



Aspiehelp / The Aspire Trust October 2018 Newsletter

Edited by Anna Melling

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Article: Why do some people with autism have restricted interests and repetitive movements?

Aspie Roundup 2018

This is the last newsletter before the roundup next month.

The Roundup will take place on Show Weekend this year—**16 & 17 November in the Rata and Kowhai Lounges at the Cashmere Presbyterian Church, 2 MacMillan Avenue.**



Themes this year are: Aspie Creativity Past and Present, and Designing an Aspie-Friendly Future.

Planned presentations (subject to change):

- Emma Goodall live presentation
- Jeanette Purkis video presentation
- Debbie Ball video on home-schooling
- Sébastien Mathieu presentation on autism treatment in France
- Julie McGeorge “What's good for us is good for them”
- Annie Southern presentation about the brain and aspergers
- Michael Woods will show his latest short horror film
- Building design for disabilities including sensory issues by Richard Cullingworth
- Choi Kwang Do demonstration (on benefit of martial arts)
- Art and photography exhibits

The presentation by the Babbage family has sadly been cancelled.

See theaspieroundup.co.nz for more information. Feel free to email us with any queries—info@aspiehelp.com



Upcoming Fundraising Sausage Sizzles

Here are the dates for the upcoming Sausage Sizzles at Fresh Meats Barrington (Barrington Mall):

Saturday the 27th of October
Saturday the 24th of November

If you're in the area, come and visit, say hello and perhaps buy a sausage!



We are again short of volunteers to help out with the sausage sizzles - even 2 hours now and then is very helpful. Contact the office if you want to help out.

In Our Office

We have had fewer referrals in the last month, but have still been very busy with organising the Aspie Roundup, general administration, networking etc.

Both Julie and Leith had a week off and also Leith has been somewhat exhausted and below par. Lately, a new prescription (Sertraline) seems to be helping. (Hurrah!)

We have reached out to the Tourettes people as we are “neurological cousins” (our term) and were interested to hear that they are planning to establish a respite centre at Lincoln. Maybe we can work with them in the future.

We have been sending publicity material and books to members and medical centres in the North Island - our name is getting out there!

New pamphlets - including a fourth one on “the Home Environment” have been printed plus we have invested in a new Welcome Folder to hold all the bits and pieces we give people. It looks much more professional and attractive.

Leith was also interviewed by Skype by a researcher in Sydney about being an aspie at University, which was interesting, as her experiences are so far back in the mists of time!

When asked how she managed difficult experiences, the answer was “I just got on with it” which seemed to greatly puzzle the researcher!.

Next month: The Aspie Roundup: 16-17 November. Get in quickly with your registrations - we will negotiate time payment if need be. Guaranteed interest and fun! We feed you as well!



*Our staff from top:
Leith, Julie, and Anna*

Social evenings

These are on hold for the foreseeable future.

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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Carabiner Event

When: Fri 30 Nov 2018, 6:30pm–9:30pm

Where: BizDojo Event Space, 4 Ash St, Christchurch

<https://www.eventfinda.co.nz/2018/carabiner-mentoring-awareness-and-networking-event/christchurch>

Carabiner is a unique mentoring programme for young people with disabilities **aged 18-25** who demonstrate motivation, determination and drive to achieve a specific career-based, sporting or artistic goal. The programme matches these young people with a person in the industry that they are aspiring towards to support them on their journey to success.

Carabiner Mentoring



Carabiner Mentoring Christchurch is holding an event to raise the profile of the programme amongst young people with disabilities and the business community. The event is free and includes entertainment, refreshments and inspirational speakers, including social entrepreneur and the co-founder of the Student Volunteer Army, Sam Johnson. Stay posted, more speakers being announced soon!

If you are a young person with a disability, come along to find out how Carabiner Mentoring can support you to achieve your goal, network with professionals from a wide variety of industries, hear interesting speakers that have achieved success, meet other goal driven young people and enjoy free food. Friends, whānau, and support people welcome.

