

On the Mantlepiece, no longer the Centrepiece

I recently began to write the beginnings of another poem, but haven't developed it yet.

It began with thoughts of how painful it is to our core when we realise that there is no longer anything interesting in us to captivate our partner's attention.

When we realise we were just the special interest of the time. So adored. Such a priority. The centrepiece of the story. We felt so loved and loveable. We didn't know any different. Just thought we'd found that one soul that was made for ours and wanted to share our space, forever, together.

Now we sit neatly on the mantelpiece, no longer the centrepiece. Or maybe we're smiling from a frame on the desk.

We'd thought it was actually about us. But it ran its course. The exploration complete. Every angle covered. Learned all they could. Topic exhausted. Box ticked. Partner secured.

We feel invisible. Though certainly a useful item on the mantelpiece, we never gather dust.

Note I said "learned all they could". The limitation is with them. Our relationships can only go as deep as they can go. They cannot know us deeper than they can be known themselves.

Our hearts feel tricked. We invested so much. We want to grow deeper, together. But living along the surface is all they can sustain. Gathering items for the mantelpiece, collections for the shed, knowledge for the head.

The diagnostic criteria states that ASD characteristics become more and more apparent as social demands exceed their capacity to meet those social demands.

We are living with partners who have reached their capacity for emotional intimacy and interaction. They cannot go deeper to the level of meaning that we seek and need in order to thrive.

In our support group meetings Clinical Psychologist Jeroen Decates reminded us over and over again that we must find ways to have our neurotypical needs met – to be with those who "know us", know our essence, and can sustain deeper interactions with us.

Carol Grigg, May 2016