

# It's Never Too Late For a Diagnosis

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## Females with Aspergers Non-Official Checklist

By Samantha Craft

This is an unofficial checklist created by an adult female with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) who has a son with Asperger's



**“Feels extreme relief when she doesn't have to go anywhere, talk to anyone, answer calls, or leave the house but at the same time will often harbor guilt for “hibernating” and not doing “what everyone else is doing”**

Syndrome. Samantha Craft has a Master's Degree in Education. Samantha Craft does not hold a doctorate in Psychiatry or Psychology. She has a life-credential as a result of being a female with Asperger's Syndrome and being a parent of a child with Asperger's Syndrome. She has created this list in an effort to assist health professionals in recognizing Asperger's Syndrome in females.



## *Book*

### *Recommendations*

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*Asperger's and Girls*, by Tony Attwood

*Aspergirls*, by Rudy Simone

*Pretending to be Normal*, by Liane Holliday Willey

*Women from Another Planet: Our Lives in the Universe of Autism*, by Jean Kearns Miller

*22 Things a Woman with Asperger's Syndrome Wants her Partner to Know*, by Rudy Simone

*Asperger's On the Job: Must-have Advice for People with Asperger's or High Functioning Autism, and their Employers, Educators, and Advocates*, by Rudy Simone

*Everyday Aspergers*, by Samantha Craft

*I am AspienWoman: The Unique Characteristics, Traits, and Gifts of Adult Females on the Autism Spectrum*, by Tania Marshall

Suggested Use: Check off all areas that strongly apply to the person. If each area has 75%-80% of the statements checked, or more, then you *may* want to consider that the female *may* have Asperger's Syndrome.

### Section A: Deep Thinkers

1. A deep thinker
2. A prolific writer drawn to poetry
3. \*Highly intelligent
4. Sees things at multiple levels, including her own thinking processes
5. Analyzes existence, the meaning of life, and everything, continually
6. Serious and matter-of-fact in nature
7. Doesn't take things for granted
8. Doesn't simplify
9. Everything is complex
10. Often gets lost in own thoughts and "checks out" (blank stare)

### Section B: Innocent

1. Naïve
2. Honest
3. Experiences trouble with lying
4. Finds it difficult to understand manipulation and disloyalty
5. Finds it difficult to understand vindictive behavior and retaliation
6. Easily fooled and conned
7. Feelings of confusion and being overwhelmed
8. Feelings of being misplaced and/or from another planet
9. Feelings of isolation
10. Abused or taken advantage of as a child but didn't think to tell anyone

### Section C: Escape and Friendship

1. Survives overwhelming emotions and senses by escaping in thought or action
2. Escapes regularly through fixations, obsessions, and over-interest in subjects
3. Escapes routinely through imagination, fantasy, and daydreaming
4. Escapes through mental processing
5. Escapes through the rhythm of words
6. Philosophizes, continually
7. Had imaginary friends in youth
8. Imitates people on television or in movies
9. Treated friends as "pawns" in youth, e.g., friends were "students" "consumers" "members"
10. Makes friends with older or younger females more so than friends her age (often in young adulthood)
11. Imitates friends or peers in style, dress, attitude, interests, and manner (sometimes speech)
12. Obsessively collects and organizes objects
13. Mastered imitation
14. Escapes by playing the same music over and over
15. Escapes through a relationship (imagined or real)
16. Numbers bring ease (could be numbers associated with patterns, calculations, lists, time and/or personification)
17. Escapes through counting, categorizing, organizing, rearranging
18. Escapes into other rooms at parties
19. Cannot relax or rest without many thoughts
20. Everything has a purpose

### Section D: Comorbid Attributes

1. OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)
2. Sensory Issues (sight, sound, texture, smells, taste) (might have Synesthesia)
3. Generalized Anxiety
4. Sense of pending danger or doom

5. Feelings of polar extremes (depressed/over-joyed; inconsiderate/over-sensitive)
6. Poor muscle tone, double-jointed, and/or lack in coordination (may have Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and/or Hypotonia and/or POTS syndrome)
7. Eating disorders, food obsessions, and/or worry about what is eaten
8. Irritable bowel and/or intestinal issues
9. Chronic fatigue and/or immune challenges
10. Misdiagnosed or diagnosed with a mental illness
11. Experiences multiple physical symptoms, perhaps labeled "hypochondriac"
12. Questions place in the world
13. Often drops small objects
14. Wonders who she is and what is expected of her
15. Searches for right and wrong
16. Since puberty has had bouts of depression (may have PMDD)
17. Flicks/rubs fingernails, picks scalp/skin, flaps hands, rubs hands together, tucks hands under or between legs, keeps closed fists, paces in circles, and/or clears throat often

