



**Aspergers Anonymous®**

**Together We Can!**



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## **About Aspergers Anonymous®**

*Aspergers Anonymous® is a fellowship of people with Asperger's Syndrome and their families that offers free regular meetings and a program to practice social interactions, acceptance & positive thinking. At ASPA we learn how to help ourselves and not to depend on other people to solve our problems. We are self-supporting through our own contributions and we do not seek or accept any grants, funding or donations. Our members maintain personal anonymity at the public level including TV, movies, press, radio & social media and we have no opinion on outside issues and stay out of all public controversy. Our primary purpose is to help people with AS and their families and the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop isolating.*

**THE PROFESSOR'S OPINION**  
**of**  
**ASPERGERS ANONYMOUS®**



**PROFESSOR TONY ATTWOOD**  
MSc, PhD, AFBPsS, MCCP  
Clinical Psychologist, Author, Keynote Speaker

I think that the Aspergers Anonymous assessment guide is simple but also very perceptive in identifying the characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome. I think this is an excellent document. What it does is go through 20 key points. Obviously it's not the definitive diagnostic process, but it's a good screening tool that will indicate those who will warrant and benefit from a thorough diagnostic assessment. What a clinician does is take each of those 20 items, adds a few more and then goes through them in much more depth. But this assessment guide makes for a very legitimate referral. I think the questions are very simple and very straightforward. There aren't any psychological terms that you've got to explain. So I think many people could understand exactly what the question is asking about and you have a simple yes or no. It is simple, easy and effective.

I'm a Professor and I suppose I have a fair bit of knowledge. However my greatest knowledge has come from those who have Asperger's Syndrome and their families, not from research articles or conferences and the greatest wisdom and experience is in the families and their advice has greater credibility and practicality than some of the clinicians and academics advice. The Aspergers Anonymous groups have many functions – there's a level of emotional support and a sense of belonging but also access to wisdom that you don't get from any textbook. In terms of the Aspergers Anonymous program for acceptance and positive thinking, I think those with Asperger's Syndrome need to look on the brightside, otherwise there's a tendency to focus and dwell on the negatives, it seems to be a characteristic and if I had a tablet to give optimism, I would design that for those with Asperger's. It means that they will often need to change their perception of situations and their own self worth and their own value. That is before any event, during it and also after it because they can do what I call a post mortem on it and be very self critical. So it's very important that somebody assists them in being objective rather than subjective.

I think that Aspergers Anonymous should hold meetings as often as is needed and sometimes you get offshoots that will meet on separate days because they have common issues or they all want to go and see the latest science fiction movie. So there will be subgroups that will form and friendships that will develop and I feel that the benefit of the meetings is not just in terms of wisdom but it's also the development of friendships they're going to make.

I think the parents of people with Asperger's Syndrome are more practical and realistic than professionals and they know what's reasonable in any situation. So I think that the advice that comes from a parent has that authority to it and that a professional who may not know Asperger's Syndrome from within a family setting may have expectations that are too high or not be able to explain it in everyday language. Sometimes professionals hide behind their terminology which parents don't do and so the parents speak sense.

In terms of the Spiritual program offered by Aspergers Anonymous - first of all I think people with Asperger's Syndrome are actually very Spiritual people. It depends on where it goes and what they do, but there is both a Spiritual essence and how aspects of Spirituality can help that needs to be recognised. Sometimes psychologists are very practical people and because in Spirituality you can't put numbers and data to it, they don't accept it. Yet for Humans and in life, Spirituality can make the difference between life & death.

If Aspergers Anonymous is going to be effective, you're going to have to be independent. Governments want to control and if they fund you, they will control you and Aspergers Anonymous needs to be independent of that. You need to be very objective and able to criticise Government agencies without fear of them withdrawing the funds.

In my experience, the bullying of people with Asperger's Syndrome by other people is responsible for causing up to 25% of all alcoholics and drug addicts. The problems for the person with Asperger's Syndrome are so great that the person will try to find a solution and a temporary solution that is not a solution is alcohol and drugs. So I would see that the fellowship of Aspergers Anonymous and the support and the wisdom will strangely enough, act as an antidote to inappropriate strategies such as alcohol and drug dependency.

I encourage people with AS and their families to join Aspergers Anonymous, because they're good and they will do you good - so come along!

**Professor Tony Attwood**

MSc, PhD, AFBPsS, MCCP

Clinical Psychologist, Author, Keynote Speaker.

## Assessment of Asperger's Syndrome

'I think that the Aspergers Anonymous® assessment guide is simple but also very perceptive in identifying the characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome. It is simple, easy and effective.'

