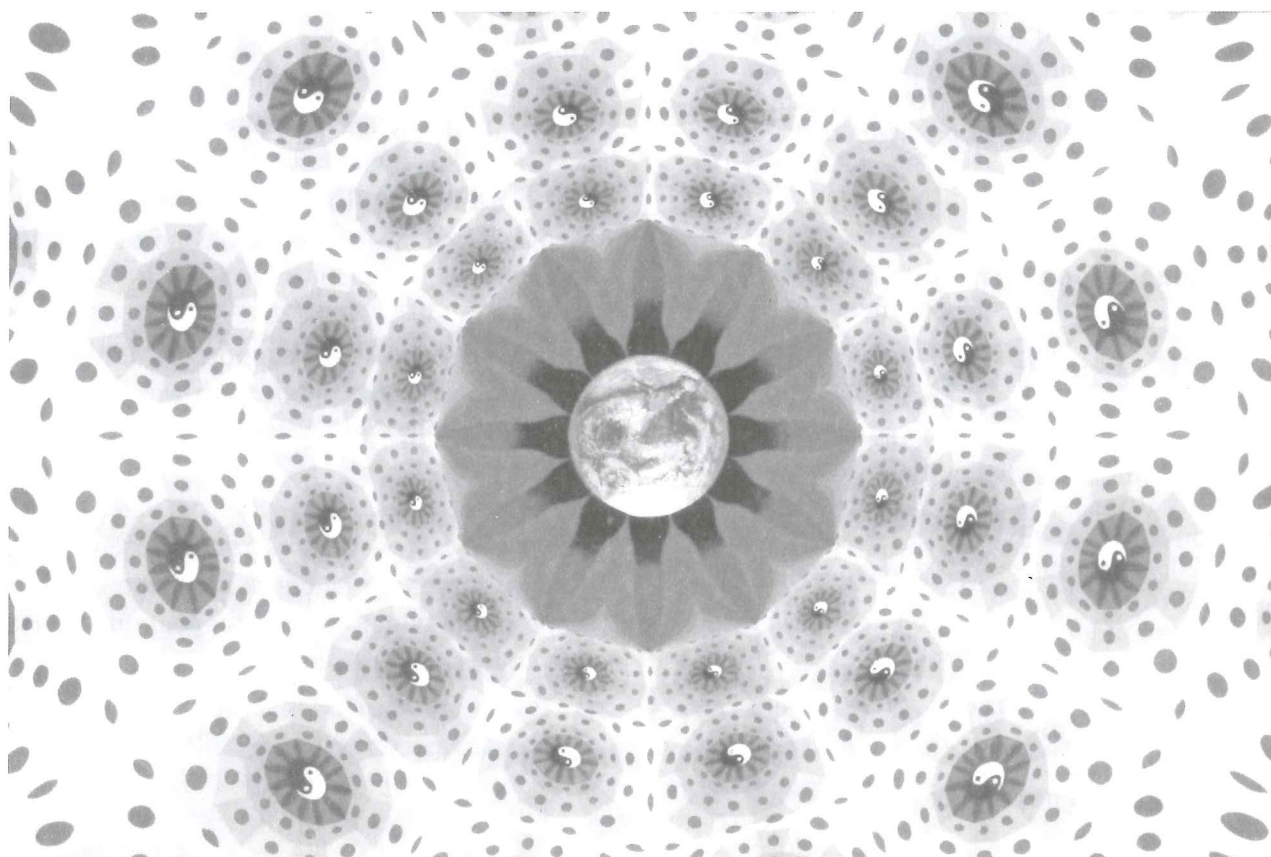


Produced by and for people with Asperger syndrome

united Asperger

Edition 46 April 2006



© Steven Frisby 2005

AU


The National
Autistic Society



Asperger United is a self-help newsletter run by and for people with Asperger syndrome. The newsletter aims to put people with the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Asperger United is free to people in the UK with a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome. We ask for a contribution of £6 per year from overseas readers and £10 from professionals and institutions to cover postage costs.

Editor John Joyce

Additional support The National Autistic Society's Publications Department

Please send all correspondence and subscription requests to:

Asperger United
c/o The National Autistic Society
393 City Road
London EC1V 1NG
Tel: 020 7903 3595
Fax: 020 7903 3767
Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk

Subscribing to *Asperger United*

Tel: 020 7903 3595
Fax: 020 7903 3767
Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk

All we need is your name and address and we will add you to the mailing list — free of charge to people with a diagnosis!

Thank you to George Cox who kindly produced the illustrations included in the Pen Pal Network section. Thank you to Graeme Lawson for producing the *AU* logo.

Please note that the views expressed in Asperger United are not necessarily those of the editor, the National Autistic Society or those involved in the publication of the newsletter.

