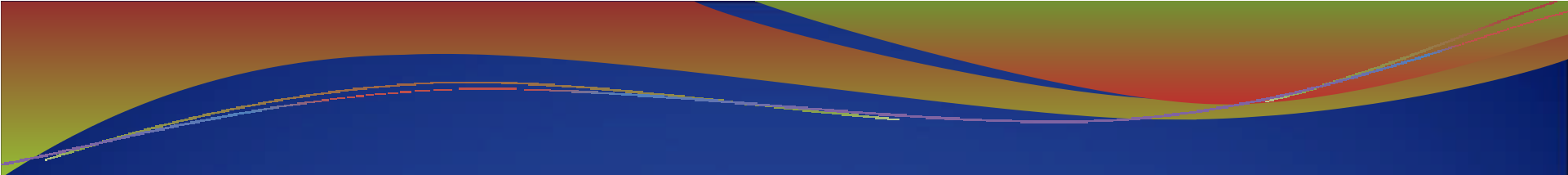# THE ASD CLINIC

A team of Psychologists specialising in Autism Spectrum Disorders

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AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS
3 PERVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Autistic Disorder

Asperger's Disorder / HFA

PDD NOS

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

DELAYS IN 3 AREAS OF FUNCTIONING

Social Interaction and Understanding
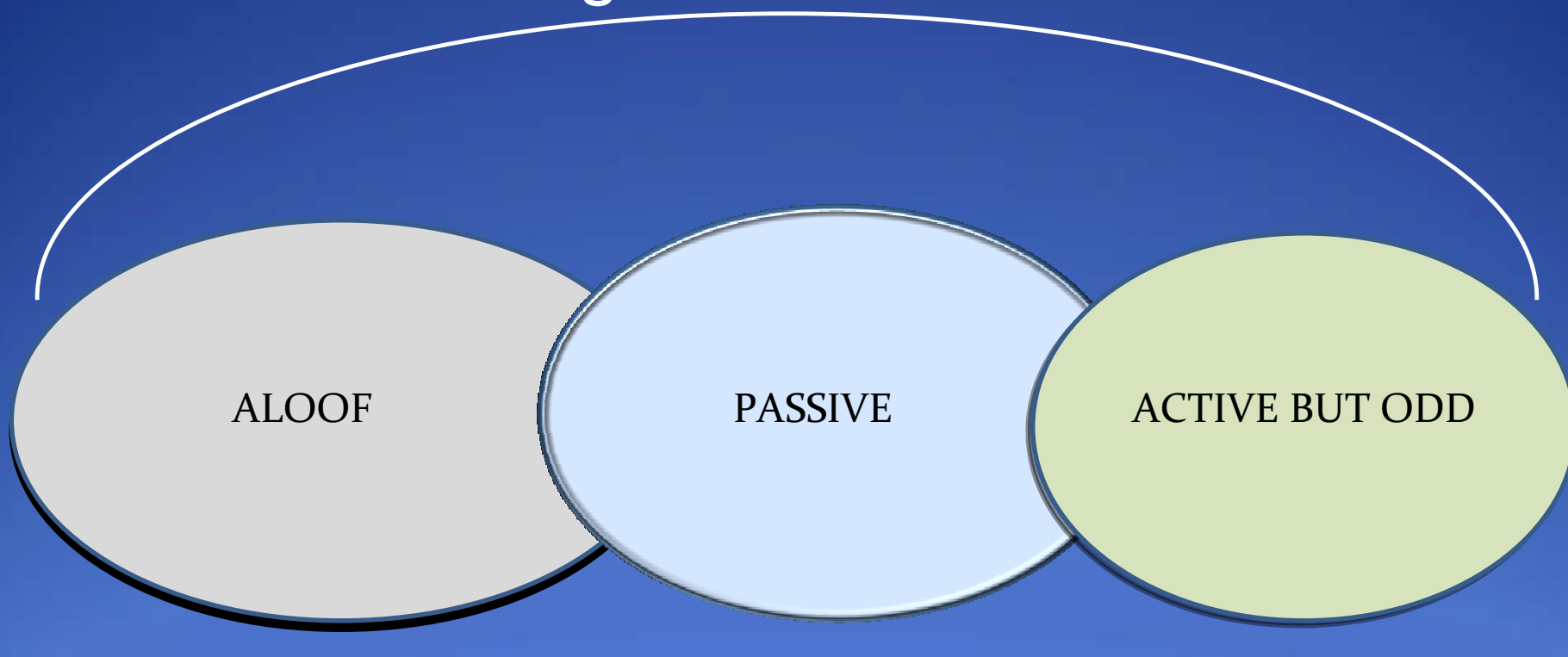
Communication