### Section E: Social Interaction

1. Friends have ended friendship suddenly (without female with AS understanding why) and/or difficult time making friends
2. Tendency to overshare
3. Spills intimate details to strangers
4. Raised hand too much in class or didn't participate in class
5. Little impulse control with speaking when younger
6. Monopolizes conversation at times
7. Brings subject back to self
8. Comes across at times as narcissistic and controlling (is not narcissistic)
9. Shares in order to reach out
10. Often sounds eager and over-zealous or apathetic and disinterested
11. Holds a lot of thoughts, ideas, and feelings inside
12. Feels as if she is attempting to communicate "correctly"

13. Obsesses about the potentiality of a relationship with someone, particularly a love interest or feasible new friendship
14. Confused by the rules of accurate eye contact, tone of voice, proximity of body, body stance, and posture in conversation
15. Conversation are often exhausting
16. Questions the actions and behaviors of self and others, continually
17. Feels as if missing a conversation “gene” or thought-filter
18. Trained self in social interactions through readings and studying of other people
19. Visualizes and practices how she will act around others
20. Practices/rehearses in mind what she will say to another before entering the room
21. Difficulty filtering out background noise when talking to others
22. Has a continuous dialogue in mind that tells her what to say and how to act when in a social situation
23. Sense of humor sometimes seems quirky, odd, inappropriate, or different from others
24. As a child it was hard to know when it was her turn to talk
25. Finds norms of conversation confusing
26. Finds unwritten and unspoken rules difficult to grasp, remember, and apply

#### **Section F: Finds Refuge when Alone**

1. Feels extreme relief when she doesn’t have to go anywhere, talk to anyone, answer calls, or leave the house but at the same time will often harbor guilt for “hibernating” and not doing “what everyone else is doing”
2. One visitor at the home may be perceived as a threat (this can even be a familiar family member)
3. Knowing logically a house visitor is not a threat, doesn’t relieve the anxiety
4. Feelings of dread about upcoming events and appointments on the calendar

5. Knowing she has to leave the house causes anxiety from the moment she wakes up
6. All the steps involved in leaving the house are overwhelming and exhausting to think about
7. She prepares herself mentally for outings, excursions, meetings, and appointments, often days before a scheduled event
8. OCD tendencies when it comes to concepts of time, being on time, tracking time, recording time, and managing time (could be carried over to money, as well)
9. Questions next steps and movements, continually
10. Sometimes feels as if she is on stage being watched and/or a sense of always having to act out the “right” steps, even when she is home alone
11. Telling self the “right” words and/or positive self-talk (CBT) doesn’t typically alleviate anxiety. CBT may cause increased feelings of inadequacy.
12. Knowing she is staying home all day brings great peace of mind
13. Requires a large amount of down time or alone time
14. Feels guilty after spending a lot of time on a special interest
15. Uncomfortable in public locker rooms, bathrooms, and/or dressing rooms
16. Dislikes being in a crowded mall, crowded gym, and/or crowded theater

#### **Section G: Sensitive**

1. Sensitive to sounds, textures, temperature, and/or smells when trying to sleep
2. Adjusts bedclothes, bedding, and/or environment in an attempt to find comfort
3. Dreams are anxiety-ridden, vivid, complex, and/or precognitive in nature
4. Highly intuitive to others’ feelings
5. Highly empathetic, sometimes to the point of confusion
6. Takes criticism to heart
7. Longs to be seen, heard, and understood

8. Questions if she is a “normal” person
9. Highly susceptible to outsiders’ viewpoints and opinions
10. At times adapts her view of life or actions based on others’ opinions or words
11. Recognizes own limitations in many areas daily, if not hourly
12. Becomes hurt when others question or doubt her work
13. Views many things as an extension of self
14. Fears others opinions, criticism, and judgment
15. Dislikes words and events that hurt animals and people
16. Collects or rescues animals (often in childhood)
17. Huge compassion for suffering (sometimes for inanimate objects/personification)
18. Sensitive to substances (environmental toxins, foods, alcohol, medication, hormones, etc.)
19. Tries to help, offers unsolicited advice, or formalizes plans of action
20. Questions life purpose and how to be a “better” person
21. Seeks to understand abilities, skills, and/or gifts

