



# What if.....

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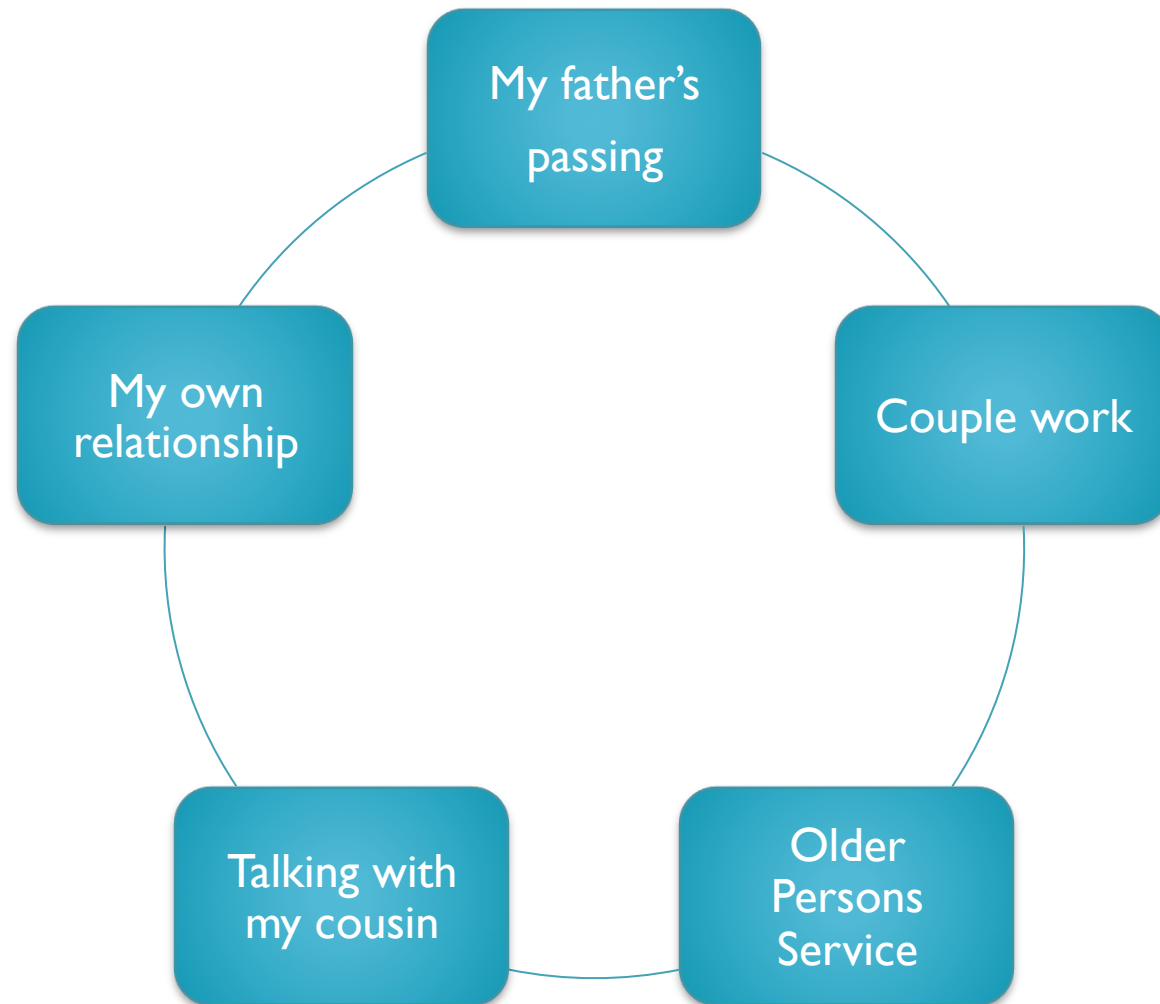
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# Intention of Paper

- Develop understanding and context for the relationship where one partner has Asperger Syndrome (including subclinical)
- Falling in love - attraction
- The change that happens
- Theory of Mind
- Effect of the relationship on each the Aspie and the NT
- Strategies to strengthen relationship
- Have left out
  - DSM issues
  - Differential diagnoses
  - Recognise Gilberg's Criteria

