



MACKAY
AUTISM
SUPPORT GROUP

NEWSLETTER

email: autismmackay@gmail.com ph. 07 4942 3458 - June 2016

Providing Mackay and
surrounding areas
with

[Up to date
information](#)

Coffee and chats

[Parent register](#)

Facebook

[Library of resources](#)

Autism awareness
activities

[Community links](#)

“Lego” Social group

[Girls/Womens on the
Spectrum contact
group](#)

18's to 35 Social group

Basketball team (via
PCYC)

MEMBERSHIPS DUE ON JULY 1ST

To Parents and Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Spouses in Mackay - A membership form will be sent to you shortly to renew your membership with our group for 2016-2017. The Aim and Rules of our Support Group will also be included.

Renewal Membership fee is \$5 per family per financial year, giving you access to our group library of books and toys, as well as newsletters, email updates, Facebook access, and access to our Lego club and other activities. Your new membership card will be provided on renewal. If membership is not renewed by 31st July, renewal membership for the year will rise to \$10. New memberships will remain at \$5 for the year. Due to the rise in costs of postage, all members with internet access must have their newsletters emailed. Only members without any internet access have the option for newsletters to be posted by normal post. Membership for those members wanting newsletters mailed will need to be \$10 a year, which as you can see is still very generous considering it costs \$2 for each newsletter to be posted.

Professionals and other service providers will remain a part of our network (as we value your expertise and advice for our members via email, FB or newsletter) with the option of paying a membership if they wish, but with no access to the group library.

Membership can be electronically deposited or deposited over the counter at Westpac to our group account

Mackay Autism Support Group Westpac Bank BSB: 034195 ACC. NO: 551261

Be sure to include your name as reference or if over the counter, you must email us to tell us you have deposited and when. Alternatively payment can be sent via post to our treasurer at Mackay Autism Support Group

2 Surrey Crt, Ooralea Qld 4740

Please email the form to autismmackay@gmail.com or post to treasurer.

Your prompt attention to renewing your membership would be greatly appreciated.

Autism Queensland's Studio G comes to Mackay!



David McCartney is the program coordinator for Studio G, which is an Arts and Technology based transition program run by Autism QLD for young adults on the spectrum. Here is a link to our website: <https://autismqld.com.au/page/studio-g>

[AQ are bringing this program to Mackay in July this year. If you are interested in your student or client to be a part of this program or perhaps as a mentor please contact](#)

[David directly at phone 07 3273 0000 or david.mccartney@autismqld.com.au](#)

Studio G is:

- ▶ An interactive workshop that supports young people with high functioning autism in the transition to employment, training or further education.
- ▶ A facilitated group activity program led by content experts and supported by a case management structure that aims to support individuals in the development of social, job and life skills.
- ▶ A post-school transition program and is suitable for participants aged 16 -24 years. Students enrolled in years 11 and 12 at school are welcome to join the program.

Studio G:

- ▶ Employs content experts or 'mentors' with experience in screen-based creative design and project development to lead participants on a journey of creative project development.
- ▶ Has its home at "[The Edge](#)", the State Library of Queensland's arts technology, science and enterprise centre, located adjacent to the State Library of Queensland at South Bank. All software, internet access and technology support is provided for participants.

[Click here](#) to view the different creative programs available.

With one mentor for each four participants in the program, Studio G provides a nurturing and dynamic environment where young people can build relationships of trust with skilled and experienced digital arts professionals.

The structure of the workshop allows participants to grow at their own pace and, with the assistance of their mentors, to develop and complete projects in accordance with goals they themselves have set.

Studio G workshops:

Run from 1-4pm, Tuesday and Thursday for four terms of 10 weeks per year



WILL I TAKE MY ASD CHILD TO THE ANNUAL SHOW?

If your ASD child shows no interest in going, perhaps if they have already experienced it numerous times, so knows what it is all about, and is stressed by the overpowering noises, smells, people etc. – finding a safe alternative place with relatives or friends or respite services for them to stay while the rest of the family go could be the answer. Why stress both them and you. However, it is important to not judge one year against another, as your child is growing and things that are daunting one year, may not be so daunting the year later, especially if they have a special interest in horses, rides, cooking or art eg. Some of these strategies can also work well when visiting places such as Dreamworld, Seaworld and Movieworld or for those lucky enough to venture to Disneyland.

