



DRIVING SKILLS

Aspie Driving

No 1

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

From *Highlands Drive Safe*

Welcome to the first newsletter for people diagnosed on the ASD spectrum. In the coming months we aim to develop fact sheets and helpful hints for people learning to drive. Our website is currently being built and over the time will develop into a valuable resource for people diagnosed with Asperger's, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and many conditions on the spectrum.

A common saying is "If you know one person with Asperger's, you know one person with Asperger's". And this is true, although there are a set of characteristics which help diagnose a person on the spectrum, each person is unique and can have a wide range of characteristics that differ between each of these people.

This does make training and learning to drive more of a challenge, but not impossible for the majority. This means training must be customized to the individual – how does this differ from other training- it doesn't. All training must be tailor made to the individual, whether you have AS or not, people learn differently from one another.

What is important is identifying the needs of the learner and this takes time and an effective evaluation processes.

Driving Instructors that take the time to listen to your needs and tailor make a program for you will have more success than trying to teach a standardized method to all students.

There will certainly be some people on the spectrum that choose not to drive. This is a personal choice and often one not made easily or without much thought. Reasons often given are: I don't want to hurt others, I cannot read the traffic or other drivers, and I find it all overwhelming.

All valid reasons. Anyone can make that choice and their choice must be respected. An evaluation with an experienced trainer can help them make this choice.

We will be developing a resource page on our webpage to help find these trainers.



Sue and Murray Tyler

Sue and Murray run a driving school in the Southern Highlands in NSW Australia.

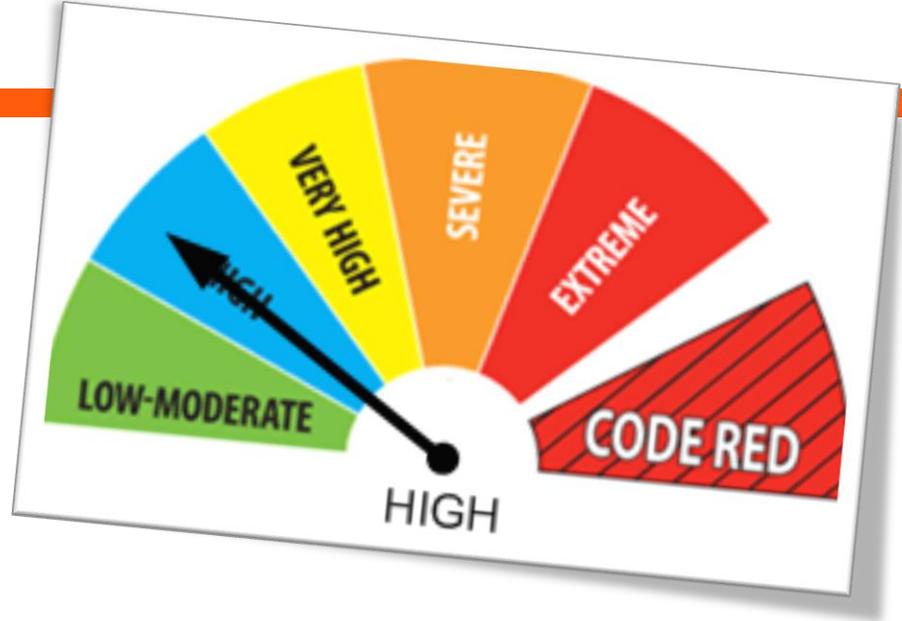
They have had experience with learners on the spectrum and continue to develop learning strategies to help people achieve their goals.

Meltdowns

There will always be a moment that triggers a meltdown. For every person on the spectrum this will look different to the next person. Although we all share similar features we also differ greatly. To talk about meltdowns is difficult as anyone on the spectrum will know it is something that is difficult to control, it makes you feel like you're watching yourself from an out of body experience. You know you are hurting the other person's feelings when you scream or go into shut down, but how can you explain in the middle of it all that you just need time to pull yourself out of the zone. And that the 'meltdown' is the valve that releases the frustration or fear, it's a necessary moment.

However, driving is not a safe place to have a meltdown. Understanding what symptoms you may feel or sense before getting to this stage where a release is needed can help you to intervene and find an alternative activity that will allow the body to work back to a calmness.

If you can identify these symptoms or feelings early pull the car over safely and take time out of the situation.



In the words of an Asperger adult "For others watching a meltdown taking place, it can be a frightening experience or for many they may misunderstand and feel I am being rude, angry or lashing out at them. The best action you can take while I am having a meltdown is simple – very little. Give me space, be silent, wait for me to depressurise and go into my zone to heal myself. Do not argue or make comments or make suggestions – I can hear you, but I am in my zone. If you keep talking and push it will increase the pressure and I will reach meltdown faster. This is frightening to you watching but it is frightening to me as well. I can hear you and your words increase my pressure level and I don't want to explode,

I feel upset afterwards and cannot find the right words to make it better.'

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Chewing on some chewing gum
- Eating something crunchy
- Pull over and deep breathe
- Sensory toys to play with
- Earphone to block out noise or to add music when the car is parked



HELP?

We are developing a worldwide resource of driving instructors and training facilities that work with people diagnosed on the spectrum. If you have had a great experience with a professional or their organisation let us know at drivesafe@hotkey.net.au and we will contact them for more information and add them to the resources page on the webpage.



Road signs :

- Using picture cards can help drivers identify the many different road signs when driving. The new learner or pre learner can identify the signs and have their own glossary for reference during the learner phase. Road signs are divided into
- Regulatory signs: these are mandatory and you must obey them as penalties apply if you do not.
- Warning signs: tell drivers of potential dangers and may suggest an appropriate speed.
- Information signs: tell drivers where places are, landmarks or tourist destinations.



Resources:

Learners

Look and Listen book and CD with NSW road rules questions and answers available free from Roads and Maritime Services NSW

We have found this to be a valuable learning tool that can be used by teachers in class and allows students to listen at their own pace to the questions that can be asked in the Learner test and the correct answers. Please note some questions are specific to NSW or Australian road rules.

In Victoria, teachers and parents can generate paper based tests to help the learner increase their knowledge and familiarise with the terminology.

<https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-Is/get-your-Is/lpt>

SIMPLE TIPS

New learners

- Look at local area road maps to familiarise names and landmarks.
- Read car brochures to familiarise the car controls
- Learn landmarks and familiar routes you will travel
- Use CD/ Online road rules mock tests to learn road rules
- Plan short trips to start with added breaks to reduce anxiety
- Have a workbook or communication book for areas of achievement, praise and areas to continue working on.
- Use Google maps – satellite and street view to discuss road situations and conditions

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.aspergerdrivertraining.com

Our Facebook site: Asperger driver training is available to share your driving stories and information about

