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April 29, 2010

# Because you asked special eblast on Family Stress



Dear Lu,

You answered our survey. Or you have called our office to talk about common family issues we all share. We have listened to the most pressing concerns and decided to respond by "theming" one e-blast per month. Our thanks to Rebecca Williams-Thomas in our office who compiled this first issue based on family stress, the highest ranking topic in our survey, and one of the most common phone call concerns. So put your feet up and read about others who share the frustrations and success stemming from the differences in our lives. You might share an article or two with family members as a way to help start needed discussion. We hope you find this collection of articles helpful as you tackle your own personal challenges relating to family functioning.

We will return to our usual format of varying articles and events next week. This new format will appear on the last Friday of each month. We look forward to hearing your continued feedback!

Sincerely,  
Lu Randall  
Executive Director

## IN THIS ISSUE

[Resources from ABOARD Lending Library](#)

[Do Couples Divorce Because Of Autism?...](#)

[Dating, Marriage and Autism: A Personal Perspective](#)

[How do I handle marriage to a spouse with Asperger Syndrome?...](#)

[The Impact of a Disabled Child on Your Marriage](#)

[Autistic Kids Benefit from Dad's Involvement](#)

[How to Get Dad More Involved With His Child With Autism](#)

[ABOARD Support Groups](#)

[Living with a sibling who has Asperger Syndrome](#)

[How to Help Siblings Cope with an Asperger's Brother or Sister](#)

[Siblings of individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder...](#)

[Helping siblings of children with autism spectrum disorder](#)



## Resources for you and your family from The ABOARD Free Lending Library

Click here to see the [complete list](#) and contact ABOARD if you are interested in reviewing any of these publications.

### Do Couples Divorce Because Of Autism?

Most [parents](#) of children with [autism](#) are acutely aware of the issues that comes with the diagnosis and particularly, how [stress](#) affects their [marriage](#). So what does the research say about autism and [divorce](#)? One study published by Hartley et al. showed that parents who had a child with autism had a higher divorce rate than parents without a child with autism ([1](#)). However, a more recent study presented in 2010 by Dr. Brian Freedman of the Kennedy Krieger Institute found there was no increase in divorce rates. According to their research, "64% of children with autism lived with married or adoptive parents compared to a rate of 65% for children with no autism diagnosis" ([2](#)).

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/autism-in-real-life/201103/do-couples-divorce-because-autism>

### Resources on Marriage

- An Asperger Marriage
- Aspergers In Love: Couple Relationships and Family Affairs

### Resources on Siblings

- Autism Through A Sisters's Eyes
- It isn't Fair! Siblings of Children With Disabilities

### Resources on Fathers

- Uncommon Fathers: Reflections on Raising a Child with a Disability
- Without Reason: A Family

- Married with Special-Needs Children (A Couples Guide)
- The Other Half of Asperger Syndrome
- Strengthening Relationships - When Our Children Have Special Needs.
- NAA 2008: Maintaining a Healthy Marriage.
- Living with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs (A Book for Sibs)
- Siblings of Children With Autism
- Sibshops - Workshops
- Views From Our Shoes (Growing Up With a Brother or Sister with Special Needs)
- Copes with Two Generations of Autism
- NAA 2008: Workshop - Just for Dads
- Dear Charlie - A Grandfathers Love Letter.

## Dating, Marriage and Autism: A Personal Perspective

One doesn't need to be on the autism spectrum to be mystified by what is involved in dating. The challenges of beginning as acquaintances and shifting to friendship and/or a significant other requires excellent communication in the realms of the verbal, nonverbal, pragmatics and "theory of mind."

Those diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder are people too. The variations of strengths and needs non-spectrum people have are just as valid as someone not on the spectrum. So by looking at what could make socialization and dating easier for non-spectrum people and by boosting the amplitude some, perhaps it is possible to arrive at accommodations that will not only be useful to those on the spectrum, but perhaps assist a larger population of people, too.

<http://www.autism.com/>

## How do I handle marriage to a spouse with Asperger Syndrome?

Lisa Jo Rudy

Question: How Do I Handle Marriage to a Spouse with Asperger Syndrome?

My husband was recently diagnosed as having Asperger syndrome, a high functioning type of autism. He graduated from an Ivy League school, but his self-absorption, social awkwardness and rigid behaviors have affected our marriage with devastating emotional impact. Is there hope for improvement?