#### **Section H: Sense of Self**

1. Feels trapped between wanting to be herself and wanting to fit in
2. Imitates others without realizing it
3. Suppresses true wishes (often in young adulthood)
4. Exhibits codependent behaviors (often in young adulthood)
5. Adapts self in order to avoid ridicule
6. Rejects social norms and/or questions social norms
7. Feelings of extreme isolation
8. Feeling good about self takes a lot of effort and work
9. Switches preferences based on environment and other people
10. Switches behavior based on environment and other people
11. Didn’t care about her hygiene, clothes, and appearance before teenage years and/or before

- someone else pointed these out to her
12. "Freaks out" but doesn't know why until later
  13. Young sounding voice
  14. Trouble recognizing what she looks like and/or has occurrences of slight prosopagnosia (difficulty recognizing or remembering faces)
  15. Feels significantly younger on the inside than on the outside (perpetually twelve)

### Section I: Confusion

1. Had a hard time learning that others are not always honest
2. Feelings seem confusing, illogical, and unpredictable (self's and others')
3. Confuses appointment times, numbers, and/or dates
4. Expects that by acting a certain way certain results can be achieved, but realizes in dealing with emotions, those results don't always manifest
5. Spoke frankly and literally in youth
6. Jokes go over the head
7. Confused when others ostracize, shun, belittle, trick, and betray
8. Trouble identifying feelings unless they are extreme
9. Trouble with emotions of hate and dislike
10. Feels sorry for someone who has persecuted or hurt her
11. Personal feelings of anger, outrage, deep love, fear, giddiness, and anticipation seem to be easier to identify than emotions of joy, satisfaction, calmness, and serenity
12. Difficulty recognizing how extreme emotions (outrage, deep love) will affect her and challenges transferring what has been learned about emotions from one situation to the next
13. Situations and conversations sometimes perceived as black or white
14. The middle spectrum of outcomes, events, and emotions is sometimes overlooked or misunderstood (all or nothing mentality)

15. A small fight might signal the end of a relationship or collapse of world
16. A small compliment might boost her into a state of bliss

### Section J: Words, Numbers, and Patterns

1. Likes to know word origins and/or origin of historical facts/root cause and foundation
2. Confused when there is more than one meaning (or spelling) to a word
3. High interest in songs and song lyrics
4. Notices patterns frequently
5. Remembers things in visual pictures
6. Remembers exact details about someone's life
7. Has a remarkable memory for certain details
8. Writes or creates to relieve anxiety
9. Has certain "feelings" or emotions towards words and/or numbers
10. Words and/or numbers bring a sense of comfort and peace, akin to a friendship

### (Optional) Executive Functioning & Motor Skills This area isn't always as evident as other areas

1. Simple tasks can cause extreme hardship
2. Learning to drive a car or rounding the corner in a hallway can be troublesome
3. New places offer their own set of challenges
4. Anything that requires a reasonable amount of steps, dexterity, or know-how can rouse a sense of panic
5. The thought of repairing, fixing, or locating something can cause anxiety
6. Mundane tasks are avoided
7. Cleaning self and home may seem insurmountable
8. Many questions come to mind when setting about to do a task
9. Might leave the house with

- mismatched socks, shirt buttoned incorrectly, and/or have dyslexia and/or dysgraphia
10. A trip to the grocery store can be overwhelming
11. Trouble copying dance steps, aerobic moves, or direction in a sports gym class
12. Has a hard time finding certain objects in the house but remembers with exact clarity where other objects are; not being able to locate something or thinking about locating something can cause feelings of intense anxiety (object permanence challenges) (even with something as simple as opening an envelope)

**This unofficial checklist can be copied for therapists, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, professors, teachers, and relatives, if Samantha Craft's name and contact information remain on the print out. This list was created in 2012 and updated in May 2016.**

Samantha Craft (@aspergersgirls) compiled this page. She has corresponded with thousands of individuals touched by autism in their lives. Sam is the author of *Everyday Aspergers*, a revealing memoir, ten years in the making, about the everyday life of an autistic woman. More information can be found at [Spectrum, myspectrumsuite.com](http://Spectrum,myspectrumsuite.com).

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