Contributions for the next issue should reach us by 15 May '06

Asperger United was founded in 1993 by Pamela Yates and Patricia Howlin, in association with the Maudsley Hospital, and Mark Bebbington and Judy Lynch of The National Autistic Society.

This was in response to a recognised dearth of services for people with Asperger syndrome and the potential for self help and networking as a means of support for this group.

The provisions for editor's and sub-editor's post was to develop a publication that was truly the voice of the people it was aimed at. This post also provided the possibility of work experience and responsibility and has benefited those who have held the position. These are Richard Exley, David Wright, Martin Coppola, Ian Reynolds and the current editor, John Joyce.

Pamela Yates provided support and advice to the editors until the publication was handed over to The National Autistic Society in 2000.

The name *Asperger United* was chosen by the group of original readers as the most 'appropriate name' for the publication. This was suggested by Anna Cohen.



Dear readers,

Hope you are all in rude health and continuing to enjoy your work and/or interests. I am well.

May I thank you all for your high quality presentation.

At the end of March I visited the London Barbican to receive a BA degree from the Open University and hope at some stage to improve on it. Perhaps those of you who are still in formal education at any level can report to us when you are about to receive the reward of your labours, likewise anybody who finds employment either with or without qualifications. Interesting TV portrayal of the real "Rain Man" recently.

Elsewhere in this edition you will find a review of Marc Fleisher's new book *Survival strategies for people on the autism spectrum*, fine sequel to his autobiography.

I am contemplating a visit to South Africa later this year for an International Autism Congress followed perhaps by visiting Kenya and Tanzania. Hope some of you can tell us of any new adventure proposed or completed.

Best wishes for Easter and blessings on you all,

Your editor,

John Joyce

in this edition

Dialled

I was feeling rather lazy
Until depression dialled a daisy;
Put me on the garden path
And how I and the flowers laughed:
The grass had been on the verge,
Was on a curve of depression
With a sad expression
Until the flowers laughed.
They put me on the garden path
And the trees stood tall,
The grass heard about it all
And I had been feeling rather lazy
Until depression dialled a daisy

Daniel

Editorial / poem by Daniel	3
Article by Mike	4
Letter from Amy	5
Poem and letter from Steve	5
Letters to the Editor	6
Pen pals	7-8
Letter from Seree	9-10
Letters in reply to Elizabeth	10-11
Cartoon by J Watts	11
More letters	12
Story translated by Steve Gist	13
Poem by Jack	13
Book review / article by Greg	14
Article by Nick	15
Book review and offer by the NAS	16

My bubble and Asperger's

It started as far back as I could remember. As a child I would often go off to play on my own. Why? I do not know, but as a child I was always on my own, doing the silly things I could get away with. But after I was punished, I would go into my bubble. I suppose I would go in there because I was bullied so much at school — even by my teachers who just assumed I wasn't listening, when the truth was I was trying my best to remember what they said. I would often get into trouble for doing things that I didn't think were wrong.

The bubble is a place where I can go to be on my own. A place of peace, and a place where nobody can get me. Nobody else can get in. I will only come out when I think it is safe to do so. In January 2005 I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome and am still coming to terms with having AS, but life has to go on.

So what is this bubble? It is an imaginary place in my mind — space around me where nobody can come near me. In fact I am best left alone when I am in my bubble. Sometimes I am in there for a day or more, or just a couple of hours, but I always come out refreshed and ready to tackle anything that comes my way.

It sounds crazy, but everybody needs somewhere to go to be alone sometimes, to get away from life's daily turmoils and problems, and most of the time I cannot cope with everyday problems, so what do I do? I go into my bubble, not realising that my poor wife is then left clearing up the trail of destruction that I have caused, and has to try and sort things out again!

My bubble is a clear bubble, and although no-one else can come in, I can see out, and am still aware of what is going on around me, even though I might not take much notice. Nobody else can see my bubble, and nobody is even aware that it is there, but I feel better because I feel safe. I don't think anyone else would understand about my bubble anyway, so I keep it to myself. I don't even tell my wife when I go into my bubble, but I realise now that I should tell her so that she might be able to understand me better.

I am writing this letter to *Asperger United* to let other people know that it is okay to have a place to go when you need to, but you should always share this with someone (a carer/partner/parent ...) so that they know you need this space, and will back off when you need them to.

I have been fortunate enough to be part of a couples group for a year now, along with my wife, where we go on a weekly basis, and meet with some other couples where the men have Asperger's, and the women don't. It is overseen by our clinical psychologist and the autism co-ordinator of the Centre. This has been a tremendous support for us, and we get the opportunity to share with each other what problems we have faced that week, and know that we are not alone. In fact we have been using a new communications system, devised by one of our wives in the group, which has also been of great assistance to us and our relationship, and has led me to sharing with my wife and the others about my bubble.

