



# Girls and Women on the Autism Spectrum

*A guided discussion*



This guided discussion is based on a presentation at the Asperger's Support Network (ASN). The ASN is a peer support group for adults that meets twice per month at Autism Calgary.

In this article you will find videos, recommended readings, and suggested questions that can be used to explore and guide a discussion on girls and women on the Autism Spectrum. We recommend using the literature and videos to contextualize the discussion.

## Literature and Videos

- Maia Szalavitz, "Autism - It's different in girls." <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/autism-it-s-different-in-girls/>
- "Girls and women on the Autism Spectrum" (Autism Spectrum Australia) <https://tinyurl.com/y4mmzkq5>
- Meng-Chuan Lai, Stephanie Ameis, & Peter Szatmari "Young Women on the Autism Spectrum" (Chapter) in *Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder*
- Kati Morton, "Autism in females - How is it different" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpJ6bJHEc-k>
- "The Autism Blogcast - Diagnosis and Prevalence of Females with Autism." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWq0JcPTaus>
- Niamh McCann TEDTalk - "Copy & Paste" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY2ctCuTWPw&t=96s>
- "The Chameleons: Women and Autism" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJHa9xk16Hw&t=19s>



# Suggested Discussion Questions

1. How do prevalent stereotypes and portrayals of Autism in the media and pop culture affect female representation on the spectrum? Consider movies such as *Rain Man* and TV shows such as *The Good Doctor*.
2. Discuss the differences between a "misdiagnosis" or "missed diagnosis." In what ways can this contribute to women and girls receiving late diagnosis?
3. What are the most commonly used diagnostic tools and criteria for ASD assessments? How do girls and women "fit in" to these?
4. The effort required for "camouflaging," that many women and girls engage in can be mentally and emotionally exhausting. What impact do these challenges have on someone's life?
5. Share your personal experiences as women on the Autism Spectrum. Can you think of women in your life that may have been or are on the Autism Spectrum?



For more information about the Asperger's Support Network or other programs that Autism Calgary offers, contact us at:

[info@autismcalgary.com](mailto:info@autismcalgary.com)  
(403) 250-5033