Whanau, friends, support people, more than welcome! NZSL interpreters attending. Please contact Kerri at kerri@carabiner.org.nz if you have further questions.

Festa 2018

<http://festa.org.nz/>

Festa is a public festival of architecture, design and food. There are over 50 events being held over Labour Weekend- 19th - 22nd of October.

Come into the city for Christchurch's biggest and brightest street party - a public feast of architecture, design and food!

FESTA 2018 runs over Labour Weekend from 19-22 October, with major event FEASTA! on Saturday 20 October (rain date: 21 October). Additional events and full programme to be revealed!



Poetry Corner

Leith has discovered the renowned Australian poet Les Murray. Les has an Autistic son, and identifies as having Asperger's himself. There are several books of his poetry available at the Christchurch City Libraries.



This is a poem he wrote about his son.

It Allows a Portrait in Line-Scan at Fifteen

He retains a slight 'Martian' accent, from the years of single phrases.

He no longer hugs to disarm. It is gradually allowing him affection.

It does not allow proportion. Distress is absolute, shrieking, and runs him at frantic speed through crashing doors.

He likes cyborgs. Their taciturn power, with his intonation.

It still runs him around the house, alone in the dark, cooing and laughing.

He can read about soils, populations and New Zealand. On neutral topics he's illiterate.

Arnie Schwarzenegger is an actor. He isn't a cyborg really, is he, Dad?

He lives on forty acres, with animals and trees, and used to draw it continually.

He knows the map of Earth's fertile soils, and can draw it freehand.

He can only lie in a panicked shout *SorrySorryI didn't do it!* warding off conflict with others and himself.

When he ran away constantly it was to the greengrocers to worship stacked fruit.

His favourite country was the Ukraine: it is nearly all deep fertile soil.

Giggling, he climbed all over the dim Freudian psychiatrist who told us how autism resulted from 'refrigerator' parents.

When asked to smile, he photographs a rictus-smile on his face.

It long forbade all naturalistic films. They were Adult movies.

If they (that is, he) are bad the police will put them in hospital.

He sometimes drew the farm amid Chinese or Balinese rice terraces.

When a runaway, he made uproar in the police station, playing at three times adult speed.

Only animated films were proper. Who Framed Roger Rabbit then authorised the rest.

Phrases spoken to him he would take as teaching, and repeat.
 When he worshipped fruit, he screamed as if poisoned when it was fed to him.
 A one-word first conversation: *Blane—Yes! Plane, that's right, baby!—Blane*
 He has forgotten nothing, and remembers the precise quality of experiences.
 It requires rulings: *Is stealing very playing up, as bad as murder?*
 He counts at a glance, not looking. And he has never been lost.
 When he ate only nuts and dried fruit, words were for dire emergencies.
 He knows all the breeds of fowls, and the counties of Ireland.
 He'd begun to talk, then returned to babble, then silence. It withdrew speech for years.
Is that very autistic, to play video games in the day?
 He is anger's mirror, and magnifies any near him, raging it down.
 It still won't allow him fresh fruit, or orange juice with bits in it.
 He swam in the midwinter dam at night. It had no rules about cold.
 He was terrified of thunder and finally cried as if in explanation *It—angry!*
 He grilled an egg he'd broken into bread. Exchanges of soil-knowledge are called landtalking.
 He lives in objectivity. I was sure Bell's palsy would leave my face only when he said it had begun to.
Don't say word! when he was eight forbade the word 'autistic' in his presence.
 Bantering questions about girlfriends cause a terrified look and blocked ears.
 He sometimes centred the farm in a furrowed American Midwest.
Eye contact, Mum! means he truly wants attention. It dislikes I-contact.
 He is equitable and kind, and only ever a little jealous. It was a relief when that little arrived.
 He surfs, bowls, walks for miles. For many years he hasn't trailed his left arm while running.
I gotta get smart! looking terrified into the years. *I gotta get smart!*

—Les Murray

Why do some people with autism have restricted interests and repetitive movements?