**Professor Tony Attwood, Clinical Psychologist, MSc, PhD, AFBPsS, MCCP**

	Yes	No
1. Are you very shy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you avoid eye contact with other people who you don't know?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you mostly spend lunchtimes or break periods on your own?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do changes to your routine make you very anxious?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are you physically clumsy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you always stick to and never break the rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you dislike and avoid team sports or team activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you prefer to do your hobbies or interests on your own?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you say things that other people find hurtful even though you don't find it hurtful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do you take things that other people say literally?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Are you easily hurt by what other people say to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do you have poor or no social relationships with people who are the same age as you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Would you prefer a vacation in a private place rather than in a crowded place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Do you have a posture or gait that is not straight?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Do you prefer to eat at home rather than eating out in restaurants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Do you get very anxious when travelling to new places or when meeting new people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Do you spend most of your time by yourself or in your own private space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Are you often oppositional or argumentative with parents or authorities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Do you dislike sharing your close friend or relative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Are you bothered by smells, lights, noises or textures that don't bother other people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### WHAT'S YOUR SCORE?

If you have answered YES to three or more questions, there is a chance that you may have Asperger Syndrome.

If you have answered YES to five or more, chances are that you have Asperger Syndrome.

If you have answered YES to seven or more, you definitely have Asperger Syndrome.

Why do we say this? Because the actual experience of many people and their families who have and live with Asperger Syndrome on a daily basis has taught us some basic truths about our symptoms - and about ourselves.

## **About Asperger's Syndrome**

*As people who have actually experienced Asperger's Syndrome and live with this condition on a daily basis, we feel that we are uniquely placed to help other people with AS and their families.*

### **Definition of Asperger's Syndrome:**

Asperger's Syndrome is a neurodevelopmental difference that changes the way a person thinks, feels and communicates with other people. Asperger's Syndrome is often called High Functioning Autism and is clinically classed as an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In many cases the person with AS looks neurotypical and has good academic skills which can lead to delays with assessment and misdiagnosis. AS is a social difference that can often go undetected but can adversely affect a person's life if not properly assessed and supported. The prevalence of AS is widely accepted as 1:100. AS rarely exists by itself and other conditions such as Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), ADHD, Dyspraxia, Tics Disorder and Tourette's Syndrome are often coexisting conditions with Asperger's.

Aspergers Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues and does not endorse or oppose the opinions of external organizations or health care professionals. Our primary purpose is to help people with Asperger's Syndrome and their families.

### **Symptoms of Asperger's Syndrome:**

Asperger's Syndrome is a social disability – typical symptoms often include:

Delayed social maturity - children with AS are usually at least three years behind peers.

Difficulty making friends often resulting in social isolation.

Better relationships with adults and older people than with peers.

Difficulty with communication and control of emotions.

Unusual formal language that can appear disconnected to the general discussion.

Language & tone can be misconstrued as argumentative or pedantic by neurotypical people.

A set of interests that can be viewed as narrow and intense.

An unusual profile of learning abilities.

A need for assistance with basic organizational skills.

Physical clumsiness – examples include gait and co-ordination.

Sensory hypersensitivity to certain noises, aromas, textures or touch.



### **Assessment of Asperger's Syndrome:**

People with Asperger's Syndrome are usually very honest, disciplined, caring, shy and private people who offer original creative thinking to solving problems and are sometimes exceptionally talented in specialised areas. However we often find ourselves isolated and alone in the world and it is very important that we ask ourselves if we have AS so that we can learn to know ourselves better and reach out for the spiritual, emotional & social support that everybody needs and craves. To answer this question, please complete our assessment guide on page 6 and answer the questions as honestly as you can for yourself.

### **Risk Factors:**

The dangers associated with undiagnosed and unsupported Asperger's Syndrome include:

Social isolation

Negative thinking

Anxiety

Alcoholism

Depression

Bullying

Drug addiction

Dependency on prescription drugs

Multi drug overdose

Self harm

Anorexia nervosa – most commonly in girls

Misdiagnosis – most commonly with Schizophrenia

### **Causes of AS:**

There is strong medical & scientific evidence to suggest that Asperger's Syndrome is a genetic condition and this belief is supported by many respected doctors, psychiatrists and health care professionals. As families who have actually experienced and lived with Asperger's Syndrome, we believe that a genetic cause makes sense and many of us have also been able to identify Autism Spectrum Disorders in other members of our family's genetic heritage. It has been suggested by many geneticists that the genes responsible for Asperger's Syndrome are also linked to the genes responsible for other co-existing disorders including Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Tics Disorder or Tourette's Syndrome. These disorders are often a 'red flag' for unassessed AS.

Those of us who are parents have been reassured by prominent medical experts that we are in no way to blame and that our children's Asperger's Syndrome was not caused by anything that we did or failed to do as parents. However we do accept that although we are not responsible for causing our children's AS,

we are responsible as their parents and legal guardians for going to any lengths to ensure that our children are properly assessed and that they receive the ongoing help and support that they need throughout their lives.

