



Social Challenges with Girls (dx with ASD)

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Michelle Dampf, M.A., CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist

Introduction

Michelle Dampf, M.A., CCC-SLP



Communication Science and Disorders
University of Missouri Health



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- Definition:** Neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by deficits in social communication and social interaction and the presence of restricted, repetitive behaviors.
- DSM-5 (medical) diagnosis does not equal educational identification and vice versa (def. in Resources section).
- DSM-5 criteria gives Levels of Support (from 1-3) instead of "High Functioning" and "Low Functioning"
- No longer correct to use the terms "PDD", "Asperger's Syndrome", or "Childhood Integrative Disorder"...currently, the only correct term is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Research

- A growing number of studies suggest that girls with ASD, particularly those without intellectual disability, may be hiding in plain sight.
- They appear to have less severe symptoms than boys and to be better able to mask their social challenges at school.
- According to research by the [Interactive Autism Network](#) and others, girls with milder forms of ASD are diagnosed later than boys, possibly delaying intervention.
- Some may not be diagnosed at all. And, particularly in the teen years, girls with ASD appear to suffer anxiety and depression more commonly than either boys with ASD or typically developing girls.

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



Why? Because girls with ASD...

- ...are more likely to mimic others in social situations
- ...want to fit in with others so they camouflage
- ...control their emotions better at school (not so much at home)
- ...teachers are less likely to voice concerns about girls with ASD
- ...like to fly under the radar at school
- ...more likely to control behavior in public
- ...less likely to have public meltdowns
- ...become exhausted with attempts to fit into the "neurotypical" world
- ...have lower levels of obsessive interests that boys with ASD
- ...may not have odd nor unmanageable obsessive interests (i.e. fashion, shell collection, stuffed animal collection, etc)



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



Haley Moss

Self-Advocate for Girls with ASD



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Goals



1. Employability



3. Happiness/Contentment



2. Independence

 Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Social Challenges



1. Friendships and Relationships
2. Self-Perception and Self-Confidence
3. Puberty and Hygiene
4. Social Media
5. Personal Safety
6. Mental Health



** Essentially the same as encountered by all girls, except Adolescence and Autism = A²



 Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Teaching Toolkit with Evidence-Based Interventions (most important slide)

- Be Proactive
- Be Concrete
- Be Consistent
- Be Specific
- Keep Things Simple
- Repeat Often
- Provide Opportunities for Practice
- Teach to Multiple Senses
- Divide tasks into small components
- Provide adequate reinforcement
- Incorporate Social Goals
- Be calm, supportive, & serious



 Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



Teaching Toolkit with Evidence-Based Interventions (most important slides)

- Visual Supports
- Routines and Schedules
- Modeling
- Video Modeling
- Video Self-Modeling
- Role-Playing
- Narratives about Social Situations



 Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Teaching Toolkit with Evidence-Based Interventions (most important slides)

- Social Scripts
- Power Cards
- Television and Movies
- Books and the Internet



 Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Suggestions for Friendships

- Teach perspective-taking skills and empathy; discuss emotions of others
- Social skills group, specifically for girls with ASD
- Discuss her definition of friendship and what she would like
- Allow down-time that does not require social interaction (recess/lunch)
- Set up short, supervised times with a friend; discuss what went well and what did not go so well
- Teach and learn about relational aggression
- Teach phone etiquette



 Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Suggestions for Self-Perception/Self-Confidence

- Know the signs of an eating disorder: cannot tell when hungry or full, forgets to eat or drink, rigid eating patterns, etc.
- Help her to maintain a healthy body weight
- Exercise will help with mood, energy, stress, anxiety, and PMS
- Help her build a healthy body image, and model a healthy body image
- Create successful experiences
- Help her to develop independence
- Be careful of “helicopter parent”.
- Develop self-knowledge
 - (both strengths and weaknesses)



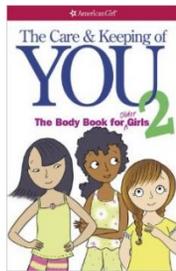
Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Suggestions for Puberty/Hygiene

- Learn rules for wearing clothes, different clothes for different venues
- Private vs. public topics
- Pre-puberty teach: toileting, showering, hand-washing, trimming fingernails, dressing
- Puberty teach: deodorant, skin care, shaving, menstrual hygiene, bra fitting, applying makeup (if interested)
- Teach the “why” behind personal hygiene
- Normalize change, “That happens to me too.”
- Locker room - have a plan prior to the experience