Strategies that have worked for others:

- Go at a quieter time of the day – early in the morning and not on people's day.
- Start their show experience at a quieter show – Pioneer Valley or Proserpine, or perhaps Sarina .
- Come to an agreement with the child to spend a certain amount of time there and stick to this plan, no matter what, barring any natural or manmade disaster.
- Have a plan to the day of some kind, keeping things a little structured. Plan some breaks to sit down in a quieter place throughout the day.
- You may have to wait in lines, so prepare your child for this using social stories/what to do stories before the day, or have something for the child to fidget with, while he waits (stress balls, sticky tape, uncooked rice in pockets, whatever works for your child). Don't forget to praise/reward for good waiting.
- Go with another understanding adult, and if the child needs a break they or you and the child can spend some quieter time perhaps in the Grandstand watching the horse jumping, while the other adult continues on with the other members of the family.
- Encourage your child to enter their baking, artwork or photography in the show, so they have an incentive and can see a purpose to going – perhaps towards the end of your time there, in case they want to go home as soon as they have ticked that one off. <http://www.mackayshow.com.au/mackay-show-schedules> or <http://www.pioneervalleysshow.com.au/exhibitors/sections/item/92-pavilion>
- Take some of AQ's "Don't let my behaviour disturb you" cards, in case other members of the public want to give you some unneeded advice if your child tantrums
- Your name, the child's name and your mobile phone number written on card in your child's pocket, (or pinned to their shirt if they are very young) in case he/she becomes separated from you in the crowd. Give precise instructions to the child where to go if they cannot find you and to show this card to a police officer, ambulance officer or security officer. Use one of the modern electronic tracking devices available.
- If food usually found at shows is an issue to your child, ensure they are aware of what food you have with you for them and what food they will see that they will not be able to consume once there.
- Take water with you to have on hand.
- Have a plan and stick to it, and ensure your child is very aware and understanding of that plan.

Check out this website http://www.allearsnet.com/pl/dis_aut.htm Its instructions about taking an child with Autism to Disneyland – can be used similarly in Australia for such big places. And also

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2015/05/19/visiting-theme-park-summer-read-these-tips-autism-dad>

www.lok8u.com - GPS locator

A Short History of Autism Spectrum Diagnosis

(Adapted from “*Identifying the lost generation of adults with autism spectrum conditions*” by Meng-Chuan Lai & Simon Baron-Cohan, *Lancet Psychiatry* 2015; 2:1013-27.)

The term autism spectrum conditions encompasses autism spectrum disorder in DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and pervasive developmental disorder in DSM-IV and ICD-10. Autism spectrum conditions include diagnostic labels such as Asperger’s syndrome or Asperger’s disorder, autistic disorder, high-functioning autism and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD NOS). The diagnostic criteria as employed by health professionals in Australia in accordance with the DSM-5 (updated version of DSM-VI), reflects a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, replacing the specific naming of an autism spectrum condition as was the case with the DSM-VI. Autism spectrum conditions are characterised by early-onset difficulties in social communication and unusually restricted repetitive behaviour and narrow interests, with a population prevalence of 1% across all ages.



The diagnostic concepts of autism were established by the 1940s. From Kanner’s case series of “autistic disturbances of affective contact” in 1943, “early infantile autism was formulated as a developmental condition with onset in childhood, characterised by extreme autistic social aloneness and an obsessive insistence on sameness”. Later clinical follow-up and cognitive studies further suggested that early language and specific cognitive deficits were crucial causes of infantile autism, leading to the new diagnostic category infantile autism in DSM-111. These concepts all focus on early childhood identification.

From the 1980’s, broader anomalies in social instinct and cognition were recognised, facilitated by empirical studies that highlighted the spectrum nature of developmental difficulties in relation to autism (Wing) and the introduction of Asperger’s work in Vienna, dating back to at least 1938, into the English speaking world. An important effect of these changes was that individuals without evident delay in language or intellectual development could still be appropriately identified as having autism spectrum conditions. Diagnosis, therefore, became available for adolescents and adults not previously identified in early childhood. The label Asperger’s disorder or Asperger’s syndrome was created in DSM-IV and ICD-10 in the 1990’s. These developments together modified the construct of autism spectrum conditions and diagnostic practice.

