Intimacy, Sex & Asperger's

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Intimacy & Sex

- Terms used interchangeably; often confused

**Intimacy**

- Emotional
- Gratification

**Sex**

- Emotional and Physical

The link *between* sex & intimacy in a relationship

- Emotional bond
- Vulnerable emotionally & physically.

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Framework

• How to build an intimate relationship?
• What are the roadblocks/barriers?
• Today’s presentation is a framework or roadmap of the issues involved. Each point could be a 45min presentation in itself.
Intimacy

• Main problem that triggers need to seek help.
• When intimacy is missing: alone empty abandoned invisible no us shunned doesn’t know me single rejected no connection Doesn’t understand insensitive hurt

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Why is intimacy core need?

*homo sapiens* - 2 main primitive/neurobiological urges.

Wired to live in a group/community/to connect

but also

Wired to survive

Dual need creates a conflict when talking about intimacy.

Tatkin: Wired for Love
Intimacy & Relationships

Understanding + Information + respect

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Intimacy & Relationships

• Intimacy is about 2 people – the ‘I’ & the ‘you’.
• Traditional counselling focuses on the ‘I’.
• For intimacy, the focus needs to be on the relationship – the ‘I’ & the ‘you’ in partnership.
• Focusing only on the ‘I’ means that the ‘you’ gets ignored.
• Focusing only on the ‘you’ means that the ‘I’ gets ignored.
Underlying Assumptions

• Intimacy in relationships

  2 people equal in the relationship

Equality is about: respect and trust
valuing the other person
safety and security
Problems/Challenges

• How can an Aspie & Non-Aspie relationship be equal?
• Aspergers – Is it a disability or diffability?
• Can there be intimacy if one partner is devalued?
• Like redheads – Aspie’s are different but equal.
• Language use – Respect: does the language we use contribute to and/or create our perceptions
Achievable Intimacy

• Is intimacy achievable in an Aspie/Non-Aspie relationship?
• Key Skill: Commitment
  – it is important to establish if there is genuine commitment to the relationship from both parties;
  – Is there enough common ground to maintain the relationship.
understanding

• Understanding of ‘I’ or ‘myself’ & understanding of ‘you’ – my partner
• Understanding that someone else’s behaviour is about them & not you
• Key Skill:
  - Critical reflexivity – important for the ‘me’ – why am I doing something or responding in a specific way not why they did it.
  - the ‘why’ question.

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Information

• Need to take the time to know your partner & see them for who they are
• Throw out ‘should’ – this invites us to see a person as we want to rather than how they actually are.

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Communication

- The key, & the barrier, is *communication*
- Problem is – Aspie/Non-Aspie – language use is very different for each.
- As well as establishing communication, the mode of communication must be *mutually understandable*.
- So, how do we learn to communicate and understand?

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Language

- Aspie – language is based on literalness
- Non Aspie – indirect, nonspecific & general – non confrontational
- Key Skill – Reflective Listening
  ‘I’ statements
Perception of the World

- Aspie – *Self* focused/referenced – linked to **mind blindness**
  Non Aspie – *Other* focused/referenced

**Key Skill:**
- Understanding the differences in perception

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Thinking Styles

• Aspie – *Rigid* thinking
• Non Aspie – *Webbed* thinking –
  – not strictly lateral or unidirectional
• Key Skill: keep things simple & stick to one subject or issue at a time, knowing that other things will be dealt with in time

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Intimacy is Possible

• Primary ingredient is time.
• And also hard work, persistence, commitment & goodwill, as earlier mentioned
• It is not going to be an overnight change – the relationship itself & the associated problems took a long time to develop & will take a long time to resolve.

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Intimacy is Possible

• Primary ingredient is **time**
• The changes involve how we **see** ourselves, our partner & the larger world
• It takes physical & psychological **resilience**
• Relationships are **hard work** but they yield a great deal & will become easier over time
• The hardest part is the start – it **will** get easier