### **Treatment & Support:**

We believe that as people who have actually experienced Asperger's Syndrome and live with this condition on a daily basis, we are placed in a unique position to help other people with AS and their families. Our experience has made us certain that people with Asperger's Syndrome do not want to be socially excluded or singled out. We want to take part in life just like everyone else, even though this may require a different approach for us. People with AS usually need help to be organised and occupied so that we can take part in life and avoid the dangers of loneliness, isolation and boredom. Family members of people with AS also need a lot of support and find it valuable to write down their negative feelings and frustrations and to express these feelings with other people who are also family members of people with AS so that they no longer feel alone and isolated. At a practical level, our family members and carers also need to take time for themselves and to look after themselves. All of us find the acronym HALT very useful to remind us to stop and look after ourselves before we get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired and become no good to ourselves or anyone else!

The HALT acronym is especially important for people with AS because we can get very drained very quickly from social interactions with other people and we need a lot of time and space for ourselves to recharge our batteries. Another practical tip that we have found is that people with AS can usually only handle one relationship at a time and we are usually attracted to and feel more comfortable with older relatives or with other people with AS.

### **Is Asperger's Syndrome a disability or a gift?**

Most of our families who have experienced Asperger's Syndrome say that it can be both a disability and a gift. Asperger's Syndrome is a social difference that requires ongoing social support throughout a person's lifetime. However people with Asperger's Syndrome are also usually very honest, reliable and dedicated people who offer original creative thinking to solving problems and are sometimes exceptionally talented and gifted in specialised areas.

It is widely accepted that the following famous people all had AS:

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – who wrote 'Sherlock Holmes' based on himself  
Hans Christian Andersen – who wrote 'The Ugly Duckling' based on himself  
Einstein

Jane Austen

Shakespeare

Carl Jung  
Gregor Mendel  
George Washington  
Susan Boyle  
Heather Kuzmich  
Daryl Hannah

There are also many hugely successful and famous philanthropists alive today who have openly confirmed that they have Asperger's Syndrome!

**Education & Employment:**

Children with Asperger's Syndrome may be entitled to additional special needs and resource supports at school. A good school will often set up special interest groups such as Computers, Science or Maths clubs that meet during lunchtime or after school to help children with AS to take part and avoid social exclusion and isolation. Adults with AS are also entitled to assisted access to third level education. Asperger's Syndrome is a social disability and the risk of social isolation at school, college and in the workplace is usually the biggest challenge. We have found that adults with AS often work best in jobs that require specialised expertise and training or in public service or assisted employment schemes.

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## Acceptance

*We accepted that we had AS and that we needed to reach out for help.*

Nobody likes to think of themselves as different and we all like to believe that we don't need any help. However the reality of life is that everybody is different and nobody is totally independent. We all have our own unique fingerprints and DNA and everybody - no matter how tough or strong they appear to be, depends upon something or somebody else on a daily basis for their survival. When we think about the food that we eat or the clothes that we wear or the electricity that runs our homes, we realise that all of these things and many more that we depend on every day are provided by outside people and agencies that we have no control over. Everybody – even the rich and famous is mortal and if people are lucky enough to make it to old age, they also usually need to be helped and cared for every day.

One of the main problems with AS is that it is a condition that tells us that we don't have it. As high functioning people, we often look neurotypical and do well at school or college but when it comes to interacting with other people and developing social relationships, we fall short. Another baffling feature of Asperger's Syndrome is that it does not show up on a blood test like regular physical illnesses or conditions. Our AS is a neurodevelopmental difference that changes the way we communicate and interact with others and the only way that can know if we have AS is to assess our symptoms. The actual experience of many people and their families who have and live with Asperger's Syndrome on a daily basis and the experience of many competent professionals like Hans Asperger has taught us some basic truths about our symptoms - and about ourselves. On page 6 above, we have listed 20 questions to help people to assess themselves or their loved ones for AS. These questions have been approved by world leading ASD experts and are a very reliable way to assess AS.

But an assessment is often not enough to convince a person that they have AS or more importantly that they need to reach out for the help and support that is available at Aspergers Anonymous. The strong willpower that can often be a great characteristic of our AS can also become a liability if we use it to deny reality or to reject the help that is on offer. Our family members can feel like they are banging their heads against a brick wall when they try to convince us to accept the fact that we have AS and to reach out for help and support. We often reject their suggestions and claim instead that we are fine and that they are the ones with all the problems and they should be getting help – not us! When our loved ones encountered this kind of resistance in us, they found that their best approach was to agree with us that yes they do need help like everybody else in the world but that there is no shame in needing help.

