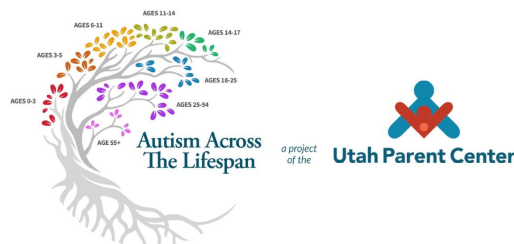


Differences Between ASD in Males and Females

Fewer females receive an ASD diagnosis than males, with a ratio of about one to four. When a female is diagnosed, it often occurs much later in life. Researchers are still trying to understand why this happens and what differences exist between ASD in males and females. What they do know is that the criteria to diagnose Autism has been based on characteristics that are typically presented by men. Professionals are now learning to recognize how females might show these characteristics differently as young girls and adults. Some examples include:

- Females, like males, have special interests; however, their interests are more easily overlooked because they are more general. While boys and men may stand out more with very narrow obsessive interests in components of transportation and computers, girls and women are more likely to be obsessively passionate about animals, literature, arts, and other socially acceptable themes.
- Females tend to have fewer or more socially acceptable repetitive behaviors. For example, rather than rocking back and forth, a girl or woman might repetitively pick at or scratch their skin which may go unnoticed by others.
- Females are more likely to have close, empathetic relationships with friends and family. They are also more likely to consider friendships important. Many professionals believe that this has to do with the way girls and boys are taught to socialize at a young age, often creating an expectation that young girls place more value on relationships.
- Females are more likely to struggle with co-occurring mood and eating disorders and more often internalize feelings of frustration and failure.



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- Females are more likely to develop coping mechanisms that mask their differences and often do better at mimicking socially appropriate behaviors. This helps them camouflage but can also lead to exhaustion, depression, and burnout.
 - Females are more likely to be misdiagnosed with personality disorders such as Borderline Personality Disorder, Avoidant Personality Disorder, Schizoid Personality Disorder, etc.

The manner in which autism is typically presented by girls and women makes it easier for them to fly under the radar and not receive an accurate diagnosis. That's not to say that males can't present signs of autism in a similar way, or that all autistic females are the same. No two autistic individuals are completely alike, so it's important to do proper research or speak with professionals if you believe that you or your young adult might be autistic.

References:

- Aspergers/Autism Network
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- Autism Speaks
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