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**ASD Tips**

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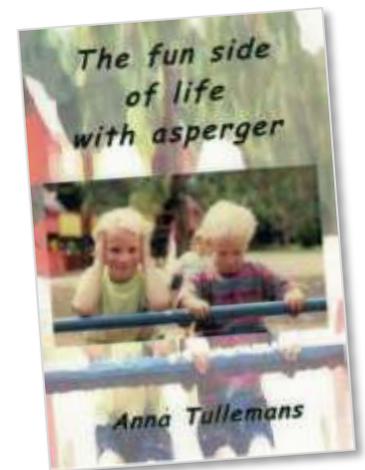
## Create Opportunities for Hugs

Many ASD people find touch difficult. Light touch and light massage can help to make them reach sensory overload quite quickly. They much prefer a firm touch and/or a firm massage.

As a mother it would upset me when my son didn't respond to my hugs and actively tried to get away. He would struggle and sometimes kick or hit me. Then there were times when he would actively seek me out and give me a hug that was so tight that I couldn't breathe.

It was after I noticed this pattern that I came up with an idea that I just had to try. I noticed that he liked firm hugs on **his** terms. From all my reading about Asperger's I knew that he needed to be warned ahead of time of things that might impact on his sensory sensitivities. One of these was light touch. It always sent him into some inappropriate behaviour when anyone touched him too lightly or brushed past him accidentally.

Many ASD people find touch difficult. Light touch and light massage can help to make



### **“Mothers need hugs to be beautiful”**

And so was born the phrase: **mothers need hugs to be beautiful**. He knew that when he heard these words I was going to give him a firm hug. It wasn't so much the sentiment behind the words that worked, but more so the advance warning. I was preparing him for the touch that was about to happen and he could prepare himself for the sensory stimulation that was about to happen.



## **“But you’re already beautiful”**

Sometimes he would reply ***but you’re already beautiful!*** Which as previously mentioned, wasn’t so much about the sentiment but meant that he could not be touched. As a mum this was difficult for me but I needed to respect his wishes.

Something that surprised me was when he began to use the same phrase back to me. He would use it when he needed to be hugged extra tight.

When my son was stressed or in the middle of sensory overload he searched for places that were small or tight, in the dryer, tightly wound in a doona or sheet, piled pillows on top of himself, as he realized that a tight hug would help to calm him.

## **Wrestling**

Sometimes my son would initiate wrestling with my husband. This always involved rolling around on the floor with weight alternating on top and underneath. We found that sometimes when his behaviours were unmanageable a good wrestle would help to calm and quiet him.

## **Hugs**

At first the hugs were one sided with me doing the hugging. When he became used to the hug I started to bring his arms around me. The next step was to make his arms put pressure around my body. So with my hands on his arms I would gently but firmly squeeze his arms around me.

After a while I told my son that a proper hug needed two people to use their arms to squeeze. He began to understand this and began to hug back.

It was fantastic the day that my son initiated a proper hug and it was breath taking, but in a great way! A day I’ll never forget because:

***“Mothers do need hugs to be beautiful”***

