Special Bonus Report:

Transcript of an Interview

with

Anne Miles

By

Dave Angel

www.ParentingAspergersCommunity.com

For More Bonus Information From The Experts In The Aspergers Explained Parenting Program
Go To http://www.parentingaspergerscommunity.com/public/cdresources.cfm
Dave Angel: Okay, so it's Dave Angel here with Anne Miles. The first question I'd like to ask today, Anne, just who you are and what experience do you have on the topic of Asperger's and diagnosis?

Anne Miles: Actually, I'm mostly a mom really and I have a son that's 12 years old now and I guess, since he was about seven that he had Asperger's and yeah, a number of years before that of knowing something was up. However, during my journey through it all, I ended up studying life coaching and I'm now an advanced life coach and NLP practitioner, and done a little bit of EFT, Emotional Freedom Technique training as well, which I just use for my own needs. So I guess those things have really helped me figure out what it is that I have been doing with my own son that I can then use to help others.

Anne Miles: Because I've found locally there was a lot of focus on what was wrong with the disorder and I guess a lot of people encourage you to just sit around looking at the disorders. And so I just wanted to look at all new alternatives. So that's sort of where I've come from and I've created a bit of, I suppose it's a free service for other people where I put tips up and answer specific questions that people have that they get stuck on, and how I would have handled it whether I've got experience or coaching things that I can call on. So that's me and I have a blog that runs at aspergersfittingin.com. So that's me.

Dave Angel: Okay, just to confirm that, www.aspergersfittingin.com, yeah?

Anne Miles: That's right, yeah.

Dave Angel: Excellent. Okay, thanks for that helpful introduction. You started to talk a little bit about Asperger's, saying your son was diagnosed at seven but you began to become aware of it obviously before that. What kind of things did you first sort of come across to suspect
your son maybe had Asperger’s and what did you actually do about it when you saw it happening, some possible thoughts and suspicions?

0:02:32 AM: Some of it I think is a little bit unexplainable and I have had a few weird things happen with health issues with my family and I have just known the name of it and not knowing why. So it has happened a few times in my life, so this whole thing about mother’s intuition, I really believe in. So somehow or other I saw at three, was when I started to really notice that he just wasn’t like other kids. His tantrums and obsessions with things were really major and no discipline seemed to work at all. So typical things that we were brought up with sanctioning. I guess if you ask or train someone to do something in a certain way, you’d expect them to hear you and follow an order kind of thing and it seemed that it worked with other kids but just wasn’t with him and his behavior was awful, quite embarrassing, really. So I guess at the point, yeah, I thought that something was up and the Asperger’s came to my mind and I asked around.

0:03:44 AM: My husband at the time really didn’t believe that there was anything wrong. I think he actually just didn’t want anything to be wrong, so there was quite a lot of resistance to follow through on that. Some of the symptoms like language, for example, didn’t sit typically in the box so some of the people around me and professionals I sought out ruled Asperger’s at the time. So I guess I spent a few years trying to figure out why it wasn’t, even though it seems like it was to me but other people around me were saying, "No." So I think there’s a bit of a symptom of it not being that well-known about. And as far as like diagnosis goes, I have no skill or ability to actually do that, so it was just from my own experience that I was having this question and I found a diagnostic DVD from Tony Attwood. You may know it; it was just the most fantastic discovery. So what I did is I saw it. “You know what? Everyone’s telling me this is not Asperger’s, I’d watch this and prove to myself that it’s not, because everything that I was seeing and researching it just seemed to fit.”
0:05:03 AM: So I watched this diagnostic DVD and I was all like serious. I had a little notepad and I saw each of the traits and I'm going to write them out and I'm going to pick whether it applies or not. And I remember just going through each trait, tick, tick, tick, "Oh, my goodness!" And so that was such an amazing discovery at the time to just to know for sure myself that I had a reason to push for this and find the right people to help me. So I think I wasn't also speaking to the right people at the time and so having that clarity helped me get through the Autism Foundation in the local area. So I guess, yeah, that's the experiences that starting out and how I actually figured it out and how he was.

0:05:52 DA: Sure, sure. And it sounds like persistence was a big part of that moment.

0:05:55 AM: Yeah, that's right and actually the first thing I felt people said around me was it was just bad parenting and he just needed good discipline. He had family members saying he just needs a good hiding and stuff like that. You just do question yourself and actually it wasn't until my daughter started at school in prep which is kindergarten, kinder year. So, the principal met my daughter and within the first week of her being in class, the principal called me in and said, "Let's actually talk a little more about this Asperger's idea." And I went, "Oh, my God, you're actually paying attention to me. What's happened?" And I said to her "You've met my daughter, haven't you?" And she said, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "Well, I know that until you met Minnie and you just thought that this was all about bad discipline and finally you've seen that I have a really well-behaved neurotypical daughter, so it can't be because they're both in the same environment correct?" She was sort of embarrassed and said, "Well, yes, I suppose so. That's how... We just have to say... We have to do that first."

0:07:12 DA: Sure, sure. Okay, so it was that kind of a contradiction between the two children that got the head teacher thinking?
0:07:17 AM: Yes, yes.

0:07:18 DA: Wow.

0:07:18 AM: Yes, yes.

0:07:19 DA: Yeah, gosh that's quite a scary story there, but probably very prevalent for a lot of parents, no doubt.

0:07:25 AM: I imagine and actually the feedback I've had from my sort of subscribers and there are about a thousand of them, a lot of the feedback is the same that you just question about your own discipline.

0:07:37 DA: Yeah.

0:07:38 AM: Before the disorder unfortunately.

0:07:41 DA: Sure, sure. There's a whole thing about that whole invisible disability or invisible difference, call it what you may, in terms of they can't see it then parents get blamed number one, don't they?

0:07:49 AM: That's a really good description actually.

