



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

*By Tania Marshall*

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AspienGirl.com and Tania A. Marshall are proud to announce their recent 2017 ASPECT Autism Australia National Recognition Award Nomination, in the Advancement category, for their work in advancing the field of female Autism and female neurodiversity. This book explores the female profile (phenotype), including sub-types, in late teenagers to the elderly, who are on the Autism Spectrum or Neurodiverse. I Am AspienWoman© showcases the unique characteristics, traits and gifts of adult females, across the lifespan, on the Autism Spectrum. Presently, there is a female Autism crisis including: a gender bias, a lack of research, assessment tools, intervention and skills acquisition tools, specifically researched and designed for females, across the lifespan. Written by the 2017-2015 ASPECT Autism Australia National Recognition Award nominee, Tania A. Marshall's second book is an international best seller and the sequel to the 2015 IPPY eLIT Gold Medal award winning I Am AspienGirl. With well over 15 gender studies in Autism in 2015 and 2016 alone, learning about and understanding females on the Autism Spectrum has never been more important. In April 2016, 'I Am AspienWoman' was awarded an IPPY eLit Gold Medal in the 'Women's Issues' Category.

Have you ever wondered about a friend, a partner, a mother, sister or daughter? Wondered why she says she feels 'different'? Out of step with her peers, she may struggle keeping friends and a job, yet she has multiple degrees. Bright from early on, she may have singleminded focus, sprinkles of anxiety, sensory and social issues, be gifted in art, writing, science, research or singing. Maybe Autism or Asperger Syndrome was mentioned but she did not resonate with the male profile or the stereotypical female profile. Maybe she is a woman on the Autism spectrum, with a unique constellation of super-abilities, strengths and challenges?

This book takes a unique approach by combining stunning imagery along with the feelings, thoughts and words of Autistic women (and those that love and support them). This book also explores common strengths and challenges, the

stages leading up to a diagnosis, important needs, reasons for a diagnosis, disclosure and an appendix of helpful tools. You will be inspired by a special group of 24 Autistic women led by Dr Temple Grandin, who showcase their unique strengths and provide helpful advice and tips. Watch for AspienPowers: The Unique constellation of Gifts, Strengths and Abilities of Females on the Autism Spectrum, coming soon.

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

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

I Am AspienGirl was a rich and unique contribution to this literature, and I am thrilled to say that I Am AspienWoman® is equally creative and inspiring. Thankfully there are these special books, that act as a guide and an incredibly accessible resource. As with her prior book, Tania's latest offering has not surprisingly leaped onto my recommended reading list.

**Shana Nichols, PhD**

**Owner, Director, Researcher**

**ASPIRE Center for Learning and Development**

**Author, 'Girls Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum: What Parents and Professionals Should Know About the Pre-teen and Teenage Years'**

In this sequel, to her first book Aspiengirl, Tania Marshall examines the topic of autism in women, utilising the personal perspectives of women themselves. As with its forerunner the essence of this book is its attractiveness, readability and clarity. It will have a wide appeal - from those women who are or suspect they may be on the autism spectrum, families and professionals in many fields such as employment, education, health and social support.

**Richard Mills**

**Research Director**

**Research Autism**

**London Hon. Research Fellow**

**Dept. Psychology**

**The University of Bath, UK**

Once again, Tania has provided a visual conversation starter to demonstrate the wide and varied adult presentation of female autism. Featuring individual profiles of successful autistic women along with quotes from individuals and family members, this book will help to further increase the understanding that women with autism are out there - even if they are hard to spot.

**Sarah Hendrickx**

**Author, Women and Girls with ASD, Understanding Life Experiences from Early Childhood to Old Age**

This is THE book series for females on the spectrum! That's why I love your books, the only ones that made me understand ASD in females. In myself! I cried when I read it, out of relief and gratitude. Finally, someone understood and there are more women like me out there. I also told my psychiatrist about your book and recommended it to her and she now uses it in her work and recommends it to her clients to read. This book is also highly useful for family members, teachers, co-workers and so on. For weeks, I carried the book with me, just to look in it, feel it, just to have it there made me feel better. I is amazing. I will never be able to thank you enough for this book. They have literally changed my life.

**Name Withheld**

From the Author

AspienGirl.com and Tania A. Marshall are proud to announce they were nominated in December 2016 for a 2017 ASPECT Autism Australia National Recognition Award. In April 2016, I Am AspienWoman was awarded an IPPY eLIT Gold Medal award in the 'Women's Issues' Category.

