



Autism and Girls

Navigating and understanding autism can be difficult for the family as well as the individual. The presentation of autism can be different in females to males.

Social Communication

- Girls may be less likely to be diagnosed with autism 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 They are less likely to behave aggressively and can be passive or withdrawn.
- Girls can appear to be socially competent as they copy other girls' behaviours. The need to fit in is more important to girls than boys, so they will find ways to disguise their difficulties (masking).
- They may need time alone to recover from masking, as this can cause exhaustion.
- They may struggle to sustain eye contact and/or reciprocal conversation.
- Girls may have situational mutism (involuntary and temporary loss of ability to speak in social situations) which is linked to having high anxiety.
- They may laugh at inappropriate moments due to differences in identifying physical sensations in the body linked to emotions.
- Girls may be more likely to have intense friendships that are more prone to falling out.
- They may find it difficult to pick up on social cues such as body language or tone of voice.
- They may prefer solitary play instead of social interaction.
- Girls may speak in a monotone voice or unusual speech patterns.
- They may have passionate but limited interests.
- Girls may try to please people and give the answers they think you want to hear.
- Girls may take things very literally and struggle to understand jokes or sarcasm.
- They may find it more difficult to self-identify.



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Emotions

- Girls may experience intense empathy towards animals, objects or soft toys.
- They may seem emotionally and socially younger than their peers.
- Girls may be triggered to high stress levels by transitions and change.
- Girls can rely heavily on structured routines and rituals.
- Anxiety and depression can occur 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.
- Girls may display signs such as irritability and being distracted, leading to an exhausted shutdown where they freeze, stop processing what is going on and isolate themselves.



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Sensory

- They may have a strong sensory reaction to clothes, touch, noises or smells.
- Girls may have a restricted diet due to the textures and tastes of foods.
- They may find busy, noisy environments overwhelming and stressful.
- They may struggle to find ways to help regulate their emotions.
- Girls may seek out increased or reduced sensory activities. For more information regarding sensory activities, please scan the QR code on the final page to access our other information sheets, including After School Overload.

Support

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 autism, 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. Ask to be added to the interested list for this group to receive updates.

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.



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Online support and book recommendations



Hey, I'm Maisie! And I am autistic - Alison Handley



The Spectrum Girl's Survival Guide: How to Grow Up Awesome and Autistic - Siena Castellon



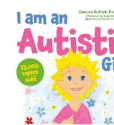
Social Skills for Teen Girls with Autism - Genevieve



Autism in Teenage Girls - Alan Spicer



Odd Girl Out: An Autistic Woman in a Neurotypical World - Laura James



I am an Autistic Girl - Danuta Bulhak-Paterson

- Autism, Girls and Keeping It All Inside—[keeping-it-all-inside.pdf](#)
- A guide to supporting autistic girls, produced by the charity Nasen - [Girls and Autism: Flying under the radar | Nasen](#)
- The Curly Hair Project - [The Girl With The Curly Hair - Autism Training, Animations, Books](#)
- NAS pages - [Autism and gender identity](#)
- Sesame Street's character Julia who has autism [Autism - Sesame Workshop](#)

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Please scan QR code or click on the link to access this and our other information sheets

[Downloadable Survival Guides, Information and Resources from SNAP](#)



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