

Females with Asperger's Syndrome: An Unofficial List

By Samantha Craft (formatted by Blessed Aspie)

By Blessed Aspie: I used this list to assist with my official diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder according to the DSM-5, (the term Asperger's is no longer in use under current diagnostic terminology). I printed the list with space to write notes about how I met (or didn't meet) each point. I took this list filled in to my appointments to help me to remember anecdotal evidence of how I met the criteria of the DSM-5.

Disclaimer by Samantha Craft: This is my opinion and based on my experience after 12 years of researching about autism and being officially diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. It is not meant to replace the DSM-V Autism Spectrum Disorder definition nor is this list meant to serve as an official diagnostic tool. Hundreds of women have used this list in conjunction with the DSM-IV or DSM-V and a professional mental health professional's guidance. It is also based on 4.5 years of communicating almost daily with those that are diagnosed with autism and some that believe themselves to be on the spectrum. It is not all inclusive. Some will fit into categories and not be autistic/Asperian. This is meant as a springboard for discussion and more awareness into the female experience with autism.

This is an unofficial checklist created by an adult female with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) who has a son with Asperger's Syndrome. Samantha Craft has a Masters 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—for in-depth information regarding females with AS refer to Craft's book *Everyday Aspergers*.

Section A: Deep Thinkers

_____ / 10

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

_____ / 10

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

_____ / 20

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 _____

1. OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) _____

2. Sensory Issues (sight, sound, texture, smells, taste) (might have Synthesia) _____

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

_____ / 26

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

_____ / 16

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 _____

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

_____ / 15

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

_____ / 16

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

_____ / 10

- 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 _____

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) _____

Score

Section A: Deep Thinkers	_____ / 10
Section B: Innocent	_____ / 10
Section C: Escape and Friendship	_____ / 20
Section D: Comorbid Attributes	_____ / 17
Section E: Social Interaction	_____ / 26
Section F: Finds Refuge when Alone	_____ / 16
Section G: Sensitive	_____ / 21
Section H: Sense of Self	_____ / 15
Section I: Confusion	_____ / 16
Section J: Words, Numbers, and Patterns	_____ / 10
(Optional) Executive Functioning & Motor Skills	_____ / 12
TOTAL	_____ / 173

(Percentage = score divided by the total (173), multiplied by 100)

This unofficial checklist can be copied for therapists, counsellors, 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 list. 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 Suite LLC, myspectrumsuite.com