

The Story of The Parenting Aspergers Website ...



By
Dave Angel

To be one of the Very First People to access The New Parenting Aspergers Community website just visit www.ParentingAspergersCommunity.com and sign up for the "notification list" today.

Welcome to this brief “potted” history of the Parenting Aspergers website. The reason for this brief look back and celebration is the launch of the new Parenting Aspergers website. This new website will not be replacing any of the existing Aspergers sites:

www.ParentingAspergers.com

www.ParentingAspergers.com/blog

www.ParentingAspergersBookstore.com

Instead it will add to them and be a much more in-depth website which will have an absolute ton of information, and make it much easier for you to communicate with other parents, myself and other professionals to help you in parenting your child with Aspergers.

But as this is a look back and not forward on with the history here we go ...

The Inspiration Behind Parenting Aspergers ...



I got the inspiration for setting up Parenting Aspergers when I went out to visit one particular family in my day time job as a social worker. I had a call in from a mum who had a son (let’s call him Bob – not his real name) with Aspergers and was at the end of her tether. Bob was around 14 or 15 and struggling at school, experiencing difficulty in his relationship with his dad (his parents were divorced) and also causing all kinds of problems with his younger brother.

I guess you could say that it’s the classic “case study” of a family with a child who has Aspergers. I still remember the day as it was a very hot summer afternoon in August 2006 (I was wearing my best Gap khaki shorts and had the air-conditioning blasting out in the car!) Bob’s mum was desperate for help and support – she said that her ex-husband was not helping, her family couldn’t cope with Bob’s behaviors, and that the school were close to expelling Bob (I bet this sounds a very familiar story to many parents).

Bob was a lovely young lad who took great delight in telling me about his interest in animals (and boy was he knowledgeable!) But he became upset and very quiet when the talk turned to school and the fights with his younger brother. He was really upset by his mum’s tears at several points during the visit.

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Well unfortunately in my role as a social worker I was just the next in the line of people who weren't going to be able to help Bob or his mum too much that day. The reason for this is that "Aspergers" is a term that tends to not fit too well into any of the categories for help from social services. Often (in the UK at least) a child with Aspergers will be argued about between the mental health and learning disability services; as to who will take responsibility. In this instance neither service was prepared to help.

So I wasn't able to offer them any kind of ongoing help and support from social services which was very frustrating. But I did promise to go away and provide some further information for them at the very least. Well like most people these days, I went straight on to the internet and began to search for some helpful information that I could print off and send to Bob's mum. And what I found was quite a shock ...

Whilst there were numerous sites about Aspergers out there I just couldn't find one offering common sense helpful information that was easy to use and read. Some of the sites were really badly laid out and just not easy to navigate at all. Others were just too high brow and using far too many academic terms to be helpful to most people. Either way this was my "light bulb moment" for setting up a website to help families out there just like Bob and his mum.

The Creation of The Parenting Aspergers Website ...



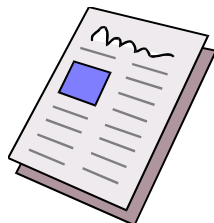
So I went away and created my first e-book The Parenting Aspergers Resource Guide. My aim was to give common sense, practical and easy-to-understand information for parents on a variety of topics related to Aspergers (which from the feedback I've had seems to have been well achieved). Then I learnt, in a very slow and clunky way, how to build the website to go with it

www.ParentingAspergers.com which was on the web in September 2006.

Now once I put the website up I was amazed at the amount of emails that I kept getting from parents thanking me for this resource and also asking me more and more questions. So the next stage in the story was to try and address this by writing some more! So I worked through 52 articles on Aspergers and put them on the web at <http://www.parentingaspergers.com/articles.html> and they're still there today if you haven't already read them. I had to burn some serious midnight oil to get them done but I was pretty pleased with the results.

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The Parenting Aspergers and Autism Newsletter ...



Then in November 2006 I wrote the first edition of the Parenting Aspergers and Autism Newsletter as I wanted to keep the contact with parents going, and offer some up-to-date information each month. This first edition looked exactly like this:

**PARENTING AUTISM & ASPERGERS NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 1
NOVEMBER 2006**

Welcome to the very first edition of

"The Parenting Autism & Aspergers Newsletter"

Inside this edition you will find:

1. Hot Topic of Discussion -- The Son Rise Program: Does it live up to its own hype?
2. In the News -- New study into the effects of fish oil on behaviors of autistic children
3. Famous Aspies - Craig Nicholls lead singer of rock band The Vines
4. And Now for Something Completely Different . .
..Wacky Halloween stories all the way from Germany.