Imagination / Play

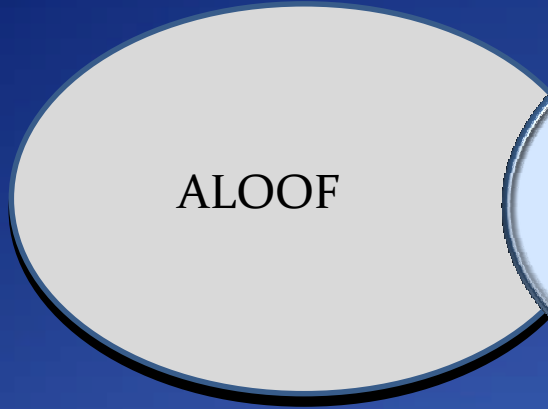| ALOOF	PASSIVE	ACTIVE BUT ODD
Socially Cut Off	Often interested in people but shy or placid	Often socially keen
In Own World	Play in parallel	Talk *at* rather than *with* you
Often Don't Talk	Possible language delay	Often good at construction
Echolalia	Struggle with social use of language/Literal	Often full of ideas
No Imaginative Play	Play is often copied	Director of play
Sensory Play	Often inflexible in play	
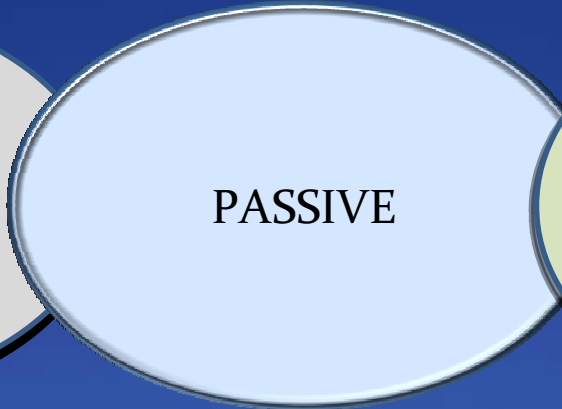
The Autism Spectrum

Many different presentations of autism along a spectrum.

All are linked by impairments in their social, communication and imagination skills.

Social Interaction and Understanding

Communication

Imagination / Play

_____

Sensory Processing

Gross / Fine Motor Skills (Dysgraphia)

Obsessions / Rituals / Routines

Executive Function

Executive Function

Four common weaknesses experienced with ASD and ADD or ADHD children

1)   Organisation and Planning skills

2)   Impulse Control

3)   Distractibility (Weak attention and concentration skills for non-obsessive activities)

4)   STAM - Short Term Auditory Memory

Something to think about?

Those of us who live and/or work with children and adults with autistic disorders have to try to enter their world, since they cannot find their way into ours. We need to learn to comprehend and empathise with autistic experiences in order to find ways to help each individual cope with a system of social rules that is alien to them. The reward for the effort involved is a deeper understanding of human social interaction and an appreciation of the wonder of child development. The key to autism is the key to the nature of human life.

- Lorna Wing, Psychiatrist

"The Autistic Spectrum", 1996.