Another way that our family members can help is to remind us that everybody wants to be safe and happy and to point out to us that our choice to deny we have AS or to refuse to reach out for help does not seem to be working because we do not seem to be happy. Through our Aspergers support groups, we have learned that facing reality makes us happy and that reality is much less fearsome than fantasy in the long run. We have found the reality of our fellowship, the reality of our unity and service and the reality of our obligations to other people with AS and their families. We have also learned that to ignore reality and to live in an imaginary world is dishonest and therefore has a destructive effect on our spiritual and emotional wellbeing.

As Human Beings living in the same time and space as everyone else, we know that we are not immune to receiving the same wake up calls to reality just like everybody else. If we refused to accept that we had AS or to reach for the help and support that we needed, sooner or later our lives became unmanageable. Some of the dangerous symptoms that we have experienced with unassessed and unsupported Asperger's Syndrome include social isolation, negative thinking, anxiety, alcoholism, depression, bullying, drug addiction, dependency on prescription drugs, multi drug overdose, self harm, anorexia nervosa (most commonly in girls) and misdiagnosis (usually with Schizophrenia). Sometimes our lives had to come to a crisis point and we had to reach a rock bottom before we would accept our condition or reach out for the help and support that we needed. A wise person once said 'never waste a good crisis'! Looking back we can now see that when a crisis or rock bottom gave us the humility to accept that we has AS and to reach out for help, then that crisis became a good thing.

***Acceptance is a process that brings relief, peace of mind and gratitude!***

The concept of acceptance is derived from a Latin word (acquiēscere) which means 'to find rest in' or to be relieved of a struggle. Many of our family members felt great relief when we were eventually assessed as having Asperger's Syndrome. However for people who actually have AS, assessment can often bring disbelief, denial and anger. We sometimes make negative judgements about ourselves and look on AS as a bad thing that makes us inferior to or less than other people. Our old way of thinking was based on the false assumption that everybody else in the world was the same and that only we were different. We can also get caught in a trap of believing that our AS is not just a part of who we are but totally defines who we are.

Thankfully most of us have come to see the error of our old ways of negative thinking. We now realise that everybody in this world has their own unique DNA and fingerprints and that variations have always been an essential part of nature and evolution. As we grow spiritually and emotionally, we begin to value

our differences and to accept the fact that we do belong in this world and that we do have an important role to play in life. People with AS are simply a different neurological group with a particular set of differences in common that sets us apart from other neurotypical people who have other sets of differences. People with AS also need specific forms of help and support that are different to the help and support that other people need. This does not mean that we are inferior to or less than other people – it simply means that we have different symptoms that require ongoing help and support in different ways.

People with AS have often been described as being very innocent or naive this can sometimes be a very good thing. Young people with AS are usually not interested in social norms or 'following the crowd' and this allows for original creative thinking. Most people with AS are very honest and transparent and usually say exactly what they mean with no hidden agendas. Many people with AS also passionate about high principals like equality and fairness. Our preference for rules and honesty can make us great students, workers and citizens. In a sorely troubled world where people can sometimes be selfish, shallow and deceitful - it can be breath of fresh air to have a loved one or colleague with AS who is honest, caring and unaffected and who can 'think outside the box' and does not need to 'follow the crowd'. It is widely accepted that Hans Christian Andersen wrote 'The Ugly Duckling' based on himself. In the video on our website, the author explains to a troubled boy that his frustration comes from his wrong negative thinking that he is an 'ugly duckling' and that he will soon discover and accept the reality that he is in fact a swan'. In other words, the author is urging the boy to accept himself as he is and to live in the solution with other people who are like him.

Just because people with AS do things differently does not mean we are less than or inferior to anyone else. Many great people with AS have used their differences to make a very positive contributions to mankind and to the world.

Most leading experts agree that Albert Einstein had Asperger's Syndrome as shown by his original creative traits and open minded attitude. Einstein was very unhappy and was bullied at school and did not 'follow the crowd' or fit in with conventional thinking. In fact Einstein's childhood teachers in Austria told him that he would never amount to anything! Yet here was a man who made the most of his differences to become a genius and went on to say that everybody could be a genius if they learn to accept themselves as they are and get to know themselves and how they work:

***“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid!” Albert Einstein***

It has often been said by spiritual people that 'gratitude is the highest form of acceptance'. However, it is usually very difficult for people and their families to accept that they have AS - yet alone be grateful for it. Yet when we take another look at this attitude we realise that we actually do have a lot to be grateful for. We are alive, we have 5 senses in more or less good working order. Most of us are not physically crippled and do not have a life threatening or terminal disease like some poor unfortunate people. 'Success' can be described as 'getting what you want' but absolutely nobody gets what they want all of the time. 'Happiness' on the other hand is 'wanting what you've got' and this is possible for all of us all of the time. Nobody can be successful all of the time but everybody including ourselves can be happy if we choose to have the right attitude and practice gratitude for the many positive gifts in our lives!