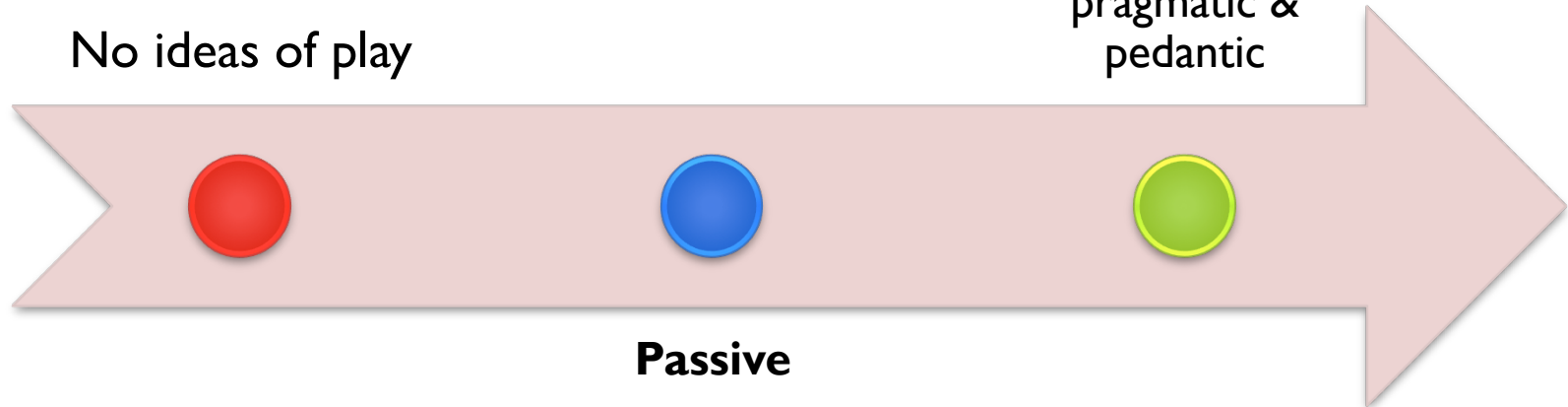
# Influences



# Flow diagram of Spectrum

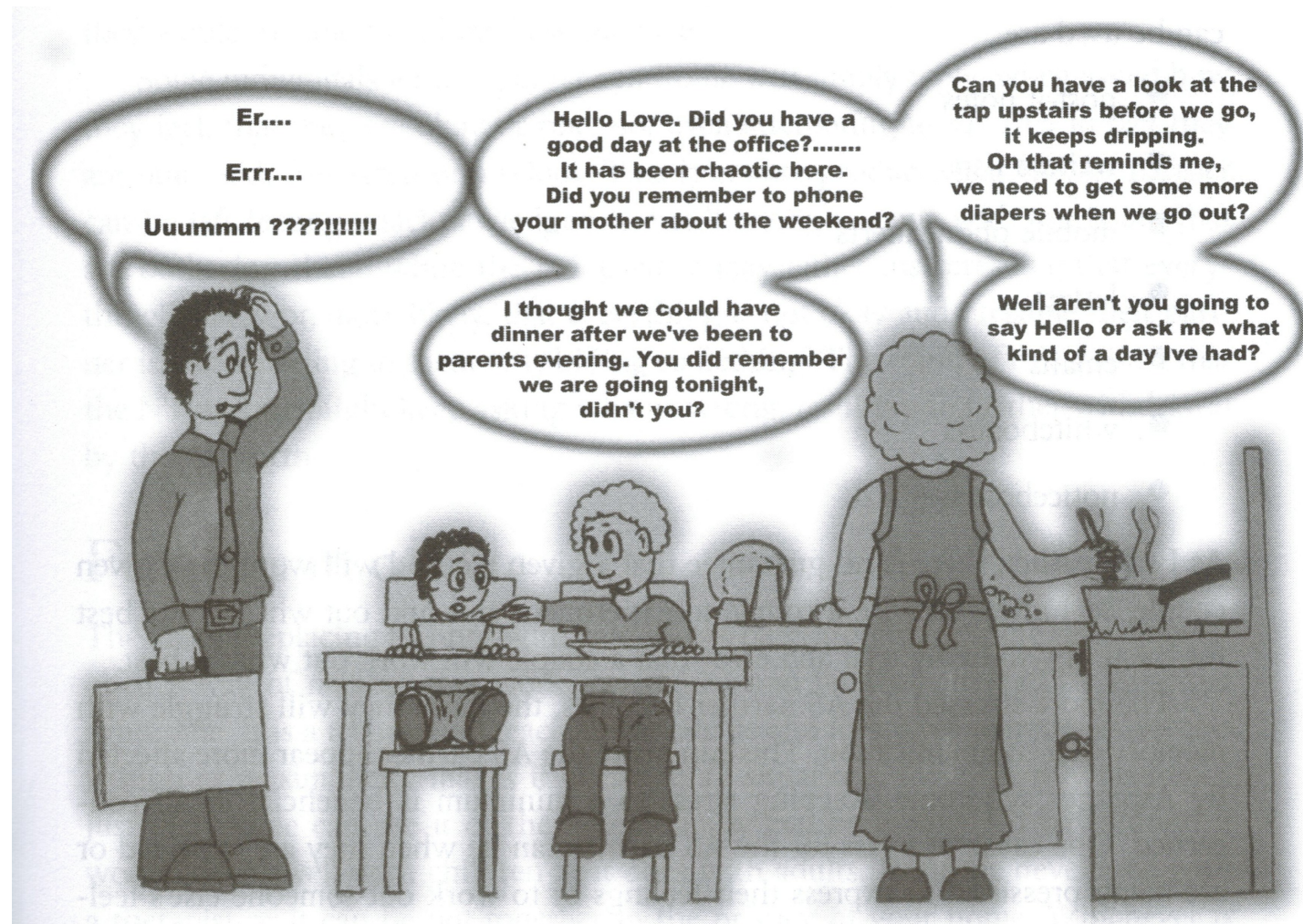
**Aloof**  
Classical  
Asocial  
Echolalia  
No ideas of play

**Active but odd**  
HFA success  
Communication  
Talk at you,  
pragmatic &  
pedantic



**Passive**  
Not so cut off  
Quiet shy children  
Receptive and  
expressive language

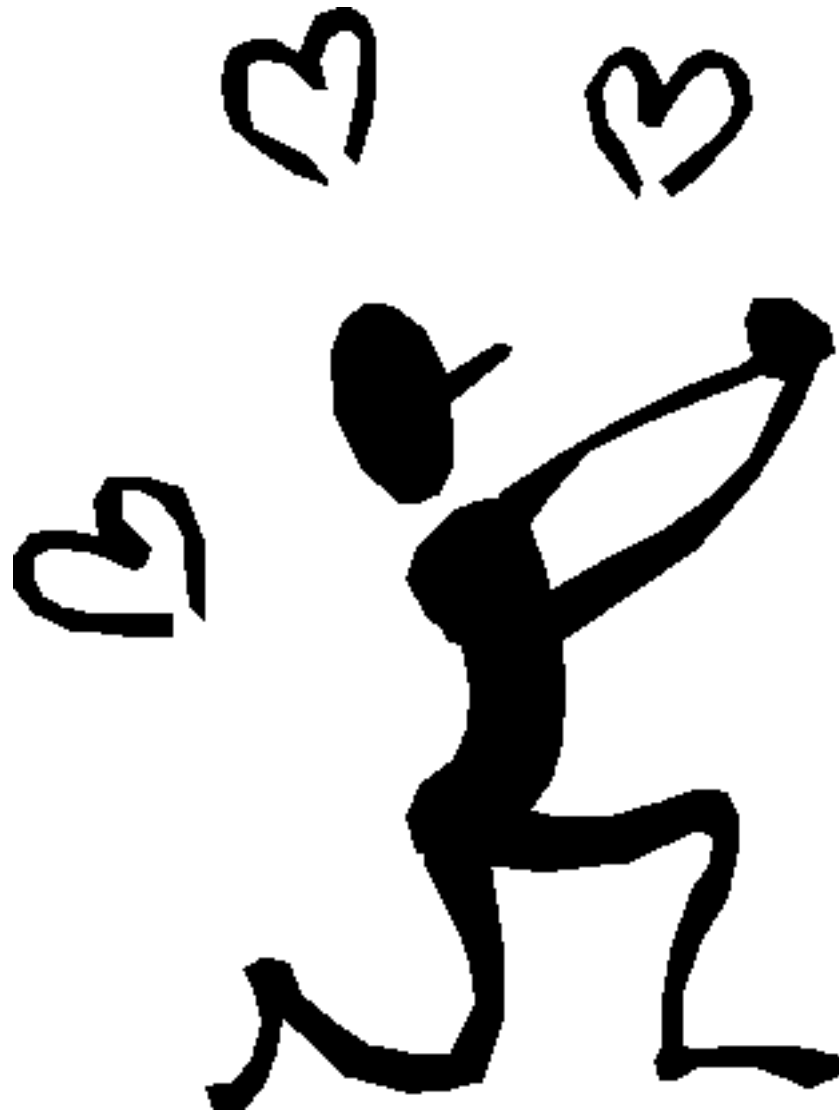
# Rules for giving messages



# A relationship story about a love of cars



## Falling in Love with an Aspie





## A. What attracted a **NT (neuro typical)** to an **Aspie** Partner ?

- The silent kind gentle handsome stranger
- Admiration of intellectual abilities
- Compassion for his/her limited social skills
- *“Better looking than I would expect my partner to be”*
- Belief his or her character was due to childhood circumstances and the person will change in a new relationship
- Shared interests (hobbies, animals, religion)
- The degree of adulation
- Fidelity in relationships
- *‘ I saw the heart not the behaviour.’*



## Attraction of NT to an Aspie Partner cont.

- Pillar of the community
- Child like quality, a 'Peter Pan'
- Creative in his/her work and good career prospects
- Similar characteristics to a parent (learned the language and culture in childhood)
- **A summary** – Humour, confident about opinions, gallant, counterbalance, kind and gentle.



