

Supporting Girls with ASD

Half-Day Workshop Handout

Girls and ASD



ASD Characteristics in Girls

- Fewer externalizing symptoms when compared to boys (eg. aggression, impulsivity etc.)
- Greater internalizing symptoms (eg. anxiety, depression etc.)
- Greater impacts on social communication
- Lower levels of restricted interests
- More gender-stereotyped interests
- Higher social motivation



Why are Girls with ASD Under-Diagnosed?

- Differences in expression of ASD characteristics
- Camouflage
- Referral Bias



Camouflaging

- Consciously or unconsciously masking autistic traits/difficulties associated with autism

Types of Camouflaging

- Assimilation
- Compensation
- Masking



Consequences of Camouflaging

- Exhaustion
- Diminished sense of identity
- Increased risk for mental health difficulties
- Decreased access to supports

How to Support Girls with ASD

- Foster a sense of identity
- Provide opportunities to learn how autism affects them
- Teach awareness of strengths and challenges
 - Connect to community of autistic females
 - Build networks that promote resilience, well-being and stigma-resistance
- Provide opportunities to connect with others with similar interests
- Support mental wellness
- Support emotional challenges
 - Ask about triggers for anxiety/behavioural concerns
 - Teach and help students recognize coping strategies
 - Allow/provide tools that are calming
 - Provide step-by-step instructions for social situations
 - Provide down-time after group work
 - Allow students the option to work alone if appropriate
 - Assign groups rather than allowing students to self-select
 - Teach social safety

Teach Critical Skills Through:

- Video Modelling
- Social Stories
- Visual Task Analysis
- Teach loosely

Teach Feminine Care

- Observable changes in body
- Changes inside body
- Menstruation
- Hygiene

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Half-Day Workshop Additional Resources

Websites:

- John Hopkins Medicine
<https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/Patients-Families/Health-library/HealthDocNew/Taking-Care-of-Your-Body-Answers-for-Girls-With-ASD>
- Autism Awareness Centre Inc.
<https://autismawarenesscentre.com/prepare-girl-autism-menstruation/>
- Parent's Guide to Puberty and Adolescence for Children with Autism
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Puberty%20and%20Adolescence-%20Resource.pdf>

Videos:

- "Ask an Autistic" Series – Amythest Schaber
<https://www.youtube.com/user/neurowonderful>
- Women & Girls with Autism – Video Learning Series – Autism Community Training (ACT), 2018
<https://www.actcommunity.ca/education/videos/women-and-girls-with-autism>
- Girls Have Autism Too – Social Skills" – AutismBC Talk, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byUzLZ4Ykpo&list=PLxecJeyoH5n2Y8q3PedM3WVPbRAjThrwv&index=7&t=1403s>

Audio Podcast:

- "Different Brains® Spectrumly Speaking" – Haley Moss & Dr. Lori Butts
<https://www.differentbrains.org/category/spectrumly-speaking/>

Blogs:

- "Actually Autistic Blogs List":
<https://anautismobserver.wordpress.com/>

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Online Learning:

- “Girls on the Autism Spectrum” – Autism Internet Modules
https://autisminternetmodules.org/mod_intro.php?mod_id=205
- “Camouflaging in Autism” – Frontiers for Young Minds
<https://kids.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/frym.2019.00129>

TED and TEDx by Autistic Women:

- “Invisible diversity: A story of undiagnosed autism” – Carrie Beckwith-Fellows
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cF2dhWWUyQ4>
- “Copy & Paste – Hidden Asperger’s – Girls with Aspergers” – Niamh McCann
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY2ctCuTWPw>
- “Neurodiversity – the key that unlocked my world” – Elisabeth Wiklander
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qvvrme5WlwA&t=47s>
- “How I learned to communicate my inner life with Asperger’s” – Alix Generous
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yfFwDq4R5M>
- “How autism freed me to be myself” – Rosie King
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ95xlZeHo8>
- “The world needs all kinds of minds” – Temple Grandin
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKhg68QJlo0>
- “Autism: A quick trip to my home planet” – Monique Botha
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCAErePScO0&t=438s>
- “My brain isn’t broken” – Tashi Baiguerra
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8j1fcQiyBU&t=76s>

Organizations and Networks:

- Aspire: The Female Autism Network
<https://aspirefemaleautismnetwork.wordpress.com/>
- Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network
<https://awnnetwork.org/about/>
- Autistic Women’s Association
<https://www.facebook.com/autisticwomensassociation/>
- Good Company – An Autistic Women & Nonbinary Support Group
<https://dorizener.com/good-company/>