


Autism in Girls Checklist

 Possible presentations <i>These may change in intensity depending on environmental/ social/health context. They will not all be present in one individual, but a significant number of ticks could suggest a referral for assessment might be helpful.</i>	
Friendships: lacks best friend/ fixates on one person/controlling or domineering/on the edge of things socially/imaginary friend/teased or bullied by peers /shy. Strengths: May be very loyal	
Maturity: may play with younger children - or older children. Strengths: Sometimes very mature	
Intense interests: may be similar to most girls but more intense and less imaginative. Strengths: Specialist in-depth knowledge which gives huge pleasure	
School work: issues with homework; difficulty with change and or transitions; perfectionist. Strengths: May be a model student	
Misunderstanding social norms: rude to teachers; correcting adults and peers; play with boys. Strengths: Different take on what really matters – sometimes refreshing!	
Communication: poor at chit-chat; taking things literally; not initiating conversations; infrequent use of gesture. Strengths: Some girls with autism have exceptionally good expressive language	
Different behaviour at home to school: anxious at home but ‘fine’ at school; trying hard to fit in at school but this comes at a cost.	
High levels of anxiety: ‘meltdowns’ or ‘shutdowns’ - poor attendance.	
Obsessive: organising things endlessly, doing the same thing repeatedly. Strengths: Ability to persist with something	
Lack sense of personal identity: not sure how to describe themselves; over apologetic. Strengths: Freedom from social constraints	
Gender: may lack certainty about gender. Strengths: Freedom from social constraints	
Sensory processing: differences [noise/touch/light...] eating issues; limited diet. Strengths: May find great pleasure in certain sensory experiences	
Intense: may come across as opinionated; strong need to be right. Strengths: Strong sense of justice	
Theory of Mind issues: struggling to realise what others may be thinking.	
Copying others: observes and copies behaviour – analytical rather than intuitive. Strengths: Observant	
Co-Morbidity: may also have dyslexia, dyspraxia, hypermobility, hypertonia, ADHD, ADD, epilepsy, Tourette’s, anorexia.	

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Early Years

Separation anxiety from parent or caregiver	
Seeks and/or prefers the company of adults or educators throughout the day	
Intense emotions often observed	
Sense of justice, adherence to rules, telling on others (or herself), described as bossy	
Can make friends but may have difficulty maintaining more than one friendship	
May be clingy to one peer	
May have an advanced reading ability	
Correcting the teacher or others	
May be observed by herself and/or wandering around alone	
Teachers may view her as the odd one out, "odd" or "different"	
Passive and/or resistant to contributing to class group work/discussion and/or lack of interest in classroom activities	
May be viewed as the "teacher's pet"	

This checklist has been developed using information from several sources including:

NAS 'Women and Girls' training module 2018 - input from T Attwood, J Gould, S Hendrickx
<https://www.autisonlinetraining.com/course/view.php?id=44>

The Education of Girls with an Autism Spectrum Condition? The hidden curriculum by J Ashton-Smith
<https://www.slideshare.net/NationalAutisticSociety/stream-2-session-2-jacqui-ashton-smith>

Girls and women who have Asperger's syndrome - 'Safety Skills for Asperger Women' by Liane Holliday Willey.
 Foreword by T Attwood
<http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/about-aspergers/girls-and-women-who-have-aspergers>

NASEN - Girls and Autism: Flying under the radar by Barry Carpenter and Jo Egerton
<http://www.nasen.org.uk/resources/resources.girls-and-autism-flying-under-the-radar.html>

Siena Castellon – young autistic woman - creator of Quantum Leap Mentoring website
<https://www.qlmentoring.com>

Early Years information taken from Tania Ann Marshall author of Aspie Girl books
<https://taniaannmarshall.wordpress.com/2013/06/22/first-signs-of-asperger-syndrome-in-young-girls-pre-school/>