



Aspiehelp/The Aspire Trust (Inc.)

Edited by Sarah Davies

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# November 2021 Newsletter

In this newsletter: Covid19, Alexithymia, dating, and friendship services for autistic people and volunteering.



The last few months have been challenging for us all, and have brought a great deal of uncertainty. This feeling of uncertainty can cause strong overwhelming feelings of stress and anxiety. When these feelings arise, if we apply healthy coping strategies, we can help ourselves and those we love become more resilient. Some healthy coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety include:

- Taking breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories related to Covid-19 and only getting information from credible sources.
- Practising mindfulness techniques such as meditation or yoga

- Eating a balanced healthy diet
- Exercising regularly
- Getting plenty of sleep
- Making time to unwind (doing activities that you enjoy)
- Connecting with others - even though social distancing measures may be in place it is very important to keep regular contact with loved ones this can be done through Zoom, phone calls or texts.
- If you feel your stress or anxiety is becoming unmanageable You can make an appointment with your local GP or call helplines such as Lifeline (0800 543 354) or text 1737 to talk to a counsellor.

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THIS WEEK'S  
TOP STORIES



## Alexithymia

Alexithymia is a common comorbidity of autism with between 40-65% of autistic people affected, although you don't have to have autism to have it.

Alexithymia is broadly defined by the following seven factors:

- Difficulty defining emotions
- Difficulty distinguishing between feelings and the bodily sensations of emotional arousal
- Difficulty describing feelings to other people
- Difficulty identifying facial expressions
- Difficulting identifying/remembering faces
- Constricted imaginal processes, as evidenced by a scarcity of fantasies

- A stimulus-bound, externally oriented cognitive style

Alexithymia is a protection mechanism from trauma or emotional distress. When you experience a lot of negative emotions, your brain has a tendency to rewire so that the subjective experience of those emotions is diminished. The result is that you seemingly feel less. If you don't experience emotions as intensely, you will be less fazed by negative experiences. Risk factors for alexithymia include being male (some studies showed men are twice as likely to experience alexithymia than women), advancing age, experiencing depression, people with substance abuse, anorexia and PTSD are also at an elevated risk. As alexithymia is not a mental disorder which means it cannot be diagnosed by a GP or other health professional but there are tests such as The Twenty-Item Toronto Alexithymia Scale or The Bernard-Vorst Alexithymia Questionnaire which can check for symptoms.

## **Dating and friendship services for adults on the spectrum**

Dating and friendship can be a tricky business for anybody, but can be especially challenging for people on the spectrum. There are dating and friendship services available in New Zealand especially for adults on the spectrum to help make the process a little easier. These New Zealand services include.....

- <https://www.hikiapp.com/> Hiki is an app dedicated to helping autistic people from all over the world connect with each other.
- <https://enablinglove.nz/> Enabling love is a dating and friendship service based in Dunedin who provide speed dating nights and events across NZ.
- <https://mykind.co.nz/> My Kind is a diverse social space for adults to make connections whether romantic or friendship.

## **Volunteering in the community**

Volunteering is a great way to gain valuable experience without being tied into full time employment. Volunteering is a great way to give back to the community and can provide experience that can be used on a resume. The following websites offer great volunteering opportunities.

- <https://seekvolunteer.co.nz/>
- <https://volcan.org.nz/>

## What's Been Going On!

Julie has been busy seeing clients, both in person and on a laptop screen!. Covid has brought us into the 21st century and we have embraced this wherever possible by using Facebook messenger and Zoom, this way we can reach out to those in further away places. We have received further funding from Lotteries which has allowed us to keep the roof over our heads and on top of expenses. We are very grateful to our fundraisers and those who support us financially. We have been involved in some autism surveys lately and have hosted a hui at Aspiehelp about changes to the upcoming hate speech laws, we felt heard and validated by the organisers and the Ministry Of Justice.

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)



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