First identification of autism spectrum conditions in adulthood is clearly established in DSM-5. The DSM-5 diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder highlights the spectrum construct, from minimal verbal expression to fluent speech or severe learning difficulties to above-average IQ. Diagnostic behavioural descriptions apply to all ages, behaviour contributing to a diagnosis can be current or historical and the criterion of a specific age of onset is no longer required.

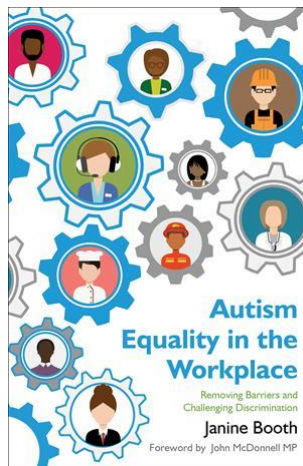
Autism spectrum conditions in girls and women are, on the average diagnosed later than in boys and men. Behavioural presentations might qualitatively differ between the sexes or genders. Girls and women might show restricted interests involving people or animals, camouflaging strategies in social situations and childhood imaginative play be non-reciprocal and scripted. Social communication difficulties maybe less noticeable than males. Subtle differences might be revealed as excessive shyness or bossiness, over-controlling in interpersonal relationships, very determined or perfectionistic, talking loudly, saying things others consider to be faux pas or socially taboo, demanding extremely high standards of friends, such as extreme loyalty or forming extremely clingy attachments to specific people or systemising social behaviours. www.thelancet.com/psychiatry Vol2 Nov15

Contributed by Lorraine Taylor, Family Support Worker – Autism Queensland Mackay

Ph. 4841 8300



BOOK CORNER



[Autism Equality in the Workplace](#)

[Removing Barriers and Challenging Discrimination](#)

[Janine Booth](#)

"This book is essential reading for all those who want to challenge discrimination faced by workers with autism."

- **Frances O'Grady**, General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress (TUC)

Neurodiversity in the workplace can be a gift. Yet only 15% of adults with an autism spectrum condition (ASC) are in full-time employment. This book examines how the working environment can embrace autistic people in a positive way.

The author highlights common challenges in the workplace for people with ASC, such as discrimination and lack of communication or the right kind of support from managers and colleagues, and provides strategies for changing them. Setting out practical, reasonable adjustments such as a quiet room or avoiding disruption to work schedules, this book demonstrates how day to day changes in the workplace can make it more inclusive and productive for all employees.

Autism in the Workplace is intended for any person with an interest in changing working culture to ensure equality for autistic people. It is an essential resource for employers, managers, trade unionists, people with ASCs and their workmates and supporters.

ASK AN ADULT - In this section of our newsletter members get to ask an adult on the autism spectrum a question. Please remember to send in your questions each month prior to the 15th of the month. **No questions** were forwarded in this month – so please consider asking that burning question in your mind next month.



FOOD CHAT with Jen

I'm not sure where this month has gone. But I have been enjoying the changing of the season, with some really nostalgic foods screaming out at me. To tell the truth I'm feeling like a bit of a pro these days at inventing dishes out of whatever I can get my hands on, and a few great basics to start with is what I want to share today. Just with three magnificent foods of the season – pumpkin, green apples, and beetroot!

PUMPKIN

My latest and best discovery, is this awesome way of roasting pumpkin for later use - or eat it straight away if temptation takes control – it smells just so delicious. So all you need to do is cut a pumpkin in half, remove the seeds if you like (we are planting ours!), then place it cut side down on a baking sheet and bake until tender. Once cooled down a bit, the inside comes out so easily, and can be used for brownies, scones, pumpkin pie, cake, or even a quick soup. I slipped some into a bolognese sauce the other night too for a richer and creamier flavour. If you like pumpkin more caramelised, cut it into quarters and drizzle with oil and add salt and cumin if you like, then bake with skin side down. The flesh will come out easily with a spoon and there is no need to mash.