Mike — age 44

Dear AU readers,

I'd just like to share my experience of being an Asperger's student in higher education so far, some of it positive, some of it not so positive. I applied to a university reasonably close to home and was called in for an interview. Unfortunately, they, who shall not be named, were less than accommodating — no, you may not have a full-time mentor, no you may not take the Counselling Psychology course, consider a gap year, and take Sociology part-time (as opposed to a full-time Sociology and Psychology degree). What the interviewers were most interested in was the fact that I had selected "T" which (for reasons unbeknown to myself) means "autism or Asperger's", as opposed to my predicted grades, none less than a B. I left feeling bitter and disheartened; to the point, indeed, of shedding a few silent tears in one of the toilets in a nearby Beatties. Fortunately having the self-belief to know that I could reach greater heights than they evidently expected, I threw my energies into my second choice university, Aston, which I now attend. They immediately offered me a place, at least verbally, since the course, Society and Government, had not been run before, and they were therefore unable to send written

confirmation. I have extended book loans, extra examination time and a room to myself, my college mentor, everything, in fact, that I had asked for. No one at university treats me any differently to non-Asperger's students and they have had the discretion not to mention it to my class-mates. No opportunity has been denied me because of my condition (in fact, being disabled has led to my involvement in a disabled student inclusion policy making process). I also used AS to my advantage as I am able to make use of the Additional Needs room, which has equipment for blind people, for instance, and is quiet. I also plan to apply to mentor a first year next year, not least because I understand what it feels like to need a mentor, and what a difference having one can make.

That was, in short, my story of my first term at Aston, and I hope it has given some encouragement to people with the same condition planning to go into higher education. My philosophy on Asperger's is you cannot "cure" it, so if for some reason you cannot control it, try to find a way of using it to your advantage!

Amy, 20

Socially blind in the company of you,
never quite knowing just what to do
Every move's wrong, yet I do try to cope
I am finding it hard to make sense of your joke
Then frustration kicks in the time I have spent,
Trying to work out what the hell you have meant.

I have been working quite hard on my personal website which is on the subject of Asperger syndrome and ASDs. Darold A Treffert, expert on savants, has sent me permission/information to use on the site on the subject of savant syndrome, which as you know has its Asperger connections. I have also placed forums which can be found using the site map. If any readers would like to visit my forums then I will look forward to reading their posts. It is fairly new and my main aim was and still is to create more public awareness about ASDs in general. The other reason is, I could do with a little Asperger company on the forums themselves.

Steve



letters to the editor

Does anybody else have the same problems as me regarding being over hypersensitive? I feel the cold very easily and spend all winter wrapped up in several layers of clothing, whereas everybody else is nice and warm with just the one jumper, and then when the summer comes I can sometimes be left feeling exhausted by the heat.

Also my hearing is oversensitive (a condition called hyperacusis) and I have to wear earplugs every day to “dampen down” noises that to me are loud and distorted. Hyperacusis is quite a distressing problem to live and cope with.

And finally “feelings and emotions”: I do tend to overact to criticism, etc and am left feeling very hurt and upset whereas somebody else would take the same comments that have hurt me in their stride and just shrug them off. How can I “toughen up” and not let careless and thoughtless remarks get to me?

I would be truly grateful for readers’ advice on how to relieve the above problems.

Best regards,

Pamela

Dear John,

I regularly encounter difficulties with communications, most usually in written form, but sometimes with recorded announcements, that I receive from my local authority.

I know local councils bend over backwards to provide large print, Braille, audio versions, etc, but so far, no allowance is made for Asperger’s, or others, who, like myself, tend to take things literally.

I wonder if others experience similar difficulties, and whether any lobby could be made to the relevant authorities about this problem.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew

Thanks again for putting my ad in, exactly as written. Out of about thirty-five publications, all disability-related (including eight run by/for autistic/Asperger people, including two Norfolk groups), the only one to print it so far is *Asperger United* — scary, isn’t it? Anybody else wondering why?

A short note back to Charlotte — thank you for writing back — that makes two replies now! I have tried voluntary work in the past and it didn’t lead anywhere, for the same reasons that paid work didn’t: 1) I couldn’t keep up with the pace of work, 2) I couldn’t cope with the people. Plus, I didn’t even get paid for what I’d been through.

I would do more voluntary work (even if it leads nowhere, as before) if I could manage to get on with NTs, or get the work done, or both, but now am concentrating on trying to find work I can do at home or (in the worst possible scenario (ie. benefit rules change and I’m forced back into jobs which have made me ill before), learn some coping strategies or gain relevant knowledge so as to improve my situation if possible.