0:07:51 DA: Absolutely. Okay, so as a parent, what kind of emotions did you experience throughout this process as well as the process around the assessment leading up to a diagnosis of Asperger's and how did you manage to sort of cope with it with these many varied
emotions I’m sure you're experiencing?

0:08:04 AM: It sure was. Actually, Just think about being lost and not knowing what to do and I guess it's about a lot of frustration that you can't get your child to behave the way that you know that they need to. I think there's a lot of shame. That was a really big thing and that was definitely the influence of people around me that really affected, how we were able to solve it. It is just so hopeless like I have been through some pretty difficult times actually. I guess there's also another whole side to this that Asperger's is commonly hereditary and I do believe there's an undiagnosed Asperger's in the family, without making any accusation that I can't prove. I really think there's a strong connection for that matter especially difficult because I was dealing with someone who wasn't necessarily neurotypical as well as a big influence. So that made me feel like I was going mad actually. I think the biggest thing is I thought I was going insane, just always people around me was just maddening really.

0:09:23 DA: I was just going to say about that whole thing about sort of feeling you're going insane and not, was that partly just because you felt you didn't have really anyone to bounce your ideas off at and kind of have a logical chat through of what you're seeing and no one was kind of listening to what you were saying?

0:09:33 AM: Yeah, that's right. And also that questioning that comes from others to think that it's all about you and somehow you need to be the solution and that it's not a disorder. It's all that you are a failing parent or that there's something you're doing wrong as a parent so that struggle I had on my own. But I'm doing everything that I meant to be doing and it's working with one and it's not working with the other. What's gone wrong? I guess that there was lot of accusation that, and I was always the main parent, most involved parent. So, a lot of pressure comes down onto me, so I did feel like I was going mad really that just somehow I couldn't figure out how to make this world work.
0:10:22 DA: Sure, sure. How did you manage to cope with that? How did you get by through that period? Was there anything in particular that was helpful that you could share?

0:10:28 AM: Yeah, good question. I think the biggest thing for me would be knowledge and persistence. I think you identified that because I just kept going. And in the end, I wanted to be sure that it wasn't Asperger's and that's how I discovered that it was. So, I suppose that was a really important part because that was the knowledge, knowing what it is that the actual criteria is for Asperger's and so that education then started and really I went on a bit of a ride with that as you can tell. I think I have about six qualifications now in this world I've gone. These are the ones I talked about and the only ones mainly relevant to Asperger's, but the whole thing is taking on a big journey. So that education has been absolutely brilliant.

0:11:18 AM: I think NLP in particular, funny enough, has been huge because the basic principle around NLP is that it's the study of success. It's not the study of disorder. So, what I loved about it is that I could find a way to model people that have got a good life and have Asperger's. And so that alone, allowed me to be okay with having a son with something like this and I could show him that it wasn't a disaster, that there were some awesome people out there. There was also some uncool behavior that he had to work through, but I would show him how to deal with that. So that was probably the biggest thing to cope with. And I think for him as well because when he knew it was okay, he totally relaxed. And we did a bit of a handshake actually on this. It was like the day the world turned for both of us. So no amount of discipline was working and this was escalating, discipline was getting bigger and harder and more challenging.

0:12:32 AM: So when I worked out this idea of success with Asperger's, I said to him... I want to make a deal with him that I was no longer going to punish him for things that were to
do with the Asperger's and that he might not know how he's meant to behave and I would show him. But the deal was that he had to really listen and he had to learn if he wanted to fit in. So that's how the whole Asperger's Fitting In, kind of came about, he was really passionate about wanting to fit in. He certainly wasn't at the time. So I guess that's the biggest thing that helped me with the emotions, the skills, education, particularly NLP anything you persevere, a strong person I suppose but gee, sometimes it was pretty tricky.

0:13:25 DA: Yeah, no doubt, no doubt. So a lot of the strengths came from within I think from what you're saying rather sort of outside external support. Maybe there's more, what you, what kind of resources you could muster and obviously like you said the knowledge and experience that you gain from a whole wealth of different things. Interesting about the Asperger's Fitting In as well, I did wonder where that came from, so that makes perfect sense. Just on that briefly, how did that deal work? Is that something you revisit regularly and sometimes talk about the big handshake day or something like that or...

0:13:49 AM: Yeah, yeah. We like have a deal. You might get into trouble for things that you don't know about. However, if he knows better and if there's any sort of harm to anyone or he breaks the law in any way, not to say that he does often but in a kid's world of the law, if you break a school rule or whatever, and there's a punishment. And kids do say that works. I think the foundation is that's the most insignificant is a lot of discipline traditionally, it's telling kids what not to do and neurotypicals figure out that means do the opposite. Whereas, I find with my son and Asperger's if they have a bit of conflict within their world is they take you very literally.

0:14:34 AM: And so, if you tell them what to do, they don't know... Tell them what not do, sorry; they actually don't know what else to do. So that has been a really big factor so say, "He does something inappropriate," rather than say, "Stop doing that thing." And I'll say,
"When you do that, you need to go like this, then that, then this, then that, okay?" And he goes like, "Okay, cool." And then sometimes if I think he hasn't got it, we'll do a role play or he'll repeat it back to me or some way so I know it's captured. Then when we've gone through that, he doesn't even need to do it again.

0:15:12 DA: Excellent, excellent.

0:15:13 AM: Certainly.

0:15:14 DA: Sure, sure. So it's just about kind of turning it on its head like what you're saying in a sense and just sort of saying this is what you should be doing rather than what you shouldn't be doing and just kind of teach them that way. Yeah, that makes a lot of good sense. Okay, just coming back to the topic of kind of emotions again, what kind of emotions did you see your son go through in the same sort of time period because I've read on your website one of the PDFs you've got there about him, liken his life at one point to the famous painting 'The Scream'. Can you tell me about that?

