



INFORMATION SHEET

Age Group: **Adults**

Sheet Title: **Relationships**

Asperger Syndrome and Relationships

Many people with Asperger Syndrome find relationships difficult, although most people report that they would like to have a partner.

Relationship issues can result from:

- Sensory Sensitivity – finding physical contact and intimate touching uncomfortable.
- Socialising – a difficulty in being in social situations in order to meet new people and potential partners.
- Solitude – needing lots of time alone, which may be hard for a partner to understand.
- Empathy and compromise – people with AS may find it difficult to consider a partner's perspective and appear to be 'selfish' and 'uncaring'.
- Language – due to issues with tone and literal language, an AS partner may sound critical and rude, which may cause conflict in a relationship.
- Perceived criticism – people with AS are often very sensitive to anything which sounds like criticism and they may react by becoming very defensive and unable to discuss issues with a partner
- Responsibility – some people with AS find it hard to make decisions as an equal partnership and will leave all responsibility to their partner. This may make the partner feel resentful at having to make all decisions.



Some (potential) benefits of an AS Partner

- Gentle, kind and courteous
- Intelligent – enjoys knowledge and learning
- Honest and straight-forward
- Child-like and playful
- Good sense of humour
- Practical or technical skills
- Dedicated to relationship

Requirements of a Successful AS Relationship

- Research (Aston, 2003) suggests that the best chance of success is when both partners learn about and fully accept AS.
- The non-AS partner will have to make more adjustments and compromises because they can.
- Not taking it personally – the AS partner's need for solitude, routine and blunt way of phrasing things are not designed to annoy, reject or hurt their partner.
- Dealing with conflicts in a calm way - emotional outbursts confuse people with AS. Speaking calmly and non-critically will help open discussion.
- Realising that often the partner with AS has no idea what they are supposed to do in a romantic/emotional situation.
- Appreciating how overloaded that the AS partner can become from everyday life and allowing space and solitude where possible.
- Remembering that the AS partner may be giving all they can and that their continued presence is the best indication of their love.

Written by: Sarah Hendrickx – partner of AS man, training consultant and author of AS relationship book (Asperger Syndrome: A Love Story, Sarah Hendrickx and Keith Newton, May 2007, JKP)



For more information:

Relate Leaflet Concerning Asperger's Syndrome
FAAAS Website: www.faaas.org

Maxine C Aston, Qualified Relate Couples Counsellor in the UK.
www.maxineaston.co.uk

Sarah Hendrickx
www.asperger-training.com

Books:

Asperger's In Love, by Maxine Aston
ISBN: 1-84310-115-7
Jessica Kingsley Publishing. www.jkp.com

An Asperger Marriage, by Gisela & Christopher Slater-Walker
ISBN: 1-84310-017-7
Jessica Kingsley Publishing. www.jkp.com

Asperger's Syndrome & Long-Term Relationships
By Ashley Stanford. ISBN: 1-84310-734-1
Jessica Kingsley Publishing. www.jkp.com

The Other Half of Asperger's Syndrome: A Guide to An Intimate Relationship with a Partner Who Has Asperger's Syndrome
By Maxine Aston. ISBN: 1-89928-037-5 www.amazon.co.uk