



INFORMATION SHEET

Age Group: **Adults**

Sheet Title: **Issues for Partners of Asperger's Syndrome Adults**

Responsibility

Most partners often feel very responsible for their husband/wife. It is important to acknowledge that there is choice connected to that responsibility. You are not responsible. If you choose to take on responsibility for others, decide on how much and when you feel it is appropriate.

Look after yourself

Often partners spend so much time looking after others, that their own needs are not acknowledged by themselves or others. Decide what you want and how you can get it. For example, where can you go for conversation, support etc. Take time out to pamper yourself - whatever helps to relieve your stress.

Talking to someone who understands

Asperger's Syndrome is a complex condition, and it is important that support is informed and understanding of these complexities. The benefit in talking to someone who understands should not be under-estimated.

Acceptance

Acknowledging that your partner will "not get better", or be transformed into the person you thought they were, can sometimes help, although this is also difficult. Certain behaviour can be modified or changed, which can make daily life less stressful for both you and your partner. For example, routines and agreed timetables can help, as can looking at how you talk and what language is used.

With acceptance of the condition come a range of other issues, such as grief and the realisation of what is not going to be. For some, there will be a feeling of disappointment, loss and unfulfilled potential. Talking to a counsellor can really help - they can listen and enable you to explore the issues, emotions and choices.



Isolation

You are not alone, although it may often feel as though this is the case. Professionals are getting better at recognising the condition and developing appropriate service - although this will often seem too slow for many needing help now. Use what help is available, through a partner support group and/or counselling.

Look at your domestic routine

Try and see what structures may help and what may hinder. For example it may be important to agree how meal times will be conducted (e.g. sitting down together at the table). To be rigid on all times (e.g. we will eat at 6pm), may be more difficult if you cannot always meet the schedule - dinner at 6.15pm may cause stress to both of you.

Be clear and explicit about what you want

Do not leave ambiguity in your statements, and do not assume your wishes/emotions are acknowledged and understood. For example it may not be enough to remind your partner that you have family over for a meal. You may need to go through the evening in detail, explaining what you want him to do, and not do, e.g. greet everyone once, and do not go to bed before the guests leave.

Ending the relationship

This is an option. It is important to get legal advice so that you understand the financial and practical implications of separation. Many solicitors will offer a free ½ hour initial appointment, and your local Citizens Advice Bureau can often give help. Advice from a legal professional is exactly that - it does not mean you have to leave; it can just help eliminate the unknown. Counselling can be helpful to enable you come to a decision; your local Relate Centre will be listed in Yellow pages.