

Autism and Girls



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Waldegrave School

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**achieving
for children**

Session content

- What is autism?
- The 'girl' profile
- The process of an assessment
- Post diagnosis support



What is autism?

It is a lifelong disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others.

A different way of seeing the world.

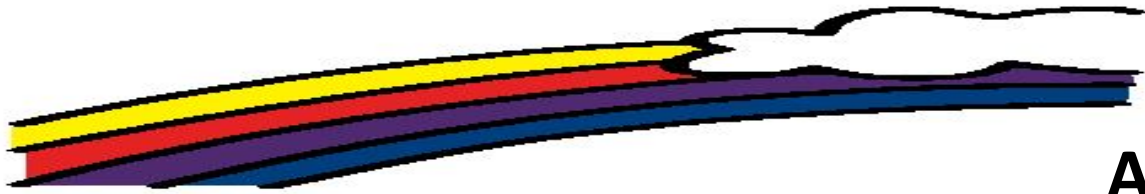
A different communication style.

A difference in sensory sensitivities.

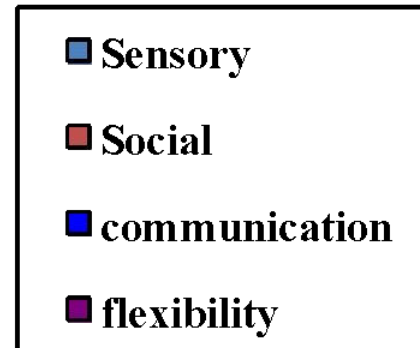
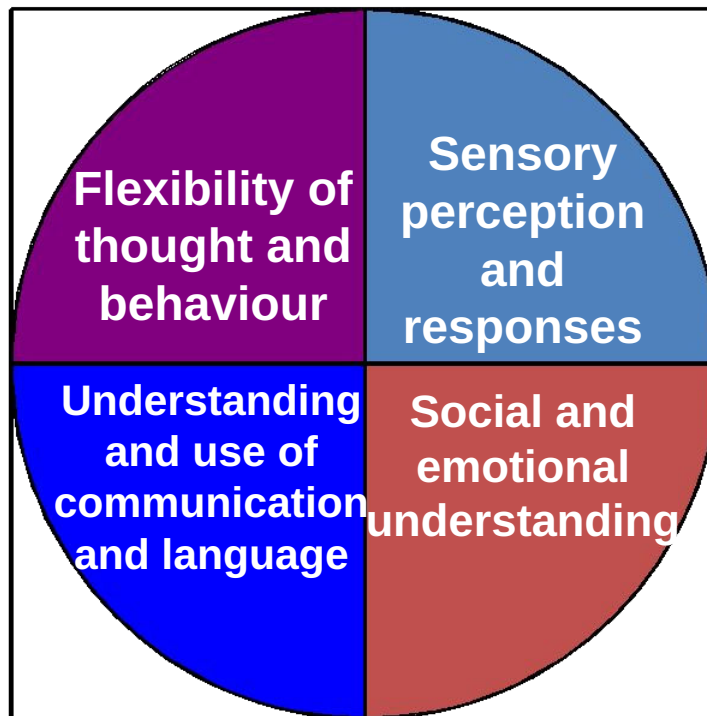
A difference in attention style.



The “autism circle” - differences not deficits



A spectrum within each
area of difference -
unique to each person



The 'girl' profile

- Not just girls
- Not every girl
- She may not stand out from her peers until later - end of primary / teenage years
- She may appear to have typical language / social development / play skills
- However, every girl (young person) is different

Characteristics of girls with autism

They may be:

They may have:

They may have

They may be:

They may:

They may be:

They may be:

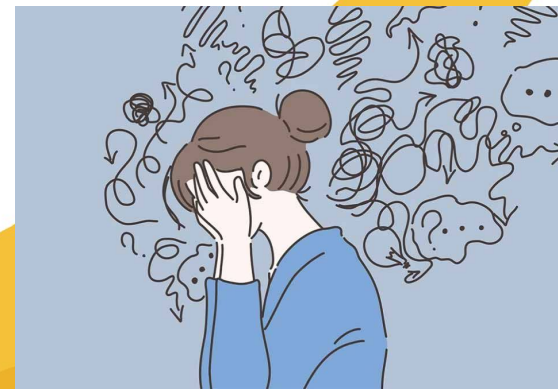
They may be:

Characteristics of girls with autism

Sociable , talkative, loud and domineering <u>or</u> quiet and shy	Typical interests to other girls their age but much more intense
One really close friend to whom they become very attached, <u>or</u> may move between social groups	Interested in fantasy, psychology, analysing themselves / others
Go along with things, say yes to everything	Sensitive, empathetic and have extreme emotions
Anxious and have low self worth	Masking what they are feeling / the real them

Anxiety causes

- Being in social situations - experience and fear of getting it wrong
- Pressure to fit in and be 'normal'
- Feeling different and not seeing the positives of difference
- Change and uncertainty
- Sensory challenges
- Masking



What is masking?