I hope you enjoy this first edition.....

Best Wishes

Dave Angel

The Son Rise Program: Does it live up to it's own hype?

I recently attended a live 3 hour event hosted by Raun F. Kauffman who speaks around the globe about the Son Rise program.

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For those of you unfamiliar with this treatment program; it started off in the United States and is now in a number of countries around the world.

It began from when it is claimed that Raun himself was diagnosed as severely autistic at 18 months old and "cured" of autism by the intensive teachings and input of his parents in his early years.

From this experience the family launched The Son Rise Program which has worked with over 22,000 families and professionals in the world of autism since.

There has been a great deal of cynicism and controversy about the program's claims.

One of the major issues being the accuracy of Raun's original diagnosis (i.e. was he really autistic).

A second issue is the apparent lack of outside studies as to the success of the program (although in a recent telephone conversation one of their staff ensured me that such a study is currently being conducted).

My personal take is that the program seems to use a great deal of common sense behavioral techniques, psychological techniques and dietary approaches that will certainly help the autistic child and parents.

But to be honest a lot of it isn't rocket science and it can be found elsewhere.

They do though offer it in a very intensive and focussed way which I guess makes them pretty unique.

As they admit in their literature they will not "cure" every child but always make some improvements in every child.

Which seems fair enough.

The other point I would make is that it really is an intensive program that involves the parents doing a great deal of work with the children over many months and probably years.

For parents who have got the time, energy and ability to do this I would certainly say they should look at it further for themselves and decide if it looks right for them.

But clearly for many parents who do not have all of these abilities I would say that it will probably be just a pipedream that would be unlikely to help.

And it may even give unfair and unrealistic expectations, which can only add further heartbreak.

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Because the crux is that for it to work (like anything really) you must follow the teachings accurately and consistently.

It is no overnight miracle and, to be fair, is not billed as this either by the Son Rise people.

My other problem with it is the language of "curing autism".

Whilst I know that for parents it can be extremely frustrating and challenging to have a child with autism.

I just don't like the language of "disease" and "cure".

My point being that autistic children are just "different" and not "wrong" or "ill" and to talk about "curing autism" indicates that autistic children must be "wrong" or "ill" and need a cure.

Which just isn't the case.

Whilst I am 100% behind any genuine approaches to help both the child and parents to improve their quality of life, I also think that every individual child should get the love and respect that they deserve for who they are as children and young people.

They are individuals and part of society just as you and I and certainly don't deserve the label of being "diseased" and in need of a "cure".

Well that's my take on it all, but I would love to hear your thoughts too.

Please email me with any ideas, thoughts or stories you know of in relation to the Son Rise Program and I will return to this thread with your comments in the next newsletter.

New study into the effects of fish oil on behaviors of autistic children.

Recently a 6 month study was carried out at a school for pupils with autism ,aspergers, ADHD and related special needs in Norwich, England.

Over the 6 months pupils were given Eye Q fish oil and a healthy diet (reduced salt, transfatty acids, sugar, preservatives and additives).

The results were pretty staggering!

The number of violent incidents involving pupils dropped from 112 to just 36; which was a huge 68% reduction.

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At this stage I don't know how rigorous the testing was around this and whether other factors may have had an impact too.

Also I would advice some caution when looking at the results because clearly Eye Q fish oil is a product and the company obviously want to promote it to sell.

Now that doesn't mean it's not effective but just remember the results may not be 100% objective.

But to be honest they are some great results and really show you the effects of food and supplements on autistic children, so are definitely worth a second glance.

This kind of approach appears to ring true for all children as I know similar works have been done and found similar positive effects on mainstream school children.

If you want to know more about this research I would suggest that you read the whole story at <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=182885>

Craig Nicholls - Lead singer of rock band the Vines

This is the first in a series of articles on famous aspies/autistic people.

What I aim to do with this is provide some inspirational stories and examples of people succeeding in the neurotypical world.

Who knows if we get big enough maybe some of these "stars" will agree to an interview for the newsletter!