GREEN APPLES



Green apples are very popular at our place and they are very versatile element to keep stock of in the fridge. My husband and kids like them just as they are. I'm not a raw fruit fan anymore though, and prefer to make an apple sauce (usually done in the thermo in a hurry). Use the sauce for roast pork or muffins. Or just slightly cook peeled and diced apple and use it for a crumble or pie. I think my very favourite though, is to saute diced apple in the pan after cooking pork steaks or chops and then added to the dinner plate. Yum! I find this motivates mostly vegetarian kids to attempt the meat as well, with our house rule being that the apple is **ONLY** for the people who are eating some meat (no pressure for quantity – they just have to give it a go). If you are using apple for a sweet treat, don't forget the many benefits of cinnamon as well as its wonderful flavour. I often use cinnamon to add a touch of sweetness and something special without using sugar or other added sweeteners.

BEETROOT

I have a daughter who **LOVES** beetroot and is very excited to see them in her lunchbox over the past week or two. We love them baked with balsamic vinegar and olive oil, or boiled with aromatic spices then sliced or cut into chunks. I recently discovered that my daughter's favourite way with beetroot is just raw and grated into a sandwich. As for me, I would love someone to make me a beetroot brownie. Heaven. Another favourite is beetroot chips, though I seem to be alone in my family for that one. Just slice the raw beetroot thinly, toss with olive oil and salt, and bake in oven until crisp. The need eating straight away though, otherwise they lose their crispiness.



So I hope this inspires you. These days I think most people are running on a tighter budget but definitely more health conscious and food obsessed than we used to be. For me, sticking with wholefoods that are in season and plentiful beats any diet or protocol, and can bring so much anticipation and pleasure to our everyday lives. That's me anyway. Enjoy the month ahead, and keep safe and well. Jen



SUNSHINE STORIES

Aspect Australia have chosen two of Nekea Blagoev's original artworks for their greeting cards to distribute to their 20,000 clients Australia wide.



PEOPLE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER OFTEN ARE THIRSTY!

WHY IS THIS? Various reasons

- They may not recognise thirst signals
- They can't ask for a drink or unsure when to ask for a drink (their parent always has reminded them)
- Worried about using toilets outside home
- Find school bubblers dirty, overwhelming etc
- Are stressed by the world they live in (anxiety increases thirst)
- Are on medication that increases thirst
- Eat a VERY dry diet (ie biscuits etc)



SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

- Schedule in times for a drink (before after play, every time go to toilet etc)
- Have a drink available on desk at school or easy access in car/bus/home
- Send for a drink when showing signs of anxiety (humming, asking questions, talking about special interest)
- Monitor water intake, maybe see how much other children drink and ensure having some amount if not more
- Have a drink before and after eating
- ASK parents how drink at home, how often, if promoted

WHEN YOU SEE SIGNS OF STRESS SEND FOR DRINK

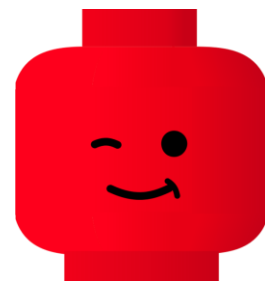
Parents often notice an excessive thirst when younger and will have their child checked for diabetes!

(from Sue Larkey's Making it a Success Newsletter - Practical strategies for home and school for autism spectrum disorders) with permission from Sue in June 2006

AUTISM ACTION WEEKEND IN JUNE

Lego “Social Therapy” Group

Who is going this Sunday?



Lego group is on every Sunday of school terms starting at 9am. Lego social therapy groups can be of enormous benefit to the child with ASD to make friends in a very natural fashion. Parents attending with their child can also benefit from the contact with other parents walking the same road with their child. However it needs your commitment to attend on a very regular basis for it to be effective for your child

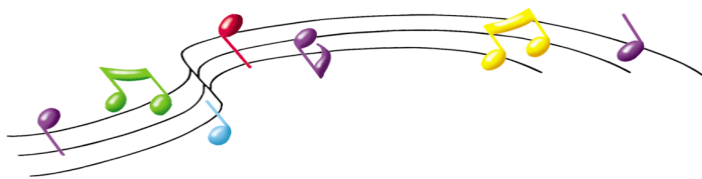
No age restrictions, but parents must attend with their children. Contact Doug Knight at 0407159114 or d_knight28@hotmail.com for further information.

June 5th – a special session at Lego group when Autism Queensland’s Jess Sugarman visits the group from 9.30am to 10.30am to give some instruction and advice on getting the most out of a Lego social therapy group session. This special session is brought to you compliments of our support group and all we ask is for a gold coin donation. RSVP please for special session.

Southern suburbs Junior Rugby clubhouse, off Casey Avenue, South Mackay next door to the stadium.



