmail.com

If you would like to receive the newsletter via email:

Email

- \$50 The Essential Guide to Successful Secondary School
- \$45 Teacher Assistants Big Red Book of Ideas
- \$30 How To stop Your Words From Bumping
- \$25 Talking to Family and Friends
- \$25 Working with Teachers
- \$20 I'm Going to School (workbook for students entering school or transitioning)
- \$12 Fun Side of Asperger
- \$18 Which School

Prices include postage in Australia only (April 2009)

\$.....Total

Please make cheques payable to
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And send the order form and cheque to:
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