***Happiness is an inside job and can only come from what you think of yourself – not what other people think of you!***

Nobody should have any problem with the spiritual program of Aspergers Anonymous. Our members come from many different religious and non-religious backgrounds. We do not demand that anyone believes anything – we simply pass on our own experience of what works for us. As people who have actually experienced Asperger's Syndrome and live with this condition on a daily basis, we feel that we are uniquely placed to help other people with AS and their families.

***Accept Yourself. Who are you to say you should be different?!***

## Open Mindedness

*Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could help us to think positively and be happy.*

Aspergers Anonymous does not demand that anyone believes anything – we simply pass on our own experience of what works for us. Our members come from many different religious and non-religious backgrounds. Every person with AS and their family members are welcome as equal members of Aspergers Anonymous, regardless of whether they believe in a Higher Power or are agnostics or atheists.

Emotional problems are not limited to people with AS and most people in the world struggle to be happy and to find emotional contentment and peace of mind in life. Many people turn to very destructive addictions like alcohol and drugs to try to solve their emotional problems and to change how they think and feel about themselves. Obviously these addictions do not work and just make people's problems and negative thinking a lot worse in the long run.

Just as lights run on electricity and cars run on gasoline, our Human minds run on ideas. Some of the ideas that we have are good ideas and produce positive effects in our lives. However some of our old ideas are not so good and can produce negative thinking, stress and anxiety. In the same way that a computer follows a repetitive program, our minds can also get stuck in a repetitive program of wrong ideas and negative thinking about ourselves, about other people and about life. One of the main features of Aspergers Syndrome is shyness and a crippling fear of people. Our fear of people can lead us to isolate and to lose out on taking part in the world and in life. Some of us have tried to overcome our negative thinking and fear of people through psychotherapy, CBT, prescription medication and other therapies. Aspergers Anonymous does not endorse or oppose any outside treatment, but most of us find that we need something a lot better to produce the permanent positive changes that we need in our spiritual and emotional lives on a daily basis.

Everybody wants to be happy and most people would agree that one of the hallmarks of negative thinking is unhappiness. Although we can recognise that our unhappiness is linked to our old ideas that don't work, this still does not change the fact that we can get stuck in our old fear of people and that on our own, we usually find it impossible to change the negative way that we think and feel – even when we really want to. When we admitted that of ourselves we were powerless over our old negative ways of thinking and feeling, our minds started to become open to trying new ideas. However when it was suggested to us that if a Higher Power existed, then such a Higher Power ought to be able to



do anything including reducing our crippling fear of people and changing how we think and feel about ourselves, this made some of us very uncomfortable and antagonistic. Even though we saw other people in all areas of life who seemed to be solving their problems by a belief in and a reliance on a Higher Power on a daily basis, we rejected this idea as false and delusional. We refused to try the 'Higher Power experiment' of 'asking for help and seeing what happens' in case this new experiment worked and proved our old theories wrong!

Spirituality can simply be described as a way of thinking and acting that helps to reduce or remove the destructive agents of negative thinking, stress, anger and anxiety from our lives. We welcome the different spiritual opinions of all of our members at our meetings and we find that this attitude helps us to be more useful to others and to stay open minded so that we can all continue to learn and grow spiritually. Most spiritually centred people usually base their lives on the concept of a Power greater than themselves. All of our members are free to choose their own idea of a Power greater than themselves. Some of our members simply believe that two is a Power greater than one and choose their Aspergers Anonymous support group as their Higher Power. Others choose their own conception of God as they understand Him. We find that choosing our own concept of a Higher Power accommodates for all people including believers, former believers, agnostics & atheists.

Thankfully most of us eventually become open minded to trying new ideas to see if they work. One of these new ideas is regular attendance at meetings of Aspergers Anonymous where we can share how we think and feel with other people like ourselves. Another new idea that we can try is the 'God experiment' of 'asking for help and seeing what happens'. Many of us have found that when we try this experiment, new and unaccountable things begin to happen in ours and our loved ones lives. This includes positive changes to how we think and feel about ourselves and a huge reduction in our crippling fear of people.

The Spiritual program of Aspergers Anonymous is based upon a simple belief in a Power greater than ourselves and a willingness to try to live by universal spiritual principles. These universal principles include reaching out for help, getting honest with ourselves and with another person who we trust about how we think and feel, helping other people without demand and asking whatever Higher Power that we believe in for help with these things on a daily basis. If these simple universal principles have worked for billions of other people in this world, then they are certain to help us to think positively and be happy!