Theory of Mind

- Definition: A person's ability to think about what someone else may be thinking about.
- Young children are able to pass Theory of Mind (ToM) tests by 3-4 years of age.
- ASD children regularly fail ToM tests.
- A lack of ToM may explain social and communication impairments found in people with ASD.

Typical Cognitive Profile
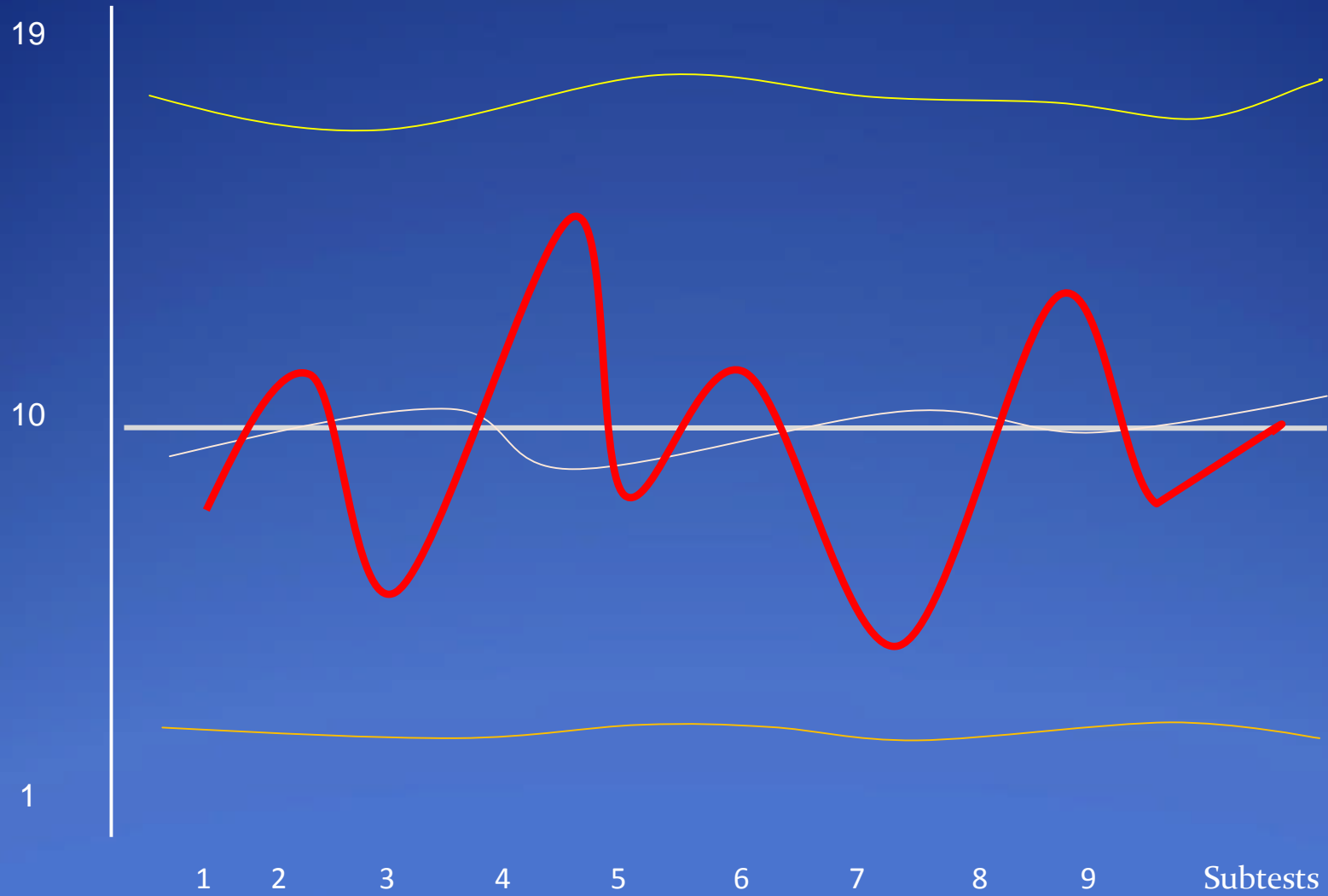
Structure In Chaos