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



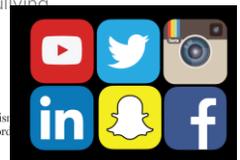
Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Suggestions for Social Media

- Stay informed and up to date on apps
- Discuss sharing/not sharing personal information
- Teach her that information placed online is not private
- Share online experiences, as much as possible
- Limit amount of time spent online, especially late at night
- Implement rules for downloading and purchasing
- Be aware of potential for cyberbullying



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



Suggestions for Personal Safety

- Learn skills to reduce vulnerability to victimization
- Teach social skills and boundaries
- Social communication - needs to have the ability to assert herself and refuse, protest, “no”, and communicate fear or dislike
- Teach emotional awareness - use visual supports and help her recognized feelings of nervous, scared, confused, etc.
- Sexuality education - teach facts, boundaries, and body parts
- Privacy awareness
- Personal space - respect on her part and with others



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Mental Health

Depression:
sad, irritable, withdrawn, hopeless

Anxiety:
“constant state of stage fright”



Why is this worse with A²?

- Friendships more complex; social problem solving; organizational skills; academic work more abstract; perspective taking skills needed in social and academic areas

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Suggestions for Mental Health

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) = highly effective for those with cognitive abilities close to average range
- Social Groups = with other girls with ASD or that teach appropriate life-skills
- Social Activities = with small group with same interests (i.e. Lego club, Pokémon club, Chess club, or start your own)
- Possibly medication, discuss in depth with doctor/psychiatrist who is familiar with ASD



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



Role Models and Advocates



References

Grandin, T. & Attwood, T. (2019). *Autism and Girls*. Arlington: Future Horizons, Inc.

Moss, H. (2010). *Middle School: The Stuff Nobody Tells You About: A Teenage Girl with High-Functioning Autism Shares Her Experiences*. Shawnee Mission: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

Laugeson, E. (2013). *The Science of Making Friends: Helping Socially Challenged Teens and Young Adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Everyday Speech www.everydaysspeech.com

Verdick, E. & Reeve, E. (2012). *The Survival Guide for Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorders (And Their Parents)*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing

Nichols, S., Moravcik, G. & Tetenbaum, S. (2009) *Girls Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

References

Sarris, M. Are Girls Hiding in Plain Sight? www.sparkforautism.org

Rivet, T.F., & Matson, J.L. (2011). Review of gender differences in core symptomatology in autism spectrum disorders. *Research in autism spectrum disorders*, 5(3), 957-976.

Hiller, R.M., Young, R.L., & Weber, N. (2014). Sex differences in autism spectrum disorder based on DSM-5 criteria: evidence from clinician and teacher reporting. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 42:1381-1393

Mandy, W., Chilvers, R., Chowdhury, U., Salter, G., Seigal, A., & Skuse, D. (2012). Sex differences in autism spectrum disorder: evidence from a large sample of children and adolescents. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 42(7), 1304-1313

Autism Speaks www.autismspeaks.org

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Resources

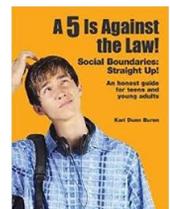
- www.autismempowerment.org and Spectrum Life Magazine
- Laugeson, E. & Frankel, F. (2010). *Social Skills for Teenagers with Developmental and Autism Spectrum Disorders*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Social Stories (Carol Gray)
- Stichter, J. Social Competence Intervention-Elementary and Social Competence Intervention-Adolescent.

www.ocali.org/center/autism
Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri



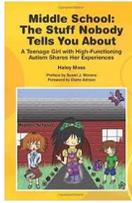
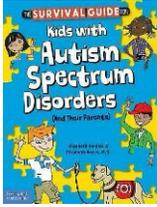
Resources

- Buron, K. A 5 Is Against the Law! Social Boundaries
- The Incredible 5 Point Scale
- Feelings Wheel



Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Resources




Thompson Center for Autism
& Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri


Thompson Center for Autism
& Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Thank you!

Please share your questions...

- Michelle Dampf, M.A., CCC-SLP
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- (573) 884-5596
- dampfm@missouri.edu

Video

What women with ASD want you to know....




Thompson Center for Autism
& Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri