

Effects of Differing Neuro/Developmental Levels on Neurotypical/Autism Spectrum Adult Relationships

<p><i>A developmental milestone is a significant neurological step in the progressing emotional, intellectual, mental, spiritual maturity of a person to adulthood.</i></p>	<p><i>Autism Spectrum Disorder is a term used to describe a spectrum of neuro-developmental disorders. It is genetic and results from neurological factors that delay or prevent the developmental maturity of many or sometimes nearly all functional brain systems.</i></p>	<p><i>Failure to reach certain significant mature milestones can have an aberrant effect on a person's ability to function successfully in relationships.</i></p>	<p><i>The confusing, differing maturity levels between the couple result for the NT, in a unique Post Traumatic Relationship Syndrome which Karen Rodman of FAAAS has termed Ongoing Traumatic Relationship Syndrome. (OTRS).</i></p>
<p><u>Mature developmental milestones reached by NTs</u></p>	<p><u>Where levels of development may arrest in adults with ASD</u></p>	<p><u>Effects on adults with ASD as a result of not reaching mature milestones</u></p>	<p><u>Effects on NT partners of incongruous developmental milestones in the relationship</u></p>
<p>Joint attention</p>	<p>Interest only in one's own needs; OCD; narcissism</p>	<p>Difficulty sharing experiences & interests</p>	<p>Perspective, interests & needs disregarded by partner</p>
<p>Theory of mind/Theory of own mind – awareness of self and others</p>	<p>Inability to see one's own or another's point of view</p>	<p>Inability to be “ in someone else's shoes”; fails to acknowledge and denies truth of partner's view</p>	<p>Loss of sense of self; insecurity; uncertainty of own reality</p>
<p>Ability to read and interpret body language / facial expression</p>	<p>Limited understanding of body language / facial expressions</p>	<p>Inability to register others' emotions</p>	<p>Emotions unacknowledged, not validated and disregarded by partner</p>

Ability to repair & maintain relationships, have life-long friendships	Inability to repair and nurture relationships	Few, if any, real friends	Unresolved disputes, unfinished interactions and unresolved emotional upset; no resolutions to problems
Emotional reciprocity	Lack of empathy for people	Inability to relate to or sense others' emotions	Lack of input / return of feelings / emotional support
Desire or need to socialise and make "small talk", interest in others	Inability to see the need for small talk; socialises for own ego/manipulation; narcissism	Difficulties in making relationships, uses role playing, copying & masking outside home to cover deficiencies	Lack of intimate connection such as "pillow talk", real friendship, loving foreplay
Sense of humour / understanding of irony & human frailty	Limited humour/ inability to laugh at oneself and one's own mistakes	Limited ability to admit to mistakes, sees others as the cause of their difficulties	No redress when wronged, receives no "natural justice"
Abstract language	Limited to literal understanding of language	Limited ability to understand irony /metaphor / jokes	Unrequited efforts to make themselves "heard" / lack of loving banter
Desire to share own and others' interests	Obsession with own interests; OCD	Difficulty sharing anything	Loneliness in the relationship, few shared positive memories
Ability to generalise learning to new situations	Rigid compartmentalisation of concepts	Inflexibility in learning new ways and growing	Unacknowledged and non-validated perspectives
Abstract thinking; higher order thinking skills	"Concrete" thinking, lacking schema changes after childhood; lacking insight/inferences/extrapolation skills	Little appreciation of "hidden" meaning in life; unable or very slow/unwilling to learn new ways of being	Denial of truth; "gaslight" phenomenon; self-doubt
Imagination and ability to dream of possibilities	Solitary imagination	Tendency to remain "stuck in a rut" in life	Reduction and narrowing of life experiences