## **Prayer & Meditation**

*Just as we need to feed and nurture our body with food and water, we also need to feed and nurture our Spirit with prayer & meditation.*

Love is often described as giving to another person without any demand for anything in return. Even though there is no scientific reason for this kind of unselfish giving, every person is capable of Love. We often do things for other people that are kind and thoughtful without looking for anything in return. We might care for someone by giving them our time and attention or by listening to and reassuring somebody who is going through a tough time and helping them to see the positives and to turn a painful experience into a source of growth. The beauty that we see in nature, the smile that we extend to another person, the small things that we do to help other people and the compassion that we show to people who are hurt or vulnerable and need help – these are as much a part of our make up as our bones and our flesh. These things come from inside us but from where? Obviously these qualities don't come from any of our biological systems or from the chemical synapses in our brain, so where do they come from? Many of us have come to believe that we are Spiritual Beings as well as Human Beings. Just as we need to feed and nurture our body with food and water, we also need to feed and nurture our Spirit with prayer & meditation.

Billions of people over thousands of year have given witness to the positive effects of prayer and meditation in their lives. There are many different forms of prayer and meditation and we do not endorse or oppose any particular religion, denomination or faith. Aspergers Anonymous is open to all people with AS and their families regardless of whether they are believers, agnostics or atheists and the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop isolating.

Those of us who were or still are atheist or agnostic have no need to fear that we will be pressured into believing or doing anything at Aspergers Anonymous. Every member is free to choose their own concept of a Power greater than themselves. When we first joined Aspergers Anonymous, most of the long term members in our group seemed to have more manageable lives and to be happier than us. Although we do not demand that anyone believes in anybody else's concept of God, we do suggest that every member reaches out for help from a 'Higher Power' – even if this is their support group where two is a power great than one. In the beginning, our group can serve as a 'Power greater than ourselves' and this is a good enough start for most people to progress from.

Every healthy relationship requires communication and has two simple things in common – talking and listening. Prayer is simply talking to a Power greater than ourselves and meditation is trying to this Power in quiet. The positive fruits

of prayer have been experienced by billions of people throughout the ages. We were all created with free will and prayer is simply asking for help from and inviting our Higher Power into our lives. We have found that it is not important how or where we ask for help. In our experience, it does not matter whether people choose to go to church and pray on their knees or to simply talk to God at different times and places throughout their daily lives – this is a personal choice for each person to try for themselves. The only thing that we know for certain is that we need to actually ask for help. We were all created with free will and each of us has the power to keep our Higher Power out of our lives.

We have also learned some other valuable lessons about prayer. It is common sense that if we believe in a Power greater than ourselves, then this Power should take the role of an employer and we should take the role of an employee. It would not make sense for us to play boss by telling our employer what to do. Therefore when praying we should ask only for our Higher Power's will for ourselves and for the power to carry this out and we should trust that this will always be way better than our will. We can also do the same for our loved ones – we can ask for help on their behalf and for our Higher Power's will in their lives too and for the power to carry this out. In this way we are asking for help from a Power greater than ourselves without 'playing God' in the process.

Now about meditation - most Spiritually centred people suggest that we should find a quiet and peaceful place away from any noise or distractions when we are trying to meditate. This could be a quiet room in our home or a quiet place in nature. For some people, a church or spiritually based support group meeting is a good place to close our eyes and listen. Every relationship requires giving our time and attention to another person and listening to them. Meditation is simply listening in quiet to the voice of a Power greater than ourselves. If in prayer we have asked for our Higher Power's will in ours and our loved one's lives and the power to carry that out, then meditation is simply the next step in trying to receive this guidance and support.

How do we know if the guidance that we receive in meditation is real or false? Because when we look back we clearly see that the fruits of any direction that we receive from a Higher Power are always positive and constructive and make common sense in the long term. If we are indecisive and are not sure of which course to take, we can seek advice from a spiritual friend or another trustworthy person on what is the best course to take. Sometime we just need to be patient and wait for events to slowly unfold and problems to be gradually solved or improved in ours and our loved ones lives lives. Even if we do make a mistake in the action that we take, it won't be the end of the world and we can always change course and learn the lesson. Our Higher Power has given us brains for a reason and the persistent use of prayer and meditation should eventually bring

us to a place where we can trust our own thinking. We find that when we invite a Higher Power into our lives, we are protected from making harmful mistakes:

***All God's 'rejection' is protection. His way is always better!***

Like everything else worthwhile in life, prayer & meditation needs to be practiced in order to be effective. Just like a road map is academic unless we actually take the journey, our knowledge about prayer and meditation is also academic and is of no real value unless we practice it every day. When we practice prayer and meditation, we find that this has a profoundly positive effect on our inner lives. We no longer feel isolated and alone. Even when we are not around any other people, we feel a sense of security and belonging. We enjoy a level of intimacy with our Higher Power that no other person could provide. We become less anxious and afraid. We are happier in ourselves and our self-pity is replaced by gratitude. We become less interested in material things and more interested in giving our time to help others without any demand for anything in return. And the more we give to others without demand, the more we receive in our own lives – both internally and externally. In the past we heard other people say these things but we did not really believe them. Now we know that they are true because we have experienced them. The program of Aspergers Anonymous is based on a belief in a Power greater than ourselves and a willingness to try to live by Spiritual Principles on a daily basis. When we put these simple Spiritual ideas into daily practice, then we experience the rewards.

