

Asperger's Disorder in Females - rough draft

Basic Asperger's Symptoms

- Above average memory skills
- Average or above average vocabulary skills
- Awkward, repetitive gestures, body postures or facial expressions
- Below average handwriting
- Difficulty understanding their feelings
- Extreme difficulty with peer relationships and social situations
- Inability to be empathetic
- Inability to read non-verbal social cues and other people's feelings
- Inability to sense other people's needs for personal space
- Late development of motor skills or a lack of physical coordination
- Obsessive interest in one topic which they may talk about excessively
- Strong attachment to routine
- Strong aversion to change or spontaneity
- Unusual sensitivity to sound, light, or touch
- Unusual speech patterns with regard to tone, pitch, or accents

Female-Specific symptoms (gathered from multiple web sites)

Symptoms of Asperger's are different in girls than boys

Symptoms are more passive in nature

- Not often aggressive when frustrated (unlike male counterparts)
- Tend to be withdrawn and can easily "fly under the radar" in classrooms and other social environments
- Able to express their emotions in a calmer way than their male counterparts
- Often protected and nurtured by their neurotypical friends, who help them cope with difficult social situations
- Acceptance from peers can sometimes mask the issues that these girls have so that they are not recognized by teachers and parents

- [] Obsessive tendencies in regard to animals, dolls, and other female-oriented interests
- [] Collect dolls but do not use them to engage socially with other girls
- [] Fascination with certain subjects can lead to them lagging behind their peers in terms of maturity and age-appropriate behavior: for example, a pre-teen with Asperger's syndrome may be fascinated with stuffed animals or cartoons long after other girls their age have outgrown these things
- [] Tend to be bored with people their age and have difficulty empathizing with their friends' worries or problems
- [] Because a girl's friends do their best to help her, her parents and/or teachers may never see symptoms - or may not see them often enough - that would warrant a clinical diagnosis
- [] Hyper-focused interest one particular thing or topic; girls often focus on animals or classic literature
- [] Will have an unusually intimate knowledge of her topic of interest
- [] Young girls may play with dolls and have imaginary friends, which doesn't seem at all unusual. However, her interest in these things will continue even when she's a teenager
- [] They often learn to mimic people who have stronger social skills. They may adopt someone else's mannerisms, facial expressions and even vocal intonations
- [] Tend to suffer in silence and appear shy and passive
- [] Typically use their average to above-average intelligence to hide their social difficulties
- [] Do not understand how to process and express emotions in a normal way, their faces often develop a "mask-like" quality
- [] They put a permanent smile on their faces and constantly try to please others
- [] Learn to mimic what other children do. However, without role models, they cannot figure out what to do on their own
- [] Often memorize scripts when they have to interact with others
- [] More likely to enjoy arranging their dolls; may alphabetize their Barbies by outfit, for example
- [] Enjoy playing dolls by themselves and find the other girls' creative play boring or disruptive

- [] Like "little philosophers." They may wonder if all people see the same color as blue, for instance, or analyze the meaning of the word "mind."
- [] Often appear odd or cold, or seem to live in fantasy world
- [] Love animals, but in an obsessive way. For example, if she loves horses, she may want to spend every waking hour riding, grooming her horse, or even sleeping in the stable
- [] In elementary school, these girls often cope by finding one good friend. This friend is often kind and motherly, and her friendship is a lifeline to the girl with Asperger's Syndrome. In fact, if she moves away, it has devastating consequences
- [] Another way that young girls cope with their disorder is by playing with boys. Male games are rule-oriented and do not require as much social and emotional understanding as female interactions do.
- [] During a time in life when everyone else is obsessed with fashion and fads, Asperger teens often dress in a haphazard way, not following fashion but preferring to wear the same comfortable outfit day after day
- [] May not wash or use deodorant unless prompted by their families
- [] May still enjoy toys and games that were popular in grammar school
- [] May not have the organizational skills needed for high school level work
- [] When their parents try to bring them up to speed and to help them conform to their world, many girls with Asperger's rebel from what they perceive as constant parental criticism
- [] Teen girls with Asperger Syndrome often find female friendships to be very demanding and even overwhelming
- [] Don't understand their adolescent friends' extreme emotional ups and downs - why they cry when they get a failing grade or if a boy does not call
- [] One constant worry for parents is that their teenage daughter will be the victim of a sexual predator. This is a valid worry, for Asperger girls are often naïve about sex. They misinterpret boys' signals and allow them to use them.
- [] Intense focus on a particular subject
- [] Appears anxious when there are changes in routine
- [] Practices rituals that appear to have no function

- Resists change
- Odd posturing
- Difficulty coordinating movements
- Repetitive movements (stims)
- Strong aversion to certain smells
- Resists activities that involve movement (slides, escalators...)
- Seeks out sensory experiences (spinning, rocking...)
- Dislikes textures in foods, clothes or objects
- No response or extreme response to noises
- Appears excessively shy
- Avoids interacting with others
- Appears uncomfortable during conversation
- Hesitant to make the first move
- Tends to "blend" into the crowd
- "Scripts" daily conversations
- Excellent memory skills and adherence to routine make them outstanding actors who can mask appropriate social interaction. Signs of scripting social interaction include:
 - Patterned speech that may seem unnatural
 - Odd inflection that occurs repeatedly
 - Tendency to use the same script every day
 - Difficulty dealing with unexpected responses
 - Adding responses into the script
- A scripted conversation may appear slightly unusual or it can be readily apparent. The patterns can be difficult to detect but a telltale sign is the individual's tendency to seek the same reciprocation repeatedly. Sometimes this leads to answering her own question. "Everyone get in line? Let's get in line." (The student may mimic the way the teacher talks when saying, "Let's get in line.") "Are you okay? Yes I'm okay."
- Young girls with Aspergers may have endearing ways of scripting social interaction that, while cute, can be signs of social processing difficulties.

- [] Masters with order and routine
- [] Often better able to express emotions than their male counterparts
- [] Seem disinterested and aloof
- [] Have difficulty understanding slang and humor
- [] Enamored with princesses, fantasy kingdoms, unicorns, and animals
- [] Feel resentment toward people, who for many years had been trying to teach them “socially appropriate” ways of acting
- [] May make eye contact better or know how to answer a question better (than male counterparts). They have just been trained to more verbal and have better communication skills.
- [] They can sometimes fake being "normal" better (than male Aspergers).
- [] They may seem more social because it is more acceptable to help a girl with friends instead of urging them to do this for themselves
- [] Clumsiness shows up in the way she walks, perhaps not swinging her arms as typical in other (non AS) girls or taking small mincing steps; or in poor handwriting
- [] Unusual in their tone of voice. Their tone resembles a much younger person, having an almost child like quality.
- [] Prefer to maintain the characteristics of childhood.
- [] May see no value in being fashionable, preferring practical clothing and not using cosmetics or deodorants