



# Aspiehelp / The Aspire Trust October 2017 Newsletter

Edited by Anna Melling

Aspie Round Up - updated fees and timetable, In Our Office, Introducing Rod Wintour,  
Article: Why the world expert on Asperger's took 30 years to notice condition in his own son

## The Aspie Round Up Friday 17th and Saturday 18th of November

You can view the website at:

<http://www.theaspieroundup.co.nz/>

**Fees have been updated:**

You can see the prices at the link  
below or the QR code to right.

<http://www.theaspieroundup.co.nz/fees--registration.html>



Use the coupon code **EarlyBird** before **October 15th** and get  
**20% off.**

### Timetable:

#### Friday 17th November 2017

**9:00 am:** Check-in opens

**9:30 am:** Welcome and Morning tea

**11:00 am:** Stephen Shore "the Awesomeness of  
Autism," followed by a Q&A.

**12:00pm:** Lunch

**1:00 pm:** Parents Panel "what advice do you  
wish you had been given at the start of your  
journey?," followed by a Q&A.

**2:00 pm:** Sébastien Mathieu

**3:00 pm:** Afternoon tea

**3:30 pm:** Michael Woods "The Parcel" DVD

**4:30 to 6:30:** Social mixer

#### Saturday 18th November 2017

**10:30 am:** Welcome Back and morning tea

**11:00 am:** Aspiehelp "Subverting the dominant  
paradigm" - Leith McMurray and Julie McGeorge

**12:00 pm:** Lunch

**1:00 pm:** Rod Wintour, followed by a Q&A.

**2:00 pm:** Afternoon tea

**3:00pm:** Closing

Visit <http://www.theaspieroundup.co.nz/presenters.html>  
for information about the various speakers.



## In Our Office

We have been really busy with new clients and also sausage sizzles “up the yin yang” as Julie would say.

Olivia has been working hard on the Aspie Roundup, with Dean Sutherland, one of our Trustees.

Leith has been flinging herself at the ground really hard twice in the last month, with resulting injuries...not good, but goes with ageing (?) The first time a large gate caught the wind and pushed her over, and the second time, she tripped over the cat!

We are thrilled to announce a new team member, Rod Wintour, another Aspie, who has done stellar things with young Aspies in Auckland and surrounding districts for many years, including running a respite home as well.

Rod arrives next week- about the 20th and just in time for the Roundup. He will provide an excellent male presence on the team for many of our male clients, and a whole different store of ideas for our development which we will announce in the New Year!



*Our staff, clockwise from top left:  
Leith, Olivia, Julie, and Anna*

## Upcoming Fundraising Sausage Sizzles

- **14th of October - Fresh Meats Barrington**

- **21st of October - Fresh Meats Barrington**

If you're in the area, come and visit, say hello and perhaps buy a sausage! We are very short of volunteers to help out with the sausage sizzles. Please offer even for 2-3 hours now and then.

### Social evenings

Our regular social evenings are on the first and the third Wednesday of the month, at a venue near Church Corner at 7:30pm. (Please contact Leith for the exact location).

We have board games, hot drinks and biscuits, and a selection of books from the Aspiehelp library available at every meeting. Please bring a \$2 donation.

The next meetings are on the 18th of October and the 1st of November. You are welcome to attend. (New members should contact Leith or Julie first.)

### Conversation group

Our Aspiehelp conversation group meets fortnightly on Tuesdays at 2pm.

A get-together for people affected by Asperger's Syndrome.

The next meetings are on the 24th of October and the 7th of November.

Please contact us if you're interested in attending.

#### Our Patron is Stephen Mark Shore, PhD.

The Aspire Trust, Inc is a registered Charitable Trust. Charities Services registration number is CC46192.

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[www.aspiehelp.com](http://www.aspiehelp.com)

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## Introducing Rod Wintour

*Rod will be joining Aspiehelp shortly. Here is a brief background:*

Rod is one of three known generations of aspies: Rod's father, Rod himself, and his two sons.

His father was expelled from mainstream education in his primary school years because his ticcing and noises were a disruption to the other children.

Rod's sons were written off from an educational point of view. They sons were deemed "retarded" (the term then used), and Rod and his wife were urged to keep the boys away from mainstream education.

Today Rod's eldest son is now a fully qualified audio engineer through MAINZ, and was their top student. Earlier this year Rod's youngest (after missing his Graduation) received his Degree in 3D animation.

Rod himself was deemed unteachable, but it was uncertainty about what his true ability was which caused divisions between his teachers. Rod couldn't read after leaving school, but taught himself at the age of 17.

Rod has a Level 4 National Certificate. Rod's dad was a successful farmer and all three of our generations (each person) competed in the finals of the national competitions in different interests they were involved in.

Rod and his wife started the first Aspire Trust in 1998 to directly cater to the needs of Aspergers students in education, which was registered fully in June 2000. They also owned and ran a respite care centre for Aspergers children and teenagers for eight years. Rod worked full time on Area Health and Education teams for over twelve years - working with many children and teenagers with Asperger's in schools throughout the Auckland and Northland areas. Rod alternated years of homeschooling his sons and placing them in school.

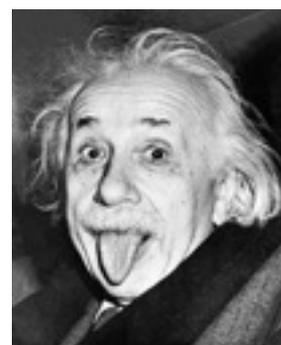
Rod also trained as a student advocate (Youth Law EASY program) and advocated for students as well as did Irlen screening. Rod has written many articles and features in books internationally and is also well known for his poems and quotations about Aspergers.