0:15:38 AM: I know. My goodness, when I saw that painting I was, "What?" I get like feeling emotional even thinking about it now, that's just like so full on. 'The Scream' is a painting by a very well known depressed character that got suicidal. So my son didn't know any of this, but this painting looks really hideous, it's got this like it's supposed to be a self-portrait. So there's a character that has paint sort of sneered down, it's very dark and heavy.

0:16:09 DA: Who is it? Is it Edward Munch, or something like that, is it?

0:16:11 AM: Yeah, that's right.
DA: Yeah.

AM: Yeah, the character is Munch, that's right. Thank you, because I've forgotten who it was. Anyway, I saw that painting and he's looked at me and he said, "That's like my life, mommy." And I went, "Oh, my God," that's so full on. And I said, "What's that like then?" And he just said it was very alone and so he didn't have a lot of friends at that time. We didn't have any friends at that time so he was really alone and devastated about that. He thought of putting his head in the oven and killing himself. This is at the age six and seven like he... That's how I even know this shocker. I just couldn't believe it. So he was very sad, very depressed, and very angry. He acted out around... To everyone around him, whenever he was challenged. He flapped very badly when he was anxious. Also, when he was excited.

AM: I didn't realize actually until last year that he'd actually stop flapping altogether because I was training him how to stop, and then all of a sudden I went, "Oh my gosh, yes, remember you used to flap?" So, he did that very badly and he had meltdown so full on no matter where you were, he would just... I used to call it when he was doing a starfish because he would just lie on the ground, all fours spread out and just scream and kick out of control really. So, he was very sad. Actually, I interviewed him last year and that's on the blog. And he said, he's described his life now like going from being a homeless person to being a billionaire. And that's not all about money because we're not really wealthy at all. So that's how he described his transformation. So at that time he would have confused himself with being as lost as a homeless person which the ultimately said he felt.

DA: Sure, sure. So, that's a heck of a journey there from the scream and kind of feeling really bottom of the heap for lack of a better metaphor. To kind of feeling he's going to be wealthy in a lot of areas and so he must be very, very happy and so proud of yourself and him to have got through that I guess.
0:18:36 AM: Yeah, thanks. I'm definitely proud of him. And I'm proud of myself too. It's a big deal how he is now. He's just started. He's seven and in the last few weeks and then I believe during. So it's miles apart from where we were, yeah.

0:18:58 DA: Sure, Sure, sure. That's a tremendous journey. Okay, just talking about things around assessment, I mean, for some people there are pros and cons around deciding if your child should go in for an assessment for Asperger's. Can you think about what the pros and cons are and where you should stand on that?

0:19:12 AM: Yeah, I think personally it's really helped our world and there was probably a year where I knew and it really helped us and he didn't know. And I was into mindset along the way whether there was a need in telling him. So I guess it was still a value with me knowing and being clear about what the problem was because I felt that helped me solidify how I was going to help him. So I would say 100% would support anybody having a diagnosis to be clear for yourself or even an unofficial one even just do the Tony Attwood thingy and click off the criteria because at least that gives you clarity around the solutions. I so completely love that. I think there was a time where I just said that there are all sorts of people who use their brain in different ways. And there are a whole lot of people who use their brain the way he did, although it wasn't as common and there weren't as many people in the world.

0:20:25 AM: So what I also thought worked well for us is when it came to the time that I do actually tell him, I had done some work pre-framing, so preparing him how to see Asperger's. So I think that's crucial and I would say this is a really important factor for any of the family. There is no point telling a child that's got Asperger's if you believe that there is something
really wrong with that because I feel you'll just be labelling him and doing all those negative things that a lot of people criticize in the world. So because they say if you correct this label then I'll be this person. I do agree with that. I think it's still how you set that up. So I spent a lot of time reading about it. He saw me reading books not knowing it was related to him and I just said, "I'm really interested in this topic."

0:21:22 AM: And then I talked about a lot of the famous people in the world who were reputed to have Asperger's. I spend a lot of time understanding what had made them succeed and a lot of it was the Asperger's, right? So I guess that was the pro and that's how to manage the cons with it. I think some of the other cons in this game are things... Oh, actually maybe I should just complete that story. When I actually did tell my son, because I've had some time building it up, how it came about is I was reading a book called All Cats Have Asperger's. You probably know it, it's a well known book.

0:22:01 DA: Yeah.

0:22:02 AM: Can't think of the author, a great little book. And he read it and he says, "Now tell me the traits of Asperger's again, mom," because we have two cats so we were laughing about the fact that these cats have this thing called Asperger's. And of course he loves cats as well so that was another positive connection. And so I went through all the traits and he looked at me and he goes, "That sounds like me. And I think you know how funny you say that actually." "Yeah, you are actually Asperger's. I haven't seen any real need for you to be thinking about it. But yeah, you do have Asperger's." And he goes "Woohoo! I'm going to be rich!"

0:22:49 DA: Right, okay.
0:22:50 AM: So I could not have had a better reaction from him because I had shown him that people with Asperger's can be successful. The cats, they are awesome and lovable and lots of things we like about them. So I think it's how you do it. So it's not so much that there's a standard set of pros and standard set of cons. I think work with the cons and make it work with each other and feel good about what they are encountering. I'm not saying they have to accept all the inappropriate behavior either because it's balanced with it. But in general, who they are and how they're made up the way they think, all of that is totally cool. We just have to get on top of the inappropriate behaviors at the same time.

0:23:35 DA: So a lot of it... So the framing of Asperger's from what you're saying which makes a lot of good sense, if you've got enough knowledge about it and/or in the frame of mind where you can present it positively to your child. And in your example he actually came to it himself, which was great. And who were the rich people he was thinking of with Asperger's?

0:23:51 AM: Einstein, Bill Gates. There were actually quite a number. Richard Branson, he's rumoured and I think it's proven. There are quite a few. I'm just been struggling to remember them off the top my head. But I actually did a Google, famous people with Asperger's. And I think it comes up that way.

