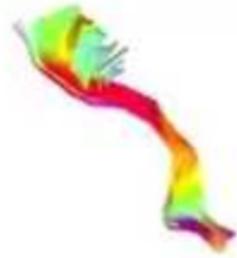


High-functioning  
Asperger brain



Neurotypical brain



## Aspergers –Parenting

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Consideration of a perspective that Aspergers is not the mental defect imagined by many, but a variation in neurology that offers distinct advantages as well as challenges.

The implication of a thesis that a neurological variant that results in greater sensory and processing demands results in the development of a proportionally greater degree of manual or intentional control in the administration of ones thoughts in contrast to most whose less intensive neurology allows for the development of a more reflexive and integrated administrative thought process.

Particular emphasis on the challenges for parents in raising a child with Aspergers.

## Understanding Aspergers

The previous book “Aspergers—An Intentional Life” gives a fairly detailed understanding of Aspergers and should be read previous to this one.

There are a variety of neurological variations that together are called Aspergers. This allows some variation within Aspergers such that one parent may face what seems like a different set of challenges than another parent.

It is my contention that Aspergers is not a dysfunction, disability, disorder, or other defect. I see Aspergers as just a variation in neurology. A variation that produces significant differences in how the world is perceived and how thoughts are processed.

It may be that greater sensory and processing speed and or configuration result in an abundance of information to be processed. These differences appear more pronounced in childhood as the means to process information is still being developed.

Not every Aspie is a genius, has every characteristic, or has every characteristic to an extreme degree. It is this variability that makes Aspergers different from neuro-typical people as well as produce variability from each other.

I see the neurology of Aspergers presenting an Aspie with an abundance of information that has to be processed intentionally in order to minimize anxiety. This is in contrast to neuro-typical people who have a more reflexive way of integrating information from the world around them into their inner mental world.

Having Aspergers and having raised children with Aspergers, I thought that passing on some observations may be of help to parents who find that having a child with Aspergers is frustrating to the point of despair.

It is my hope that this book will be of some help for parents to first help them first understand the difficulties of living a life on "manual control". Secondly to help guide their children to develop the skills to be able to exercise effective control in a world where most seem to be "flying on auto-pilot" for whom things seem to come much more easily and reflexively.

Often Aspergers involves dealing with sources of and methods for relieving anxieties. These also will be discussed. No parent who has traveled this path can remain unsympathetic for fellow travelers. If anyone needs some help in this regard, I can be reached at [info@ems-publishing.com](mailto:info@ems-publishing.com)

Tim

## Chapter 1 - Families

To gain a broader context for the issue of parenting an Aspergers child, we should consider the historical evolution of the family.

For most of human history and in many places still today children were raised by parents with boys learning the work of their fathers and girls learning the work of their mothers.

A vestige of this can still be seen in apprenticeship programs. However, the role of the family has become greatly diminished over time. Consider that the Industrial Revolution took fathers out of the home, compulsory public education took children out of the home, and feminism took women out of the home. The result today is that a home is more like a boarding house where people going in different directions, having different activities, and different friends have common lodging.

This situation minimizes parental involvement (presumably so that they could pursue income generating activities), however, it leaves the bulk of child rearing to institutions such as school and day care. It is the difficulty institutional staff have in processing Asperger children that often first brings to the parents attention the awareness of a “problem”.

## Chapter 2—Schools

To understand the institution of school, it can be helpful strip away some of our preconceptions so that a more accurate picture emerges. The first indication that we do not accurately understand the system of school is that teachers are praised for student achievement but students are blamed for failing.

A business survives or fails as a result of market forces. A school is a government institution and has no feedback mechanism (other than standardized tests) to measure performance. The difference between a “good” school and a “bad” one is not funding or even teacher ability. It is actually a measure of student capability (brighter students learn more than dimmer ones).

Once an aura of selfless nobility is removed, a better model for understanding a school is the Post Office or a prison. While there are occasional exceptions, most of the staff develop a bureaucratic perspective that sees difficult children as defective that need to be removed or made compliant.