Development of auditory skills and articulate verbal skills	Deficient oral / aural communication with receptive / expressive language difficulties	Tendency to misinterpret others' intentions; uses non-sequitur	Object of misunderstandings producing self –doubt/ confusion
Takes responsibility for own actions	Blames others for problems / mistakes; lack of insight into own responsibility	Inability to acknowledge or learn from mistakes; belief in own superiority; always right despite evidence	Falsely blamed, develops strong anger arising from injustice and false accusations
Ability to share problems and concerns as a means to solve them	Inability to share problems or foresee consequences and possibilities	Tendency to get into problem situations; “Mr Magoo” Syndrome; oblivious to turbulence of problems	Requirement socially / emotionally to fix the unconsidered consequences
Social conscience, sense of “fair play” and natural justice	Undeveloped social conscience & overly strict adherence to own rules; narrowly focussed, unable to interpret nuance in life	POSSIBLE psychopathic, sociopathic or criminal behaviour, black and white attitude to life; extreme zeal for perceived righteous pursuits or power; “god-like”	Exposure to insufficient or unsafe conditions / dismissal of concerns and reality, may feel intimidated & humiliated; affected by family violence/abuse
Ability to react & act spontaneously	Inappropriate responses or no response	Awkwardness, lack of caring in family and social situations; poor parenting	Deficiency of positive feedback or assistance
Innate knowledge about social behaviour	Lack of real understanding of social behaviour	Desire for isolation or over socialisation	Undesired isolation, lack of options for full participation in life; controlled, narrow social life
Comfort, pleasure & pain in sensory experiences	Sensory overload or unawareness	Excess or avoidance of appropriate touch & physical contact	Deficiency of human physical contact; enforced/deliberate celibacy or uncomfortable assault

Intuition about life; innate knowing	Lack of intuition	Lack of common-sense	Obligation to repair social gaffes & misunderstandings by partner
Balanced development of emotional and intellectual skills	Development of intellectual skills over emotional skills	Interactions limited to intellectual responses unless prompted	Feelings of being socially mimicked and depended upon, as a social “seeing-eye dog” & surrogate parent
Ability to show love and respect in tone of voice, eyes, treatment of others	Limitation to "gifts of service"	Cold and unloving behaviour, lack of compassion, lack of empathy	Object of manipulation, intermittent reward; experiences fear with loss of trust in the relationship & self
Attachment to people, places and things	Lack of attachment to people	Attitude that others are dispensable	Unrequited love; lose self-esteem, feel unappreciated, manipulated, used
Reflection and insight into self	Lack of sense of self in relation to others	Inability to reflect on own life	Obligation to solely accommodate partner’s needs without compromise or negotiation
Ability to make decisions using emotions <u>and</u> intellect	Uncertainty of own feelings about things	Poor decision making / naiveté	Hopelessness in seeking partner’s opinions or commitment
Executive functioning	Lack of organisational skills; prompt dependence or complete control	Inability to navigate complex processes and use forethought to perceive consequences; passive aggression	Obligation to prompt or fulfil partner’s neglected duties
Ability to prioritise tasks and multi-task	Limited to one task at a time, usually a special interest, strict routine or obsession	Neglect of urgent responsibilities / panic	Obligation to solve urgent disasters alone and for partner

Ability to gain wisdom from experiences	Lack of generalisation of learning and awareness of important experiences	Strongly inflexible or absent personal philosophy / ideology	Superficial, unfulfilling relationship; physical illness as a result of stress
Physical co-ordination	Poor fine/ gross motor skills; Tourette's; hand flapping	Unusual gait, unco-ordinated movement, tics; inappropriate facial expressions; immature attempts at "play"	Senses the unusual movements and facial expressions as intimidation.
Mature ability to control thoughts, emotions, words, actions according to circumstances.	Lack of impulse control, uncontrolled meltdowns, inappropriate anger; rage cycle	ADHD, ADD, OCD, tantrums; manipulates and controls others by fear, anger, anxiety, verbal/physical violence; possible depressive symptoms	Living with constant stress, fear, unresolved anger, domestic abuse and violence. Death by a thousand paper cuts. Ongoing Traumatic Relationship Syndrome (OTRS)

The chart was compiled by a widely experienced retired educator with post graduate qualifications who has been in an almost three decade long marriage to a man diagnosed with High functioning autism (Asperger's syndrome) by Professor Tony Attwood in 2005. The author has facilitated a support website for neurotypical spouses/partners for several years. The chart was compiled in collaboration with other facilitators of international NT support groups. These facilitators together have over eighty years' combined experience of living with a spouse on the autism spectrum. They have also heard from many tens of thousands of adult NTs living in marriages and relationships with someone with Asperger's/Hfa. The value of the quantity and quality taken together, of that experience of being in contact with so many NTs, cannot be ignored. The chart is also based on numerous neuro scientific research/investigations, along with results of other research into the circumstances of our situation conducted over many years.

Researchers of neurotypical experiences:

Dr Lisa Abel, Dr Cathryn Rench, Jennifer Bostock-Ling, EC McNeil, R. Doley, Kim L Bolling, Professor Tony Attwood

www.theneurotypical.com

www.faaas.org

www.aspergerpartner.com

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