



GIRLS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

- Girls are typically diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders at a later age than boys and may be less likely to be diagnosed at an early age. They may present as shy or dependent on others rather than disruptive like boys. They are less likely to behave aggressively and tend to be passive or withdrawn.
- Girls can appear to be socially competent as they copy other girls' behaviours and are often taken under the wing of other nurturing friends. The need to fit in is more important to girls than boys, so they will find ways to disguise their difficulties.
- Like boys, girls can have obsessive special interests, but they are more likely to be typical female topics such as horses, pop stars or TV programmes/celebrities, and the depth and intensity of them will be less noticeable as unusual at first.
- Girls are more likely to respond to non-verbal communication such as gestures, pointing or gaze-following as they tend to be more focused and less prone to distraction than boys.
- Anxiety and depression are often worse in girls than boys especially as their difference becomes more noticeable as they approach adolescence. This is when they may struggle with social chat and appropriate small-talk, or the complex world of young girls' friendships and being part of the in-crowd.

There are books available that help support the learning of social skills aimed at both girls and boys such as *The Asperkid's Secret Book of Social Rules*, by Jennifer Cook O'Toole and *Asperger's Rules: How to make sense of school and friends*, by Blythe Grossberg. There are many more aimed just at girls and women with autism spectrum disorders (see below).

SNAP has recognised the need for parents of girls with social communication difficulties to support each other, as advice and support available for boys is not always appropriate for them. In response to this, The SNAP Centre is hosting regular opportunities for parents of girls who are diagnosed with, or suspected of having an autism spectrum disorder, to come together for discussion groups. At these groups parents can share information, learn from and support each other, and hear about the services SNAP can offer them. There may also be a relevant guest speaker if requested by the group. Ask to be added to the interested list for this group to receive updates.

The SNAP specialist library has many books and resources specifically about girls and women on the autism spectrum.

Girls and Autism: Flying Under the Radar – An excellent guide to supporting girls with autism spectrum conditions, produced by the charity nasen (National Association of Special Education Needs) www.nasen.org.uk This guide can be emailed from the SNAP library on request.



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A selection of books available from the SNAP library:

Asperger's and Girls – Tony Attwood
Asperger's, Autism & Girls (DVD) – Tony Attwood
Girls Growing up on the Autism Spectrum – Shana Nichols
Girls Under the Umbrella of Autism Spectrum Disorders – Lori Ernsperger
Sisterhood of the Spectrum: An Asperger Chicks Guide to Life – Jennifer Cook O'Toole
The Independent Woman's Handbook for Super Safe Living on the Autistic Spectrum – Robyn Steward
M is for Autism (students of Limpsfield Grange School)
M in the Middle
Life on the Autism Spectrum – A guide for girls and women – Tony Attwood & Karen McKibben
A Girl like Tilly: growing up with autism – Helen Bates & Ellen Li
Women and Girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder – Sarah Hendrickx & Judith Gould
The Growing Up Guide for Girls – Davida Hartman
Parenting Girls on the Autism Spectrum – Eileen Riley-Hall
Asperger's in Pink – Julie Clark
Aspergirls: Empowering Females with Asperger Syndrome – Rudy Simone
The Girl with the Curly Hair: Asperger's Syndrome – Alis Rowe
Helping siblings : Meltdowns and Shutdowns : In 8-11 year olds : In 5-8 year olds : In 13-16 year olds : In 16-18 year olds : Anxiety : Puberty : Book 1 : Social energy : Meets the boy with the spiky hair : In 12-16 year old girls Vol 2
Grace Under Pressure: Going the distance as an Aspergers mum – Sophie Walker
Odd Girl Out: An autistic woman in a neurotypical world – Laura James
Lisa and the Lacemaker – Kathy Hoopmann

Online:

The Curly Hair Project - <https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>
Facebook group: Girls Autistic Journey: a page to share information about girls on the autism spectrum <https://www.facebook.com/girlsautisticjourney/>
NAS pages - <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/gender/stories.aspx>
Limpsfield Grange School video - <https://youtu.be/oZhZ0k1lyF8>
Sesame Street's character Julia who has autism <http://autism.sesamestreet.org/>

The contacts and links given via this SNAP information sheet have been shared as a starting point for your own research. We believe the information to be genuine and correct at the time of publishing, however no responsibility for loss occasioned by any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of the material contained herein can be accepted by SNAP.