I have had no replies, to date, from carers or advocates or anyone in my situation at age forty-four, and I sincerely hope that this means nobody else is. I hope that you never are (or anyone else, either) and wish you all the best. I wish I’d been diagnosed at twenty-five instead of nearly forty.

Yours,

DS Linney

Please show your support for Asperger’s awareness by browsing my site:

www.assupportgrouponline.co.uk

Sign my guestbook and tell me what you think.

Lots of love,

Em



How to reply to Pen Pals

- Please remember to let us know the name of the person who your letter is for.
- To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.
- We will pass your letter on to the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.
- Please note that all penpal letters sent via *Asperger United* are opened before being passed on.
- Those under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen pal advertisement in *Asperger United*.

****Important notice — please read****

Asperger United is happy to publish pen-pal advertisements but we must stress that we are not a pen-pal or introduction organisation. We do not match people up and we cannot monitor letters (other than the first letter, that is sent via us) so please be cautious when releasing personal details in your letters. The National Autistic Society / *Asperger United* cannot intervene or be held responsible for any ensuing correspondence between letter-writers.

Dear pen pals,

My name is Craig, I am twenty-four years of age and was diagnosed with high-functioning Asperger's when I was sixteen.

I would like to hear from male or female people with the same syndrome.

My interests are films, music, current affairs and reading.

I'm Steven. I am twenty-eight years old and was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at nineteen. I live in Camborne, Cornwall, and I work three days a week doing horticulture.

My interests are reading fiction, spiritual, and physics books, going to the cinema — enjoy watching thrillers, fantasy, horror, science fiction, adventure films — and watching some TV soaps, documentaries, eg. the universe, the future. I like listening to pop, rock, dance music, dancing at parties, playing badminton and pool. I have got my own car, and I like driving.

Hello. I am Lisa, live in London, and also in the country at weekends, am 43, a mother of two children, a company director, privately educated with varied interests. I was diagnosed as a "typical textbook case" of someone with AS two years ago. I spend most of my week pretending to be just like everyone else, but it would be ever so nice to have some more friends. If you think you might be a bit like me, do get in touch as I'd love to meet up.

Dear Asperger United,

I am aged forty-five and was diagnosed as having Asperger's/High-Functioning Autism when forty-one.

Although I am intelligent and have good qualifications, I have always had difficulties, one being mistreatment by others, including being bullied, robbed, exploited, discriminated against, assaulted, sexually assaulted, covertly drugged, &c.

When I was diagnosed I was advised to read, and one book mentioned that a minority of people on the autistic spectrum are "excessively loving and trusting". It was only after long pondering on this that I realized that other people do not feel the love for humankind that I feel.

I had always been mystified by the way that people would waste their time and energy going out of their way just to be mean and very hurt by the way that people who I had done no harm to would be so nasty. The answer would seem to lie in the lack of this love and possibly the presence of other things: aggression, malice, competitiveness?

Now understanding has dawned, I hope I will be better at protecting myself, but I am not happy. What I used to feel, though still inside, is now largely unexperienced as it is blocked by fear. I used to assume that most others were similar to me inside, now it is clear that they are not and that they are often driven by strange and unpleasant forces and are therefore unsafe and untrustworthy. This world is not the world I thought it was and I must come to terms with my discovery.

I am alone in the world, having come from a background of hatred and violence and I am just wondering whether there is anyone else who has this excessive trust and who might like to share some mutual support, encouragement and

possibly friendship. In the long term I would probably prefer to speak over the phone rather than write.

Personally, I don't feel that my trust is "excessive"; if this was more universal this world could be freed from poverty and war. It is the inadequacies of those who do not feel this love that need examination if there is to be progress. If it were possible for a group of people who feel this way to be formed, maybe we could find a way to do something of use.

I invite anyone who feels this way to contact me via *Asperger United*.

Sincerely,

Sarah

My name is David,

I am a 19-year-old from Herefordshire with Asperger's syndrome. Currently, I am a student at college, thinking hard about my future, since being "socially reawakened".

My interests include listening to music (particularly rock 'n' roll, action theme tunes and emotional music), cycling, human geography and sound technology.

I would like to meet with anyone of a similar age of either sex with AS from Herefordshire or quite close to the county's borders.

Despite my willingness to talk to people, the area which I live in restricts travel to quite an extent, as well as face-to-face contact with others.

Dear Sir,

Firstly I have to thank you so much for the publication of *AU* that I receive regularly which helps me so much to remain focused and to see justice! It was the last edition where I read how a young lady had experienced a difficult time being diagnosed through her GP.

My tale: I had a nervous breakdown last October — well it's been coming up for the last ten years as my marriage to the wrong man was coming to an end. I have so many "horror" stories since I have been in and out of the local Mental Health. And as for the team caring for me in the community: it's a year since I have been complaining to them that they can't diagnose me because no one in the hospital or community team has had any training through the NAS. The ignorance and discrimination I have received is beyond stupid.

I have received emotional, psychological and physical abuse since becoming a patient of this department of the NHS.

Since then I had an incident with my ex-husband and have yet again been imprisoned against my will on a section 2, with extreme ignorance and mental cruelty due to the team's ignorance re my light sensitivity and dietary needs. I have been in just over two weeks and now my size-twelve jeans I can slip off without undoing them!

However I simply felt it was important that *AU* were aware of my difficulties and whether there are any suggestions your "experts" can help me with and/or offer support to both my advocate and solicitor.

Due to near-starvation and the need to buy some personal items — as the NHS had decided not to provide me with these things — I have been in a catch-22 situation. I have an excellent relationship with the ward manager. He'd let slip that he wanted to "strangle" the consultant because of the way he was treating me. I had then (on advice from my solicitor) written down my feelings about the consultant. I call him Dr Penguin — when I sell my story to the film people I want Basil Fawlty, ie. John Cleese, to play him! I just — after a year of asking the

"team" looking after me for a second opinion (through my advocate) — I said "sod it", I'll see if I can go directly myself.

Unfortunately I was very upset — the pent-in emotion of living without recognition . . . plus the abuse. But the secretary was great and another psychologist came and listened.

You see, I have actually complained through my advocate to the National Care Standards and the hospital liaison team about my experiences.

But now; now it is time someone said no to this ridiculous, antiquated system. Patients are being so badly treated by many of the staff, who are condescending bullies — the consultant especially.

I have been advised to hang fire with going public with it. She's advised me to hold on until December when some sort of committee are themselves putting in an enquiry. But I am still in the living hell . . . wow, when I write my story of my experience the NAS will benefit — I promise — from the royalties. On a positive front — which was the true reason for writing to you! — I am forming my own foundation trust to initially set up parent/Aspie-run support groups, advocacy, respite and enabling services and, along with my ("money-making", retirement-fund) formal business, my ultimate dream is to run learning centres where children and adults on the spectrum can learn individually, based on their individual skills and interests.

I hope to build a lecture/workshop facility where other professionals can come and benefit from the experienced team-working and get hands-on experience of working with our client group — I hate the word "service user": a user of what kind of services?

I did write my book but my estranged husband wiped it off the hard drive of my computer! But important to say he is dyslexic, profoundly autistic, but in denial of his self, and that side of ASD is destructive and dangerous.

Because I am setting up my own business I'm wondering if you could contact someone for me? Richard Exley was very supportive of me when I had a mini breakdown at an autism

conference in October '05 (two days before I was sectioned) — wow, what a year.

I know a little about his own consultancy and I just wondered if I could pick his brain — well, no, I'm looking for a business associate/company co-director and of all the people I have met I would like to give Richard the first opportunity to come "on board".

Just a little "ditty" to end on — last week the social worker within the team who was seeing me about my section said, "We think you should stop writing your poetry." Why? How about that! The ultimate insult — laughable because by going to the writers' club I'm a member of means I mix socially with people in the working world. The community care team

wanted me to go to a self-help group — I did once and came away more depressed. Mixing with depressed people — it's so obvious to me — why can't those professionals who are so, say, "trained" see it?

Now I'm standing up for me; for the other patients and facing the critical, controlling bullies in our society, who are basically just frightened of anything that is different. Like Luke Jackson says, "it's cool to be different"!

Thank you so much for listening.

Peace be with you,

Seree

I would like to try to answer some questions asked by Elizabeth in issue 45. These answers can't be definitive, but I hope they can make things a little clearer.

A lot of what Elizabeth says sounds familiar: members of the opposite sex that are attracted to you behave incomprehensibly, and I need hours and hours to myself to think over what people have said and done and to de-stress. I also find men scary.

From my experience of trying to ask girls out, and from talking to blokes — friends — about the difficulties, I would say that people (men and women) don't come out and say it directly when they ask you out because they're scared you'll say no. Not being direct gives them time to judge how you are reacting, maybe alter what they are saying, and think of what to say next (that's assuming they judged correctly). If they don't judge correctly they'll be just as confused as you or me.

In my experience, if you do just say you would like to take someone out on a date, they refuse — and that's even if they were obviously interested in you just a moment before.

Also, displaying one's verbal skill and subtlety is a form of showing off (showing off is something which many species do to attract mates) and failure to show skill marks you out as vulnerable, not only to sexual predators (not "all men" as you imply) but also to bullies, and anyone else, including all sorts: con artists and the rest.

To give an example from a male perspective: women have a "window" (of opportunity; a window of time when you can ask them out). They open the window if they are sexually interested in you, but they only open it for a certain time. Ask them out before it is open and they will say no even if they really like you — I don't understand why. Ask them out after it has closed and they will also say no. Ask them out while it is open — only then do you stand a chance. If the window closes — you can tell this when they start behaving more coldly and rudely to you — give up. If you carry on trying to pluck up the courage to ask them out you will come across as creepy or scary.

J (name and address supplied)

Dear Asperger United,

I'm writing in response to reading Elizabeth's letter — issue 45 — about relationships. I thought it was interesting and especially so as I am bisexual and so I see relationships from both the autistic viewpoint and bisexual view. I find that if I am seeing a man he is usually delighted that I don't want a lot of contact. Men often seem to find that women crowd them and expect a lot of intensity and I am the opposite, I only want to meet up at intervals, not every day. When I have seen a woman it is the opposite, I find that the gay women I know become close very quickly and plan to move in together very quickly and they find it very odd that I have no need for all that. And not just no need, but I get very upset when I feel crowded and that it is expected of me to meet them again the next day. There are exceptions to every rule but it is a pattern that is very marked in my experience. I know how Elizabeth feels about being confused. Many times I have got into a confusing situation when a man thinks I have been playing hard-to-get and it made him try harder when really I had no relationship feeling whatsoever and was not thinking anything at all about him — because I do not feel any need for a relationship anyway. I agree men are strange — they see it as a challenge if a woman is not interested and then they feel crowded by the woman's needs and feelings and would rather be watching football with their friends.

I think that it could work quite well between a man and an Asperger woman if he was able to understand the confusions that arise for an AS person about relationships, because both have a need for some space. I am not sure about gay women because of the need for closeness that women seem to have. They might feel rejected by an Asperger woman.

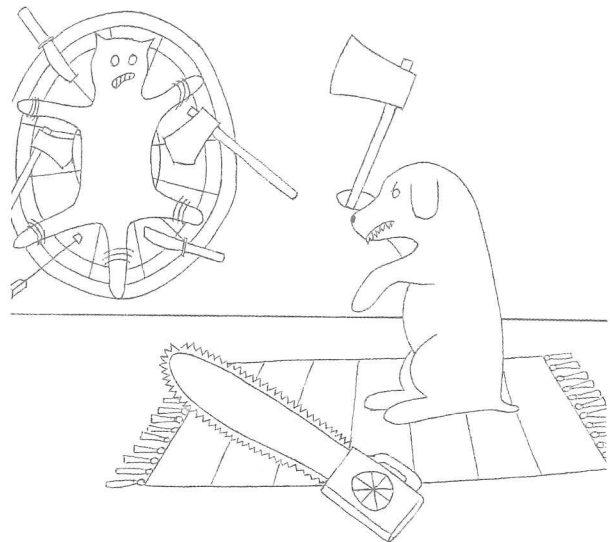
Thanks for the article, it raised some interesting questions.

Now, to the Kate Bush fan: I read your letter with sadness, there is so much more to life than blaming everyone for how you feel. The more we try and control everyone to meet our needs the more unhappy we are. It is a gift to live in a democracy, to have water on tap, to be able to be part of this awesome world. Open your heart to the love of life and you will find people will be as friendly and warm as you would be. And if not, so what? We are all free human beings, even us autistics.

Very best wishes to you, from someone who has been there re suicide and spent years unable to deal with my pain and the difficulties I faced. Now life is still difficult but I am happy and able to love myself and everyone else,

Anne

EVERY DOG



HAS ITS OFF DAYS

Memory Gardens Sculpture Club a learning space

Legard Road NCH, Arsenal, N5

There are a course and a club available:

1. Adult education: *Outdoor Living* course

- a) We will make group sculptures using wood and bricks exploring themes such as enclosures, shelters and pathways
- b) We will photograph artwork and each person will compile a portfolio
- c) We will make food and cook on an open fire.

Start: Thursday, 4 May for six weeks

Time: 10am – 1pm

Cost: £3 per session or £12 for 6 sessions

To enrol, contact **Ruth: 020 8806 1129**

E-mail: yellruthtoday@yahoo.co.uk

2. Tuesday drop-in: Gardening Club

This is a chance for anyone to come and help out in the general upkeep of this natural habitat.

- a) Learn about gardening and permaculture
- b) Enjoy the peace and the wildlife
- c) Meet up with others and share ideas and news over a cup of tea.

Start-up: Tuesday 7 March – 5 September

Time: 11am – 1pm

Contact **Ruth: 020 8806 1129**

E-mail: yellruthtoday@yahoo.co.uk

Dear Mr Joyce,

Most issues of *AU* are devoid of serious articles, but issue 45 was a welcome change from the norm. The article *Autism, testosterone and the extreme male brain* by Emma Chapman, was interesting and well worth reading.

