



Including excerpts from "[Sisterhood of the Spectrum: An Aspie Chick's Guide to Life](#)" and the upcoming "[Autism in Heels: The Untold Story of One Woman's Life on the Spectrum](#)."

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"I didn't see her Asperger's at first, as I did with your sons. You made the case, point by point, and asked me to stick around without judgement for a month or so. You were tired and had been through a wringer of psychologists and specialists and I'll be honest, I thought you'd be wrong about her. You weren't. Every observation was spot on, and four years later, not only do I have no doubt about her Asperger's, you taught me what some of the world's best medical schools couldn't."

My kids' child psychiatrist

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

Maya Angelou

“Regardless of what specific talk I give -- whether about education or social skills or geek culture -- to some degree, I take care in every presentation to mention the disparity in male to female identification. To mention my insistence that the animated superhero kids on the cover of my first book include a girl. To tick off at least some of my original Chick-list Checklist. Expanded, now, and enriched. For almost everyone in the room, it is the very first time they’ve heard of the epidemic of under-and misdiagnosed girls...the first time they’ve ever considered the profile or seen the silhouette of a woman on the edges of the ‘belle’ curve.”

-Jennifer O’Toole, *Autism in Heels*

THE CHICKLIST CHECKLIST

- Girls on the spectrum are more likely to be excluded for “being-know-it-all’s” than for acting out or causing trouble.
- Unlike our male counterparts, it's the level of intensity and almost-professorial knowledge about our special interests, rather than the topics of the interests themselves, that set us apart from neurotypical peers.
- Our special interests provide two primary functions: they give our brains a pleasurable topic on which to ruminate and perseverate, and they act as a social buffer, transportation to a distant time, place, species, or social scenario where interpersonal rules, hierarchies, and customs can be “studied

and mastered.”

- Frequent passions include genealogy (and timelines), mythologies, fantasy lore, cosplay, history and historical fiction, languages, animals, anime, fashion, music, and theater.
- People on the spectrum are much more likely to experience synesthesia, a condition in which one sense is simultaneously perceived as if by one or more additional senses, and girls are three times more likely than boys to be synesthetes. At an early age, they may note that certain days, numbers, and/or letters ARE a particular gender, color, or flavor. Synesthesia can also manifest as difficulty distinguishing between words and names that contain the same letter patterns, even if the words are being spoken, not seen (eg Daniel and David may be mixed up because the recollection is of a large D, then an “a” and an “i” near the end).
- “Lining up” our collections (whether collectables, figurines or even all of the books in a series) looks less “conspicuously spectrum-ish” than boys’ rows of toy cars or trains. The enjoyment comes more from setting precise “tableaux” - a dollhouse scene or barn replica or Barbie wedding - rather than engaging in spontaneous, interactive play.
- Girls often hyper-focus on one, all-encompassing “best” friendship; later, this may evolve to an all-or-nothing self-concept of being in or being able to “keep” a dating partner/spouse, at any cost.

- Hyperlexia -- very early, self-taught, highly-skilled reading -- is common among spectrum girls.
- Girls are often word/linguistically-based thinkers, detecting incredibly subtle lyrical and literary patterns, an affinity for etymology, foreign languages, and an uncanny ability to mimic voices and accents.
- Girls on the spectrum are often particularly sensitive to artistic, pattern-based mathematical realities, extending their concrete knowledge adeptly into musical cadence and visual art.
- Spectrum girls are more likely to gather and memorize as much information as we can on social roles and sexual expectations. It's our way of compensating for what others pick up naturally.
- Many girls find it very tough to clearly distinguish between levels of social hierarchy. We tend to be socially naive, blind to others' motives, have trouble distinguishing acquaintances from close friends, or define what constitutes an actual friendship (we haven't had enough experience).
- Oftentimes, we don't find making friends difficult. It's the sustained energy and attention required to maintain relationships that are our downfall.
- For many girls, "show-womanship" skills far exceed comfort with spontaneous or one-on-one social interaction. Intuitive use of this sidestep around social anxiety can lead to excellence in teaching, narrative

presentation, and performance.

- Perfectionism. It is the all-hallowed deity (and nemesis) of the majority of spectrum girls.
- Eating disorders, like binge eating, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia are indicators of perfectionist tendencies, a need for artificial control, extreme rigidity, and adherence to routine. They are exponentially more present among girls and women, and should be considered serious “red flags.”
- Self-harming behaviors, such as cutting and burning are ways females more frequently try to manage depression, disassociation, and low-self esteem.
- Spectrum gals may fall more madly in love with and feel more intensely connected to fictional characters than to other real people



[click for more “pink on the spectrum” resources](#)