0:24:11 DA: Yeah, there is a whole list of people on. I think that Dan Ackroyd, the actor, is another person rumoured to be one.

0:24:16 AM: Oh, yeah.

0:24:17 DA: And there is a guy, a Japanese guy who invented Pokemon, I can't remember his name but he's got Asperger's. He definitely does have Asperger's.
0:24:25 AM: Well, it definitely would have resonated with him at the time. But I missed that one.

0:24:28 DA: Yeah, I was telling someone the other day about that. Oh, yeah, because he loves Pokemon. It's just a really positive story. If you Google Pokemon owner and Asperger's something like that, it will show you the story. There's a guy, his name begins with S, I can't remember the Japanese guy but yeah he definitely is on the autistic spectrum.

0:24:42 AM: Yeah, definitely and they're such a lot, it's fantastic.

0:24:45 DA: Yeah.

0:24:45 AM: And actually that's a really key foundation that I work on with my son now is that we even joke about it. So the foundation that has made those people successful is that their obsessions have turned to mastery. So what I say to my son is when he gets really stuck on something, I say, "Is that obsession or is that mastery?" And he knows when it's pointless and he's just really getting stuck on something and then we redirect him to turning it into mastery. Because my belief is that nobody feels an Olympic athlete is obsessed. But they'll say someone who plays with shoelaces over and over for hours is obsessed. So I then say, "Well, if you want to play with something in that kind of detail, let's make it into a sculpture." And so he'll make with the shoelaces, say he would turn that into an artistic sculpture. So as a result he is highly artistic and in a special high school now with a graphic art string. So I've just directed his obsession into something that I thought was socially acceptable.

0:26:00 DA: Sure, sure. I mean, that comes across enough in a number of interviews the last couple of weeks. So many people are saying that this obsession thing, this special interest
thing, is such a gift for so many people. And if people would just see it that way, it's just like I say it's a cornerstone to whatever the child and the adult wants to do with their life in a lot of ways.

**0:26:15 AM:** Yes, totally. And to help them be aware when they are doing it so in the wrong way, I think that's... Well not the wrong way, but the socially unacceptable way. So that's the learning as we go, and even my son look at me and go, "Hmm, I'm getting a bit obsessed now aren't I?" "Yeah, you know." We have quite a lot of fun around it.

**0:26:36 DA:** Yeah, that's good self insight though isn't it to be able to actually turn around and say that. That's excellent.

**0:26:41 AM:** I know it's absolutely brilliant.

**0:26:43 DA:** Good stuff. Okay, well, I mean, you've started to touch on a little bit of the NLP anyway. I was just wondering if you could talk me through a little bit more of how life coaching in NLP can be used with both children and adults with Asperger's? You talked a little bit about the modelling of famous people. Is there more to it than that?

**0:26:58 AM:** Yeah, I think the biggest part of it is breaking down any kind of success. So, in those famous people that are breaking down I suppose the obsession versus mastery thing on a bigger more global scale. But coming down to absolute specifics every day, I think that's where NLP has been particularly useful because every interaction with another person, there's a set of rules around it. And if you actually stop for a second and go, "What actually happened here?" Then I can then explain and even someone emailed me the other day and said they had problem with their son not handling school, lining up when it was out of the blue and unexpected. So typically the kids all sat in set seats in the classroom. But in certain... It
seemed random moments the teacher would say, "Okay, everybody line up together and we're just going to go ahead and grab another chair and form new groups," or something like that.

0:28:09 AM: So it seemed chaotic and random to the Asperger's boy and he would totally flip out because he wasn't sitting in his normal chair and next to the people that he is used to. So NLP has helped me understand that it's actually a protocol for this. It's not all chaotic and it's not all intuitive. So I help the parent go, "Well, when would a random circumstance like that come up? So you would warn the kid that occasionally there is going to be a slightly different ways of doing it and how it normally works is you focus on one thing. So instead of worrying about losing your old seat, you would focus on where you’re going to sit. And you could choose criteria, is it the best friend that you’ve got or is it the chair that’s in the best spot in the room, and which would you focus on first and what would you prioritize as number two?"

0:29:06 AM: So if I could then help this kid, it's not just this chaotic mad thing. There is a process. Everyone will have something in their head about how it works for them. So breaking it down into, "Okay, number one, focus on who I want to sit next to. Number two, second best person and maybe third is the best chair or just the nearest one or whatever criterion." So you help them make it up by breaking it down. So I think that's been huge because that's also going into that telling them what to do not what not to do, because in the typical experience in that chaotic lining up thing, is people would just tell you to stop freaking out and just get over it. They don't say, "Okay, in your head choose the person you want to sit with, number one, number two, the second best person and then the favourite seat and they wouldn't break it down like that, so definitely NLP has helped with that.

0:30:08 AM: I think also life coaching, which is different than psychology in my personal experiences it's less about the disorder and more about where you want to go. So you set the path in the future of where you want to go and then you figure out how. So that's been a great
mindset shift for me. I think also in all of this NLP and life coaching thing there's a little bit of learning about hypnotics suggestion and there's a couple of things around that that have been really useful and it's not in a spooky woo-woo sort of way. Hypnotic suggestion in every day life is using a phrase and repeating it, so I use certain phrases over and over to help my son learn how to say it for himself in his head. So an example of that... For example is when the meltdowns are about to happen, as a parent and I'm sure others can too, you can tell when it's about to erupt and it's just trying to help them get on top of it and stop them with your prompting and eventually they learn to do it themselves.

0:31:18 AM: So what I would do in those moments is say the same thing and now he says it himself because it's ingrained and the best thing that I've ever said with him there is when he starts to get emotional and start to flap, there's a turning point moment when he can... When the rest of us might pull ourselves together and be calm and the Asperger's goes out of control and turns into a starfish on the floor. What I say is the other side of that feeling is where the ideas are and so I continually say that every time he's having a meltdown. So whenever he then keeps on top of it or even if he has a hissy fit and turns into this starfish, when he calms down then we talk and the ideas come. So I'll then use that hypnotic phrase and I'll say, "See I told you when the other side of all that emotion and where the ideas are, see we're having ideas now to solve your problem."