## B. What attracted the **Aspie** to the **neurotypical** partner?

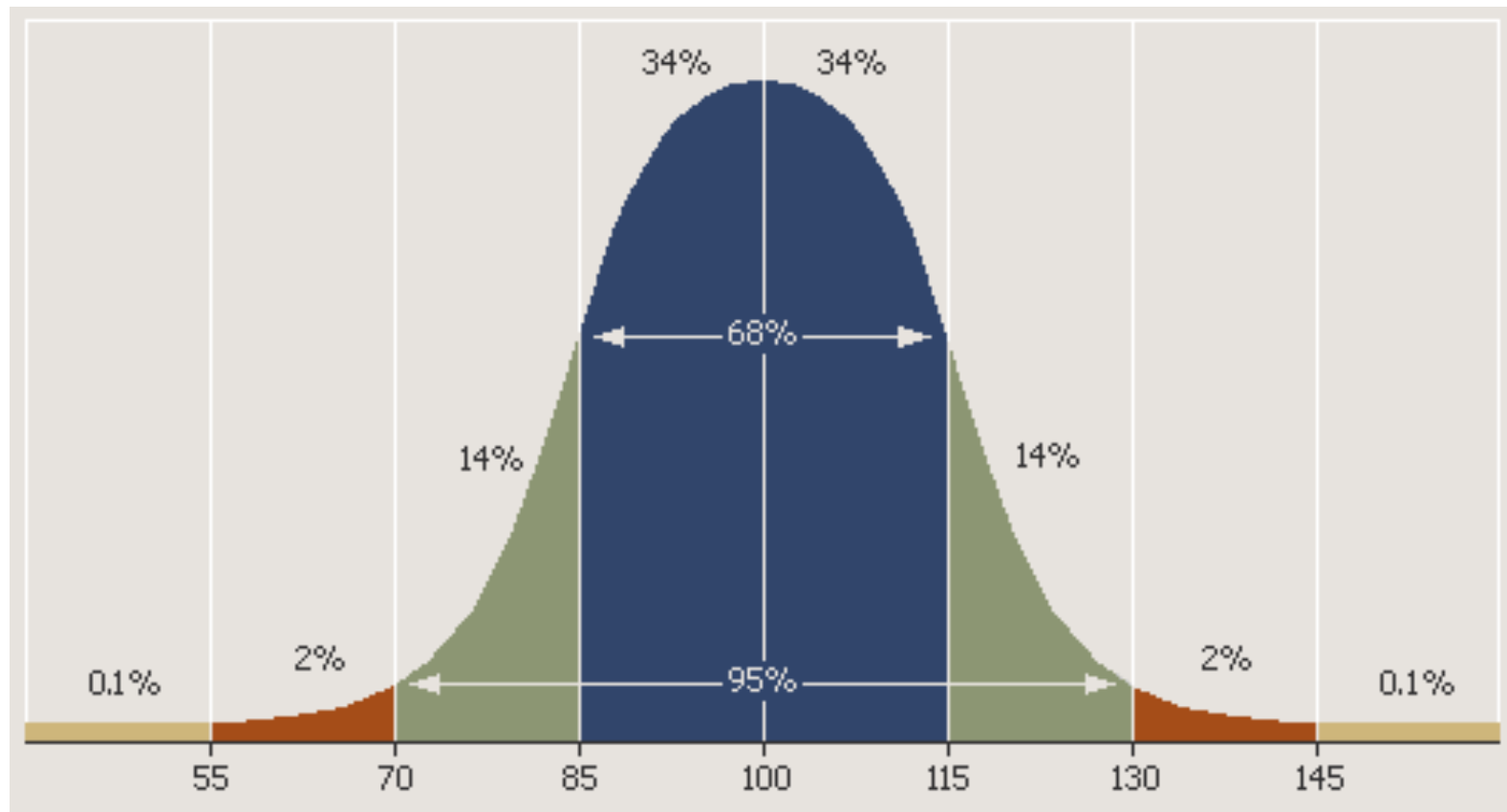
- Good in social situations, network of friends
- Accepting and listening, good to talk to
- Good looking
- Executive secretary, well organised
- A physical quality such as hair – less concerned with physique or age or cultural differences



## Attraction of **Aspie** to the **neurotypical** partner cont.

- Someone who doesn't want to change me
- Expressiveness and compassion
- Translator of the AS point of view
- A tutor in terms of what to do socially

# The Social Quotient





## Choice of partner

- Women with AS may prefer a relationship with a man with AS
- Extreme neuro-typicals more likely to fall in love with an Aspie
- Adults with High Functioning Autism less likely to seek a partner



# The Development of the Relationship

- An initial extremely deep love for the partner with AS.
- In the early years of the relationship, not expecting the partner with AS to know what the person is thinking or needs.
- The extreme neuro-typical can imagine the AS perspective but the partner with AS can have great difficulty imagining the NT perspective.



## Changes - What signs indicated he/she was different?

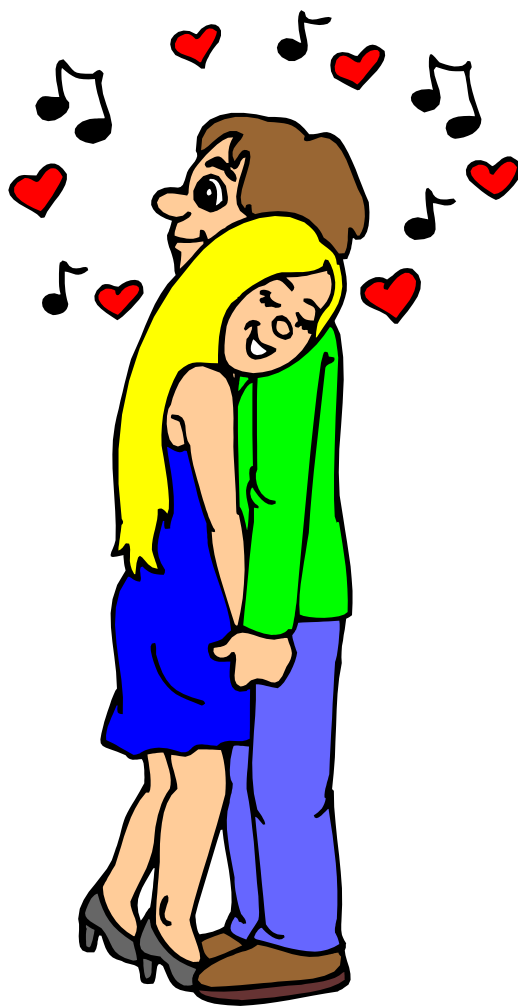
- Indifference e.g. early attentions in courtship stage vanished
- Dominance of hobbies in time
- Resist being changed
- Reduction in social life
- Emergence of obsessive compulsive routines
- Less need for social relationship with partner