I Am: Two of the most powerful words, for what you put after them shapes your reality.

AspienGirl® : as-pee-en-ger-l; AspienWoman :aspee-enwo-man

1. a young female with Autism or Asperger Syndrome
2. an adult female with Autism or Asperger Syndrome
3. a female with a differently wired brain
4. a positive strengths-based perspective and identity designed to support and assist females on the spectrum and help them discover themselves, their unique abilities and strengths; to showcase value, ability and contribution; living with both gifts and disability, a focus on strengths, yet not ignoring the challenges.

Tania works in private practice and regularly works with a wide variety of neurodiverse individuals, some of whom include: professional singers, actors/actresses, dancers, performing artists, artists, authors, engineers, geologists, professors, special forces, professional athletes, gifted and talented individuals, twice-exceptional (2e), Autism, or Asperger Syndrome, highly sensitive people, individuals with savants skills and high-profile individuals and celebrities.

Many, but not all, of individuals have the characteristic traits of Asperger Syndrome or high functioning Autism. Many of them are gifted in a variety of ways. Most have discussed feeling different, alone, from another planet, or era; hence the term Planet Aspien. The use of terms, for example 'AspienWoman', are used affectionately and serve as a strengths-based identity for a group of females who often feel isolated on populous planet Earth.

In researching this book I spoke to women from around the world, including Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the European Union, China, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, India and Israel.

This book is a conversation starter, a visual illumination of a group of adult females all over the world, all experiencing similar strengths and challenges, in varying degrees. This book is based on professional private practice experience, anecdotal evidence and current research. The women in this book are from the 'lost generation', the generation where Autism did not exist as a diagnosis. Today, many women struggle to obtain a diagnosis and are knocked back, misdiagnosed and misunderstood because they do not fit the 'male' criteria. This is the current gender bias, with some female research, little to no female assessment tools and no female-based interventions in existence.

What I have learnt is that many of these women are 'warriors' and when supported and provided with the right environmental fit, are able to use their unique combination of gifts and talents to overcome their challenges and limitations, in addition to sharing their gifts with the world. Each day I have witnessed females working in 'superhero' drive, fighting daily battles that even people in their family, at work, university or community are unaware of.

Through sheer determination, I have witnessed many females picking themselves back up, dusting themselves off and going forward, in a positive and healthy way. That is a warrior. Being positive and healthy despite the circumstances. Go forward, warriors, each one of you, knowing you are one of many paving a positive way for the future AspienGirls and AspienWomen who may be just now finding out who they are, regardless of their age. Be healthy positive role models for the younger generation. In the year since its release, *I Am Aspiengirl®* has gone onto become an international best seller, win an Ippy eLit Gold Medal Award and be recognised by ASPECT Autism Australia with a National Recognition Award in the Advancement Category. *I Am AspienGirl®* is now available in Spanish with the following languages being completed and/or released: Italian, German, Japanese, Norwegian, Dutch, Chinese, Brazilian Portuguese, Hebrew and French.

After *I Am AspienGirl®* was released in June 2014, the AspienGirl® team was inundated with emails, stories, messages and letters. Many of them were from females themselves or from their family members, their loved ones and professionals. We received pictures, poetry, art, short and long stories, pleas for help,

support and requests for information. We had people, of all ages, wanting to be a part of the Be Your Own Superhero Project ([aspiengirl.com](http://aspiengirl.com)). We received messages from a number of countries wanting to know more about female Autism, offering their translation skills to assist in getting the information made available in other languages, wanting to know where to go to start the process of an assessment. Messages came in from parents and professionals saying they were using the book to explain the diagnosis or as a reference point for explaining or discussing certain characteristics. Many of the messages or testimonials referred to the format of the book, in particular the use of images and quotes which combined together showcase a particular trait, characteristic or talent, being an effective way to promote awareness and educate others.

*I Am AspienWoman* is the sequel and based on a blog I wrote two years ago entitled 'Aspienwomen: Moving towards an adult female profile of Autism/Asperger Syndrome'. As we go to press this blog has been viewed close to 300,000 times and has been translated into a variety of languages, reblogged and cited in a variety of publications.

