

## **Contradictions: avoidance of conflict or not?**

A few years back I was troubled by an incident at my workplace where we served people in a health setting.

I wasn't troubled by how it left me feeling, but because from what I knew of the "offenders" historically, they were very fragile people "psychologically" and, in spite of my own distress in the situation, I actually felt compassion for them. Sadly, in their effort to enforce their own boundary in a particular situation, they in fact set up a confrontation with staff and others which of course they then couldn't cope with and proceeded to behave very badly as a result. I'm sure they went home shaken and angry, believing their own "stand" to be a justifiable "right", but their unwillingness to comply with a "reasonable" request in particular circumstances had set up the confrontation. They tried to present paperwork claiming "exemption" from what we requested, but there were over-riding factors, policies and issues that required us to require compliance while they were present in our facility which was shared with other physically vulnerable people.

As situations so often do, it triggered my thoughts about ASD in relationships, the subject I frequently write about. A common topic of sharing in our support group meetings and in counselling sessions is the inflexibility of the person on the Spectrum in a range of circumstances, but particularly in the home. This relates to what I've written about in my new book "Straight talk for partners" about fixed views, perspectives, opinions, procedures for tasks, etc. I believe I can see that the person with ASD adopts a stance on many things, believing this will actually shut down or remove potential for discussion, challenge, confrontation or conflict, when in fact in this crazy challenging world, a fixed stance on anything actually sets up challenge, confrontation and conflict because none of us can navigate our daily exchanges with other people and circumstances without discussion and negotiation. Hopefully, we mostly do this respectfully.

Of course, formal policies and procedures are in place in many situations to reduce hazards and risks in order to keep people safe, meaning there are times when we all have to comply with these "rules" as it were, but so many of life's situations require comprehension of the bigger picture, the reasonableness to take into account the varying needs of everyone present, the ability to compromise or relinquish one's "perceived" rights in the situation, and awareness of the outcomes that are being aimed at. This is defined as "cooperation" and "collaboration" for the greater good.

Whilst we are aware of and admire many people with ASD who are able to see and take brave stands for "big world" issues that affect the globe, or to show compassion in relation to disadvantaged groups of people or animal welfare, in some situations they can seem strangely unaware that those around them, particularly in their immediate space or household are fragile too, are worthy of care, and need considerate and respectful exchanges, not challenge and confrontation for just trying to negotiate a fair and compassionate outcome for all involved.

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