0:32:17 AM: So what happens now is he says in his own head past this feeling is where the ideas are and so he stays calm knowing that that feeling is there and it's correct and it's okay to have that feeling and he just waits to let it pass so that he can let the ideas come and he's now OK. It's been easily six months, maybe a year with only one really big meltdown and I think I didn't help him in that moment as well as I might have, because I was distracted and busy and probably grumpy myself. I think that's amazing so we were a daily many times a day occurrence before to have only one in six months, maybe a year, is just unreal and it's from
those sorts of things like this hypnotic suggestion idea.

**0:33:11 DA:** Sure, sure. I do like that idea. So can you tell me just practically speaking, in terms of the hypnotic suggestion, you've got obviously this key sort of phrase that you use with him, is that something that you... How have you sort of implanted this for him, prior to the event? Is that something you've dealt with when he's having a good day or sit there and kind of do that with him or is it something you've actually done via some kind of hypnotic thing? How does that actually work?

**0:33:31 AM:** Yeah, it's not a spooky look into my eyes type of hypnotic suggestion. I think it's just repetitive use.

**0:33:38 DA:** Okay.

**0:33:38 AM:** And I think it's also modelling on myself, that's another big foundation of NLP is having people to learn from and copy including I think parents as the most important part of that. And so rather than a lot of the things that I do, taking it for granted and never explaining that I have any emotion, I'll even say to him myself, "I'm a bit frustrated about this." The other side of this the ideas are going to be aren't they and then, "Okay, I got an idea. I'm good now," sort of thing. So I'm modelling to him that same thing and using that same phrase.

**0:34:16 DA:** Oh, okay.

**0:34:16 AM:** I think this repeated phrase and finding lots of other ways for him to see other people having success with it.

**0:34:22 DA:** Okay, so it's... Yeah, okay, so I see. You're kind of using it yourself in a day to
day, so he sees that and you're kind of interacting with him and using that as well, so it does just become very much second nature.

0:34:32 AM: That's right. Yeah, second nature it is now which is just sensational. It's evident he's having an emotion. I think that's the next thing we're working on, is just making it more invisible on the outside. He doesn't flap or have a tantrum but he still... I call it a dark cloud so we're just working on that now. But then, just you'd hardly imagine that you could even get to this stage when you're in that meltdown stage and suicidal talk and all that this other end where he's at now is actually possible. That's the biggest thing that I'm most passionate about sharing with other families is what's possible. And the thing that we haven't even mentioned in all of the chat that we've had is, four years ago now it is, he was just about thrown out of mainstream school and I was researching and meeting with special needs schools or schools with special needs departments because he just was not working in a normal everyday public school.

0:35:39 AM: In Australia, a public school is the local government school, not a private school. So he was at the normal public school just about kicked out, and now four years later and last year, he was voted vice-captain of the school and beautifully behaved. People who meet him now have absolutely no concept of him behaving that way. He's very adult, very responsible, mature, polite, engages with people, he's popular. It's just like... It seems like either way, so that's now what I'm doing is I'm showing other people what I did with him, which is the most successful people but it's a key then this is in a really tangible level for others.

0:36:27 DA: Yes, sure. It's very practical that people can see. So vice-captain at school, that kind of way, I guess in our country, it's kind of prefects, we have stuff like that. It's kind of what is it sort of a responsible child within the school?
0:36:37 AM: It’s actually the second most responsible position.

0:36:41 DA: Okay.

0:36:42 AM: So there's number one is captain, number two is vice-captain and then there might be prefects under that.

0:36:50 DA: All right, okay, and what kind of things... What's the role of the vice-captain if you like, what kind of things would he have to be doing?

0:36:56 AM: When those adults come to the schools, they meet and greet and do a speech. He regularly speaks in front of the whole school as a public speaking position. He has also acted quite responsibly when there's talk in the playground of someone doing something uncool or illegally then leaving the school or whatever. So, there's a bit of responsibility about having to stand up when your peers are saying otherwise, things like that. And I guess, when there's awards and things, they give them out, that kind of thing. It's like a... It's actually is another thing the school student representative councils, so if there's issues with the students, the representatives take them to the teachers to get resolved.

0:37:44 DA: Sure, sure. So it's...

0:37:45 AM: So, it's quite stressful, yeah.

0:37:46 DA: Yes, it's a big deal, absolutely. Yeah, and it's a big role and obviously like you say a real physical obvious testament to the achievement that he's had and obviously, you as a parent as well helped into move along too. That's really awesome.
I think the biggest thing about it actually and I haven't really specified is in that peer group. It's actually a popularity vote above all else and that is the biggest thing for the Asperger's aspect of it, to think that not only four years ago, he didn't have any friends at all and now, he's been voted as the most popular, I think most popular, that's how it's seen in Grade 5 and Grade 6 level.

What age group is that, sorry?

It's 10-11 age group.

Okay, okay, brilliant. Thank you. Okay, just moving a tack slightly, just a little bit about sort of describing and explaining Asperger's a bit. But how do you actually describe Asperger's if someone says to you, "What is Asperger's Syndrome?"

Yeah, I find that I do and I had a really interesting exercise. My son at high school did an exercise with a bunch of other kids, so what they had to do is to write a bit of an explanation about who somebody is and what you like about them and what their strong character is. And so you then, you did it for three people and you got three back so it was really interesting because what has happened is my son has had three people write about him and they wrote about Asperger's in a certain way. So what that tells me is it's how he is presented to them what Asperger's is. So I felt this was perfect because all of them said something like, "Even though Jay has Asperger's, which means that he thinks differently than other kids and he's very intelligent and can find some things, some advanced things very easy at school, he also finds ordinary things very difficult."

