



# Girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Girls with ASD are often undiagnosed, because original diagnostic criteria have a boy bias. The criteria were created by actually examining mainly boys, and the girls can be very different. I think we all know 'neuro-typical' boys and girls are very different in their social, communication and behaviour. There are many characteristics that are very similar to boys with ASD but I thought I would list the main differences to girls with ASD.

## Ten Ways Girls with ASD differ to Boys with ASD

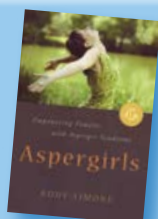
1. Their special interests are usually animals, music, art, literature.
2. They often have a very good imagination which includes imaginary friends, games, being animals or taking on persona of other girls.
3. They often see speech therapists for their speech and may be diagnosed with specific language disorders however there is something different about this girl no one can quite put their finger on.
4. They often play with older children or much younger children. This play is sometimes unusual for example 'Mums and Dads' but she will want to play the same role and game every time. She usually wants to be the pet or baby, whereas most girls want to be the Mum or Dad.
5. They often have hyperlexia – the ability to read but comprehension does not always match their reading skills. They are often the class book worm or write stories but they write the same story over and over changing a few characters. Many have a special interest in literature.
6. They have unusual sensory processing, like the boys, however bigger fluctuations often going from one extreme to the other.
7. They get anxious like boys, however their anxiety is rarely physical or disruptive. In fact many have great copying mechanisms at school however the family see a very different child at home where the anxiety can explode.
8. Often their difficulties with social skills are called 'shy', 'quiet', 'solitary'.
9. They often like to organize and arrange objects. I watched one little girl spend hours seemingly playing "My Little Ponies" however on closer examination she was just arranging and re-arranging the horses over and over.
10. The main difference is there are MANY more undiagnosed girls/women than boys/men. Currently we only diagnose 1 girl to 7 boys. In the future it is thought by many psychologists the ratio could be more like 5 to 7 as we become more aware of this group.



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Aspergirls

By Rudy Simone



### The Complete Guide to Aspergers Syndrome

By Tony Attwood



### From Anxiety to Meltdown

By Deborah Lipsky

