
Common Patterns in ND Partnerships

Common Patterns in ND Partners - ADHD

- **Distraction/Attentional Focus Issues:** partner thinks is evidence don't care and feels unloved
 - **Poor Organization:** trouble being reliable on tasks, leading to lack of trust
 - **Novelty Seeking:** feels like early relationship interest that has now waned
 - **Emotional Lability:** feels emotions bigger and faster
 - **Instability in Work:** may have history of work turnover and accompanying stability anxieties
 - **Short-term Memory Issues:** trouble remembering conversations; tasks; can feel like gaslighting
 - **Prospective Memory Issues:** not remembering to remember, can damage trust
 - **Time Management Challenges:** trouble breaking things into tasks and estimating time, can lead to problems meeting commitments with others and self/loss of trust/parent-child dynamics
 - **Prioritize Present vs Future:** can feel selfish/self-interest driven, indulgent to partner
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Common Patterns in ND Partners - ADHD

- **Lying:** impulsive, present-moment problem-solving can damage trust/create lack of safety
 - **Parent-Child Relating:** partner provides exec functioning, just as a parent does for a young child
 - **Approach/Withdraw:** scripts of “bad guy” chase/”can’t-do-anything” right withdraw
 - **Chore Wars:** scripts of chores becomes a constant battleground & devolves into tests of caring
 - **Intention/Impact Wars:** scripts of ND wants intention to matter/NT focuses on the impact
 - **You're Not Treating Your ADHD/Your Anxious & Codependent:** scripts about “other” lock-in
 - **Shame:** NT feels around nagging; ND feels for not doing what say will do
 - **Dopamine Seeking:** pornography, substances, behaviors, computer use/gaming
 - **Sleep Issues:** not going to bed together, fights about coming in late at night, pays cost next day
 - **Triangulation with Children:** responsible parent/fun parent opportunities for triangulation
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Common Patterns in ND Partners - ASD

- **Challenges with interoception:** hard to notice and define internal body states and emotions, easier to focus on outside and others...looks like, “if my partner happy, I’m happy”
- **Living separate lives:** strategy of exhaustion to solve problems but often partner loneliness
- **Trauma relationship:** 1. can feel safe/gentle/predictable and attract individuals with trauma in initial stage of relationship that turn into experiences of abandonment during differentiation phase of development. 2. ASD partner exteroception challenges source of trauma (“no emotional skin” to cope with partner intense anger). 3. Prone to experiencing bullying, abuse, intense anger, being taken advantage of, sexual assault
- **Sexual expression conflicts:** sensory challenges, levels of desire, unknown routines/rituals
- **Fear of NT partner:** hair-triggered freeze response, especially in presence of anger
- **Compensatory social strategies:** masking, assimilation
- **Communication style:** navigation using logic can be experienced as defensiveness or transactional and miss clear communication with relational styles
- **Functions best:** in structure, predictability & logic, rule-based learning, can frustrate NT
- **Executive functioning challenges:** delays from decoding can look like LD or ADHD, episodic memory challenges can lead to historical recall frustrations

Common Patterns in ND Partners - ASD

- Rigid/entrenched/lack of flexibility in perspective- other can experience feeling invalidate or “corrected” in their experience
 - Unique voice & sentence structure (formal, childlike, literal)
 - Unique cognitive profile, savant/special area of interest: often career choice, can feel like monologuing and overdone to partner
 - Sensory sensitivities: dog barking/fabric/smells/food textures/sex
 - Social behavior: say wrong thing for context, few connections, want more friends but not execute, partner or special interest is their center, not like to travel
 - Alexithymia: difficulty accessing words for emotions, defining own experience
 - Perspective taking: hard to guess another’s experience
 - Desires connection but can feel exhausting to activate on it “successfully”
 - Can struggle with food, ASD women are prone to anorexia
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Common Patterns in ND Partners - NT

- **Chronic reactivity:** broadcasting anger and using fear as a lever to be heard/get action
 - **Chronic overwhelm, over-responsibility, overuse of controlling parent:** don't want to but feels in a double bind
 - **Chronic resentment:** resents the many invites to understand & accommodate your difference
 - **I can't trust you:** lack of consistent demonstration means I'm always on guard assessing
 - **Lack of emotional reciprocity:** intense loneliness
 - **Frustrating/unexpected patterns of communication:** my inner roadmaps don't work and unseats my safety in the world (and often no one knows this is what's happening for me)
 - **Shame about their anger and resentment:** feels changed by it (lost self-identity), and spends considerable time vacillating between shame and trying to troubleshoot the experience
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Common Patterns in ND Partners - NT

- **Hopelessness:** about the situation being able to change
 - **Incredulous/feeling of gaslighting:** desire to have their partner's behavior on film & for someone to validate "this isn't normal"
 - **Overdeveloped skill in prediction:** reinforces confirmation bias
 - **Can be the bad guy in triangulation:** experiences intense shame and resentment about not being preferred given their sacrifices
 - **Frustration about lack of validation from others:** many times has been invalidated by others including therapists (needs to be believed)
 - **Has read many books:** trying to understand and find a plan for change/relief
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