Our Lego social therapy group in action May 2016



MUSIC THERAPY SESSION

Tania De Brincat, Registered Music therapist brings to our group a trial music therapy session. This session is supported by our group, so all it costs families will be a gold coin donation. RSVP to group to attend and for venue details.

June 4th 10am – 11am

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/music_therapy_th.html



GymAbility

The next GymAbility class will be on Sunday 5 June, 2016. **Please note later start time– 10.30 am this session.**

Class fees for children with disabilities are still free thanks to sponsorship from Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal. The cost for siblings is \$10 each per session.

Please note: due to requirements of Gymnastics Australia all participants in the GymAbility classes must now be register. This means you need to fill out a registration form preferably before class and the cost is \$35 per child.

Quote of the Month - Top 10 Tips for Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum

1. Whatever you're going through, you are not alone.
2. The only person who can decide who you are is you.
3. Sometimes your space and methods will be different, and that's totally fine
4. Once your school days are over, they're over forever
5. Find the places where you can play to your strengths
6. Don't blame yourself for things that aren't your fault
7. If you need help, ask for it
8. Everyone else finds things difficult too.
9. I'd rather be happy than normal
10. Remember how much you're loved
11. Finally, listen to other people's advice

by Chris Bonello

for the full story go to <http://autisticnotweird.com/growing-up-autistic-advice-for-teenagers-with-asperger-syndrome-or-mild-autism/>

DEALING WITH RELATIVES WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND ASD

One of the hardest issues for any parent to deal with is that of relatives not understanding and/or accepting the diagnosis of ASD.

Many relations, including grandparents may deal with the issue by underestimating the importance of the diagnosis and common responses here include 'he will grow out of it', 'all kids do that', etc

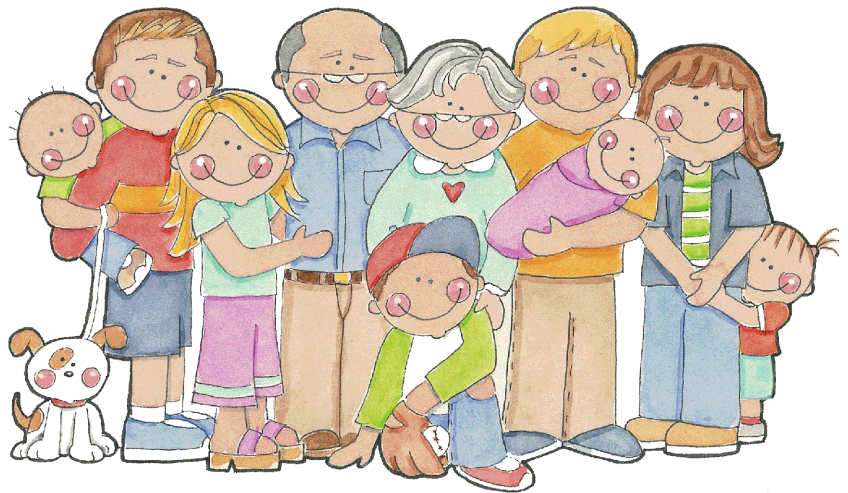
Some just can not see past the 'behaviour' as being 'naughty' and may criticise or undermine the management strategies you put in place and say things like 'a good hiding will fix him'. As we know, children with ASD appear and often behave as other children do and, for this reason, ASD as a disability is a difficult concept to understand in practise (even when people seem to understand it intellectually), for instance when issues occur or incidents need to be addressed. Even relations who have been supportive may well show different responses when placed under pressure.

Many of these responses are simply showing the person's inability to cope with the situation and denial of the disability.

It is important to remember that these people will mostly be seeing your child for short periods of time and so do not see the pervasiveness of the disability for the child and his family. It is important that you do not take the issues on as your own but rather see them as problems for the person involved which are impacting on your relationship with that person.

So there are really 2 issues to deal with -

1. How to help the person involved understand and accept the diagnosis of ASD and
2. How to minimise and deal with the impact their reaction is having on you and your family.



HOW TO HELP THE PERSON ACCEPT THE DIAGNOSIS OF ASD.

