

## FAMILIES OF AFFECTED BY ASPERGER'S SYNDROME (FAAAS, Inc.)

FAAAS has been providing information and support for neurotypical family members of adults with Asperger's Syndrome, now known as autism spectrum disorder (high functioning HFA) since 1997 through its internet site, support groups, conferences and workshops. Since 2000, FAAAS has hosted four international conferences and two workshops featuring authorities on HFA from around the world. FAAAS has also presented on international on-line conferences.

OTRS/CP is a newly recognized aspect of HFA. OTRS/CP is usually recognized when an undiagnosed HFA adult...whether male or female is finally diagnosed, or after a child is diagnosed as being along the autistic spectrum of disorders. NT/HFA families can be assisted and supported when professionals around them understand this aspect of HFA, Ongoing Traumatic Relationship Syndrome/ Cassandra Phenomenon.

*"They—the families, with their blistered hearts and souls and damaged psyches—they are the end-product of unrecognized and untreated adults with Asperger's Syndrome. How many are out there? Too many, I'm afraid."*

K. Rodman 1997

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FAAAS, Inc.

Families of Adults Affected by  
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## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER - HIGH FUNCTIONING IN ADULTS Effects on Family Members

- ✔ Living alone within a marriage?
- ✔ Puzzled by an unresponsive, remote, aloof partner?
- ✔ Baffled by your spouse's combination of intelligence and helplessness? innocence and emotional cruelty? devotion and neglect? indifference and dependence? control and no responsibility?
- ✔ Do you feel isolated from friends and family?

## WHAT IS OTRS/CP?

## ONGOING TRAUMATIC RELATIONSHIP SYNDROME - CASSANDRA PHENOMENON

Although high functioning autism (HFA) is misperceived by many as solely a childhood disorder/disability, it continues throughout life. Adults with undiagnosed HFA may, and often do, marry so-called normal or 'neurotypical' (NT) partners. The NT spouse/partner, especially if unaware of the disorder/disability, may develop specific reactive symptoms, collectively known as Ongoing Traumatic Relationship Syndrome/Cassandra Phenomenon aka OTRS/CP.

OTRS/CP shares features with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but it differs in that the stress and deprivation are on-going and the abuse occurs in the context of a familial/intimate relationship as opposed to external forces. As long as the public and Medicine's awareness of adult HFA and OTRS/CP remains limited, unnecessary dysfunction and abuse will continue in NT/HFA relationships and families. NT spouses/partners often experience psychological trauma (OTRS) from their attempts to have a close personal/intimate relationship with a person who has neuro-developmental deficiencies in interpersonal relationships: areas such as reciprocity, compassion, empathy, recognition of facial expressions, putting themselves in another's shoes,

a constellation of features known as 'mindblindness.' NT spouses are often not believed about the difficulties encountered in their relationship. (CP)

HFA individuals, by definition, are, challenged by relationship 'mindblindness,' lack understanding of their own disorder/disability and are unable to give mutual support and understanding specifically to their NT caregivers. Domestic abuse which causes NT spouses/partners/family members to doubt themselves, feel abused, feel oppressed, have stress-related health issues, loneliness, feel unloved, live unfulfilled live, could be caused by unrecognized HFA behaviors, within the home setting. This situation is unrelenting. It occurs within the home, and is often denied by the HFA family member.

Many of these relationship difficulties can be lessened by implementing SALVE: Support, Assistance, Listening, Validating and Educating the family about AS and about OTRS/CP. With professional support, assistance, listening, validation, and education, NT family members may be effectively treated so as to feel less confused and helpless about their disparate relationship.



### BOOKS

*Asperger's Syndrome in Adults...Is Anyone Listening?*

Karen E. Rodman, [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com)

*No Team Player*

Judith Newton, [www.theneurotypical.com](http://www.theneurotypical.com)

### WEBSITES

[www.faaas.org](http://www.faaas.org)

[www.theneurotypical.com](http://www.theneurotypical.com)

[www.aspergerpartner.dk](http://www.aspergerpartner.dk)

### RESEARCH ON NEUROTYPICAL PARTNERS

Dr. Lisa Marie Abel, MAPS, and founder Dr. Vicki Bitsika of the Centre for Autism Spectrum Disorders (CASD) at Bond University, Australia, et al have co-authored research projects on the well-being, coping, resiliency of NT-partners of individuals on the Autistic Spectrum (data from Masters thesis).

## RESOURCES