School is a place where difference is seen as weakness is often exposed and exploited. Failure to conform often results in being subjected to ridicule, bullying, and a host of anxiety producing situations that can cripple the development of a child.

## Chapter 3 — From relationships to systems

There was a time prior to mandatory public education when a diversity of behavior was more widely accepted. Being a character, unique, or different was not the anathema it is today.

What Henry Ford demonstrated with the assembly line was a way to manufacture a product efficiently. It was perhaps only natural that this “systems” approach would be applied to many other aspects of human undertaking such as with WWII. So many people had come to accept the mass production of war material such as tanks and planes and the mass processing of soldiers and sailors that the continuing mass processing of children in school was never questioned.

After the war the intensification of the mass processing of children began to reveal problems. Not every child could pass through the system without difficulty. However, no one seemed to question the assumption that uniform conveyor-like processing was suitable for all children.

As businesses, schools, the government, and even churches adapted to systems type functioning, there was a general requirement for people to be more shaped as compliant cooperative components.

The preparation of children to serve in this new emerging collectivized and systematized world was no longer to be accomplished in families who were often told they were unequipped to educate their children. Instead, specialized teachers who themselves had been groomed to be effective system components would carry out the work of duplicating themselves using the children that were sent to them.

By narrowing the definition of “normal” to mean compliant, Aspergers children now face even greater difficulty.

In contrast to the inner directed life of an Aspergers child, the neuro-typical child frequently finds easy, reflexive, automatic adaptation to the world in which he finds himself. This makes the contrast with the Aspergers child even more noticeable.

Making things worse in the age segregated cohort that a school classroom becomes there often develops a sort of “Lord of the Flies” social milieu that the Aspergers child has even more difficulty navigating.

It is these two problems, industrial automated processing and the unhealthy waters of exaggerated peer dependence that can make Asperger children filled with even more anxieties.

## Chapter 4—The Aspergers Infant / Toddler

An Aspergers infant may have some developmental delays, but usually nothing that would be considered debilitating. He may even appear advanced when he first starts to use words.

Asperger infants may have neurological physiology that drives overwhelming sensory issues such as textures, lights, or sounds. Since an infant cannot communicate other than by crying, the parent ought to consider exploring environmental issues if there seems to be no other reason for discontent.

As an Asperger child transitions from infancy to toddlerhood, behaviors more consistent with Aspergers can begin to be observed.

Aspergers is most often diagnosed at ages 7-8 (the beginning of school years) often driven by teachers unhappy with what they may consider to be difficult children.

However, the observant parent may notice issues that can become problems early on and take action to help the child develop coping and management skills.

Some early Asperger driven behaviors may not be recognized as such early on and contribute to parental frustration.

An Asperger child can seem fussy as clothing can be a source of irritation (particularly clothing tags) at a level not appreciated by the parent. The child might seem to have a whimsical discontent that appears petulant if the level of irritation is not fully appreciated.

The Asperger child may feel very uncomfortable if being held and struggle to get free. This can leave a new parent in particular feeling like the child has no affection for them and the parent can become resentful.

The subject of parental frustration and disappointment is not often fully appreciated. A parent can fairly easily come to almost despise their own child.

Sometimes the parent stumbles across Aspergers as an explanation and finds tremendous relief as it can explain why some of their expectations were so woefully unfulfilled.

The parent who comes to see their Asperger child as trying to cope with overwhelming sensory and processing on their own may understand a little of the difficulty the child has responding to others in more expected ways. While more neuro-typical children are like those enjoying a boat ride, Aspergers children can seem to desperately need help to learn how to bail out a leaking boat.

## Chapter 5—Anxiety

An Asperger child's sensory issues may seem strange to a parent, but at least somewhat understandable. However, anxiety issues may be even more discomfoting for the child but less discernable to the parent.

Anxiety is a sort of tension between two forces like an itch that can't be scratched. The Aspergers child may have physiological anxieties resulting from sensory issues. It can help the parent to consider that more than a child's preference, a particular sensation may be perceived as extreme discomfort bordering on pain.

Another source of anxiety is developmental. Often encountered during parental correction and discipline. A child may seem rebellious or intransigent because their mental processing expands to so many different parallel paths that no conclusion is reached and he is left in an indeterminate state.

An additional anxiety source can be in a situation where a action or verbal response is expected although mental processing seems to be taking the child further from a conclusion.

Just as sensory stimuli can be overwhelming to the point of pain, anxieties can also precipitate an emotional crisis.

## Chapter 6—Meltdown

There can be a tipping or avalanche point where anxieties quickly build and as no resolution is seen, flood the Asperger child with such emotional intensity that it explodes with physical effect.

The speed (seconds instead of hours) at which this can occur can be a shock to parents not accustomed to it . Also the degree to which children seem driven can be surprisingly extreme.

For example, what might seem to the parent as a rather minor incident may to the Asperger child be sufficient to cause him to run away or attempt suicide. Also potentially mystifying to parents is how quickly the episode can pass. This also sheds a little light on the emotional tempest that can so explode within the Asperger child.

Boys are more inclined to flail or strike out whereas girls may experience the same degree of inner turmoil but withdraw and seethe internally which may result in a slower passage of the event.

Anxieties and frustrations can make the Asperges child feel they are being driven into a corner. The explosive effect of a meltdown can even be seen as liberating one from having a sense of not having control.

Having control and an ordered life can be very important to the Aspie child. Many rituals and actions taken by the child are to establish a low anxiety framework within which they can derive comfort.

A meltdown can be triggered by one big thing or several smaller things. The parent unaware that anxiety has been accumulating may be surprised when the “dam breaks” over something that seems to them to be relatively insignificant.

A child that seems to continue in a meltdown mode such as with continual screaming may need to have something significant introduced such as being placed in a tub of cold water (clothes and all) in order to create an intrusive environment from which he may regain his self-control.

The parent may be driven by embarrassment, anger, or frustration to try to end the child’s meltdown. However, it is best to be measured, dispassionate, and restrained. If the parent starts to lose control, it can launch the child into an even more intense episode.

The key is to get the child to learn to take responsibility for his own self-control. The old “sit on the chair until you get your self-control back” tactic often works well to provide the time for a child to dissipate the energy produced by the meltdown.

## Chapter 7—The Comfort of the Familiar

Neuro-typical children often adapt more easily to the world they see around them. While changes, threats, and uncertainty can have anxiety producing effects, they are much more pronounced in the Aspergers child.

In the face of what is often perceived as an avalanche of incoming information that is difficult to manually process, an Aspergers child may seek to add to the incoming sensory stream contributions he makes himself. For example, hand flapping, finger rubbing, face touching, and even OCD simulating actions can help the Aspergers child see a baseline that helps to establish a sort of reference point from which some anxiety relieving certainty can be derived.

There is comfort in having identified a sequence of tasks to perform or a stable environment. If the schedule should be interrupted or someone intrude and disrupt the stable environment, an Asperger child may be driven into unmanageable anxiety. For this reason the parent may wish to introduce some softening tactics such as saying “In five minutes I want to talk with you about something different we are going to be doing”.

Over time the parent can help the child to manage his own surprise handling strategies.

## Chapter 8—A World of His Own

The Asperger child may come to develop a sort of cocoon in which he has the comfort of music, videos, books, video games, or other furnishings that let him live in a world with few unsettling intrusions.

A neuro-typical child might adapt well to changes and intrusions into the world they perceive. An Asperger child may actively resist, avoid, and escape such intrusions. Since an Asperger child is in more manual control of their thinking, he often can see little reason to leave the comfortable world he has created.

Some Aspies go into adulthood and occasionally beyond having sealed themselves off from a world they increasingly come to see as uninviting or even hostile. Mensa meetings can sometimes look like a bunch of thirty year old “groundhogs” emerging to slowly experiment with a social world from which they had previously retreated.

The parent needs to help the child understand the reason for their hermitage, the problems this causes and how it will create even larger problems in later life, and a program of skill development that will allow the child to be increasingly able to protect themselves from the slings and arrow of outrageous fortune.

## Chapter 9—Stubbornness and Being Right

Certainty can be such an important balm against anxiety that it is often brandished with greater zeal than Martin Luther declaring “Here I stand”.

Since a large part of the work of a parent is telling a child to do things, encountering opposition can be frustrating. This is further aggravated when a Asperger child treats the parent as an equal (as they are prone to do) or even with disdain and condescension.

Because Asperger children direct their own mental processes, they are likely to adopt adult patterns they see demonstrated around them (even the less noble characteristics).

It can be tempting for the parent to bully their way through a difficult situation with the “Because I told you to” tactic. It may even feel good to put down such an imperious attitude. However, in the long run, it can be more effective to chip away at behavior with correction so that this behavior does not grow to be full fledged arrogance.

When an Asperger child demonstrates stubbornness, he may call the parent to give an account of their reasons. This is similar to when one dog tries to show dominance over another. It is not intentional as the child feels it is his right to have an ex-

planations as would an adult. The trick here is to put the burden of proof on the child and have him explain why he refuses to do something or the merits of his alternative. The parent then retains the right to judge the reasons instead of the child.

This technique allows the parent to maintain their position as well as act as a “teacher” instructing the child as to what is faulty in their reasoning. Sometimes the child will not accept any reasoning in which the old “Because I told you to” can be brought to bear.

The reason for taking the time to chip away at stubbornness and replace it with reasoning is because the Asperger child lives in a world of conscious assessments. If he can be enticed to apply this beyond the narrow criteria of what makes him feel good or what he would prefer, he can begin to establish a basis for engagement with the larger world.

It can be frustrating for the parent and seem like little or no progress is made for years. However, the Asperger child needs feedback so that they can learn when they are being rude or insensitive and what they are failing to consider, and recognize in a particular situation. Slowly they will begin to expand their perceptions beyond the selfish interests of a child.

## Chapter 10—Deafening Silence

The term “selective mutism” has been used to describe children and some adults who can be verbal with some in one environment and unable to speak, respond, or question in another environment.

Often this differentiates between home and school where the anxiety caused by the school environment is met with insurmountable silence. This silence can also be used with parents who are seen to produce anxiety such as when discipline is called for.

It is very tempting for parents to see this failure to respond as being rebellious and disrespectful and it may occasionally be so. However, an Asperger child can have a real inability to function in an anxiety generating encounter.

The trick here is to get some kind of communication such as having the child leave the room and write down on a piece of paper a response that can then be given to the parent.

The child can be asked to give a non-verbal response such as nodding the head or raising a hand. These techniques can seem convoluted, but the point is to get the child in some kind of response

mode so that it can slowly be expanded as the child learns how to deal with their anxieties more effectively.

More than just an anxiety born of fear of consequence, there is a confluence of factors such as not fully understanding what is asked, and consideration of multiple implications.

The refusal to simply answer a question can seem to the parent to be willful obstinacy. This is aggravated by the fact that there is no information forthcoming from the child.

The key to reaching this child is to first start within the child's comfort zone by asking them about their music or books and slowly helping them focus their thoughts in ways that more easily lead to expression in communication. This can take many years.

Many parents look forward to reciprocal love and affection from their children. The Asperger child may never be able to say "I love you". They may feel it and even understand how painful it can be to never hear it, however, there can exist a barrier too high to climb for them.

## Chapter 11 - Know It All

One of the hallmark characteristics of Asperger children is an almost unstoppable flow of information about a favorite subject. Hans Asperger even called them “little professors”.

Both the inflow of information about a special interest and the outflow of information to anyone who will listen provide the Asperger child with a sense of control in which anxieties can abate.

In addition to a respite from anxiety, the ego-inflating sense of “expertise” can be pleasurable.

The parent needs to keep an eye out for the danger incumbent on all performers playing to an audience, that of becoming lost in the part.

A parent may be able to expand a special interest to include peripheral subjects or introduce additional subjects such that the intensity of focus can diffuse a little.

Also, care needs to be taken that the child learns to gauge both the initial interest level in a subject before launching into a transmitting barrage as well as to continue monitoring the interest level to determine when the captive audience may wish to escape.

## Chapter 12—Paranoia

As children grow a little older they can encounter unpleasant and mean-spirited children that provide them with unpleasant experiences. Asperger children for whom sensory and processing issues are already more intense, can become increasingly guarded and possibly withdraw from future social encounters.

This can be debilitating enough, however, it can be compounded as Asperger children are less likely to seek out, recognize, or appreciate the motives of others. In the data vacuum the child may assign mal-intent where there is none.

While not true paranoia in the mental health sense, the reflexive assumption of mal-intent can lead to a belligerent attitude that itself creates conflict where none had existed.

The parent that sees his child forming a pervasive cynical assumption of others motives, may wish to challenge statements of intent assumption to get their child to consider other possibilities and recognize when there is no support for determining the motives of others.

The cure for most reflexive paranoia is to recognize that most people do not care enough about us to mean us harm.

## Chapter 13—Selfishness

Children by nature are selfish. This is only amplified with Aspergers. Since the inner mental life of an Aspergers child is self-directed, it is directed to serve the selfish ends of a child. Much of the mental foundation established in the early years is structured to serve self.

Much of the work of a parent of an Asperger child is to persuade the child to reconstruct their thoughts and thought processes to serve broader interests than the narrow scope of selfishness of a child.

As an illustration an Aspergers child may be called to stop pushing his siblings out of the way so he can claim all of a treat. He can be asked to consider also taking pleasure from the enjoyment his siblings will have from their share.

There is a role for corrective discipline like swats on the back of the hand with a paint stirrer or time out on a chair. However, the bulk of correction for the Aspergers child will have to be at the level of engagement of his mind.

Any real or lasting change in an Asperger child has to come from within. As a result, the parent has to be able to convince the child change is needed.

## Chapter 14—Conversational Avalanche

It can seem strange that one Asperger variant is not talking while another can be talking too much.

Some Asperger children transmit what might be called a “stream of consciousness” as if they were saying every word that occurred to them as they thought of it.

In the rush to transmit, particularly in the realm of a special interest, little attention is given to the interest or reaction of the other party. This can result in the child acquiring a reputation as a show off or arrogant.

Neuro-typical children are more tuned into the reactions of others and more easily learn to moderate their interactions as to minimize negative reactions. The Asperger child can be so focused on his subject that little or no consideration is given towards audience reaction or receptivity.

This does not mean that the child is doomed to forever alienate people. However, it does mean that he has to learn how to split his focus so that some of his attention is given towards audience assessment. Like most things for the Asperger child, this skill will have to be developed and operated manually with intention.

## Chapter 15—Focus

The ability for the Asperger child to bring an intensity of mental focus to a subject can be an asset in future careers such as medicine or computer programming. However, for children and teens who are yet learning moderation, bringing an intensity of focus into the social realm can bring disappointing results.

In addition to people getting creeped out with intense scrutiny, an intense focus reduces perception of peripheral subjects. Like having an adjustable aperture on a camera, having the ability to narrow and broaden focus gives the Aspergers child more of the option of seeing both forest and trees.

The parent can aid in this skill development by calling attention to observations missed by the child when in a tight focus mode.

Another exercise that can be employed is to make superficial assessments of situations to sort of force consideration of multiple items. For example, when watching a movie, the child may be called upon to consider elements that he usually ignores. He may then be asked if he can see an application to people he knows and possibly “soften” the impact focused intensity can have on others.

## Chapter 16—Looking You in the Eye

One of the earliest things an infant learns is to recognize the face of his mother. A lot of neural processing is allocated to face recognition and processing.

For Asperger children the visual information coming in can be overwhelming. In particular the volume of information contained in eye movement, position, and reflection of interest, as well as expressing attitude can be difficult to assess. In addition, this information is changing every second and can make processing visual information from a person's eyes quite taxing.

Also, the Asperger child learns fairly quickly that bringing focused attention on looking at someone in the eye makes them feel scrutinized and uncomfortable. Given that the information that could be obtained can be massive, ambiguous, and constantly changing, as well as risking a bad reaction from the person being examined, avoiding eye contact often seems that best option.

As Asperger children mature, they often learn to substitute looking at a cheek, ear, or mouth as an acceptable alternative to eye staring.

## Chapter 17—Anger Management

A parent who sees his child getting angry may just be relieved that it is not a meltdown event. However, each anger event is an opportunity to help the child learn to deal with frustrated expectations.

The first step is to review what expectations were held and consider how they could have been modified to be more realistic.

The second step is to help the child make an assessment of new circumstances or alternate plans.

For example, the child who had in mind an uninterrupted period of play time, may get angry if what they had come to count on is cut short. The parent can suggest that future estimates include asking the parent how much time would be available for the activity so that a more realistic expectation could be made.

Continuing with the playtime example, an anger reaction may be mitigated by asking the child to assess when they think their play could be resumed or what other activities might be an acceptable alternative.

Helping the child to “step outside” of their reaction and make useful assessments, can help the child learn to use these techniques to control his reactions in the future.

For the Asperger child, suddenness aggravates reactions. Parents can help the Asperger child by providing warnings or notification of immanent changes such that the surprise element is reduced.

In addition, the parent can help the child to develop strategies for when he is suddenly overcome such as asking for a minute or two to comply or develop a sort of mental “mantra” to quell an avalanche of discontent.

For example, a child can be encouraged to mentally dissect a surprise event to determine the following;

1. Immediate physical threat.
2. Estimate lost time, money, etc.
3. Begin recovery planning.
4. Seize control of emotional reaction.

Bringing analytical skills immediately to bear on a surprise event, can channel the emotional energy generated by a surprise into a more productive result than possibly contributing to a melt-down.

## Chapter 18—Going overboard

Perhaps associated with an ability to focus one's attention, Asperger children can place so much single-minded energy in one particular effort that they can seem as going berserk.

It can be difficult for them to engage in a friendly game if they become focused on just winning. They can become extremely disconsolate if they lose.

There is a saying, "He's the type of person if you ask what time it is, he will tell you how to build a watch". This captures a little bit of both the focus and excessive interest Asperger children can bring to conversation.

It is almost as if the narrowing of focus also extends the depth. Fads can pass through a school as interest in a particular item expands and then fades. For example, someone might bring a yo-yo to school and the next few days might see many other children bring in yo-yos. The Asperger child might be slow to catch the fad, but might bring in several yo-yos and then proceed to instruct everyone willing to listen to the history of yo-yos.

Some Asperger children are crippled with anxiety to the point of stifling any expression. Others can fail at any restraint of expression. It is as if their anxiety comes from trying to use restraint.

## Chapter 19—Violent Possibilities

Since it takes Asperger children so long to learn how to moderate their sensory and processing issues, there is a lengthy window of time where overwhelming input can trigger overwhelming output including violence directed against oneself or others.

Younger children can be directed to use a punching bag when they feel angry. This can help them relocate to a designated area and apply their anger in a physical form to an inanimate object. In this way they can start to learn to control themselves.

While Asperger boys may demonstrate physical expressions of anger more than Asperger girls, a seething rage can bloom in either. Fortunately this can pass seemingly as fast as it arises.

The key to preventing violence is to have in place good anger management strategies in which the child has developed some proficiency.

The Asperger child may not understand all of the intensity of sensation that he is subject to, but he can learn how to better manage his reactions.

## Chapter 20—No Friends

When considering the development of friendships with neuro-typical children it can be observed that even though they are more organically integrated into their environment there are still some “bumps in the road”. This is because the natural selfishness of children can cause hurt which destroys friendships.

Friendships can start with shared experiences. However, to grow, friendships are usually based on the good feelings each person causes to arise in the other.