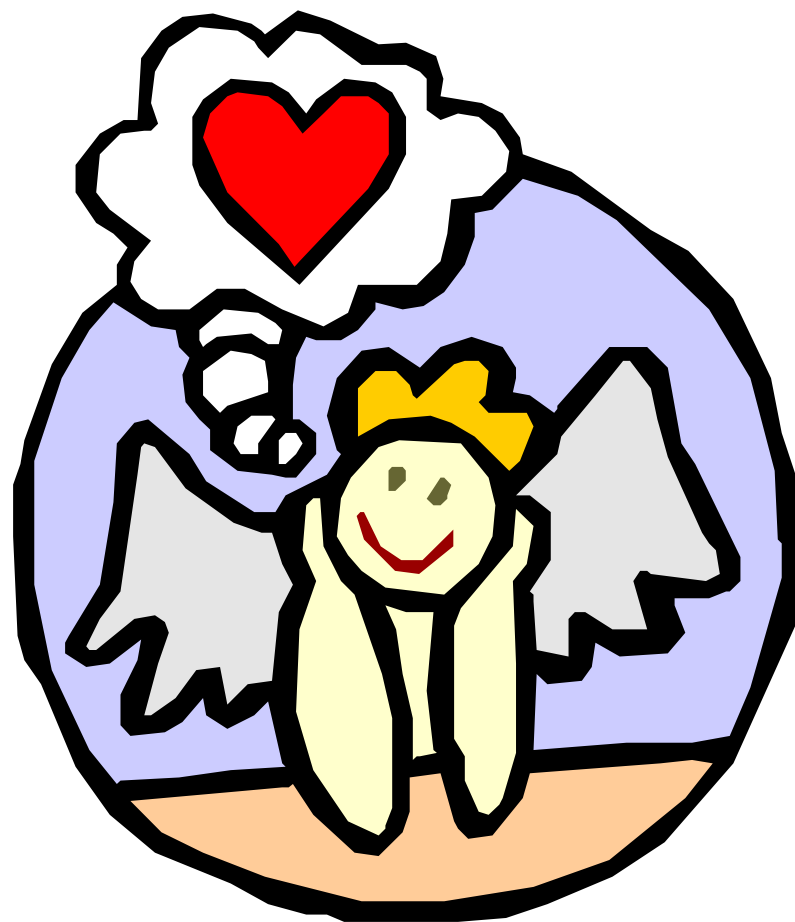
## Cont. Signs indicated he/she was different?

- Oppositional
- Major decisions made without consulting the partner
- Planning, organizing and executive secretary
- Not knowing what is emotionally important information for you
- Needing you at home and inhibiting your social life
- Low empathy
- Different conceptualization of marriage, love

# What is Love?

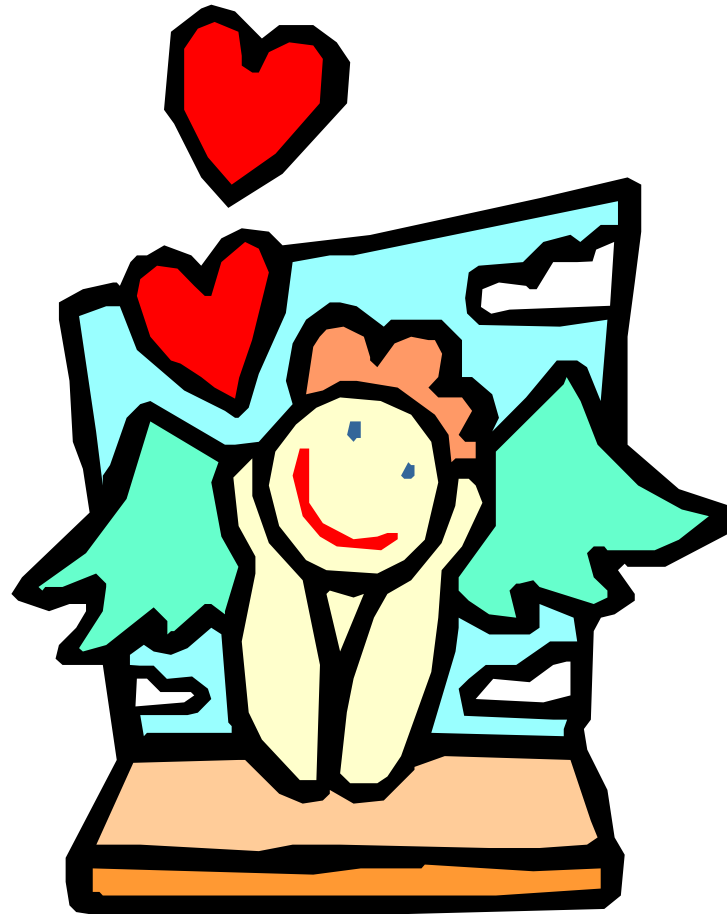


# Neurotypicals definitions

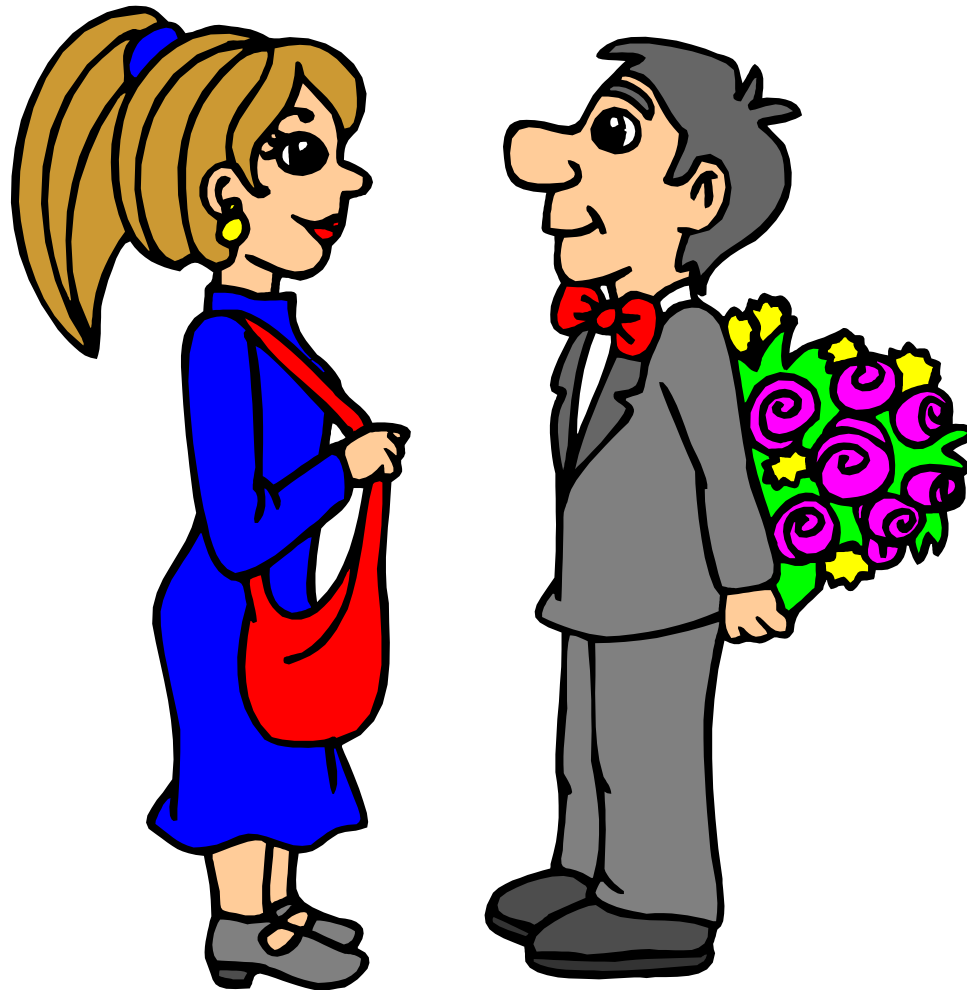


- **Love is:** *Tolerance, non-judgemental, supportive.*
- **Love is:** *A complex set of beliefs that tap into our childhood languages and experiences; it is inspired when you meet someone that has a quality that maybe you admire, or do not have (admiration and respect) – or that they (someone you admire) reflects back to your ideal self – which is what you want to be or see yourself as.*

- **Love is:** *Passion, acceptance, affection, reassurance, mutual enjoyment.*
- **Love is:** *What I feel for myself when I am with another person.*



# Aspie Partner Definitions





# Aspie Partner Definitions

- Love is: *Helping and doing things for your lover.*
- Love is: *An attempt to connect to the other person's feelings and emotions.*
- Love is: *Companionship, someone to depend on to help you in the right direction.*
- Love is: *I have no idea what is involved.*
- Love is: *Tolerance, loyal, allows 'space'.*



## AS defn cont

- *Four aspects of love: everybody, friends, family, erotica.*
- *Love cannot be observed.*
- *Love is yet to be felt and experienced by myself.*
- *What is Love? I don't know the correct answer.*
- *Opening the door and letting a new world into your life, then building a new world that combines your world and their world.*
- *Someone that will try to understand the Aspie way and still be there in the morning.*



# Expression of Love and Affection

- To frequently re-state the obvious or known is illogical.
- Overly attached or detached.
- Love expressed by a practical act, such as repairing the verandah or building a new wardrobe.

# Difference



*Don't underestimate a person with ASD, try to understand*

# Temple Grandin

- *My brain scan shows that some emotional circuits between the frontal cortex and the amygdala just aren't hooked up- circuits that affect my emotions and are tied to my ability to feel love. I experience the emotion of love, but it's not the same way that most neurotypical people do. Does this mean my love is less valuable than what other people feel?*



# Theory of Mind

- The ability to recognise and understand thoughts, beliefs, desires and intentions of other people in order to make sense of their behaviour and predict what they are going to do next.
- ‘Mind blindness’ Simon Baron-Cohen



# Effects of impaired Theory of Mind

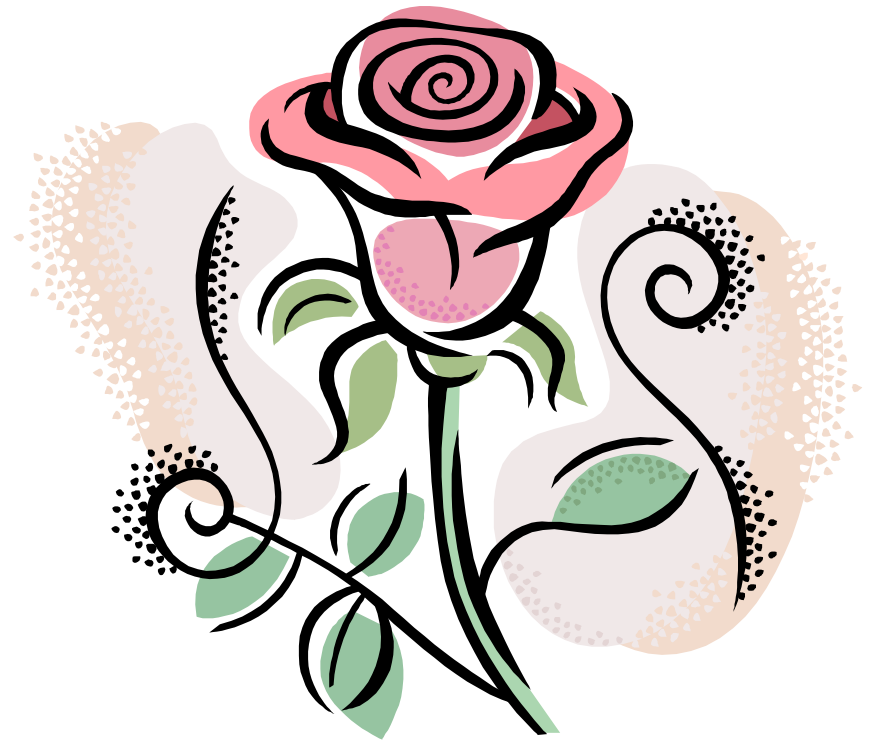
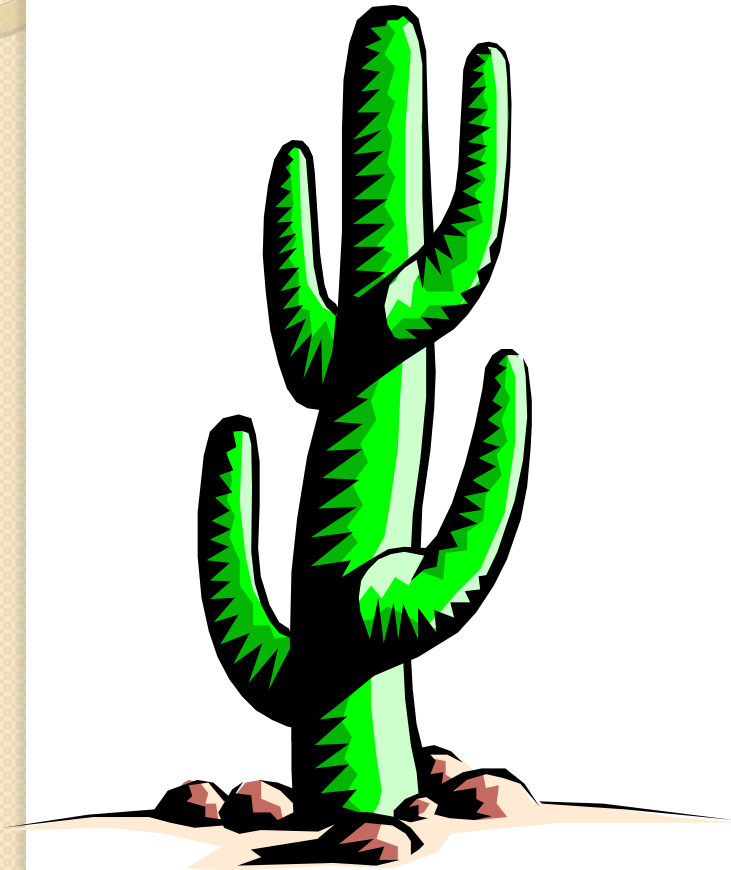
- Difficulties in reading messages in someone's eyes
- Literal interpretations
- Considered rude and disrespectful
- Remarkable honesty
- Sense of paranoia
- Inability to see that another person may have the knowledge and desire to be of help
- Delay in devt in the art of persuasion, compromise and conflict resolution
- A longer time to process social information, due to using intelligence rather than intuition
- Physical and emotional exhaustion