I realize that the resources of *AU* are slender, but the more articles of the quality of the above-mentioned, the better. In fact, if each issue of *AU* had just one article as well-written and as interesting as Ms Chapman's, the entire quality of the magazine would be transformed — it would make the publication something to be eagerly looked forward to.

Yours sincerely,

A Gabanski

Autescape 2006

Building Autistic Community

Radstock, Somerset, UK

Tuesday 1 – Friday 4 August 2006

Autescape is a conference and retreat organised for and run by autistic people. After the success of last year's event, we are repeating the conference at the same popular venue.

Autescape is designed to encourage full participation of autistic people. Non-autistic people are also welcome. All we ask is respect for "autistic space", a non-judgemental attitude and an open mind.

Autescape really turns the tables on the usual autism conferences!

For further information, please visit our website: www.autescape.org

or e-mail: autescape@gmail.com

or write to: Autescape, PO Box 295,
Plymouth, PL4 8WX

A foreign language

Translation from the Italian © Steve Gist 2005

Fido was two years old. He was the most intelligent dog in Rome. So it happened that on the first day of school, he left the house at eight o'clock in the morning. He wanted to get to school as soon as possible, being a very ambitious dog. Earlier that morning, his mother had asked him:

"What time are you coming back today, my little puppy?"

" " answered Fido. He kissed his mother goodbye and set off for school. And while Fido was at school, his mother, who was very interested in her son's education, glanced from time to time at the clock.

At exactly thirty minutes past midday she was sitting expectantly on the balcony awaiting the return of her son.

At precisely one o'clock Fido arrived at the front door of their building. He entered, ran up the staircase and found his mother sitting in front of their apartment.

"Hello, Fido," she said.

And Fido replied: "Miaou, miaou."

"Fido, what are you saying?" asked his mother. "Why are you imitating a cat, when you know perfectly well how to bark like the rest of us?"

"Actually, I'm not just barking," responded the puppy. "It's just that I wanted to show you that I'm intelligent. This year at school we're learning a foreign language. So here goes, I'm going to tell you the first two words: miaou, miaou."

To the frightened and Lonely

O how I wish
To hold you now,
My love for you to show.

To reassure
Your screaming heart;
I ache to hold you so

© Jack Vhiles 1990

Book review: **Survival strategies for people on the autism spectrum**

Author: Marc Fleisher
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
ISBN: 1 84310 261 7, Price £12.95
Review by **the editor**

Marc wrote much of this book from personal experience thus making it a valuable guidebook. The most important element of aid to the person with an autism spectrum condition is communication by the donor of aid so that the recipient understands, and the teaching of this art to the ASC person so that he or she will be able to make their position understood to those who need to know.

Marc details ways of overcoming anxiety and hopes that agencies set up to help people cope with this problem will work together. For him as for many socialising was a problem which he has overcome with the aid of a personal therapist to such an extent that he is a frequent public speaker, has appeared on the media and is the author of two books. He has also become a tennis coach.

He looks into the problems of living alone particularly dealing with workmen who fail to appear at the time they say they will come. You must not delay personal business indefinitely for the benefit of a person who fails to come.

Apart from membership of a London social-skills group Marc and I now have the bond of being graduates. Marc overcame the problems of study in such a manner as to gain two maths degrees. I have just gained a BA from the Open University.

In short Marc explores all the problems faced by persons with ASCs and gives a solution or the means of obtaining one.

Having Asperger's

by Greg

Having Asperger's has made my life a little more challenging. Along with the challenges of everyday life, other people have judged me by the mistakes I have made, rather than pay attention to the good things that I have achieved.

It is easy for people to focus on bad things people do. This makes people forget about the good things I have achieved like getting GCSEs and passing my driving test.

At college, other students notice that there is something different about me. But without being able to identify the reason why I am different, they act upon it. This tests my character. It challenges me about how I react in a situation or if somebody says something that I don't like to hear. When I first came to the college in 2002 I was a very different person to the person I am now. It was the first time I had been in a learning environment since I left school in 2001. And school hadn't been very good to me either. I tried hard to settle in but students saw my weaknesses. They were too strong for me and they all seemed to be against me.

People act like this because they are not aware of the differences between somebody who does have Asperger's syndrome and somebody who does not. These people did not know that I have this condition. It is not visible externally but it comes out through certain aspects of my behaviour and speech. But even if they could identify a "problem" they would not know what to do just through a basic lack of knowledge and understanding.

Having Asperger's does not give me problems. It is just the way that other people see it. I have learnt to tolerate other people's behaviour and learnt not to take everything people say so seriously. I have made mistakes but I have also learned from them. This has made me a better person to be with.

How AS makes you a big success by Nick

How do I fail? Well, I fail because I have money in my bank account; I have money in my pocket. There are many people in this world who do not and that is why I fail.