An Asperger child may be withdrawn and reluctant or even unable to participate in a verbal exchange. This can result in a potential friendship fading away.

A more expressive Asperger child might create an unpleasant environment with brashness, excessive expression, sudden or explosive reactions, focused attention which excludes the interests of others, expression of unfiltered critical thought, or other actions unsettling to someone more comfortable in a less turbulent environment.

Often friendships are delayed into adulthood when some people can come to tolerate and even appre-

ciate those with a more idiosyncratic approach to life. Asperger adults can find friendships with those whose personality is kind and accommodating augmented with their own social skill improvement.

It can be helpful to consider a spectrum of personal relationships that could be called “friendships”.

Casual acquaintance. This would be a person with whom there is occasional interaction. Conversation might extend a minute or two.

Club member. This is a person who participates in an activity such as church, bowling league, or other social organization with whom regular encounters provide occasional conversations that may go up to fifteen minutes. As a result, personal information such as about family members can be exchanged.

Co-worker. This is a person with whom conversation is exchanged everyday and sometimes in depth. This person also knows about some personal struggles and life difficulties.

Recreational friend. This person is one with whom activities such as fishing are undertaken. It is at this depth of relationship that some level of mutual appreciation is needed.

There are deeper levels of friendship but they are rare and often forged over years as with family members or in intense situations such as in combat.

Most childhood friendships are superficial. It may not be that important for the parent to attempt to arrange “friends” for an Asperger child. The slow lengthy process of guiding the Asperger child to master control of himself will yield better results for more successful relationships later in life.

Even with skill development, being “friendly” can be taxing. What comes naturally for the neurotypical child is often a matter of considered deliberation for the Asperger child. While impulsive, rude, and selfish comments can be reduced or masked, the core process of conscious analysis, evaluation, and calculation will still operate.

It is impossible to have a deeper friendship with someone without making the inner thought processes visible. This narrows friend selection to those who are not bothered with what can seem like a cold “robot-like” way of thinking.

The parent of an Asperger child can help him develop skills to manage lower level “friendships” and help him learn how to identify those kind or similar thinking souls with whom the possibility exists for deeper friendships,

## Chapter 21—It's Just Routine

There is a classic video showing Lucille Ball and her friend Ethel working on a chocolate candy assembly line. As the line speeds up they take comic measures to try to keep up with the amount of candy coming at them. In a way this is a picture of the Asperger child.

Each new sensation, interruption, comment, task, or even thought is a demand for attention. This can be as overwhelming as the candy avalanche was for Lucille Ball. Many Asperger children find it advantageous to sort of program themselves and their activities such that a degree of relief can be obtained from instituting an automatic process that does not need much attention.

This can seem to a parent almost as a touch of OCD. This can seem especially so if there is a strong reaction against the interruption of an established routine.

The parent can work to encourage the Asperger child to modify his routine to help him learn to experiment with gaining greater control over the world that so inundates him with its demands.

Slowly this control can be extended to real-time events and the need for fixed or inflexible routines can begin to diminish.

## Chapter 22—I Did It My Way

The parent of an Asperger child may find many years of frustration as their advice, correction, or instruction is ignored or even resented.

It is not uncommon for young people to tackle a project that is too ambitious with inadequate preparation, and few skills. Much learning can occur in such situations. However, the Asperger child may not acknowledge anything wrong from an incomplete or failed project. This can shut the door on what could have been learned from the experience.

For this reason it can be important for the parent to help the child learn to not only accept criticism, but seek it out. Some would suggest that children be constantly praised. However, this risks the child developing into a narcissist.

Excessive praise or criticism distorts the truth and harms the child. Helping the child to make honest and accurate appraisals of the work they do can be both instructive and also help them to develop the ability to more accurately assess what in their inner thought life may need reconstruction.

A lot of learning occurs through successive approximation which is frustrated if the child thinks that what he has done has no need of improvement.