Most prominent professionals agree that Dr. Carl Jung was one of the greatest psychiatrists and psychotherapists in history. In an interview in 1959, Dr Jung was asked 'Do you still believe in God?' Dr. Jung paused and simply replied 'I know. I don't need to believe. I know.'

The greatest gift of prayer and meditation is the awareness that each of us can have a direct relationship with The Spirit of The Universe as soon as we are willing enough to try. This direct relationship is just for us. This gift is our birth right that we have all been given by our Creator and the only thing that we need to do to access it is to ask for help and invite our Higher Power into our lives. We do not need anybody else's permission to have a direct relationship with our Creator - we have been given permission already from The Highest Authority. We also do not need any third party to facilitate this direct relationship and no other person can give this gift to us or take it away from us. We have discovered the Great Reality that that when we ask for our Higher Power's will in our lives, God will never let us down and we will never be alone again – here or hereafter.

***'God loves each of us as if there were only one of us!' – St. Augustine.***

## Helping Others

*Helping others without charge is essential to our own wellbeing and the wellbeing of our fellowship and of the many who have yet to come.*

Aspergers Anonymous is an altruistic fellowship of people with AS and their families that offers free regular meetings and a program to practice social interactions, acceptance & positive thinking. Our final suggestion in our program of action is to help other people with AS and their families without charge. Because we have actually experienced Asperger's Syndrome and live with this condition on a daily basis, we feel that we are uniquely placed to help other people with AS and their families. Those of us who have benefitted from our Aspergers Anonymous support group know that this was only possible because other people gave us a huge amount of their time and energy for free. Many of us have also experienced the rewards of helping others and giving them our time and attention without charge and we know that our whole fellowship and our support groups cannot continue to function and grow unless this kind of work continues. Therefore it is common sense that helping others without demand is the only way that both we and our loved ones can continue to receive the ongoing support that we all need for our spiritual and emotional wellbeing on an daily basis.

At a practical level, love is often described as simply giving to another person without any demand for anything in return. We live in a world where most people seem to be out for themselves and almost everything has a price tag on it or a hidden agenda. Indeed there is nothing wrong with providing goods and services for payment – this is the reality of our material world and we all have material needs. However we are also spiritual people and we also have spiritual needs which cannot be bought or sold. Love is free and we have been privileged to receive other people's time and attention and experience without charge at Aspergers Anonymous. Just as we have freely received, so we should now give freely back to help others so that both they and we can continue to grow spiritually and receive the huge rewards to our inner lives that comes from this kind of giving without demand.

You might ask - how can we help other people with AS and their families and where can we find these people? All around you right now in your own community, there are many people with AS and their families who are alone and desperate. In large cities, there may be thousands who have never even heard of Aspergers Anonymous and are not aware that there is a way out of their isolation and desperation. Our job is to carry the good news of Aspergers Anonymous to these people in our own families, communities, schools and jobs. This may be a simple task like putting up a flyer about our Aspergers Support

Group in a community centre or church hall or writing anonymously to our local newspapers or church newsletters and asking them to insert a notice about where and when our support group meets. However the best way that we can help others is to regularly attend meetings of Aspergers Anonymous ourselves and to be available for the new people who may walk through the door and for our existing members who are going through a hard time and may need our support. As people who are prone to isolation, we find that continued regular attendance at Aspergers Anonymous support group meetings is essential to providing for both ours and other people's social & spiritual needs on an ongoing basis.

There are many other practical ways that we can help others. We can also take on the service responsibility of running our local support group meeting for a few months or helping out with the tea and coffee or setting up before the meeting and cleaning up afterwards. If we move to a new area or there is no meeting, we can help others by setting up a new support group in the local community centre or church hall and bringing the Aspergers Anonymous program and literature to a new area. At ASPA we learn how to help ourselves and not to depend on others to solve our problems and it is up to each and every one of us to create the fellowship and support group that we need. It is easy to give a small amount of money to charity or to a homeless person, but the hardest thing that any of us can give to another person is our own time and attention. Yet the rewards from doing this are immense for both the person giving the help and the person receiving it. At Aspergers Anonymous we can communicate and talk about our thoughts and feelings at a level of intimacy that is often not possible with other people. We have also had the privilege of helping other people with AS and their families who were struggling and the amazing experience of seeing them get on their feet and grow spiritually and emotionally stronger one day at a time. Many of us have also made lifelong friends who we can call, meet up with and talk to on a regular basis. The more that we have of this fellowship, the more we realise that we need it and that other people with AS and their families also need it. Therefore helping others without charge is essential to our own wellbeing and the wellbeing of our fellowship and of the many who have yet to come.