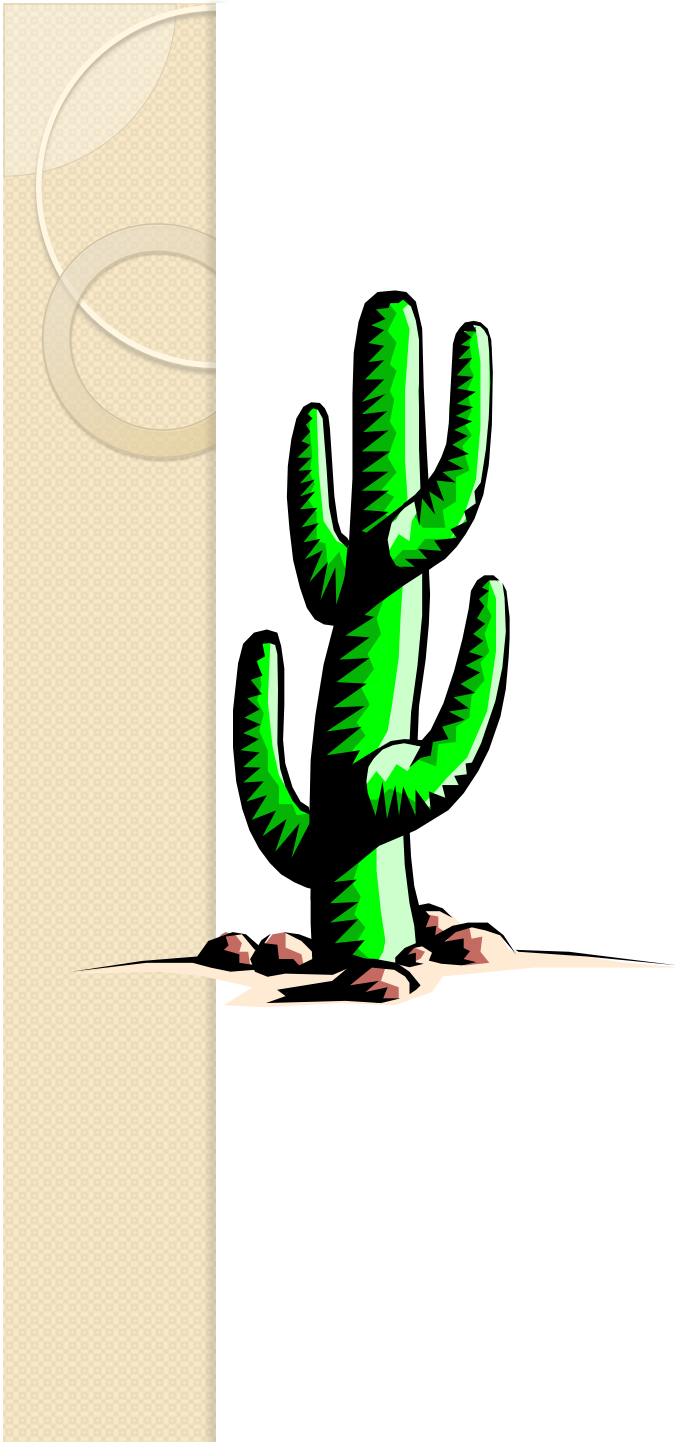


## Impairments cont.

- A different form of introspection and self consciousness
- Problems knowing when something will cause embarrassment
- Anxiety

*The Cactus and the Rose*  
by Marguerite Long (2000)





Soft and vulnerable inside

Prickles to protect them from predators

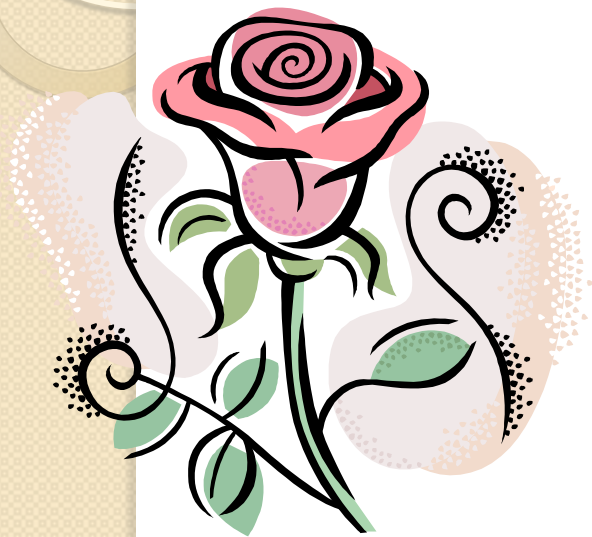
Happy in a desert

Can withstand long periods of  
relationship 'drought'

Do not understand that roses need rose  
food

Keep a distance from other plants to  
survive.

A cactus in full bloom is magnificent and  
very difficult for a rose to resist



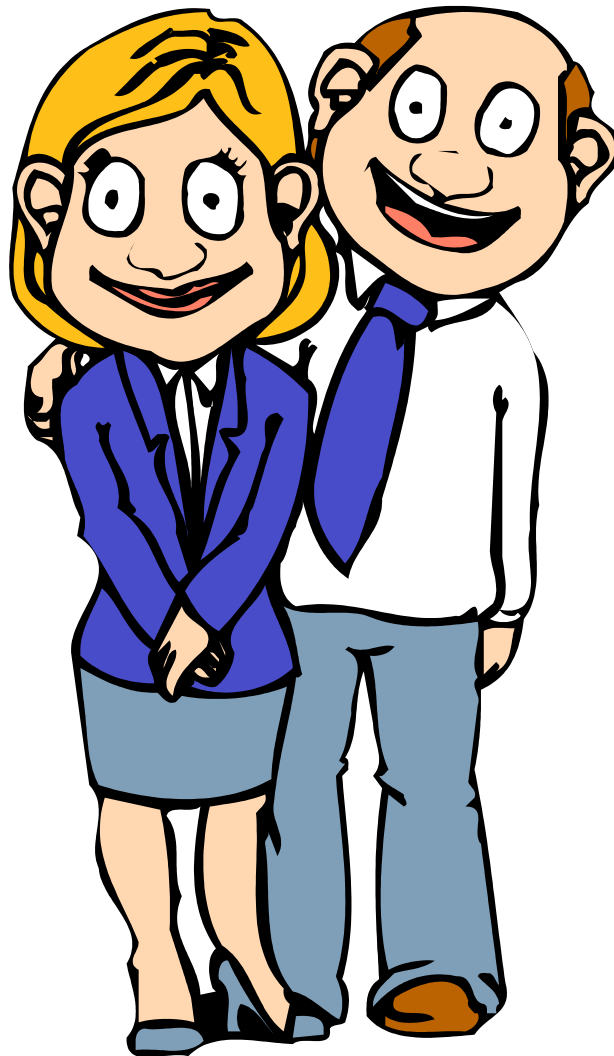
The roots must not be allowed to dry out

Needs to be in a rose garden to connect with other roses and be watered, fed and mulched.