18 %
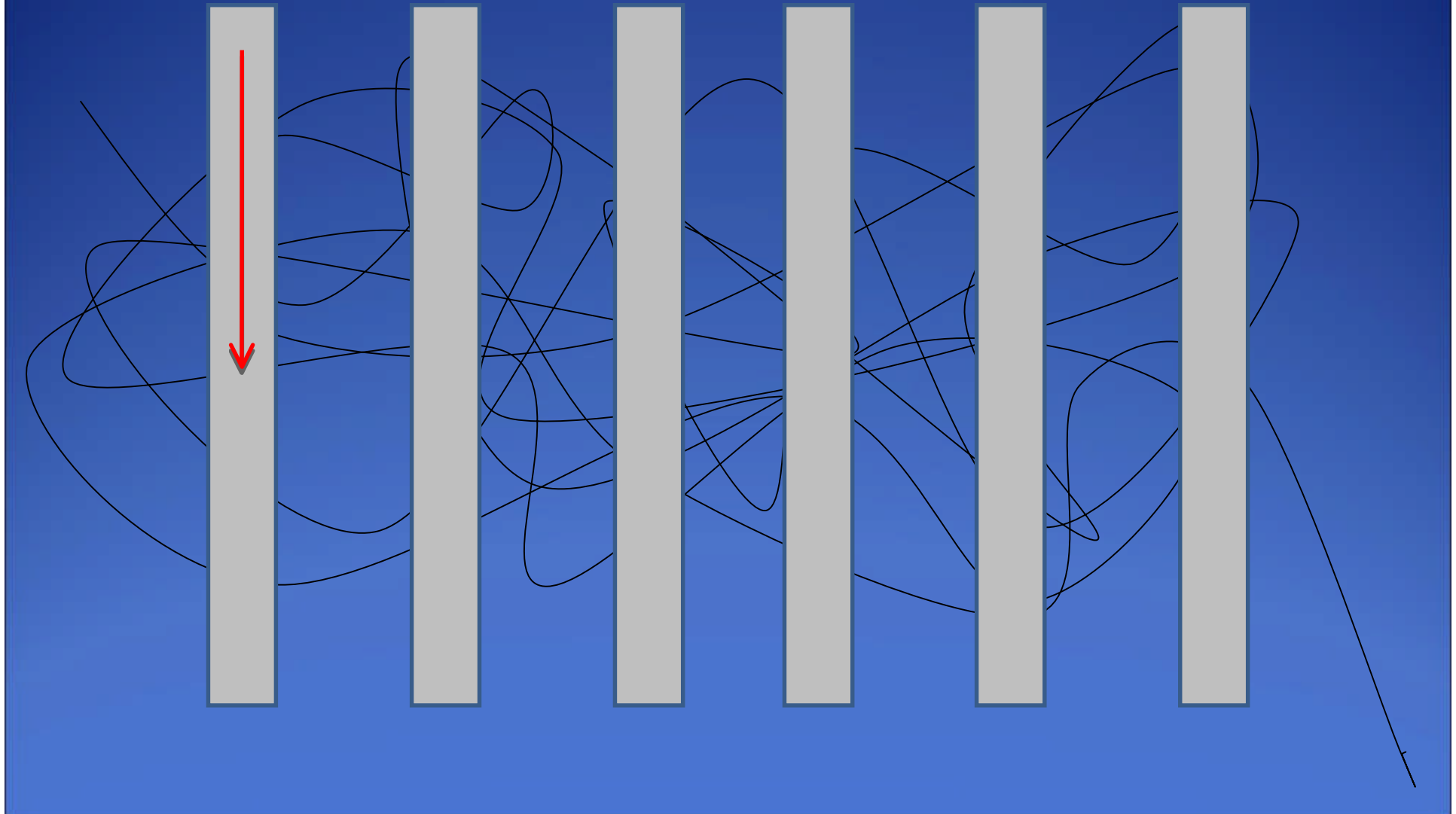
The problem with school?