Women with Autism or Asperger Syndrome have challenges that, for most part, remain unrecognised in society. There is one published assessment tool available for girls (Kopp & Gilberg, 2011) containing specific ASSQ-GIRL items and no published assessment tools for adult females. There are currently no research-based interventions for females on the spectrum. There are few professionals worldwide trained with an understanding and experience in working with females on the Autism spectrum. Those of us working in this area know there is currently a deluge of females across the lifespan with undiagnosed Autism struggling with mental health issues and/or co-existing disorders or conditions. It will remain this way for some time into the future. There is a desperate need all over the world for more trained professionals, more research based on females and comparing females with Autism to their neurotypical peers, more information regarding the internal experiences of a large group of females on the spectrum, more information about the female subtypes, and a huge need for assessment tools, resources, intervention and support designed specifically for females. Current assessment tools do not appear to be suitable or designed to identify particular features of Autism spectrum disorder/condition in females. It is important to remember that this book is about many adult females who have been misdiagnosed or undiagnosed and as such have not received appropriate or helpful interventions. Poor self-esteem is a common theme, often from early childhood, and the experience of bullying, the later expectations of failing, disapproval by others and/or fear of ridicule.

It is her hope that with earlier diagnoses and interventions, many of the struggles seen in individuals today may be avoided, that appropriate interventions are created to assist females to 'be their own superheroes' and that ~~#nomorefemalesareleftbehind~~. Tania works in private practice with a variety of gifted and talented neurodiverse individuals, She is available in person or via telemedicine (Skype, etc). She can be reached at [tania@aspiengirl.com](mailto:tania@aspiengirl.com)

#### From the Inside Flap

*I Am AspienWoman* starts where *I Am AspienGirl*® left, giving voice to the feelings, thoughts, experiences and perceptions of women from a variety of countries, ages and cultures, some diagnosed, some self-diagnosed and many undiagnosed. This book is written for four types of readers. First, for the general population (neurotypical people), to explain the internal experiences and the unique characteristics of adult females with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). Second, this book is written for the female who is just starting her journey to understand that she may too be somewhere on the spectrum herself. Third, for individuals with a formal diagnosis who feel this book may help explain their uniqueness and characteristics to themselves and/or their loved ones through sharing it with family members, partners, friends, colleagues and/or the wider community. Lastly, the book is written for professionals, to assist them in understanding the newly emerging Autistic female phenotype or profile and in their work with their own clients.

I. Use of the word 'Autism' refers to all people on the spectrum including Asperger Syndrome. Autism and Asperger Syndrome are used interchangeably. It also includes those with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) traits.

II. Not all women have the ability to 'mask' their difficulties.

III. Not all women fit the female profile and vice versa. A smaller group of women present with more male characteristics and some males present with more of the female characteristics or presentation

IV. Whilst all females share the core difficulties and strengths, there exists heterogeneity within the group of females, and as such, many females within the group may be similar to and different from each other. For example, there are females who are introverted and there are females who are extraverted, but all say they struggle socially to some degree. Some females mildly struggle and some females have severe social difficulties.

V. There exists a stereotype of what female Autism is or presents like and it is important to point out that there are many subtypes of females with Autism.

VI. The issue of language and terminology is a contentious one. It is usually the professionals who prefer person first language ("person with Autism") whilst those on the Autism spectrum may prefer "Autistic person". Suffice to say, there is no one way of describing Autism on which everyone can agree on. The National Autistic Society recently carried out some 'research' on this very topic (a survey) which provided some interesting and contradictory findings. Realising that it is impossible to please everyone on this issue this book prefers to refer to Autism as a condition (Simon Baron Cohen) rather than a disorder (DSM5 terminology). I prefer to use the terms 'Autistic children' and 'Autistic adults', 'Autistic girls' and 'Autistic women and men', 'Autistic women and girls'. I also prefer to use the terms 'women and girls on the Autism spectrum', 'women on the Autism spectrum', 'girls on the Autism spectrum', 'Autistic adolescents' and /or 'female adolescents on the Autism spectrum'. As this book goes to print, a groundbreaking study (Nordahl et al, 2015) is released adding to the growing body of literature suggesting males and females with Autism have different underlying neuroanatomical differences. Research is showing that girls generally display less obvious behavioural symptoms at a young age compared with boys. When compared to typical girls though, girls with Autism have more behavioural and social difficulties. It is my hope that this book may contribute towards 'no more females being left behind'.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Deanna Ratliff:**

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**David Barnett:**

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**Herman Jenkins:**

Exactly why? Because this I am AspienWoman: The Unique Characteristics, Traits, and Gifts of Adult Females on the Autism Spectrum is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will surprise you with the secret it inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who also write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have got such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking means. So , still want to delay having that book? If I were being you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

**Doris Garcia:**

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