***There are no strangers here, only friends who have not met yet.***

## **SMART Service Traditions**

In order to protect our fellowship from the external problems of money, property and prestige, all of our groups voluntarily agree to adhere to our SMART principles below:

### **Self supporting**

We are self-supporting through our own contributions and we do not seek or accept any grants, funding or donations. Our fellowship does not own any property and our groups keep at most a prudent reserve for running expenses.

### **Meetings**

Aspergers Anonymous is a fellowship of people with Asperger Syndrome and their families that offers free regular meetings and a program to practice social interactions, acceptance & positive thinking. We recommend regular attendance at Aspergers Anonymous support group meetings on an ongoing basis to help others and for our own spiritual and emotional wellbeing.

### **Anonymity**

Our members maintain personal anonymity at the public level including TV, movies, press, radio & social media. This means that when we are speaking about Aspergers Anonymous, we do not publish our full names or our photos. This anonymity assures our members that their privacy will be protected.

### **Religion**

We are not connected to any particular denomination and we do not endorse or oppose any religious ideas. We offer a spiritual program to practice acceptance and positive thinking on a daily basis. Our fellowship is open to all people with AS and their families regardless of whether they believe in a Higher Power or are agnostics or atheists. We welcome the different spiritual opinions of all of our members at our meetings and we find that this attitude helps us to be more useful to others and to stay open minded so that we can all continue to learn and grow spiritually.

### **The only requirement**

The only requirement for membership of Aspergers Anonymous is a desire to stop isolating. Every member's opinion is valid. The only thing that we ask is that we do not get personal with each other. In other words, we encourage members to share their opinions about what is right or wrong - not who is right or wrong. Every support group is also autonomous and no group can tell another group what to do. Our only suggestion for our support groups is that they follow the ASPA SMART service traditions in order to protect our fellowship from the external problems of money, property and prestige.

## **Suggested Support Group Meetings Format:**

‘Welcome to this meeting of the Aspergers Anonymous® \_\_\_\_\_ Group.  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I (*am a parent or have AS*).’

**ASPA Preamble:** ‘Aspergers Anonymous® is a fellowship of people with Asperger’s Syndrome and their families that offers free regular meetings and a program to practice social interactions, acceptance & positive thinking. At ASPA we learn how to help ourselves and not to depend on others to solve our problems. We are self-supporting through our own contributions and we do not seek or accept any grants, funding or donations. Our members maintain personal anonymity at the public level including TV, movies, press, radio & social media and we have no opinion on outside issues and stay out of all public controversy. Our primary purpose is to help people with AS and their families and the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop isolating. The format for this Aspergers Support Group meeting is that the Group reads a few pages from the Aspergers Anonymous® approved booklet. Today’s topic for discussion is \_\_\_\_\_. After the Group has read the literature, the meeting will be opened for discussion in a round robin format around the room. We will now start the reading....’

### **Read out before sharing:**

‘Aspergers Anonymous® provides a safe place for adults & children to share about AS. In order to protect this, we ask members to avoid all cross talk or interrupting anybody else while they are sharing. Members are free to share their own experience strength and hope as it relates to AS. We encourage members to share their opinions about what is right or wrong - not who is right or wrong. Everybody is equal here and we all get an equal amount of time to share. The timer is just a guide to ensure that everybody gets to share. We will now start sharing in a round robin format around the room....’

### **After 45 minutes, pass the bag around for our self-supporting tradition:**

‘Every ASPA Group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions’. The collection goes towards room rental, tea & coffee and insurance costs.

### **At end of meeting read our anonymity tradition:**

‘Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our traditions. What you hear here - take it with you, who you see here – leave it here.’

*We’ll finish the meeting with The Prayer for Acceptance for those who wish to join us:*

*‘God grant us the SERENITY to accept the things we cannot change;  
COURAGE to change the things we can; and WISDOM to know the difference.’*



## Contact Us

We would be delighted to hear from anyone who is affected by Asperger's Syndrome and to help out in any way that we can. We also welcome feedback and co-operation from our professional friends. If you have any queries or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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TN25 6SX  
UK**

**Web:** [www.aspergersanonymous.org](http://www.aspergersanonymous.org)

**E-Mail:** [info@aspergersanonymous.org](mailto:info@aspergersanonymous.org)

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/aspergersanon>

## **Prayer for Acceptance**

**God, grant me the  
SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change;  
COURAGE to change the things I can;  
and  
WISDOM to know the difference**

**Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships  
as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things  
right if I surrender to His will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this  
life and supremely happy with Him  
forever in the next. Amen.**

Reinhold Niebuhr