- We are lucky they come!
- How do we not turn off these children from learning in a mainstream school environment?
- Why the high rates of anxiety/depression/school refusal/behaviour problems? – well-intentioned parents and teachers?
- An academic ASD adult with mental health problems is often 'disabled'

ASD 'friendly' schools

- Is there an understanding of the child's 'real' age?
- Is the playground the best place to rest?
- Are there clubs and structured activities?
- Is there a chill-out zone? Is there a place to engage in stress-reducing activities?
- Is there a focus on strengths? – "Expert syndrome"
- Is there a focus on homework?
- Is there a focus on modifying the workload? i.e.., "less is more"

ASD 'friendly' schools

- (Do all engineers and computer programmers understand Shakespeare? The Factual vs. Creative child)
- Can VCE be done over three years?
- Is there a focus on technology/IT to assist with work output?
- Is there a strong anti-bullying policy?
- Is there a focus on inclusion for those who are different?

ASD 'friendly' schools

- Is there a focus on 'unpacking' behavioural incidents?
- Is there a good communication system between home and teacher? PSG/SSG
- Do teacher's understand the "Jekyll and Hyde" presentation?
- Is there a focus on negative consequences for 'bad' behaviour or have you tried "bribery/rewards/incentives" for better behaviour?

Tips for reward programmes

- Make it easy to get a reward. Be generous – remember the child's true 'social/emotional' age
- Rewards can be given for increasing pro-social behaviours and reducing negative ones
- "All or none" reward schedules are 'autistic' – they need to learn the 'grey''
- Reward with obsessions/passions wherever possible

Tips for reward programmes

- Link reward with home activities for that extra hit! Work with the family to try to get them to also use mostly rewards in their home life
- Encourage "deal-making"
- Remember rewards are stress relievers
- Be their 'mate'/mentor/'earthling interpreter' rather than the authoritarian
- Never take rewards away – Punishment does not work with ASD children

The Golden Rules

If the reward does not work today – try again tomorrow. Avoid a battle of wills – NT's usually lose!!

Focus on your relationship with the child, not compliance (give 80% get 20% back)

Resources

- Asperger's Syndrome and A Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome both books by Tony Attwood

Tony Attwood's website is a mine of information
www.tonyattwood.com

- Also Sue Larkey's website has some excellent classroom tip sheets
www.suelarkey.com/Newsletter_and_Tip_Sheets.php
- Asperger Syndrome: What Teachers Need to Know by Matt Winter
- Asperger Syndrome: A practical guide for Teachers by Val Cumine, Julia Dunlop and Gill Stevenson
- What to do when your temper flares by Dawn Huebner
- Social Stories by Carol Gray

Resources

- A Martian in the playground: Understanding the schoolchild with Asperger's Syndrome by Claire Sainsbury
- Parenting a child with Asperger Syndrome : 200 tips and strategies by Brenda Boyd
- Addressing the challenging behaviour of children with HFA/Asperger Syndrome in the classroom : A guide for teachers and parents by Rebecca Moyes
- All Cats Have Asperger's Syndrome by Kathy Hoopmann
- Exploring Feelings: Cognitive behaviour therapy to manage anger and anxiety by Tony Attwood
- The Sixth Sense II by Carol Gray
- Intricate Minds: Understanding classmates who think differently (DVD)

Contacts

- AMAZE – (formerly Autism Victoria) 9657 1600

www.amaze.org.au

  Parent groups have sprung up around the country – Amaze has a comprehensive list

- Asperger's Victoria (formerly ASSN) 9845 2766

home.vicnet.net.au/~asperger

Information Kits/books/videos etc

The ASSN runs social groups for teenagers and adults and has meetings for parents/family

- Alpha Autism (for adults)

http://alphaautism.org.au