

Common Issues In ASD/NS Partnerships

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Project Access

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Most Commonly Cited Pluses

- Loyalty
- Kindness
- Good father
- Reliable worker, or tries hard to find a job
- Honesty
- Strong sense of right and wrong



Most Common Complaints

- Lacks ability to hold onto a job for a long time
- Unsociable or only sociable on their terms
- Lack of physical affection or too much
- Lack of spontaneity
- Inability to manage money
- Lack of counseling supports

Vocational challenges

- The main scenario in these cases is that the spouse is very intelligent and has some really good job abilities.
- The spouse's social limitations are the most-cited cause of job loss.



Social Challenges

- The spouses often want to keep an absolute routine, which doesn't allow for guests.
- If the NS spouse attempts to plan social events, the ASD spouse often “hides” either in or away from the house.
- If the couple attempts a social occasion outside the house, the ASD spouse often either retreats or becomes agitated.

Spontaneity

- They don't want to suddenly take a walk, due to nice weather
- They don't want "drop-in" company
- They don't want to try a new sport or a new hobby or even a new TV program
- Special problems when raising kids who want to be creative in play

Money



- Even CPA's or CEO's
- Trouble paying bills on time
- Trouble analyzing investments
- Tendency to spend, rather than save
- Often won't reveal a financial crisis until the problem is insurmountable

Counseling Supports

- Counselors don't understand Cassandra Syndrome
- NS Partner gets labeled as a nag or hysteric
- Traditional Counseling is ineffective
- Counselor needs to use cognitive approaches: i.e., how do we fix it...not why is the problem there

Counseling (cont'd)

- Counselors need to focus on facilitating communication between two people with drastically different communication abilities
- Sexual dysfunction issues need to be addressed and creative solutions offered.
- Goals should be set that are highly pragmatic.
- NS partner often needs separate counseling

Common NS Partner Traits

- Commitment to saving the marriage
- High levels of tolerance
- Good executive functioning skills
- Excellent social skills
- Anxiety-related stress levels are high
- Good sense of humor
- Deep faith

Failure in relationships is not exclusive to ASD

- Some problems in non ASD partners include: Dishonesty, game playing, taking advantage of the other person, other mental illnesses, desire to get a better looking, younger partner, lack of loyalty, concern for what others think of them, over focus on money or possessions, changeability, sit in front of the TV watching sports and drinking beer syndrome, more desire to hang out with the guys, killing animals for ego boosting syndrome



- I had a boy friend before Tom who was not ASD. He was an alcoholic who was still living the Vietnam war. He was easily offended had a bad temper and carried weapons.



I knew what I was getting into with Tom!

- I have a son with autism.
- I have friends with Aspergers.
- I have friends where one or more partner has ASD.
- I knew Tom's characteristics before we married.
- I liked him because of his characteristics.
- I was tired of guys with testosterone poisoning.
- I wanted a man who didn't feel he had to prove he was a man.

Reasons I like my husband

- He is honest and predictable.
- He is not a flirt or “lady’s man.”
- He is devoted to me.
- He wants to spend time with me.
- He is very responsible.
- He is a dedicated musician and we share music.
- We exercise and dance together.
- He is an organic gardener. He does yoga.
- He doesn’t like conflict. He does Tai Chi.



- He is very ethical and shares my political views.
- We have a comfortable and intimate relationship.
- We don't play social games. We hike and bike and canoe. He makes me eat healthy foods.
- We live in the country and he helps repair the house.
- He accepts my children and family.
- He accepts my work and the travel it entails.
- He has given me his family to love.
- He is learning to be generous with others because he is generous with me.
- Basically, I needed him, and he really needed me.



Concerns

- He is sometimes stuck in his routines.
- He doesn't talk about his feelings. When he gets mad he gets quiet. He gets overly anxious and shakes.
- He needs to talk about his work and interests a lot but he doesn't ask about mine much.
- He has priorities that are not always logical (or in agreement with mine) and it is almost impossible to talk him out of them. He is very messy and doesn't notice it.
- He has trouble making real friends.
- He is very shy with new people or in groups.
- He is sometimes not assertive with others.
- He misses some important social behaviors.

My best friend, Patty said: “ I am surprised you are dating Tom. He is so shy!” I responded, “My life work is Autism. Shy is not a problem.” She was my Maid of Honor.



Love can help people change, but don't count on it. Accept them for who they are and be thankful for the wonderful qualities they bring.



What are we doing about it?

- Online chat group: Kealah Parkinson
- In-person meetings 4 X per year. This may eventually split into 2 groups for geographical convenience.
- Julie & Susan are available for workshops
- **WATCH FOR SUSAN'S NEW BOOK!!**
Out in late fall, 2008.

For More Information

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Recommended Books

- An Asperger Marriage. Gisela & Christopher Slater-Walker.
- Aspergers in Love. Maxine Ashton.
- Alone Together. Katrin Bentley
- The Complete Guide to Asperger Syndrome. Tony Attwood.
- ALL BOOKS BY TONY ATTWOOD!