## Chapter 23—Parenting is Hands-On

The Asperger child has developmental delays caused by his attempting to exercise manual control over his own development. Since this is directed by a child, this development progresses slowly and is often constructed in ways that hinder further development.

It may only be in the late teens or adulthood, that the now adult Aspergers child begins to reconstruct his mental interior life to start to alleviate anxieties, sensory and processing impacts, as well as addressing social skills.

The parent of an Asperger child can greatly help the child to adopt strategies, minimize hindering mental constructs, and provide the recursive guidance needed to take greater control and build a more functional life.

The common modern approach to parenting today might be considered the same as letting water seek its own level. Aspergers children need more from their parents than a passive observer of their passing years.

Modern family life with day care, public school, and two incomes is not well suited to the needs of the Asperger child.

While some public schools make a sincere effort to help Asperger children, there is not very much that can actually be done. It is not a condition that needs to be “fixed” and is not remedied with medication or surgery.

Most Asperger children survive the vicissitudes of public school with varying degrees of “success”. However, often years are spent in adulthood attempting to compensate for deficiencies that could have better been addressed when they were younger.

Homeschooling can be an advantage for the Asperger child in isolating him from the cruelty that children and even teachers can inflict on anyone “different”. Also, the attention given to the child can help him gain feedback that is useful in learning greater control over his internal sensory and processing issues.

The Asperger child will never achieve “normalcy” because a different neurology creates a different way of perceiving the world. Different is not inferior. There are many advantages to being in more direct control of one’s life.

Speaking as a former Asperger child, I can declare the we are less loveable. Our parents have a difficult, frustrating and often thankless job. However, if our parents don’t love us, who will.

## Chapter 24 — Parenting Strategies

The parent of an Asperger child should understand that the objective for the child should not be so much “fitting in” as having the option to function in various environments and with various people more easily as well as making full use of the advantages his neurology gives him.

For example, a magnifying glass can be very useful. However, if one were to try to use it all the time, many other tasks would become complicated. The parent can help his child learn to work with an ability to focus intensely on a single subject. The parent needs to help the child learn how and when to bring this focus into play and how and when to use a broader perspective.

Most behavioral learning for the Asperger child will be “on the fly” (real time” as opposed to conceptual and abstract). For example, to continue with the magnifying glass example, if the child is tuned out to the parents comments or even presence, that parent can place his hand on the child’s shoulder using a physical touch to break the intensity of focus. When the child is thus brought out of a state of focus, the parent can use the event to call the child’s attention to his loss of contact with the larger world .

The child thus brought out of his reverie might be encouraged to periodically rouse himself, lest his submergence of focus lead him to be unaware that someone wants his attention, or the house has become engulfed in flames.

Using abstraction in a humorous way can take a little of the edge off a defensive reaction that may arise when feeling criticized.

However, the criticism needs to be used only after an understanding of a characteristic that needs to be modified has been established.

Consider dealing with a child that is unable to verbally communicate with you. The child may be able to hear and understand, but is unable to make a verbal expression.

If the child can move their head to indicate a “yes” or a “no”, a basic method of communication can be established. In this case experiments can be conducted to see if the limitations on communication can be pushed back somewhat.

For example writing notes, finger spelling with ASL (American Sign Language), or even drawing pictures can be utilized as a sort of game to make such experiments fun. However, the objective is still to improve the range of communication.

It is best for a parent to consider that they have an Asperger child as soon as possible. This perspective can reduce the pain of constantly frustrated expectations.

In a way, the Asperger child is a sort of throw back to an age where parental involvement in raising their children was crucial. Most neurotypical children seem to do OK with modern minimal parental involvement in their lives. They seem to function in the institutional systems to which they are entrusted to be prepared to step into the roles prepared for them in the various systems in the world.

The Asperger child is not so easily processed. While most Asperger children will start to employ coping and management strategies in their late teens or early adulthood, these strategies are often only marginally successful.

The aware parent can help the Asperger child to develop his own strategies and skills earlier and to a greater degree. However, the parent needs to recognize that his child will always be “different”, but that’s OK.