1. Short, accurate information sheets on ASD and its presentation. Perhaps highlight that information which is most relevant to your child. Most people do not want to be overloaded with information, and will seek out their own information if they want to understand more fully.
2. Where possible present the diagnosis in a neutral, factual way, mentioning both the difficulties and some positives.
3. Mention that, at times, your responses to particular issues may seem a little strange but they are aimed at long-term goals and changes for the child.
4. Talk about the particular difficulties that your child has as part of his ASD, such as anxiety, and how these impact on him. Discuss the likely types of behaviours he will display, how you will deal with them and why.

5. Talk about the prevalence of the disability, thus normalising it as just another aspect of the diversity of mankind. Many people see ASD as a weird and unusual disability, not as something that is quite common. By normalising the disability you are also legitimising it and hopefully, taking some of the fear out of it.
6. Discuss long-term outcomes and how your management of the child now is geared to helping him deal with his issues more appropriately as he becomes older.
7. Talk about the fact that many people with ASD are leading productive and appropriate lives as both children and adults. It may also be useful to throw in a few names of important people you have heard of who have this diagnosis and that, for many of them, the manifestations of the diagnosis have been what has made them important.
8. At times, agree to disagree on how you manage your child and his behaviours. You are the parent and know your child best. You do not have to defend your parenting skills.

DEALING WITH THE IMPACT OF RELATIONS REACTIONS.

1. Most importantly realise that although your relation's responses are hurtful, they are not a reflection on you as a person but occur because of that person's inability to deal with and/or accept the diagnosis of ASD.
2. Unfortunately, it is very common for friendships and family dynamics to change dramatically when a person within the family has ASD. Realise that you are not alone, there are many other families going through the same issues.
3. Decide how important a relationship with the involved person is? Can you ignore their comments or emotionally minimise their impact on you. If not, you can either talk openly and honestly about how their responses have affected you or chat to other family members or friends about this and they may be able to approach the particular person on your behalf.
4. If approaching these people personally remember to remain assertive, not aggressive and try to clearly state your issues without blame or emotion.
5. Try to surround yourself with both professional and informal supports who understand and support your position. This will lessen the impact of the other person's responses on you and your family.
6. Be selective about whom you discuss problems with. Minimise any "in depth" discussions about your child with people who are not accepting of the diagnosis and the impact that this has on your family and seek out those who are supportive to be your sounding boards.
7. When meeting with these people it is useful to look at when, where and for how long you see people. For example, if you are visiting elderly relations who have lots of knick knacks in their house it may be beneficial to change the meeting to a local park etc where everyone can be more relaxed. It may also be useful to keep meetings fairly brief so that stress doesn't build up.
8. Remember that if it becomes too difficult you do have the option of walking away from that relationship. Many parents have done this and, while it is painful at the time, in the long term it may be beneficial for the family as a whole. Several mothers we know of in this predicament actually ceased contact with the involved relation for several years and then were able to re-establish positive relationships at a later date when time and experience had allowed change to occur in the people involved. (written in February 2006)

Meltdowns (updated article from our newsletters September 2006 and August 2008)

No doubt as parents of ASD children you would be well aware of "meltdowns". It must be remembered that meltdowns usually don't just happen. They are a culmination of various things, and in an ASD person's day perhaps not the usual things that would stress other people, but none the less very real.

Sometimes it is hard to get other people in our children's lives (teachers, sports coaches, extended family, general public etc.) to understand the gravity of such things, and they only see the child's bad behaviour that is dealt with there and then instead of the underlying cause, which is usually a build up of stress not being noticed and then exploding in a socially inappropriate way.

An ASD child can hopefully be taught to be aware of his own emotions, (and others) and learn to act on emotions appropriately by using personal individual strategies that suit various situations. In a school situation, teachers need to be aware of these strategies that have been learnt and adopted, so they will not end up punishing the ASD child for actually using their coping skills (like asking to leave the room, or to go for a drink, sometimes at the most inappropriate time in the school timetable). "Mr Volcano Man" (pictures of the stages of an erupting volcano) or particular colours on the desk, can be unobtrusive indications to the teacher that the child is becoming agitated and should be quickly sent on a message to another teacher for some time out of the classroom, eg. However as parents we are also very aware that all ASD children are individual, and some children have shorter fuses than others. So sometimes it doesn't take too much stress before the explosion. However I think it is important to understand that it's not the smell of the glue, which sends your child into overload, and therefore meltdown: rather it's

- The burnt toast in the morning
- Following the slow backhoe on the way to school
- An unexpected change in the morning timetable at school
- Not understanding a joke at first break
- Not understanding instructions in science
- The smell of the glue in art = **overload** = **meltdown**.