I fail because I am rich, I can afford to buy books and CDs and eat in restaurants. I get more than £3,000 a year but less than £10,000 a year, I apologise for not being more precise. I feel that to have more money than I have now would be detrimental to my ability to function, so this is a prized gift from nature.

If I did have too much money I would want to keep buying things and I feel like I couldn't control the obsessional urges I feel would result. I had these obsessions before and they took over my life. I fought so hard to rid myself of them and I do not wish them to return again. I find it difficult to cope with money, as it is very difficult to cope with organisation. I had little desire to earn more money than I have now; what I have now, though, I need. It gets on top of me. I would much prefer to work to just keep the amount of money I have now, not to try and get more of this stuff.

I am a success here I feel because AS has allowed me to feel I have enough money, that's good. Lots of money, I'm scared, would make my life more complicated and disorderly. I want my life to stay pretty much as it is now. My goal in life is to keep what I already have: I feel that I need it because I'm used to it. I know I will still want and will get more but the money I have now lets me stay in control. I feel perhaps that individuals with AS may have the potential to become some of the most outstanding and successful stewards of our moral development. People with AS, I feel, seek a humble existence — it is their enterprise in life. It seems perhaps that many people with AS don't see the point of a system in which society is graded into different classes. They perhaps have the great potential to see all individuals as equals in stature.

It also appears that great people with AS often stick to the rules, do not want to hurt others as much as the common person generally seems to. I seek a job where I don't have to earn a living and where I am not paid. I just want to get the money I get now for not working and work in a position where I can help people with autism.

The most successful people I feel are perhaps people who work to help others because they feel they should. Perhaps more than those trying to get as much money as possible for themselves. I feel you can not be a successful person if you make lots of money for just yourself: to be humble and noble is stardom, I feel. Lots of people have so little money, which makes them superstars. You have to care to be top. What one owns is not the story of success. It cannot be a success to have excess. What we do to help our fellow humans is what counts.

If you have AS and you feel wrongly a failure all you have to do to be a superstar is this:

- have consideration for others
- stick to the rules of our society
- be kind.

Like me you will fail lots but it's the trying that's important. I feel having AS is a gift that allows people to be humble and noble. Be very proud to have AS. It can be a gift that can make you a very nice person.

It does not matter if you don't always succeed because your disability makes it so very hard for you, as long as you try.

I feel nature gave people with AS to the world because nature experiments to find a better way. People with AS aren't perfect, just like those without.

I suppose nature will look for the best in all people and keep those things, and we will evolve into a better human race. The human race may actually be only just starting out, we may be an infant race.

The Asperger love guide

by Genevieve Edmonds and Dean Worton

Paul Chapman Publishing, £17.99, ISBN: 1 4129 1910 X

reviewed by **the Goth**

This book sets out some helpful facts about relationships in a neat, simple form, although I don't think it is that useful unless you have already developed your social and conversational skills up to a point. It may be useful if you are struggling with successfully inviting people to go on a date, for example, but not if you struggle with basic talking to people. Also, it is expensive for a 79-page book.

If the following points seem daunting, I don't think you are ready to benefit from this book:

- self-loathing and depression make it impossible to get into a relationship; they need to be tackled first

- if you struggle too much with conversation then you need more basic help and need to find a social-skills class
- it takes effort to maintain a relationship, and for the two of you to deal with various issues, such as over-sensitivity to touch.

Fundamentally, I feel relationships involve work, trust and understanding, so flexibility and effort on your part are essential. Compromise is inevitable. If you can't maintain friendships with people you find attractive, then you don't yet have the skills to maintain a relationship — friendships are easier than relationships. Both are worth working for.

Special offer to readers of *Asperger United*:

Supporting students with Asperger syndrome in higher education

by Rachel Pike, NAS Regional Officer

Many people with Asperger syndrome do very well in higher education because they are able to pursue their special interests. This guide offers help to their lecturers, tutors and other higher education staff on how best to support them. It also signposts sources of further information and help, including a new support project for students from Prospects, the NAS supported employment project.

For a limited time the NAS is offering these booklets completely free to readers of *AU*.

To get your free booklet, please send your name and address to *Asperger United* at the NAS —

contact details on page 2. Offer valid until 15 May 2006 — sorry, one booklet only per reader.

This booklet, published by the NAS, costs just £1.50 plus postage and packing. If you want an extra copy, it is available, like all NAS publications, from their new distributor:

Central Books Ltd

99 Wallis Road

London E9 5LN

Tel 0845 458 9911

Fax 0845 458 9912

E-mail: nas@centralbooks.com

Or order on line at www.autism.org.uk/pubs



Asperger United, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road,
London EC1V 1NG.

Telephone: 020 7833 2299. Fax: 020 7833 9666.

Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk

Website: www.autism.org.uk



The National
Autistic Society