Craig Nicholls is from Sydney, Australia and fronts the internationally best-selling rock band The Vines.

He dropped out of high school in Tenth Grade and then went to Art School where he met his future band members.

They practised together and then got some gigs and up until that point Craig had not written any songs.

At this point he began to write songs, loved doing it and then wrote a whole bunch of songs one after the other.

He is quoted as saying that song writing became a "good outlet" for him.

The band then went on to big success with an album "Highly Evolved" selling over 1.5 million copies and they were the first Australian band to grace the cover of Rolling Stone magazine in 20 years.

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More controversially they were banned from the Jay Leno show following allegations that Craig trashed the studio whilst rehearsing.

It appears that Craig's, at this point undiagnosed, Aspergers was making it very difficult to cope with the stress and lack of routine that go with the territory of an international touring rock band.

Craig is known to crave routine and privacy.

At that point he would drink only Coca Cola and eat McDonalds food, and constantly seek reassurance of the whereabouts of his skateboard when on tour.

By 2004 Craig was in court being charged with assaulting a photographer; now the penny dropped and the realisation that there was something "different" about Craig surfaced.

A roadie on tour with The Vines downloaded some information on Aspergers Syndrome from the internet following concerns he had about Craig.

This was presented in court and Craig's case was dismissed and he was referred for medical input.

In fact the world famous Aspergers expert Tony Attwood was called upon to provide a report to the court.

The band are still now going strong with a 3rd album released this year called Vision Valley.

But they are all now very aware of Craig's needs and he has gone from being considered as an "arrogant and indulgent rock star" to someone with his own unique set of needs.

An example of this is that they never do long tours anymore due to the intense disruption to Craig's routine and the problems that this can bring.

So it seems that even in the crazy cut throat world of rock n' roll a little education and understanding can go a long way in helping people with Aspergers and Autism.

For any of you who are interested in hearing some of The Vines music, but not interested enough to pay out the \$18.98 price tag! Go to:

<http://www.amazon.com/Vision-Valley-Vines/dp/B000EMGJJU>

Scroll down the page to the "Listen To The Samples" section on the left hand side, and click on any of the tracks for a short free taster!

But be warned - they are quite hard rock so may not be

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everyone's cup of tea!

And Now for Something Completely Different . . .

Maybe the Halloween season has left us all spooked.

Maybe frequent and widespread terror alerts have set everyone's nerves on edge.

Or perhaps we need to curb our caffeine intake after consuming so many high-octane espresso concoctions.

In any case, it appears that some folks could benefit by stepping back and taking a deep breath (or a "chill pill," as the case may be).

As the following stories reveal, things aren't always what they seem to be . . .

Two women in the small, northern Germany town of Bad Zwischenahn were shocked to see what appeared to be masked bank robbers through the tinted windows of a car in front of a bank.

Both women hurried to notify police, but the vehicle left before officers arrived.

Two hours later, police caught up with the suspicious vehicle and detained its driver, along with the passengers-three children in Halloween masks and costumes.

After bringing the "suspects" in for questioning, authorities quickly determined that there had been a misunderstanding.

Officers thanked the two "witnesses" for being observant!

And in another story from Germany a large-scale security alert was triggered when some people in Berlin noticed a red, orange, and green substance in a pile on the side of the road.

Biochemical experts, firemen, and police responded to the scene.

A wide area was closed to traffic as investigators donned chemical warfare garb to examine the substance.

Hours later, after conducting a variety of tests, authorities determined that the jelly-like substance posed no risk.

The offending blob, originally believed to be some form of

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toxic waste, was, indeed, jelly-or Jell-O, as it's known in the United States.

Turns out the jelly was leftover from a wedding celebration that had occurred earlier.

Police tracked down the groom, who acknowledged that the substance was a discard from the wedding party.

The groom promised to clean up the mess, according to police.

Well that's all for the first edition and we hope you enjoyed it.

Please email us to let us know your thoughts on this first edition, as we really value your feedback.

We really want this newsletter to be as interactive as possible for all you parents.

So please send in any inspirational stories that you know of, any questions that you would like our team of experts to answer, any topics that you wish to be discussed and news stories that you want to share.

We will publish as many as we can.

Until next month.....

Best Wishes

Dave Angel

The newsletter continues to go out each month with a mixture of the latest Aspergers news, discussion topics and parenting tips.