Success in handling meltdowns or preventing them in the main comes down to information and the sharing of this information and listening to others information as well. This scenario can be seen at home and at school or anywhere, so it is important that all parties involved with the child are aware of the necessary information pertaining to your individual ASD child, so they know what to look out for and how quickly the process can take place. Just like parents, teachers are also learning to understand your child, and the more information shared with them the better for the best outcome. I have often heard parents condemning teacher's training, and perhaps they feel they have some good reason at times, but really all the training in the world at times, is not going to be effective without the individual information that only a parent can provide and vice-versa, working together as a team. So when parents' are thinking it is the school's lack of knowledge it also can be the parent's lack of understanding of the school system and how it can work for you. One example of this, an ASD student can be totally mainstreamed, but this doesn't mean that to be mainstreamed they can't be withdrawn for a session occasionally for "time out" or study time (catch up), be it in the form of social skilling as in cooking or gardening together at the Special Ed. Unit. There are all types of learning and for those on the spectrum learning can come in different ways and some ways can be really so productive and with little stress. Furthermore, with High Schoolers perhaps consider other options and styles of learning for your child may be more successful than the usual modes, such as work experience opportunities, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. It is important to sit down with the school's teachers, Head of Special Ed, Guidance Officer, Principal or Deputy and share information from home and from school to then work

together using that combined information to form the best outcome for the ASD student and all students in the classroom.

If you can't physically talk to your child's teacher each day, it is important there is a diary between home and school and vice versa. The teacher needs to know that "Johnny" was stressed this morning because Mum was running late getting him to school, or that his favourite breakfast cereal had run out, and likewise Mum needs to know that "Johnny" struggled in maths today, or was upset at lunchtime when someone ran away with his hat. At High School in protecting your ASD person's self-esteem, an unobtrusive phone call to the SEU can work the same way. Likewise a phone call from the SEU to the parent is also particularly welcomed if it means nipping a possible meltdown in the bud or any inappropriate behavior for that matter.

On another note, although my own ASD child has never been suspended from school, he did find himself on a behaviour management card at times in the past. As a parent I know how hard it is to see through this "punishment" especially at the time, but from experience do try to and don't see it as a punishment, but rather as the beginning of solving a problem. An issue has been highlighted, then go about working on it to better the situation for you, the child and the school. So often we focus in on the punishment that has been dealt to our child, rather than the underlying cause that has culminated in the particular punishment. Depending on the circumstances, see the suspension as a good opportunity to de-stress and sort out a few things with your child, issue wise and glean more information from them as to how they are "ticking" to then be able to go back after the suspension and share with others working with them in their school/sporting situation. A behaviour card can be seen as a tool, for teachers to monitor the child and see where the unsatisfactory behaviour is happening and perhaps show a trend with a particular teacher (in the High School scenario with multiple teachers), or time of day, or sort of activity. Then perhaps timetabling can be looked at, to see if a more satisfactory alternative activity at a particular time may be more suitable for all concerned. Don't forget changes to a timetable is not a "cop out", it is finding a solution that works better, and really your child is not going to learn anything that he is supposed to, if he is stressed or disrupting the classroom and continually being "punished". Whatever the options and decisions, do try and see through the negativeness of the "punishment" and fix the underlying cause hand in hand with the teaching team that works with your child. Hopefully this information may help some of you, as you experience these moments in life. Every child is individual and every family is individual, so there is no fix all cure. So what has worked for me, may just not work in the same way in your situation. But each situation is entitled to be looked at for its uniqueness and a solution found that suits all parties. Don't get me wrong, suspensions and behaviour cards would be best avoided, and hopefully by good monitoring between home and school, these can be avoided or at least for a good part of the time, by nipping the brewing issue in the bud. But if it does happen, spend your energy on righting the situation with a positive attitude, rather than getting angry and losing control of the situation. Can I also encourage you to call Autism Queensland for advice, and arrange school visits when appropriate during the year when the school advisory team visit our area, as they often can help with strategies, and give a fresh approach to an ongoing issue either at home or school or socially with a new set of eyes and thinking. They often put things back on track, or reassure parents and teachers that where they were going with a child is in the right direction. I guess I can sum it up by saying try to see the positive in a negative, just like Pollyanna. Also if you really feel no one is listening to you, be prepared to follow the system of support in

place, continue to advocate for your child and don't be afraid to go to the next level for assistance. As a parent you are your ASD child's best advocate.