And so that was such a great way to explain it and it was a bit of and kids speak a bit of the way I describe it so I'd just say that it's just having a... It's a group of people who
have a particular way of thinking that's a bit different to the common people out there. With the right help, they can be really amazing people and they still... And when I say to my son, there's still some things he has to learn but in his way. I think that his way, one of the big factors that NLP draws on around that is whether you're a visual, auditory, kinaesthetic or auditory-digital type of thinker, I think that's been really big in it. So, I do talk about that a little bit if you'd go into a bit more of a conversation about what Asperger's is. Plus I also do a clinical thing inside within the autism spectrum. And having to put the little name on there and I know that is changing somewhere along the line. But anyway, that's how I've hit it because most people, I think if you said Asperger's, they don't really know what that is, but if you said it's in the autism spectrum, they go, "Oh, okay, I got you."

0:41:00 DA: All right, interesting. Yeah, because I've had different people say different things around that. Some people said Asperger's seems to be a very popular well-known sort of phrase, other people saying less so in different parts of the world, that's interesting.

0:41:09 AM: Yeah. So, I'm sure these different countries that are bit more advanced than others, I would say too.

0:41:15 DA: Yeah, just in terms of sort... I think there's a lot more people with Asperger's or certainly people being portrayed as having Asperger's on a lot more sort of shows and media and stuff like that. Okay, I mean, it's sounds like that explanation because I was going to ask you about kind of how one would explain that to siblings and that sounds like that kind of explanation would fit in for siblings as well, wouldn't it really?

0:41:32 AM: Yeah, I agree totally. It's a bit of explanation you can scale up, but I thought it was really cute that that's how Jay presented himself on how his friends have come back to him. Yeah, so, they're 12.
0:41:46 DA: Sure, sure, okay. So in school, did Jay... Did you say he sort of did disclose to the whole class or how did that work? How did people know he's got Asperger's in school?

0:41:55 AM: Yeah, I wondered. There was a time when he wasn't keen on anyone knowing about it, so I just allowed him to have what he felt comfortable about. And even though he would say to me that he doesn't want me to talk to teachers and he doesn't want me to meet with special ed department teachers because he is fine and he is fitting in and he doesn't need any of that, so there is a little bit of a degree of him wanting that to be quiet is probably what that's really about. But yeah, at the same time, with his really good friends that he trust, he's clearly says he has Asperger's.

0:42:33 AM: So I feel he is really happy enough and comfortable enough around what Asperger's is to be saying it, and quite freely, actually. So it's interesting he doesn't want the help because he is fine from the teachers, is it that he's embarrassed and doesn't want a bigger population to know, maybe there is an element of it. But then with the people that really count, it's totally cool he's accepted and yeah, I guess sometimes one of his good friends I'll say, "You just tell him when he is getting obsessed, won't you?" sort of thing or "You just tell him if he needs to do something in a different way." And they really sort of cool about it. So yeah, that's very interesting. I think it's actually quite a good thing.

0:43:23 DA: Absolutely, absolutely. Okay, just to lead you on to another topic. One thing I get a lot of emails about and you may well have done yourself from other parents, is people asking me what kind of types of traits and behavior due to my son's Asperger's, and what of kind of regular features of puberty, teenagers whichever and how do you deal with that? Because obviously you talked about your sort of deal with your son around some of the behaviors maybe due to Asperger's, how do you do that? How do you differentiate, if you do
indeed differentiate between behaviors?

0:43:48 AM: Yeah, I think that's a fantastic question. And I guess it's a bit multidimensional how I would respond. I think that my belief hopefully would answer this, my belief around it is that Asperger's is a magnification of who you are. So all of the personality traits that you might typically have yourself, I just exaggerate it so it's just as a line that's drawn at some point that makes those behaviors acceptable or not acceptable, are they top or bottom, whether they're hurt or they're depressed or whatever scale. So I think that really helped me and I think it's helped my son. And even that handshake day, what I did is I drew, because he's very visual, I've learned to find when I talk and it's important I'll scoop a little bit of paper. What I did is I drew a band on the pages so there were like three zones.

0:44:47 AM: And I coloured the centre part, which is where I described ordinary people's behavior and whether you agree or not, I use the word normal. I said, "This is where people would say normal." And when you behave outside the box and we also often even with those hypnotic phrases, I'll say, "You're getting out of the box, Jay." And he will go "Okay, gotcha." So I'll have those words and I also have a hand signal where I put my hand on my... No, if he chose to signal, so I didn't have to say it out loud in front of anyone. I just did this little symbol that said he needed to get back in his box. So that three band box on the paper where the centre part which was normal, and then there is like a hyper, too forlorn, too obsessed hyperactive crazy at the top, and at the bottom was depressed sat down obsessive that sort of thing. So I'm showing him that to fit in the world, if you behave within the middle band, you're going to be totally fine.

0:45:51 AM: Every now and then, some of it might fall into the top one and the bottom one is just you don't hang on those spaces too long, and that has been absolutely brilliant at helping him figure that out. So I guess that's in normal teenage issues all of those go within the band.
And that band I guess can only be filled with clarity as a parent if you're sure about what's acceptable and what's not. So I have also spent a lot of energy being shown my stuff about what's acceptable behavior and not around, and experience some challenges in my close family proximity about what was acceptable and what wasn't. So I actually have a list, there's like a hundred and something rules of acceptable behaviour, and so I went through those with my son as well. I haven't actually put that up on my website, so it just made me think that would be valuable to others because it really helped with this foundation of what is right and what is wrong.

