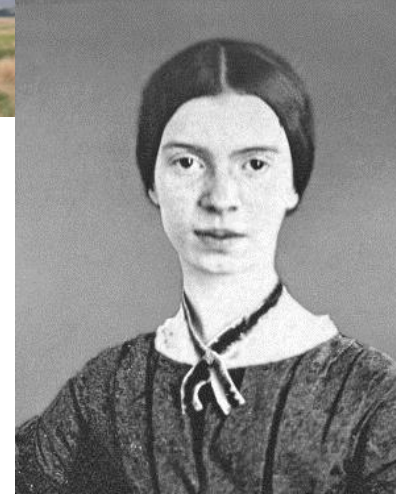


# History's 30 Most Inspiring People on the Autism Spectrum (the women)



**Not on the list but perhaps more likely to have heard with reference to autism?**



# “I think being a woman is hard. Being an autistic woman is even harder”

Rose Hughes

- Gender bias in screening & stereotypes (based on male characteristics)
  - Apparent higher social motivation and greater capacity for traditional friendships – but based on analytical thinking and strategies such as rote learning, imitation, scripts, masking and camouflaging with better language skills
  - Ability to camouflage social difficulties in social situations, on periphery, led by others
  - Quiet / passive behaviours more acceptable for girls
  - ‘Special’ interests may be less obvious (more ‘normal’) but more intense than peers
  - Better imagination, pretend play but maybe escapism or scripted
  - Less obvious ‘physical’ characteristics e.g. repetitive & ritualistic behaviours
  - Internalising behaviours rather than externalising
  - Diagnostic overshadowing – coexisting conditions may be part of autism presentation
- 
- Assessment based on traditional ‘male’ presentation and so females missed in terms of recognition and diagnosis with the ensuing explanation, help and support
  - ‘Misdiagnosis or missed diagnosis’ - Impacts

# “Empowering women and girls with autism”

United Nations



**What is the experience of  
being a women with autism?**

**In your group discuss your  
own experiences**

# References

Dean, M. Harwood, R & Kasari, C. (2017). The art of camouflage: gender differences in the social behaviours of girls and boys with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism* 21 (6) pp678-689.

Gould, J. & Aston-Smith, J. (2011). Missed diagnosis or misdiagnosis: girls and women on the spectrum. *Good autism practice* 12 (1) pp34-41.

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# Females on the Autism Spectrum

## Behaviour

Less prone to act out physically or aggressively

Intense focus on a particular subject, often involving animals or classic literature

Appears anxious when there are changes in routine

Observes human behaviour, learning to mask difficulties

Practices rituals that appear to have no function

May play with dolls or toys well beyond the typical age for these items

Tenacity toward perfectionism in certain aspects of her life

High risk of having episodes of eating disorders and self medication

Stimming behaviors, such as hand flapping, rocking, or spinning can appear much milder. They can also be internalised/thoughts instead of external behaviours

May apologise and appease when they make a social error

Often more socially aware and driven

Males may often present with many of these traits, just like females can present with the more male type traits. It is called a female presentation because it is more commonly seen amongst females on the autism spectrum

## Communication

More aware of the need for social interaction

May have an exceptional vocabulary

Tends to mimic rather than providing natural responses

May converse in predictable, "scripted" ways

Seems to struggle with non-verbal aspects of communication, such as body language and tone of voice

May use odd inflection

Appears to have difficulty dealing with unexpected verbal responses

More able to follow social actions through observation

## Social

Usually has only one or two close friends at school

May have difficulty fitting in due to clothing and hairstyle choices

May make greater efforts to avoid drawing attention to themselves

Appears excessively shy or avoids interacting with others or making the first move socially

Can be quite controlling in play

Seems uncomfortable during conversation. Can struggle with eye contact

Often "mothered" by others in primary school but bullied in high school

May play appropriately with toys and engage in pretend play or may focus on organizing objects or toys

Often shows empathy and compassion but may be confused by non-verbal social signals

Usually holds it together well while out and explodes at home



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Interesting article with 6 women with autism

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/identity/women\\_late\\_diagnosis\\_autism](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/identity/women_late_diagnosis_autism)

NAS information on women and girls with autism – the second one in particular has some links to interesting articles

[www.autism.org.uk/womensday](http://www.autism.org.uk/womensday)

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/gender.aspx>