The basic rules in dealing with a meltdown when it does happen that has worked a treat over the years for me

- Remember during a meltdown it is not a learning opportunity – that comes later to discuss when all is calm
- Acknowledge the meltdown just didn't happen, it has come about from a build up of various stimuli during the day or sometimes days before
- Keep the child and others around him/her safe during a meltdown
- If safe for the child and others, it is probably best to remove the child from others and the environment to a calm and safe environment, this often will speed up the cool down, which is what you really want for your child, as while you may think a meltdown is bad for those around, it is far worse and exhausting for the person with ASD.
- Do not restrain a person during a meltdown, it is likely to escalate the situation. Sometimes after a meltdown a big hug is often wanted and needed and requested by the individual.
- Regardless of how stressed your child is, keep calm yourself – they need you to be calm for them and not add to the stress.
- Learn the stress warning signs, to avert a meltdown in the future



(Contributed by a parent)

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

- Attend Lego group therapy and/or trial music therapy session
 - Attend monthly coffee and chat
- Start planning school holiday program – have at least one activity each day organized in advance that is structured as possible – cooking pikelets, painting, planting some vegie or flower seedlings, visiting a friend, going to the movies, a Lego morning, puppet show session etc.
 - Consider organizing with other parent/s to go on an outing during school holidays
- Start an ASD file where I keep all support group newsletters, to refer back to them in need as my child grows and matures
 - Share a sunshine story with the group



Oh My Musical Goodness

presents

Music, Sound & Silence

Allison Davies, Registered Music Therapist



Learn music based techniques that YOU can use for relationship building with children on the autism spectrum

2 Day Skills Based Workshop

- * Music and the brain
 - * Therapeutic relationship
 - * Communication & self expression
 - * Sensory sensitivity
 - * Instruments & how to use them
 - * Self care for siblings, carers & teachers
- All parents, carers, teachers, aides, therapists & health care providers welcome

Mackay
10-11 Sept
10-3.30pm
Mackay Women's Centre
\$195 p/p



Oh My Musical Goodness

- * Limited tickets Available
- * This event is not eligible for HCWA funding

Bookings & Info: www.ohmymusicalgoodness.com

SENSORY MOVIE DAY

19th June at 11:00am



Tickets are \$8.00 each

Companion I.D Card Accepted

Children 2yrs and under are free

Birch Carroll & Coyle Mackay North Cinemas

Grandview Drive, North Mackay QLD 4740

Please see Katie for your members card on the day

For more information email or call Katie on:

sensorymovieday.mackay@hotmail.com

[0499843187](tel:0499843187)

Face Painting starts at 10am, spot prizes and every child receives an animal balloon at the end of the movie

Sensory Movie Day Mackay is an inclusive event for families with special needs.

Lighting on dim, sound lowered, volunteers at doors for those escape artists.

Children are free to move around, flap or stim.

This is a no judgment screening.

Refunds are available within the first 40mins.

No Diagnosis required, siblings and extended family are welcome.

FOR UPDATES LIKE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE:

<https://www.facebook.com/SensoryMovieDayMackay/>

NEXT COFFEE AND CHAT

Tuesday 21st June 9.30am to 11am

Autism Queensland, Mackay

10 Macrossan Street, East Mackay.

Come along and chat to other parents and grandparents walking in the same shoes as yourself with your ASD children and their siblings.

If you are keen please bring a small plate of goodies to share with our cuppa.



18-35 Group (ASD Social Group for those aged between 18 and 35)

June 5th 10am – Slot Cars outing Bakers Creek

June 18th – possible proposed Eungella day trip/overnight stop or possible Games night if Eungella can not be arranged.

June 19th – possible Pioneer Valley Show visit for those keen

If you wish to attend these events, **please RSVP** to autismmackay@gmail.com ASAP for further details.

That's all for this month.

Mackay Autism Support Group

The Support Group Executive

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Join our group also on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/133009150350/> Join our Aspies Adult Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/236622159754087/>

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