



Autism, Relationships, Sexuality & Gender Issues

Saturday 3rd November 2018, 9.30 for 10am - 3 pm

at

Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN

<http://www.didcotcivichall.co.uk/Contact-Us>

Didcot Civic Hall is easily reached by public transport; limited parking on site and nearby



Guest Speaker

Dr. Wenn (formerly Wendy) B. Lawson

PhD; CPsychol; AFBPsS; MAPs

World Renowned Author of 20+ Autism books including:

Transitioning Together:

One Couple's Journey of Gender and Identity Discovery

Sex, Sexuality and the Autism Spectrum

Love, partnership or singleton on the autism spectrum

Research focus includes: **Autism & Gender; Autism & Gender Dysphoria**

Professionals: £60 + vat

Autistic People & Family Members: £45 + vat

Concession rate: £30 + vat

Our hope is that all who want to attend can afford the entry fee – prices have been fixed accordingly, taking into consideration all the costs of organising and hosting this event

Refreshments will be available; please bring your own lunch or buy from local shops

For fast, easy, secure booking: <http://www.autismoxford.org.uk>

Further Information

At this event, Dr Wenn Lawson will discuss the topics below, offering research findings, autistic insights and strategies to address the issues raised. Referring to the literature, he will draw on his personal experience and that of the many autistic people who have shared their experiences with him. This is a must-attend event for anyone with an interest in autistic relationships, sexuality, gender identity and gender dysphoria.

Relationships, Sexuality & Communication

There is a fundamental difference in the design mechanisms for attention between typical individuals and AS individuals. When one's brain is designed to work with single focus (AS individuals) and one isn't so apt at dividing one's attention it is very easy to be occupied with one specific interest.

Typical individuals, however, appear to be more at home with lots of different interests and not so focused upon one. Of course they can apply all of their attention to one thing and be fully tuned into that occupation. But, it seems their ability to divide their attention enables them to switch topics quickly, swap from one interest to another and even show and share interest in things that don't interest them!

This is an asset when it comes to social and or romantic relationships. On the other hand it's a hindrance when it comes to needing to stay focused on a particular topic (e.g. university essay) and not be drawn away to some social event (e.g. time at the pub with mates).

So, how do we bridge the gap between us? How do we, as AS individuals, build social relationships that work?

Gender & Sexuality in Autism

Gender and sexuality are different things. Both gender and sexuality may be experienced differently by the autistic (AS) population when compared to the typical population (NT). In autism our brain is single focussed and not traditionally bound to being socialised in ways the NT population experiences.

This has implications for gender and sexual development. To date the research on gender and sexuality in autism is scanty. But one paper concluded:

'autism manifests differently by biological sex. Furthermore, atypical brain areas in females with autism substantially and non-randomly ($P < 0.001$) overlapped with areas that were sexually dimorphic in neurotypical controls, in both grey and white matter, suggesting neural 'masculinization'. This was not seen in males with autism' (Lai Meng-Chuan, et al, 2013. P.1).

The idea that males and females experience sexuality and gender differently in autism is not new, but what will this mean for diagnosis, individual development of sexual and gender identities and how to support this diverse population?

Gender Dysphoria (GD)

There are frilly, girly girls, there are tomboy girls, there are girls who like woodwork, hairdressing, gardening, cooking – there's a huge spectrum that's female. But there are also girls who wish they were boys, and boys who know they're really meant to be girls. It's an incredibly strong thing. But it can take longer for some to connect the dots, especially if you have autism.

Some of the figures showing in autism research suggest Gender Dysphoria (GD) and other gender and sexuality issues are higher within the autism population. GD

individuals are living with extreme discomfort and 40% attempt suicide. Poor mental health among this population is higher than for any other and cannot be ignored. Wenn's current writings, research and teachings aim to address this (as well as all other areas of interest in autism).

Guest Speaker



Dr Wenn Lawson PhD; CPsychol; AFBPsS; MAPs

Bio

Wenn has worked in the autism field for over 25 yrs. His Autism workshops and training are much in demand in Australia and internationally. He has written and/or contributed to **over 20 books on autism** and related topics:

<http://www.buildsomethingpositive.com/wenn/books.html>

Wenn's Research focus is: Autism & Gender; Autism & Gender Dysphoria; Learning across the life span' and Object Permanence in Autism.

Papers published include: 'GAMMA and autistic attention,' 'Delayed Object Permanence and autism,' 'Single Attention & associated Cognition in Autism (SACCA)'; Women & Girls... and many others.

Wenn is a Tutor/lecturer (on line) in Autism Studies at the University of Birmingham, and is also currently involved with the Co-operative Research Centre for Living With Autism (ACRC) in Brisbane. He also works with:

2018-ICAN Editorial Board, Melbourne Central and Regional Local: ongoing

2018- Editorial Board- Autism in Adulthood Journal: ongoing

2018-2015 ACRC, All levels of co-production: Autism Research Academy; Autism National Guidelines (Australia) <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/connect-hub/reports/researching-autism-together-workshop>

Future Leaders Program: <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/future-leaders>

2018-2009 ongoing, Freelance **Psychologist**

2018-2005 ongoing, Tutor/lecturer (part-time) University of Birmingham's (UK) Autism Masters Course

018-1993 ongoing, Researcher, Author, Autism Advocate and Educationist