**0:46:58 DA:** Sure.

**0:46:59 AM:** Clearly speaking. I know we don't really like to say what's right and wrong, but I think if you don't know where that band is you can't help them. The other thing that I got within people that I've written these, not just that this age appropriate or inappropriate behavior, there is also personality type appropriate and inappropriate behavior. So there's four major personality types and you're one of these, number one, and your parents are number four, your parents are trying to impose their personality unto you then there's conflict there as well. So I think within all of that I'm talking about being clear about what's meant as behaviour and socially acceptable behaviour, but it's also what's okay for certain personalities as well.

**0:47:52 AM:** So if you're a real detailed thinker and broke down everything into a bottom detail and you're very linear, you know, everything has to start from one end to the other, that's actually okay. There are people in their personality who do that. It's just with a certain level that you're going to bend that's uncool. Likewise, the parent, the very big picture generalist global thinking is going to find that detailed type of thinking polar opposite it to them, but it doesn't make it wrong. So that's the band I think you have to be careful of as well that you are not trying to make the Asperger's like you. You just try to bring them in into the
band of acceptable within that personality chart, within that age group as well.

0:48:41 DA: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense. I kind of do that what you’re talking about, it’s just more about the behaviors because in a sense it kind of takes Asperger’s out of the picture. It’s just about what's acceptable, what's not, whether that's being a teenager, whether that's someone with Asperger’s. It could be someone with issues, whatever. It doesn't matter, does it? It's just a basic kind of way of living, isn't it? Absolutely, and that's hopefully, that's really powerful.

0:49:01 AM: Yeah, perfect way of saying, totally. And even to the point where mostly other people doing it, I will note to him, "Look at him behaving beautifully in that situation, that would’ve been the challenge to them because of x,y,z... And look at that person, being inappropriate. Can you say how they are not?" So that's also the application of at least showing them other people doing it and yourself, talking through how you're feeling and how you're coping through things, modelling yourself as well.


0:49:30 AM: Yeah.

0:49:31 DA: Okay. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing young people with Asperger’s today and how can they be helped with them?

0:49:38 AM: You know what? This could sound really mean, I think the biggest challenge with Asperger’s is their parents.

0:49:45 DA: Okay.
0:49:46 AM: That's really harsh to say. I was my son's biggest challenge until I learned what I needed to know to help him. So, I'm including myself and my own experiences getting me to say that. I was working at the school canteen last week and there was a mom who was talking about her challenges with her son who has Asperger's. She now has him living in another house. She can't even have him in the same house. She had no skills whatsoever to help her son and she believes that it was a disorder that was just going to be that way and his behaviour was the way he was and there was nothing that could be done about it.

0:50:28 AM: And I just thought, "Oh my God!" And she has even has, you know, really strange, or I'm thinking inappropriate... Thinking that is completely limiting her, that if you're a working parent who's well, you cannot have a successful Asperger's because you don't have the time and the resources. You know, I'm a single parent who works full-time and I still have my son in the position that he is. So I think that it's the own parents' limitations and the lack of clarity about what the rules are, about acceptable or not acceptable behaviour. Not explaining things and to learn in a way they need to hear it. I think there's a whole bunch of things that it's up to us to help the kids.


0:51:22 AM: Seeing both.

0:51:23 DA: Well, but like you say, between school and your home, that's the two big places where you spend all your time, isn't it? When you're a youngster, a whole lot of the time. Anyway, so they are going to be massive influences, aren't they? And you are absolutely right. Our home environment does shape us from a very young age and how things are kind of put across to us is a big impact to us all, Asperger's or not.
0:51:39 AM: I think definitely schools are not as equipped as they can be too. There's a limitation to what a typical, ordinary school can offer. I think the teachers are not trying... Well, not in Australia or anyway, teachers actually are not even trying to deal with it. So, I believe that the school can only offer your child what you’re able to help them with and how you manage how they teach your son your job.

0:52:08 DA: I see that.

0:52:09 AM: I'm not even as bold enough to say that it goes above the teachers. I think a lot of families rely on school when I think they're just not equipped to deal with it. I think parents have to take control without being controlling. That's a different thing. But being of help and have contact... There's lots of things you can do to do it. But I think the school can only be what parents put in.

0:52:32 DA: I think that's really interesting because like I say, I've done a number of interviews last few weeks and a number of parents I've been to have good successes with school. They've all pretty much been very, very proactive in the school system. Going in there, kind of talking about their point of view, pushing for their specific education, the teachers, the whole thing. You can't just be a passive parent. I don't think you can expect to get the best for your child in the school environment, can you?

0:52:52 AM: I agree with that, totally. That's good to hear that there's other people, not just me, and that it's a global thing. I think that's fantastic learning for everyone if you can pass that line on.

0:53:02 DA: Sure. Sure. Absolutely. Okay. You've talked about it a little bit. But can you tell...
me what some of the most common mistakes parents can make when raising a child with Asperger's?

0:53:11 AM: Yeah. I think the lack of boundaries in their own head about what's acceptable or not acceptable. I'm doing this off the top of my head. So I think it's telling them what not to do instead of what to do and breaking down successful behavior into it from minute detail. Making sense of the things that they meant, they're actually not. I think it's also persevering, just you know that they give up too easily, so that means they are not consistent and the rules are not defined. I think a lot of parents think that the disorder is there forever. Oh, I think it is forever. I think the problem is associated with the disorder are there forever and you've just got to fit your life around them.

0:54:03 AM: When I think, "No, I'm going to learn how my son thinks and I'm going to lead him out into our world but I do have to get into his world first and lead him out so he has to fit into our life." I think that of most families, so I can't go to the supermarket any more because my son just had tantrums. Well, to me that's all the more reason to get him to go to the supermarket and learn how to manage it. You're going to need to do it slowly bit by bit. But now, I can go through that another time but this has been a complete process about getting my son okay with going to the supermarket and dealing with it. And actually, one of the key hypnotic sayings I use is, "Well, we've just got to suck it up."

0:54:50 DA: Okay.