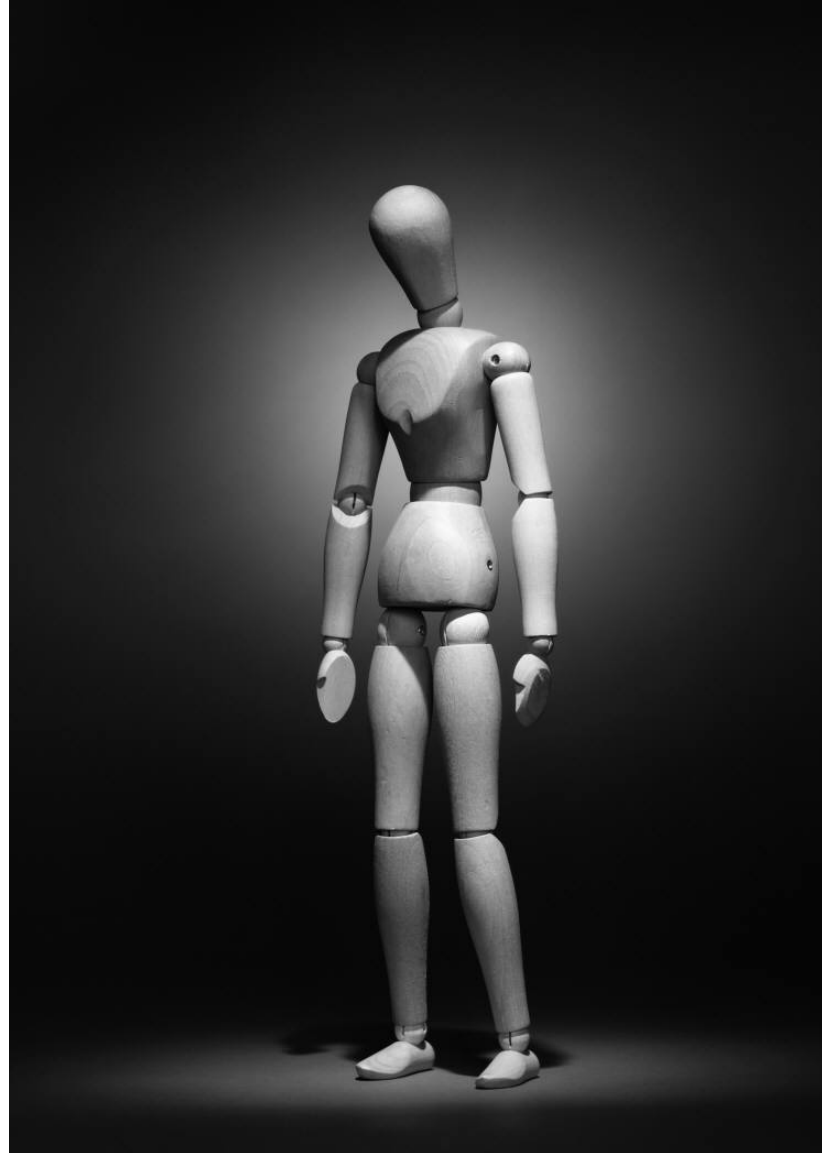
Need intimate emotional connection, communication and love

Can a rose survive in a desert?

# The Effects of the Relationship on Each Partner: Neurotypical



# Loneliness



# Affection Deprivation

- Fixes rather than empathizes
- Love and affection as an emotional restorative.
- Affection capacity (bucket or a cup).





# Mirroring

- Aspie is dominant in a household and their style is infectious
- Over time NT 'Mirror' the Aspie partners behaviour, life style and thinking to survive.

# Cassandra Phenomenon





## Quotes from long term NT partners

- *‘I have developed into the person necessary for him’*
- *“Take your self-confidence and energy”*
- *“The essential me had disappeared along the way”.*
- *“Not that something had died, but the greater tragedy is knowing that something that should, has never lived”*
- *Star trek – Spock examining an e.t.’Its life Jim but not as we know it.’ In AS it is love but not as we know it.*



# Aspie Partner

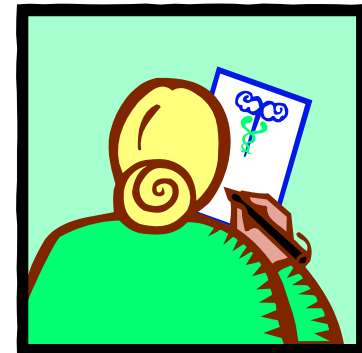
- May also feel irritated and depressed.
- Feeling of being unable to meet his or her partner's expectations in terms of social, emotional and intimacy expectations.

Unable to

- Express inner thoughts and feelings,
- Cope with change (attention switching),
- Conversation
- Household responsibilities from budgeting to taking care of the children.

## 3 Key steps to Strengthen the Relationship

1. Recognition of the diagnosis.
2. Motivation of both partners to change and learn.
3. Communication – unique process





## Motivation of Both Partners to Change

- Usually a greater motivation from the extreme neurotypical.
- When motivated and having access to knowledge, the person with Asperger's syndrome can change.



