



Autism New Zealand Inc.

Including Asperger Syndrome and Related Disorders

Manawatu Branch of Autism NZ Contact Details:

Phone: (06) 3577846 (message service)

Email: Manawatu@autismnz.org.nz

Coordinator: Paula Love, works Monday and Thursday pm.

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Manawatu Branch Newsletter

11th June, 2009

Manawatu Autism NZ Local Branch Information:

Manawatu Autism NZ Support Group:

Our local Manawatu Autism NZ support group is held at Café George on the third Thursday of each month. This month's support group will be on **Thursday the 18th of June at 7.30pm.**

Café George is on the Corner of George and Main Streets, Palmerston North. The support group is a time to share information and support with other individuals on the spectrum, parents and family members.

The local Autism NZ Committee would like feedback from our members on the possibility of a second support group being run each month in Palmerston North. This could be during the day for those who are unable to attend in the evening. We would also like feedback on whether people would like to be able to bring children to this daytime group or if

they would rather it have an adult focus, similar to the Thursday night group.

We would also like to find out if there is enough interest from our member's in Levin to run a support group there once a month, or to organise for shared transport to bring a group up to the Palmerston North group at Café George.

If you have any feedback on either of the above ideas please contact Paula Love (*see contact details above*).



Tararua Support Group:

An ASD family support group is held in Dannevirke on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at lunchtime, from 12-2pm. This is facilitated by Tararua REAP and is held in their buildings in Gorden

Street. This month a guest speaker has been organised so the date has been changed to be Wednesday the 24th of June. For more information contact Wendy at Tararua REAP on (06) 3746565.

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St Peter's College ASD Talk:

St Peter's College in Palmerston North recently had a week which was dedicated to 'Celebrating Difference' at school. During this week a student and a staff member who have ASD gave a short speech in Assembly explaining their personal experience of ASD in conjunction with the 'In My Shoes' DVD being shown.

This teacher, Jeremy Moss, has kindly given us a copy of his speech to share with our members;

"As many of you know, I have Asperger's Syndrome. This is an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a developmental neurological disorder that affects the way a child learns. Asperger's Syndrome has negative effects, but unlike most other neurological conditions, it also has positive effects. For different people, it means different things. This is what it means for me.

Having Asperger's Syndrome means that I can't concentrate properly if I'm looking at your eyes. Eye contact feels physically uncomfortable. I know that's difficult for some people to visualize, so I'll draw an analogy. Imagine you're in a country, where everyone sits very close together. Complete strangers will walk right beside or behind you, often having full body contact as you sit or walk, even when there's no-one else around. How do you feel about this? For most people, it makes them want to move away. But you can't; everyone does it. So you tolerate it, and you learn that to get by in this country, you need to make body contact too. But it still makes you feel physically uncomfortable, and it's very difficult to concentrate with a stranger rubbing their body against you. That's how I feel when I make eye contact. So if I'm concentrating really hard, I probably won't look at your eyes. It doesn't mean I'm not listening to you. In fact, it means the exact opposite.

Having Asperger's Syndrome means that, after almost 9 years of marriage, I'm only just now, learning how to start a conversation that is not about astronomy. It's been as frustrating and confusing for Louise, as it has been for me.

It means that I have exactly three facial expressions that come naturally to me; ecstatic, furious and everything else.

It means I have a poor theory of mind. This means it is difficult for me to decode other people's expressions and body language, and sometimes to work out whether you're being serious, or joking, or somewhere in between.

On the other hand, as most of you will have worked out, it also means that I can memorize pretty much anything I set my mind to.

It means that I am very good at following clear instructions. My ability to follow a recipe contributes to my cooking skill; my ability to follow an experiment method contributes to my scientific aptitude.

It means that my brain focuses automatically on details. This makes spelling errors jump out at me from a page. It also means that in English, I was good at analyzing sentences; verb, noun, object, imperative statement. This also makes me good at learning languages. It also means I can concentrate on something I'm motivated to learn, almost to the exclusion of all other input.

It means I have a narrow set of interests, but those interests are intense; I think about very little else.

It means that, since my brain automatically thinks logically, subjects like science, computers and maths absolutely make sense to me. But subjects like literature, poetry or abstract art, absolutely do not.

So, to finish, Asperger's Syndrome is not an imaginary condition. It is not a 'trendy' diagnosis. It is as real, and as pervasive, as Down's Syndrome, schizophrenia, or clinical depression. It's just not as obvious, and with time, we can learn to deal with it."