He is featured in Philip Wylie's book on "Very Late Diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome".

## Quote Corner

If it weren't for Asperger's and Obsessions there would be no Theory of Relativity, no Magic Flute, no Microsoft... and no *Ghost Busters*.

**- Rudy Simone, Aspergirls**



# Why the world expert on Asperger's took 30 years to notice condition in his own son

Melissa Davey

This article is re-published under the Guardian's Open License terms. The original article can be found here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/sep/25/why-the-world-expert-on-aspergers-took-30-years-to-notice-condition-in-his-own-son>



**Prof Tony Attwood, an internationally renowned clinical psychologist, was blindsided when he realised his son Will had the syndrome**

Will Attwood has been addicted to drugs for the past two decades, an affliction which has seen the 35-year-old jailed multiple times and reliant on support from his family.

His father, Prof Tony Attwood, describes him as “a hero”. It’s a feeling towards his son that has come about since his decision about five years ago to watch an old family video.

Until then Attwood, an internationally renowned clinical psychologist known for his knowledge of Asperger syndrome in children, had been reluctant to look back on the videos of Will as a toddler, a time before addiction and pain.

“They were hard to watch,” he said.

But his daughter Rosie, a teacher to preschool children with autism, convinced him to play one of the videos for her and reminisce. They watched as Attwood appeared on the screen with Will, who was then about four. They were at a beach.

“In the video I was trying to engage with him, and he really just didn’t want to know me,” Attwood said.

“I was giving him all signs of interaction and trying to play with him, and he was basically in a world of his own. It wasn’t shyness, because he knew me. Something more was going on.”

A few minutes into watching, Attwood and Rosie looked at each other in shared recognition of what they were seeing. “He’s got Asperger’s,” they said at the same time.

The world expert on Asperger syndrome had for three decades failed to diagnose the condition in his own son, whose crippling anxiety led him to use alcohol and marijuana when he was a teenager, which progressed into an addiction.

“I realised that I couldn’t make the diagnosis myself because I’m his dad, which would make it hard to be objective,” Attwood said. “And love is blind.

“So I arranged for someone I know and who I very much respect to see him, and she confirmed the diagnosis.”

His son has just finished serving a two-year sentence, and said having a diagnosis made his time in prison easier.

“Previously he was lost in the social world not knowing where he was going, but suddenly he had a road map guiding him about why he felt certain ways and this helped him to understand what he needed to do to cope,” Attwood said.

“Will is now writing a book to help people with Asperger’s cope with prison, as a very high proportion of those in alcohol and drug dependency services have Asperger’s and often end up in prison because of that. So really, I see him as a hero.”

Although Attwood couldn’t help but wonder what might have turned out differently for his son had the diagnosis been made when he was a child, he also knows better than most how scant any research on the condition was back then.

Asperger syndrome, a condition on the autism spectrum, is a developmental disorder that can affect social and communication skills. It is not unusual for those with the condition to be high-functioning, with expertise in a specific topic that can at times be prodigious.

“On one end of the spectrum you have children who are silent, with no speech and poor communication skills and who need a high-level of support in a special school, while on the other end is someone working as a professor or engineer,” Attwood said.

Attwood was just 19 and volunteering at a special school in England, where he was born, when he first encountered children with autism. Back then, the children were described as having “childhood schizophrenia”, even though schizophrenia is a much different neurodevelopmental disorder.

With such a limited understanding about the field, the children were particularly challenging for Attwood at the time. But he knew he wanted to understand them and decided that was how he would spend his career.

More than 45 years later, he is so highly sought after that he can no longer accept patients at his clinic in Brisbane, in Australia, or even manage a waiting list. But he regularly answers questions on his YouTube channel, and tries to make as much of his research available\* as possible for free on the internet.



His research has taught him that children with Asperger’s should be defined by their strengths and not by their limitations. They are often loyal and dependable; take people at face value and are less likely to label people according to sexist, age-ist, or cultural biases; speak their mind; have a high attention to detail; and are determined to seek the truth, among other strengths. He teaches psychologists around the world to identify and work with these characteristics.

Attwood is focusing his research on women, who are much more affected by Asperger’s than previously thought. Until just a few years ago it was commonly said there were 10 men for every woman with the condition. Now that number is closer to two men for every woman.

While he is well-known for his discoveries in the field and for his work writing “the bible” on Asperger syndrome, Attwood has only now begun to share the story of how the condition has affected his own family. The story will be the subject of an episode of the ABC’s Australian Story† airing on Monday.



“Realising that Will has Asperger’s was an intense relief,” he said.

“Before that it was like trying to make a 5,000-piece jigsaw puzzle without the picture, and then suddenly you’re given the picture on the box. I can now explain to him what is happening to him in his language, in ‘Aspergese’.

“I now know he wasn’t trying to be a difficult child and that I wasn’t a bad parent. And when I talk to other parents now, I can tell them I truly understand the genuine feeling of being an exhausted parent.”

\* [www.tonyattwood.com.au](http://www.tonyattwood.com.au)

† [www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-25/how-tony-attwood-missed-aspergers-diagnosis/8960460](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-25/how-tony-attwood-missed-aspergers-diagnosis/8960460)