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THE CONVERSATION

<https://theconversation.com/why-do-some-people-with-autism-have-restricted-interests-and-repetitive-movements-94401>



Andrew Cashin - Professor of Nursing, School of Health and Human Sciences, Southern Cross University

As a society, we've come a long way in our understanding of the challenges people with autism face with social communication. But there is a large gap in our understanding of another cluster of behaviours that form part of an autism diagnosis: restrictive and repetitive behaviours and interests (RRBs).

These behaviours and interests appear to be made up of two dimensions. The first is a pattern of overly regulated thinking: obsessions and intense interests; a strong preference for maintaining sameness; and ritualistic or habitual patterns of behaviour, such as fiddling, or motor tics like blinking or throat clearing.

The second dimension is the rocking, twisting, flapping behaviour often associated with early depictions of severe autism in the media.

The origin, or function, of the behaviour in each dimension appear to be different.

And while behaviours in the first dimension are particular to autism, behaviours in the second are related to cognitive development and sensory stimulation. They are common in typically developing pre-school-age children but, when sustained past school age, [may indicate](#) an intellectual disability.

First dimension: thinking style

Autism is a behavioural diagnosis. This means it is diagnosed by recognising the cluster of behaviours and the intensity and frequency of them. However, to understand how restrictive and repetitive behaviours and interests work, it's important to understand the different thinking style associated with autism.

Contrasted with neurotypical thinkers (those without autism), people with autism have less abstract thought. They tend to be visual processors of information, with less strength in linguistic coding, or using language to explain their thoughts.

They are also less able to put themselves figuratively in other people's shoes and guess what they're thinking and feeling.

In effect, people with autism think of concrete stuff rather than the abstract self-talk related to feelings. Without a conscious effort, they're less likely to generalise and have more difficulty recognising like or similar situations. The impact is a thinking style that is not concept-based but, rather, compartmentalised.

When faced with change, the difficulty people with autism have in recognising like or similar experiences – out of their familiar thought compartment – results in anxiety. This anxiety is not labelled and, as an abstract concept, is not recognised.

The information that people with neurotypical patterns of thought take for granted, such as how people around them may be feeling and the link to expectations, is missing or dampened in people with autism.

Second dimension: pushy anxiety and getting locked in

Even though people with autism are more likely to think about concrete stuff rather than abstract feelings, anxiety still exists and, if not recognised, continues unmediated in the background.

Anxiety is a very pushy feeling. Think of the cave people and the flight or fight response. In more recent times, think of the thing that is created by deadlines and pushes you into activity when your threshold level has been reached.

When we recognise anxiety, we can get action-oriented, or we can choose to soothe the anxiety. If anxiety is operating in the background unrecognised, it continues to push and gain momentum.

For people with autism, this can push to obsessions and intense interests or provide the fuel for extraordinary efforts to resist change.

Excess anxiety fuel may also leak into habitual motor activity, such as fiddling or motor tics, and ritualistic behaviours. Or it can push the person into behaviours and thinking that operates to filter out the noisy demands of the world, like obsessive behaviour and rituals.

This can turn into a cycle of increasing anxiety. Picture this scenario: a new after-school routine triggers anxiety in a young person with autism. They filter this out by becoming increasingly obsessed with gaming. It's clear they're not responding to the demands of the new after-school routine, so the pressure – and therefore, the anxiety – increases. So too does the filtering (gaming). As this continues, the young person is drifting further from the behaviour needed, while getting locked in to the obsession.

This can be compounded by not recognising the feelings and expectations of those around, prompting intense conversations and yet more anxiety.

Supportive structures

[Emerging research shows](#) the chance of getting locked into these behaviours increases when routine structures of work, school and family decline.

As the person's world shrinks, the space left from these externally imposed structures can be taken up with restrictive and repetitive behaviours and interests. This is when the risk of getting "locked in" to these filtering behaviours increases.

If anxiety levels are elevated, the externally imposed structures are down, and the person has a history of getting locked in, it's [time to get expert intervention](#). Specialist intervention can effectively reduce the person's anxiety and provide a scaffold of support by increasing their structured routine.