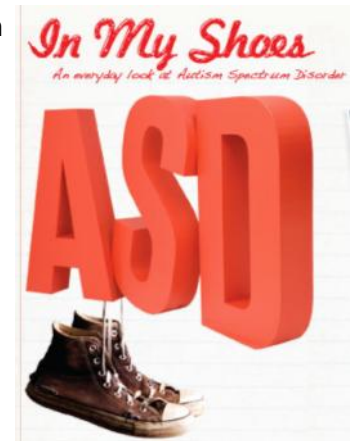


Copies of the 'In My Shoes' DVD:

Our local Branch of Autism NZ currently has 3 copies of the 'In My Shoes' DVD to lend out to anyone interested in watching it. It gives the viewer a glimpse of what it's like to live in the shoes of someone with ASD. You'll also see what it is like to care for someone with ASD.

It is designed as a resource for schools and the community at large, with four segments all targeted at different audiences (Primary School, Secondary School, Māori, and Community). These were developed in the Manawatu and star some of our amazing children.

If you would like to borrow this DVD then contact Paula Love (Manawatu Branch Coordinator – see details at the beginning of the newsletter).



Autism NZ National Information:

Slingshot:

We are thrilled to be part of a programme where by Slingshot customers can choose to have a portion of their monthly bill donated to an Autism NZ Branch. To be a part, join up with Slingshot internet and tolls by going to www.slingshot.co.nz/autismnz or phone 0800 89 2000.

Each month Slingshot will send us a cheque to use as we see fit. And if you are already an existing customer of Slingshot just advise them that you would like to be part of this programme and they can link your account.



By supporting this easy and simple scheme, you will not only be joining the most successful, 100% Kiwi-owned telecommunications company voted the best ISP at the 2007 People's Choice NetGuide Awards, but at the same time providing ongoing support to Autism NZ.

Thank you to Slingshot for developing this programme and giving back to the community.

Autism NZs New Chief Executive:

Alison Molloy is joining Autism New Zealand in mid-June as Chief Executive and we are very excited about the prospect. She has significant experience in the health, education and not for profit sectors, having spent 4 ½ years as GM Finance, Planning and Information Systems with Plunket and 2 plus years with Specialist Education Services (prior to it joining the Ministry of Education) in a similar role. Alison is also a member of the Not for Profit Advisory Committee with the NZ Institute of Chartered Accountants which has a strong focus on education, support and advocacy for the not for profit sector in New Zealand. Her working passion is to develop and implement plans that make sense to the organisations to which they belong.

Alison lives in Wellington and in the light of the need to develop new opportunities and services' the focus of the organisation will shift to Wellington. We are looking forward to working with Alison to grow and develop Autism New Zealand to better meet the needs of its members.

Glenys Fry, On behalf of the Board of Autism New Zealand

Courses:

HELP! Course

Autism NZ are looking at the possibility of running another HELP! Programme in the Manawatu during the next year. The last one was held in March and received very positive feedback from the families who attended. The Help! Programme was developed by the NAS (National Autistic Society, UK). It provides parents and full time carers with information, advice and support. It helps develop an understanding of autism spectrum disorders and positive strategies, as well as knowledge of rights, benefits and of local support services. If you are interested in finding out more about this course please contact Paula Love at the Manawatu Branch or Michelle de Boer (Course Coordinator) at Autism NZs National Office by emailing Michelle@autismnz.org.nz, Or Phone: 0800 autism (288 476).

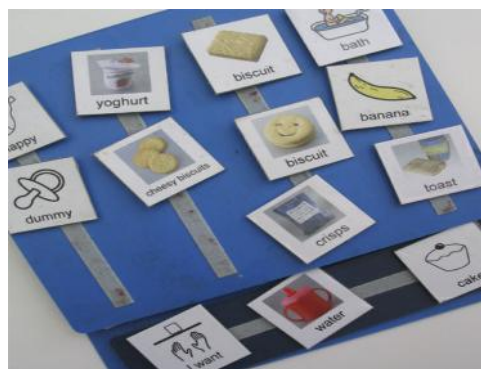
Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS):

PECS is used to teach communication skills to those with limited functional speech. For further information about PECS visit

<http://www.pecsaustralia.com/>.

A two day course on how to implement PECS is being run in Auckland on the. For more details and a registration form visit

http://www.pecsaustralia.com/workshop_nz.htm



Tips for Autism Course In Bulls:

The Ministry of Education funds the Tips for autism course nationally. Tips for Autism is a 4 day course in which the team (parents, school staff and any others) attend as a team to learn and plan together for the child with whom they work. The course provides some release funding for teachers to attend.

