Although autism has historically been considered a predominantly male condition, there is now a growing awareness that the condition manifests itself differently and more subtly in females. In many instances, difficulties with social communication can be subtler in girls and therefore may not always be particularly apparent in the school setting. This can certainly be the case when there are supportive peers or siblings in the school environment and when the young person responds well to the structure of the school day and likes to follow rules.

Girls may be more able to follow social rules through observation and girls may mask their difficulties by learning to copy behaviour i.e., using skills based on intellect rather than social intuition. They may be quicker to apologise and appease when they make a social error, increasing the likelihood of their unusual behaviour being overlooked or forgotten by others. It is also important to recognise that this can be an exhausting process and can contribute to distress and reduced coping, although this distress may be seen in the home setting rather than in school.

Also, girls are often more socially aware and socially driven, and so more likely to seek out play and interaction opportunities (whilst often being ‘led’ by peers rather than initiating activities themselves). They may have one special friend with whom they share an intense, sometimes dependent, relationship. As they grow in self-awareness and recognition of their ‘differences’, girls may take greater pains to avoid drawing attention to themselves, for example by being quiet, well behaved and compliant at school.

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition, which affects the way individuals communicate with and relate to other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. People with autism often prefer routine and may struggle with change. They may have particularly intense interests and may be good at noticing patterns and small details. People with autism frequently suffer from high levels of anxiety due to their difficulties in making sense of what is going on around them. It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways.

Autism is also associated with strengths and there is an increasing awareness of autism as ‘difference’ rather than ‘disorder.’

Here is just a few sources of information that might be useful, there are many more:

**Books**

* The Spectrum Girls Survival Guide. How to grow up awesome and autistic. Siena Castellon. Siena also has a website. She is on the spectrum herself. She's 17 and is an advocate of neurodiversity and autism.
* Asparagus-dreams by Jessica Peers
* Aspergirls by Rudy Simone
* Standing Down Falling Up; Asperger's Syndrome from the Inside Out by Nita Jackson
* Sisterhood of the Spectrum by Jennifer Cook O’Toole
* Can You See Me? Expected to fit in, proud to stand out by Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott
* Girls Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum: What Parents and Professionals Should Know About the Pre-Teen and Teenage Years Paperback – 15 Jan. 2009 by [Shana Nichols with Gina Marie Moravcik and Samara Pulver Tetenbaum](https://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Shana+Nichols+with+Gina+Marie+Moravcik+and+Samara+Pulver+Tetenbaum&text=Shana+Nichols+with+Gina+Marie+Moravcik+and+Samara+Pulver+Tetenbaum&sort=relevancerank&search-alias=books-uk)

**Websites and YouTube**

The girl with curly hair: great website with informative books and resources <https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>

# TEDX Talks (YouTube) How to be normal (and why not to be) by Jolene Stockan