- A social behaviour that allows someone to feel / look like they fit in. Acting 'normal'.
- Change in 'state' between being in the safe place and the non safe place.
- Looks different for each young person.
- Do we all mask?



What might masking look like at school?

Mimicking /
copying others

Different mask in
different situations

Change image /
personality suddenly

Quiet / withdrawn or
loud / extroverted

Scripting / performing

Trying to act 'normal'
but often not getting it
quite right

Flits between social
groups

Change in voice /
accent

Like someone who is coping,
relaxed and happy...

What happens after school?



What's happening beneath the surface?

Constantly replaying
situations / conversations

Hypervigilance - what is
everyone else doing?

Intense focus on own
behaviour

Practising what to say

Worrying about
what others think

Being hard on
themselves for getting
it wrong again

Worrying about
what's coming next

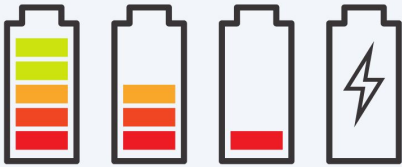
Worrying about
losing control of the
mask

Thinking about a
fresh start

How to support

- Opportunities to be themselves - however that looks
- Time to recharge, be alone and engage in real interests
- Support to see the benefits of difference
- Opportunities to find friends with similar interests
- Prepare for changes
- Not forcing social interaction

Energy Accounting - Maja Toudal



Energy Accounting

Withdrawal

Not sleeping (80)
School (90)
Crowds (70)
Noise (80)
Brightness (50)
Shopping centers (50)
Swimming pools (80)
Hot days (50)
Rushing (70)
Pain (90)
Change (90)
Screens (50)
Sport (70)
Social events (80)
Busyness (60)
Appointments (70)

Deposit

Walking (20)
Reading (90)
Painting (30)
Origami (50)
Solitude (80)
Caitlin (80)
Cat cuddles (20)
Cross-stitch (20)
Chosen noise (50)
Time with mum (50)
Rug rolling (10)
Miss Dani (20)
Accomplishing hard things (90)
Lego alone (50)
Noise-cancelling headphones (50)
Tactile play (50)

How to make a referral for a neurodevelopmental assessment

- SPA referral - parents, school or GP
- Search for 'Emotional Health Service Achieving for Children' for details on how to refer
- Prepare by putting together lots of qualitative evidence



The assessment process

- Initial screen for Autism and ADHD
- Decision made on whether to put forward for full assessment
- Clinical interview with parents
- Individual assessment using Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) and possibly the Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q)

Post diagnostic support

- Check ins after diagnosis (if diagnosed through the Emotional Health Service) - offering strategies / working with school if needed



Other support for families / young people

- Lighthouse Project - Heatham House, Twickenham
- Skylarks Charity
- Express CIC
- National Autistic Society