This course will be run in Bulls in Term 3 this year. If you are interested in attending, please talk first to the other members of the team around the child (parents, teachers, other school staff, extended family and involved professionals) and look at tips for autism website <http://www.inclusive.org.nz/tips> If a

team is feeling that they are ready to attend, please contact Cheryl Palmer

cheryl.palmer@minedu.govt.nz or 350 9896 to register your interest.

Increasing the Bounce Seminar:

Building resilience in children facing tough times.

This seminar is an informative 3 hour workshop designed specifically for those working with or caring for preschool to primary aged children facing difficult life situations. This course will be of use to early childhood workers, social workers, teachers, RTLBs, counsellors, parents, carers. It aims to give; A range of strategies to strengthen resilience in young people, an increased understanding of how life issues of change and loss can impact children, an increased awareness of secondary losses and subsequent impact, examples of how and where to access useful resources and tools. This course will be held at the Pavilion Motel and Conference Centre, in Palmerston North, on Friday the 21st of August 2009 from 1-4pm. The cost is \$100 but there is a discount of \$10 if you register by the 7th of Aug. For more information visit www.skylight.org.nz

Tony Attwood Seminar:

Tony Attwood is a clinical psychologist who has specialised in Autism Spectrum Disorders since he qualified as a clinical psychologist in England in 1975. He works in private practice in Brisbane and is also a professor at Griffith University in Queensland.

His seminar presentation topics will be; **Adolescent issues for teenagers on the Autism Spectrum**, specifically covering the physical aspects of puberty, changes in friendship, the development of sexuality, the change in academic expectations and issues regarding self esteem.

And also **Transition to adulthood and issues associated with this**—what to expect and how. Specific topics will include transition from adolescence to adulthood, transitions to the workforce, identifying skills and abilities for potential employment, how to translate these abilities and skills into employment opportunities.

Autism NZ are organising this seminar and it will be held at Te Papa in Wellington from 9am-4pm on the 21st of September, 2009. The cost is \$140 for professionals and \$120 for families.

For more information email Michelle de Boer at the Autism NZ National Office

Michelle@autismnz.org.nz,

Or Phone: 0800 autism (288 476)



Information, Contacts, Links and Resources

IDEA Services Youth Programme:

IDEA Services has recently started a youth programme which is held on the 4th Monday of each month. The next one will be on Monday the 22nd of June from 6-8pm at 9 Woburn Place, Palmerston North, which is IDEA Service's respite facility. This group is for teenagers from 13-18 years old who have an intellectual disability. The group facilitators will try to offer activities which match the interests of the participants. Depending on the activity that the group do each month there may be some cost involved. For more information contact Joy, Phone (06) 3509363 or email joy.harvey@idea.org.nz

Volunteer Awareness Week:

Volunteer Awareness Week is the 14-20th of June, 2009. There will be an expo held at the Palmerston North Convention Centre (downstairs) on Saturday 13 June from 10 to 3 p.m. There will also be a Street Parade on Tuesday the 16th of June from 1 - 3pm, starting from the Square and culminating at the Regent Theatre where there will be speeches, acknowledgements and refreshments. Those wanting to march can meet at the "Bethany's/PNCC Customer service side of the square" by 12.40 p.m.

Any organisations interested in having a promotional stand at the expo are asked to please contact Janice Gordon at janicephoenix@xtra.co.nz to register their interest or enquiries. The Guardian is doing an advertising feature and groups may be approached and asked if they would like to advertise on the two page feature.

Dr Richard Eisenmajer on Autism Spectrum Disorders:

Recently Dr Richard Eisenmajer conducted seminars on ASD in Napier and Wellington. Dr Eisenmajer is a well known clinical psychologist practicing in Victoria. He has a perceptive understanding of how people with Autism and Aspergers Syndrome experience the world around them and the reasons why they either excel or struggle with everyday activities. Dr Eisenmajer was interviewed by TVHB while he was here in New Zealand and his interview can be viewed online at

http://www.3gtvonline.com/main.php?q2_itemId=11119.

DVDs of Dr Eisenmajer's presentation can be purchased online at www.creatingsuccess.co.nz



NLConcepts:

Are selling conversation starter cards to help teach children to converse. These cards involved two steps - In step one, these laminated flip-over cards teach children to answer questions spontaneously. In step two, children learn to inquire about other people and to initiate conversations. Visit the following website to find out more <http://www.nlconcepts.com/autism-conversation-starters.htm>