# Achieving a Diagnosis

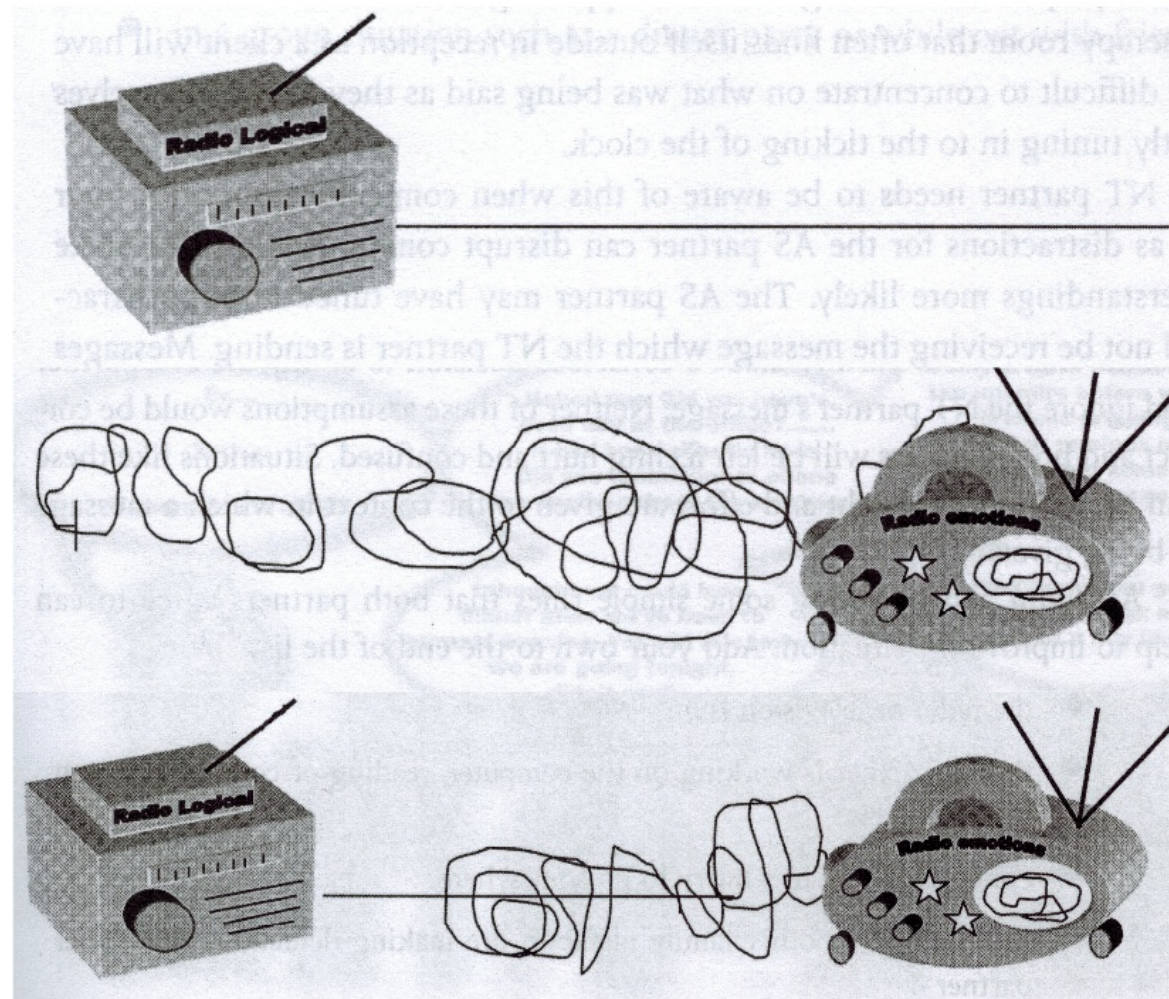
- Access to expertise in the diagnostic assessment of adults.
- The diagnostic criteria.
- Asperger Personality type.



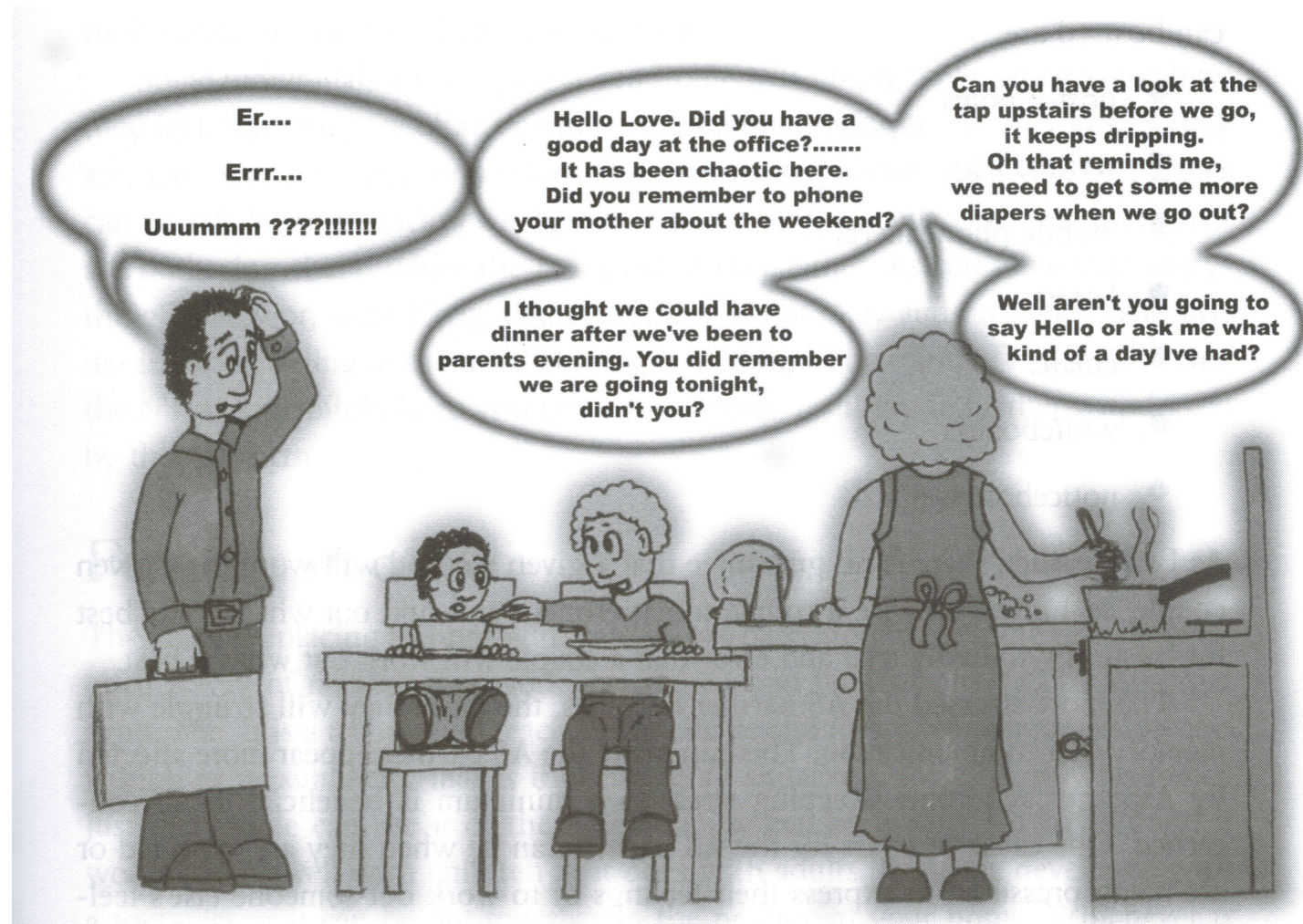
# General Strategies to Strengthen the Relationship

- An occasional escape.
- A mutual understanding of two different cultures and ways of thinking.
- Emotion management strategies.
- Guidance in social skills.
- Open and effective communication.

# Logic transmission vs emotional transmission




# Rules for giving messages





## Some Strategies for NT that Strengthen the Relationship

- Support from other family members and one's children.
- Having good friends (soul mate).
- Having an independent social life.
- Not to feel guilty about having an alternative social life.

- 
- *If we look at AS through a different lens, we can reframe some of these deficits as assets. Because an individual with AS is unfettered by the chains of social convention or manners, he may be able to identify unique solutions that no one else notices.*
    - *Teresa Bolick*
  - Thank you for your kind attention



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