The newsletter has been well received since its first edition and has added to the emails that I've received from parents over the past two years. So as a result I began to look for new ways to communicate with parents and also allow parents to communicate amongst themselves.

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The Birth of The Parenting Aspergers Blog ...



This led to the birth of The Parenting Aspergers Blog which has been a roaring success since its first post on December 14th 2007 which was all about "Helping your child's teacher to understand Aspergers" and attracted a very healthy 82 comments from parents (which definitely showed me that parents were keen to interact with one another).

For your reference you can read that very first post at:

<http://parentingaspergers.com/blog/helping-your-childs-teacher-to-understand-your-child/>

However as I am sure you may now the blog has not been without it's problems! There have been a number of times where I've bashed out an article on the keyboard at home, seen it up on the blog on my screen, emailed everyone about it and then to my surprise ...

I suddenly have a huge inbox filled with emails from all corners of the world – saying that they cannot read 1 word on the blog! There have also been problems for many people with the right hand side margin over-writing vital parts of the article too!

With the help of my faithful web designer (Fahim) I have largely managed to get on top of the problems but the blog can still be a very temperamental place to display information.

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Parenting Aspergers Hit By Spam ...



Another unfortunate side effect of the growing popularity of the website was that I began to receive an absolute ton of spam email (from Viagra pills to home consolidation loans and all the rest of that junk!). There were literally hundreds of these junk emails every day. So I had to completely shut off the info@parentingaspergers.com email address. Then for a while I dabbled with an online "support ticket" system which was quite expensive to set up and also kept falling apart. So I ended up getting the new email address of dave.angel@live.co.uk which is what is currently in use.

Then came Parenting Aspergers Volume 2 ...



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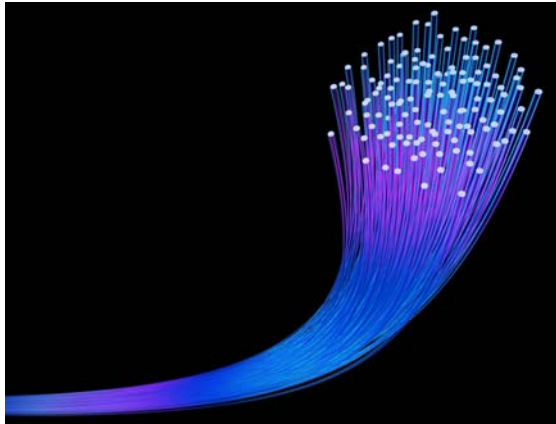
January 2008 saw the publication of the Parenting Aspergers Resource Guide Volume 2 <http://www.parentingaspergers.com/volume2.htm> This was published to address the numerous questions coming in the following 7 subjects such as:

- 1. Problems in the home for siblings**
- 2. Problems in the teenage years**
- 3. Problem understanding the different therapies available**
- 4. Problems with Social Skills**
- 5. Problems with Behaviors**
- 6. Problems with School**
- 7. Problems with Diagnosis**

Since then the blog and newsletter has continued to grow from strength to strength with weekly updates and parents adding great comments, and communicating with one another virtually every single day of the year.

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The Future ...



But the blog does have its limits ... the technical faults that I've already mentioned being one of them. And it's also a very clunky way for parents to communicate with each other. You have to leave a comment and hope someone sees it in a long list of many comments; then they in turn have to reply by adding a comment. It can be a real pain in the neck! And that's part of the reason for the new website www.ParentingAspergersCommunity.com

On this site there'll be a forum which parents can use to communicate in much easier, better organised and more direct ways with each other. Also I will be able to be much more actively involved in this discussion forum than I currently am on the blog. And even more than that there is just an absolute wealth of information on the site that I've spent months working on that are divided up into categories such as:

Aspergers News Headlines

Behavior

Diagnosis

Treatments & Therapies

Communication

Parents Issues

Sex & Sexuality

Siblings Issues

Social Skills

Adult with Aspergers

Education

Gaining Independence

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Gluten Free Cooking

Inspirational Stories

Aspergers Videos

So that's it for your guided tour of The Parenting Aspergers history and I hope you've enjoyed it.

And I hope you'll continue to be a part of the website and get involved even more as a member of The Parenting Aspergers Community website at www.ParentingAspergersCommunity.com

Kind Regards

Dave Angel

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