



## Asperger Relationships

By Adrienne Warber



There is hope for Asperger relationships.

Are Asperger relationships difficult to maintain? The social skill and communication issues inherent in Asperger's syndrome can challenge some relationships. However, there are ways for both the person with Aspergers and loved ones to successfully work through the issues. A person with Aspergers can form meaningful and close relationships with parents, spouses, extended family and friends.

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### Common Asperger Relationship Issues

A person with Aspergers and his loved ones may find themselves in conflicts that have root in key aspects of the condition. The conflicts are often misunderstandings that stem from differences in emotional responses, communication and social skills problems, routines and obsessive behaviors. The person without Aspergers or *neurotypical* and the person with Aspergers may have different sets of expectations and ways of relating in a relationship. Learning about **Asperger characteristics** can help family members and friends better understand their loved one.

### Emotional Response

A person with Aspergers has problems understanding another person's **emotions**. He may not be able to properly interpret facial expressions, body language or gestures. The inability to interpret others emotions is often referred to as *mindblindness*. This may lead a neurotypical person to misunderstand his reactions to an emotional situation and view a response as inappropriate or negative.

Sometimes a neurotypical person may mistakenly interpret a person with Aspergers' emotional response or lack of response as an inability to feel emotion. This is not true. A person with Aspergers feels emotion but he may have trouble expressing his emotion or find unusual ways to express it.

### Communication and Social Skills Problems

Asperger's syndrome causes problems with language, communication and social interaction. A person with Aspergers may not be able to make friends easily and may also find two-way conversation difficult. He may appear to *talk at* people, rather than with them and fixate on favorite topics even if the other party shows distinct signs of disinterest or distress. He continues to talk about the topic and is oblivious to the other party's reaction. He also may misunderstand language at time and taking many things literally, missing subtlety. In a relationship, the communication problems can easily lead to misunderstandings. In relationships, the neurotypical person often takes on the role of helping the person with Aspergers and others understand each other better in social situations. Some romantic relationships also become strained because the neurotypical person gets frustrated with being the couple's main social connection to the rest of the world.

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### Routines and Obsessive Behaviors

Routines and obsessive behaviors are aspects of Aspergers that can also challenge relationships. A person with Aspergers may get extremely upset over interruptions in daily routines or any attempt to redirect him away from an obsessive behavior. The neurotypical person may see the negative reaction to the interruption as irrational. However, the person with Aspergers may see the interruption as a personal insult or an attempt to take away something essential to daily functioning. Asperger's syndrome may involve obsessive behaviors or sensory issues that some neurotypical people find disturbing. Examples of obsessive behavior include a fixation on an activity like memorizing sports trivia and talking about it for hours or ritualistic hand washing.

It is important for a loved one show some sensitivity in her reaction to the routines and obsessive behavior.

### How to Help Relationships Thrive

The most important way to help a relationship thrive is to never give up hope. Learn about Asperger's syndrome through research and talking with therapists. Since each case of Aspergers is unique, pay attention to a loved one's specific concerns and personality. Figure out what is important to him and try to respect necessary boundaries. Find common ground whenever possible and cherish it. Consider participating in family or couple's therapy for Aspergers and autism. Experts can help families find better ways to relate to each other.

### Resources For Family Members and Couples

A number of Asperger and autism support organizations have information on local support groups for people with Aspergers and their families and friends. The following websites provide helpful information on relationships:

- **FAAAS**: Families of Adults Affected by Asperger's Syndrome (FAAAS) has forums, articles and resources for spouses and other family of people with Aspergers.
- **IAN Community**: The Interactive Autism Network (IAN) site provides articles and a discussion forum with information provided from people with autism spectrum disorder, families and autism experts. The site has an interesting article on a couple dealing with Aspergers.
- **ASPEN**: Asperger Syndrome Education Support Network (ASPEN) has helpful resources for families and friends of people with Aspergers.
- **OASIS**: Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support (OASIS) has detailed articles and support group information.

