

**Uniquely Us**  
**Gracefully Navigating the Maze of**  
**Neurodiverse Marriage**  
**Autism Faith Marriage**

**Chapter 2:**

**Navigating the Maze of Expectation and**  
**Challenges of Mutual Marital Satisfaction**

*Satisfaction from the Point of View of the AS/ND Partner*

# Chapter 2

Metaphors Stephanie uses to foster understanding of what it is to navigate the maze of marital satisfaction

## 1. Chutes and Ladders

We will experience success and also slip back as we learn to navigate this relationship together.

## 2. Candy Land

Stuck in the molasses swamp-waiting for the change we are working toward

# Chapter 2

Marital Satisfaction in ND marriages (from the 322 survey participants)

- ND spouses are more satisfied (68%) with the relationship than their NT spouses are (35%)
- Closing the NT-ND satisfaction gap requires a lifestyle of mutual teamwork and accommodation
- Main themes related to ND spouse marital satisfaction are
  - Absence of conflict
  - Encouragement to pursue interests
  - Sharing interests with spouse
  - Receiving appreciation for accomplishments
  - Acceptance of differences without pressure or expectations

# Chapter 2

Marital Satisfaction in ND marriages (from the 322 survey participants)

- Main factors contributing to ND spouse marital dissatisfaction are
  - Attributing all marital challenges to the autism/autistic spouse
  - Feeling criticized or blamed
  - Lack of enough alone time
  - Any form of conflict
  - Perceived shortage or withdrawal of physical affection
- What ND Spouses need from their NT partner to foster empathy and understanding:

*Slow down and allow time to think and respond*

# Chapter 2

## Effective Personal Communication and Differing Processing Speeds

1. Forecast issues that will require meaningful discussion and input to make a decision
  - Email ahead of time and allow space/time for the ND spouse to think and investigate (process) before discussion
2. Categorize discussion topics
  - Is the topic financial, logistical, relational, or emotional?
  - Which are you most successful at and which will require more processing and effort?
3. Use a Notebook for emotionally charged discussions
  - This allows both partners to express themselves with adequate processing time and space before a face to face discussion
4. One topic at a time

# Chapter 2

## Effective Coaching Strategy

Do not compare ND marriages with NT relationships (joy and satisfaction in a relationship are highly individual...)

Use the 'Love Needs' assessment to prioritize which Needs to start working on in your unique relationship

There is NOT a simple solution or guaranteed perfect outcome-this is a challenging journey that can lead to contentment, satisfaction and fulfillment in an ND marriage.

# Chapter 2

## Common AS/ND Spouse Challenges

Misidentification of frequent communication as criticism and associated Relationship Issues

- Different is not wrong or bad
- Look for what is positive
- Combine appreciation with constructive coaching
- TFTF (Stone and Sheen)

A feeling of being Constantly Evaluated

- Reframe how feedback is perceived and shared

Post diagnosis NT spouse changes

# Chapter 2

## Dan's Insights and Hindsight Learning

- When you recognize someone is trying and doing something different to reach you it is rewarding and a sign of trying to find a way out of the maze with you
- When you follow through it shows you are receptive and also trying to escape the maze
- The couple jointly works themselves out of the maze through appreciation of these efforts and continuing together
- The call to action is for both partners to work together
- We want healthy people producing growing relationships

## Brian Hight: Intentionality Is Key

- For his marriage to survive he had to intentionally change his attitude and actions
- Intentionality requires commitment and focus.



# Chapter 2

## Navigating the Maze Gracefully

- How do you offer grace and become curious about your spouse? (or are you dismissive and defensive?)
- Are you building tools for the skills you need as a couple to find mutual satisfaction? (find help at [www.christianneurodiversemarriage.com](http://www.christianneurodiversemarriage.com). )
- Find a communication strategy that meets both of your needs slowing the process and getting to resolution
- Commit to change