To read answers from Robert Naseef, Ph.D., and Cindy Ariel, Ph.D., who are the co-editors of "Voices from the Spectrum: Parents, Grandparents, Siblings, People with Autism, and Professionals Share Their Wisdom" (2006). On the web at Alternative Choices. <http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com/>

## The Impact of a Disabled Child on Your Marriage

Your Marriage Can Be Forever Changed

When you first learn that your child will have special needs and care throughout life, you can be emotionally overwhelmed. If you have a child with a disability or a chronic illness, you have realities to face. Your lives will never be the same. Your marriage will go through times of change as any relationship does, but it will encounter more challenges and stresses.

<http://marriage.about.com>

## Autistic Kids Benefit from Dad's Involvement

Teaching fathers how to communicate and play with their autistic children pays dividends, for parents and kids alike. Now UF researchers have found that teaching fathers how to talk to and play with their autistic children in a home setting improved communication, increased the number of intelligible words the youngsters spoke by more than 50 percent and helped dads get more involved in their care. The findings were published in a recent issue of the journal Nursing Research.

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com>

## How to Get Dad More Involved With His Child With Autism

Men are slower in this aspect of parenting a child with special needs, so don't despair. I can certainly remember the lump in my throat when I just looked at reading materials about autism and couldn't get past the first sentence. Let your husband know that you appreciate him and let him know what you need.

<http://autism.about.com/>



## SUPPORT GROUPS

ABOARD is the largest facilitator of autism support groups in Pennsylvania. We currently have 62 groups in 47 counties. If you are interested in a support group contact Marie Mambuca, Family Support Director at 412-781-4116.

**The following are just a few of our many support groups. If you would like the complete list [click here.](#)**

Adult Social Group for Adults w/HFS/ASP - Allegheny County  
North Hills Parent Support Group - Allegheny County  
FBR Family, Social & Play Group - Allegheny, Beaver, Bedford, Indiana, Mercer and Washington  
Growing Together: For Family Members of Adults with Special Needs - Allegheny County  
Cranberry CARES: Parents in Toto Autism Resource Center - Butler County  
Hand in Hand - Cambria & Somerset County  
PAK - Parents of Autistic Kids - Fayette & Westmoreland County  
Lancaster County Autism Mommies - Lancaster County  
Autism Sharing and Parenting - Philadelphia County  
TASC Support Group - Tioga County  
Parents as Advocates - Warren County  
NHS Human Services - Parent & Sibling Support Group - Westmoreland County

### Living with a sibling who has Asperger Syndrome.

Raising a child with autism places some extraordinary demands on parents as individuals and on the family as a whole. Prime among these demands is the lack of enough hours in the day to do all one wishes. The time involved in meeting the needs of a family member with autism may leave parents with little time for their other children. This section offers suggestions to parents about ways to help the other children in the family cope gracefully and effectively with the experience of having a brother or sister with autism. Research indicates that the majority of brothers and sisters of children with autism cope well with their experiences. That does not mean, however, that they do not encounter special challenges in learning how to deal with a sibling who has autism or a related disorder.

<http://www.autism-society.org/living-with-autism/family-issues/siblings.html>

### How to Help Siblings Cope with an Asperger's Brother or Sister

When a child is diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, the parents' natural response is to pour time, energy and finance into trying to help them. While it is not intentional, other children in the family may be overlooked or sidelined as a result. If they are very young, they may not be aware that this is happening until they look back later in life. Those who are older or in their teens may be embarrassed by their brother or sister's behavior in public. There are a number of things that parents and children can do to cope with Asperger's siblings in the family. <http://www.brighthub.com/mental-health/autism-odd/articles/112276.aspx#ixzz1JL8eRvAa>

### Siblings of individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Sibling relationships and wellbeing in adolescence and adulthood. As a result, the effects on the sibling relationship may differ according to the life stage of both the sibling and the brother or sister with an ASD. The ASD impairments of social interaction, communication, and behavior tend to become less severe over time, although they remain problematic for most individuals with an ASD across the life course ([Seltzer et al., 2003](#); [Shattuck et al., 2007](#)). Thus, although such impairments may continue to impact the sibling relationship throughout adolescence and adulthood, the lessening of severity may lead to improved sibling relationships over time.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>

### Helping Siblings of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Being the sibling of a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be both a challenging and enriching experience. Here are some ideas for looking after your other children, ensuring they get your time and attention, and helping them understand more about ASD. Did you know most brothers or sisters experience some sibling rivalry, regardless of their health and ability.

Having a child with ASD can make it difficult to find time for the needs of your other children. You might even be feeling guilty or anxious about how you're doing. But don't be too hard on yourself - there are some simple things you can do every day to nurture other children.

<http://raisingchildren.net.au>

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## About Us

A nonprofit organization founded by parents helping parents in 1996. We support Pennsylvania families and individuals with autism and the professionals who help them.

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