### Hope for Relationships

A person with Aspergers can have healthy and happy relationships with a spouse, parents, extended family and friends. For relationship success, everyone needs to work together. The neurotypical person should gain a strong understanding of both the Aspergers condition and the person involved. The person with Aspergers should be willing to participate on some level. There is always hope when people love each other and have a determination to try to make a relationship succeed.

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**William Smith** · 2 years ago  
 I was diagnosed with this disorder just over 10 years ago and it is hard. I don't have many friends and starting new relationships is very hard for me. I want to meet new people and have relationships with women but half the time I don't know what to say, or how to get women to notice me and want to go out with me to begin with, let alone maintain relationships with them. Any help on this would be greatly appreciated.  
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**Paul** → William Smith · 2 years ago  
 Starting with a normal guy relationship might be the best option. Then once you have at least one good friend then branch out into looking for a possible girlfriend. The guy friend might have some good advice to give even if he is in the same situation as you.  
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**Fly by night** · 2 years ago  
 To whoever had anything to do with information published, thank you! In a relationship with someone that has AS and I need all the info I can get on communication issues. She is a wonderful person and the difficulties with life have been immense.  
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**Shulk** · 16 days ago  
 I'll never get married. Hah, marriage is for suckers. Why would I care when I need to continue improving myself. I was diagnosed with Aspergers at 13, but not told by my mom for another 4 years. Since then I've been playing catch-up & let me tell you it's a long game.  
 Everyone speaks of the importance of family. I don't talk to my dad, besides he's A religious Christian who likes Trump. I didn't grow up with him & see no need to talk with him despite how much he says he loves me. It also doesn't help that he has Bipolar Disorder. Plus I'll never forget the time he said some homophobic things, and guess what I'm bisexual. Why talk to him. No thanks.  
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**Paul** · 2 years ago  
 I have known that I have this disorder for the last five years or so of almost 40 years here on this planet, but have not bothered to be officially diagnosed since I can get by most of the time, have a family, and a rather good paying job that requires very little interaction with people and no requirement of a four-year degree (which ended up flaring up my anxiety when trying to complete the degree while working). Now I understand why I so easily get depressed or anxious and why those feelings did not disappear upon becoming an adult. So, after being married 15 years, my wife has always been my social interface, helping me to remember family birthdays, social events, call my mom, etc. However, two years after moving out of state, I can finally say I have an actual friend (a previous coworker) here that I can hang out with (I think it is interesting that he might have a mild form of Tourettes due to infrequent involuntary movements, which like all of my previous friends and wife have something to struggle with). However, I am not much to talk since I hope the whole arm movement thing going on sometimes. So, I would say to never give up hope. The loneliness will not last forever if you will be patient and are open minded who you hang out with.  
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**Dawn66** · 2 years ago  
 My son has Aspergers , at 15 he got his first girlfriend ,she is 2 years older , 4" taller ! There relationship has always been intense . At 17 he moved out to live with her family, we saw very very little of him , they moved and we found this out on face book ! In all this time I tried constantly to maintain a relationship with him. Last Dec they went on a trip to the UK which we helped fund, they got back early Jan saw him then and not since . In Jan I got angry with them both as they had never been near to share their holiday adventures etc. They stayed 3 weeks with my mum and dad ! Plus had failed to deliver presents for his sister from my family ! I sent messages to them both saying how disappointed I was etc.  
 My son will have nothing to do with me know , he has his life with her, he ignored Mother's Day and any efforts I make to try to see him . My heart is broken xx  
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**Paul** → Dawn66 · 2 years ago  
 That is so sad. If he never had that many friends or no close ones, then he may have fallen head over heels over her more than any neurotypical person could ever understand since he has obviously found someone who he thinks finally understands him and loves all of him like no other person can. My wife has an older brother who is acting this way as well to her parents and can't ever live by himself. This behavior seems very similar to someone who has a "love addiction." I will pray for you.  
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