

## **Acknowledging the gaps in order to heal**

Continuing the conversation about relationships affected by Asperger's Syndrome, I want to talk some more about those deficits that we are either reluctant to talk about, cannot put words around or can't seem to convince anyone that they exist.

How do you describe something that's not there?

Sure, these days it's important in therapy to help people focus on their strengths because this is often the only tool we can find to help them move forward and embrace life again in constructive ways.

However, I don't believe the difficulties in a relationship affected by Asperger's Syndrome can be addressed adequately without first identifying the deficits and validating the impact these have on the relationship and family life. Then couples need suggestions about what measures can be put in place to patch or bridge the deficits to prevent harm, disadvantage or neglect in the lives of family members.

How do you explain to someone that sense of being "out of sync" with your partner? So hard to put one's finger on it. That awareness of a disconnect that prevents communication making sense either way and so therefore prevents agreement, co-operation, collaboration and resolution, the qualities of being in harmony with that one soul you chose as your life partner.

And the disorientation you experience when body language, eye contact or tone of voice aren't congruent with what appears to be taking place. When ordinary things seem to take them by surprise, as though that universal instinct of anticipation and automatic response doesn't kick in and the situation is viewed as something new, creating lots of anxiety and somehow the need for new rules.

Those lost opportunities to nurture and develop the lives of others, particularly the children in the household, as though anything other than what they have personally learned and are interested in just doesn't exist.

The avoidance of activities, places or gatherings that are outside of what they enjoy or are interested in.

The refusal to undertake any tasks or gestures that are "just for the sake of the other person", although so often we witness them going out of their way for others in a community setting. This hurts so much. And then everyone tells us what a wonderful person they are. Yes, we know they are, but why are we so undeserving, only getting the "crumbs" when we're the one they promised to personally love and cherish for life, before all others?

It's humiliating to have to ask for those life-giving hugs, and desperately lonely going without when we're sad, frightened or bereaved. And those words we so deeply crave to hear roll off their lips "I love you", having to be content to have heard it the day we married and maybe once or twice since.

How can a human soul heal or thrive within a relationship such as this if the deficits aren't recognised and addressed in some measure? Surely the deficits give a starting place for therapy, and then a lifetime of goals to work on! How we ache for partners with the willingness to just "want to". Bit by bit, slowly, is fine.

Without growth, the spirit either breaks, dies or is forced to liberate itself.

Carol Grigg, February 2014