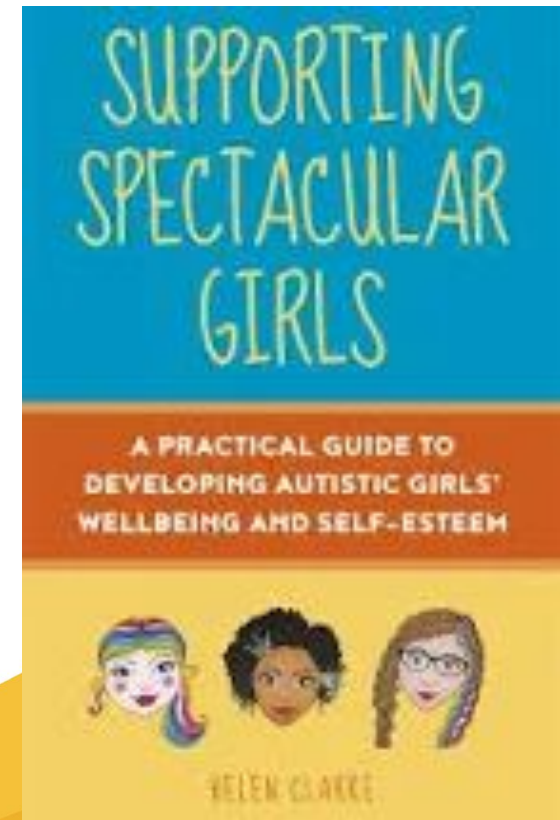
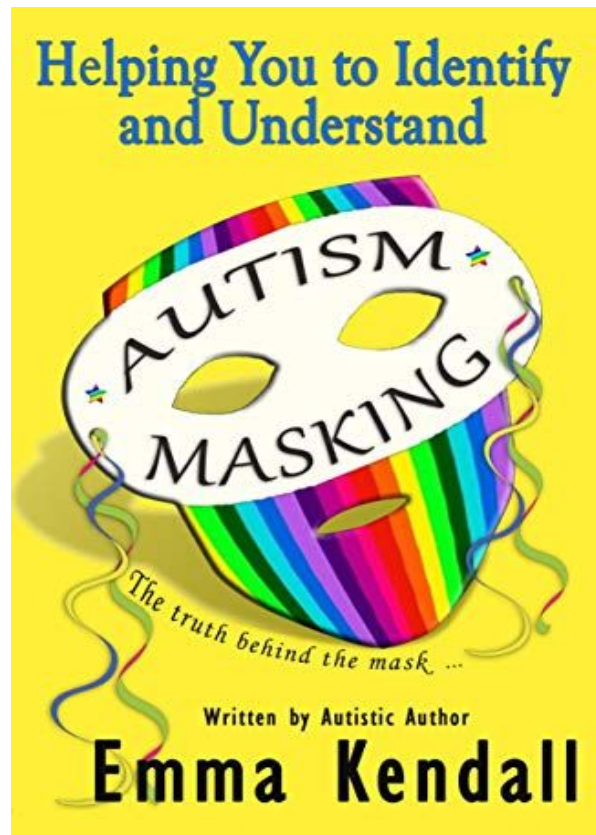
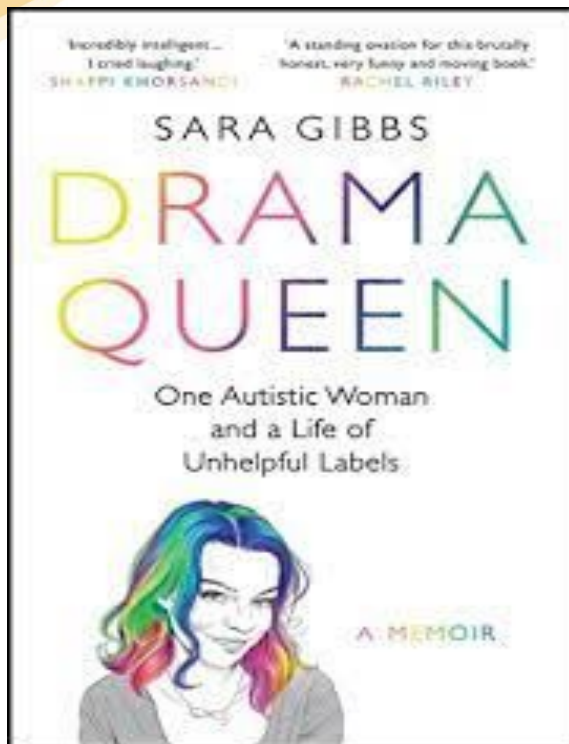


Voices of women with autism

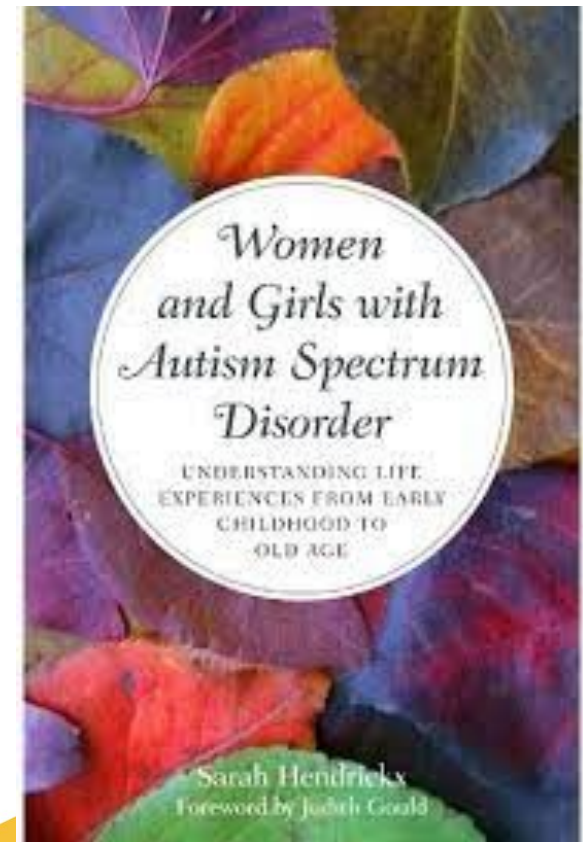
- The Girl with the Curly Hair
- Purple Ella
- Agony Autie - Youtube



Further reading



Further reading



Advisable that parents read these books before sharing with young people.

Explaining diagnosis

