

Profile of girls with Asperger syndrome

It has been said that there are 9 boys for every girl with Asperger syndrome. This figure has recently been called into question and it is now believed that because girls present differently, they are not always being picked up. Tony Attwood suggests that the adult ratio could be 2:1, men to women.

Often Asperger syndrome is not picked up in girls until another problem is identified, commonly:

- OCD
- Social phobia
- Panic attacks
- Anorexia
- Depression

They are more prone to eating disorders and can become obsessed with counting calories.

Girls with Asperger syndrome report feeling profoundly different and can find it a terrible strain to conform to social expectations.

Girls are often considered to be more verbal and more compliant than boys in educational settings and therefore might show better compensatory learning. They tend to be less disruptive and so less likely to be noticed. They can quickly learn that if they are good they will be left alone.

They may be passive, quiet and compliant.

They can lack instinctive understanding of social behaviour, which comes naturally to most women.

Girls have less conspicuous motor impairment.

Girls have a broader range of special interests and they are less eccentric, for example, horses, animals. Their obsessions tend to reflect those of neuro-typical girls' interests. These interests are more likely to be unusual in terms of intensity rather than the focus.

They are often better at copying mannerisms, behaviours and dress code than boys.

They need to make themselves inconspicuous to avoid standing out. Often lets others go first.

They sometimes replay social situations in play.

Imaginary friends can be common, even with teens. It can be easier to revert to fantasy, if they don't fit in with reality. This can lead to writing stories. Girls often read fiction (or watch soap operas), which helps them learn about inner thoughts and feelings.

Girls with Asperger syndrome often worry about what went wrong during the day, so can have problems sleeping.

They may be heavily dependent on one or two people and can be shielded and escape scrutiny due to this close relationship. They may only have one friend at a time. Prolonged social contact can be exhausting for them.

They often relate better to males who have a more linear, step-by-step thinking and conversation. Men are also less bothered by manners.

They have a stronger desire to connect with others and are more socially adaptable than boys.

They may have tomboy traits and fail to be interested in more girly pursuits, for example, make-up. They may see clothing in terms of comfort or practicality, not fashion. Often they are not perceived as conventionally feminine.

They tend not to like physical contact and this can complicate relationships later in life.

Girls with Asperger syndrome can make very good friends – they see themselves as loyal, true friends. They are less likely to be ‘fickle’ or ‘bitchy’ in friendships.

A major personal issue can be “who am I?” – girls with Asperger syndrome often can’t see what their persona is. They often want to please, but also don’t want to admit they don’t know something.

Suggested reading

- *Pretending to be Normal: Living with Asperger’s Syndrome* by Liane Holliday-Willey; Jessica Kingsley Publications
- *Asparagus Dreams* by Jessica Peers; Jessica Kingsley Publications
- *Martian in the Playground: Understanding the Schoolchild with Asperger’s Syndrome* by Claire Sainsbury; Lucky Duck Books
- *Asperger’s and Girls* by Tony Attwood (Author), Temple Grandin (Author), Teresa Bolick; Future Horizons
- *Girls Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum: What Parents and Professionals Should Know About the Pre-teen and Teenage Years* by Shana Nichols; Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- *Women from Another Planet?: Our Lives in the Universe of Autism* by Jean Kearns Miller; AuthorHouse