0:54:51 AM: So suck it up. You got to put up with it and you got no choice, we're just doing it no matter what.

0:54:55 DA: Yeah.
0:54:56 AM: So he's learned to deal with that. So I think yeah, a lot of parents are really, I think perhaps that's weakness, that it is too hard to fight this force because they're a big force. And the fifth thing, I think, the mistakes that... It's all about problem, I think. I think that there's some awesome things that make Asperger's who they are and so much better and more interesting than they ever would be without it. We do definitely have to deal with the unacceptable behaviors but really fight through the sides of it and turn it into something really awesome, that's huge for us and I think for everyone around who finally grasped that he can be a really awesome person, really cool, really successful because of the Asperger's but the problems they had to deal with too. But anyway, that's definitely a mistake I think a lot forget.

0:55:54 DA: Excellent, excellent. That's great. Thank you. Well, we're kind of coming up to the hour now, so I've got a couple of more questions just to sort of wrap up, if that's okay?

0:56:00 AM: Sure thing, I'm fine.

0:56:01 DA: Excellent. You talked about all kinds of Asperger's book and also the Tony Attwood DVD, are there any other sort of books, websites or educational tools out there that would be helpful to share with parents of children with Asperger's?

0:56:13 AM: It's probably going to sound like I'm going to pass in your pocket but apart from yours actually, the Parenting Asperger's community, I have really found it difficult to find resources. And the ones that were actually had proper tips to help you.

0:56:30 DA: Okay. Is that...

0:56:33 AM: So that's...
0:56:33 DA: Is that online or in books as well?

0:56:37 AM: About your books and your online, I think, have been excellent and I think in particular, the one that I thought was the most, I meant a lot fabulous at the time was helping Asperger's in the workplace.

0:56:48 DA: Okay.

0:56:48 AM: And I forgot what they call it nowadays, sorry, but that I thought was really fantastic because you brought down very specific behavior which is how a lot of the principles with what I do and I love how you thought about that.

0:57:00 DA: Sure.

0:57:01 AM: And just how much content is on your site and particularly in the bits that I don't do which is the diagnostic stuff and more medical based issues because I think a lot of people in my community, and I'm sure you'll find too, have a lot of crossovers with other disorders. My son as well has a number of other small disabilities as well, audio processing problems, visual pattern recognition problems and little bits and pieces that I think you do really particularly well. And Tony Attwood's work, all of his books are really great at figuring out what Asperger's is about. I did find over the years in why I created this thought that I have is a lot of people told you what needs to be done differently. I think really tell you how, that's a very small nuance but very different. It's like that lining up in the school ground in a random way unexpected like you see instead well, you've just go to form and you're lining, grab this next seat. Yeah, that's telling someone what to do and that's the good advice. I just don't think its deep enough because it didn't say, "Do this, then do that, then do this, then do that," which is
what I feel. I’m feeling a little bit of a halt. I think your work does that as well, but I haven’t seen it otherwise.

**0:58:33 DA:** Okay, okay. Well, thank you for the compliments. I do appreciate that. If you could wave a magic wand and change just one thing in the world today that would improve the lives of adults and children with Asperger’s, what would it be?

**0:58:43 AM:** Yeah, when I first written... Oh, I've heard that I was thinking that if I could change one thing in the world about Asperger's in general, I would love that I could turn the empathy key so if they could have empathy for others, I feel that would solve much more in life so I've really misheard your question. I think... And around the empathy thing, sure, my son may not have the empathy that others would because I think that's what the disorder does. He is learning though what he's meant to do, not what he's meant to feel.

**0:59:15 DA:** Right.

**0:59:15 AM:** I've had a real distinction around that. But to answer the question that you’ve actually asked, in the bigger wider world, I think it would be in schools, I reckon. You rely so much on schools at that time to help you. If the school had helped me from the first day, tell me that there was something about Asperger's going on here and that they could be clearer about it and quicker, then my son's life would have been less challenging. He wouldn't have felt suicidal, all those things at that time. Even kindergarten, if the teachers were trained in what to look for, I think would be the biggest thing I would like to change.

**1:00:00 DA:** Sure, sure. Excellent. Okay. Thank you. And in terms of people finding a bit more about your work you've talked about, is www.aspergersfittingin.com, is that the best sort of place for people to try to make contact with you if they wanted to?
1:00:11 AM: Yeah. For sure. Thanks, Dave. And if I just do this because I have a passion to help. And I want to be able to doing, having all the information we talked about earlier and how hard it was. And to waste time for my child's psych if we just... He could have a happier life if I could've learned these things earlier. And so, yes the website is the only place and all of it, like I would just do it all for free. And I encourage people to email me, it's info@aspergersfittingin.com And if they have a question and it helps me if it's very specific like, "My son went to put his shoes on in the morning. How can I help him?" Something like that then I'd break it all down into what works for me and sort of being touching turns to help.

1:01:00 DA: Excellent. Wow, that's really helpful. So I'll share that with everyone then. Okay, finally is there anything that I didn't ask you about that you would like to sort of get across as the last point maybe for anyone listening to this?

1:01:10 AM: You've asked some fantastic questions, I' really appreciate the chance. What to me is this most important thing... We touched on it, the most important thing of all that I want out of what I do and my son's story is to show what's possible. And that's the big thing because he's not living in a difficult life and his life is not going to be limited by this disorder. He will be better because of it. So, it's possible and that's the biggest thing of all.

1:01:45 DA: Excellent, excellent. It's very positive. Now I think I wish to end. I'd like to say thanks ever so much for spending the time today with this talk. To all these, thanks for giving me some excellent information. I'm sure people will be very pleased to hear what we talked about today. So thank you very much now.

1:01:58 AM: It's... Absolutely, yeah. Thanks.
For More Bonus Information From The Experts In The Aspergers Explained Parenting Program
Go To http://www.parentingaspergerscommunity.com/public/cdresources.cfm