



## Girls and autism: Educational, family and personal perspectives

edited by Barry Carpenter, Francesca Happé, Jo Egerton, London/New York, Routledge, 2019, 193 pp., £29.99 (pbk), ISBN: 978-0-8153-7726-9

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BOOK REVIEW

**Girls and autism: Educational, family and personal perspectives**, edited by Barry Carpenter, Francesca Happe, Jo Egerton, London/New York, Routledge, 2019, 193 pp., £29.99 (pbk), ISBN: 978-0-8153-7726-9

Here is a missing piece of the puzzle of autism. A strength of the book is the way that the editors have drawn from experts who write from their own experience and research. It is good to read the authentic voices of the girls with autism from Limpsfield Grange School in Surrey that appear throughout the book.

There are five parts, each with their own set of chapters, with an introduction which sets the scene, recording, for example, that the number of girls being diagnosed with autism is lower than boys, although in recent years this is beginning to equal out.

Part 2: on “girls and autism: the lived experience”, is a strong reflection on the experience of a lot of girls. The opening chapter has a very powerful title “the advantage of autism: a personal journey” and does not disappoint. Broadcaster Carrie Grant, discusses the voice of the lost girl, which has an informative section on what she calls the uphill struggle of getting an Education Health Care Plan.

Part 3: Girls, autism and education contains gem after gem. This a discussion on the use of masking which helps the girls deal with their anxiety levels. This is powerfully discussed in “Building a specialist curriculum for autistic girls” by Sarah Wild. The chapter on “Included or excluded” by Jane Friswell and Jo Egerton, raises some important questions, including the lack of available information exploring the impact on girls of being excluded.

Part 4: is on Autism, adolescence and social networks. Whilst all the chapters are useful, the first, on “What do we know about the neuroscience of autism in girls and wom-

en?” could have been more detailed, although the section on “evidence of a ‘female protective factor’\* is thoughtful and challenging. There are chapters on mental health, friendship and sexuality, all of which are useful and considered, though developing them further would have enhanced the work.

Part 5: Autistic girls: looking to the future. This section examines the transition to employment, which is one of the areas that people with autism often struggle with. The chapter on the whole-school approach again is short but useful and reflects real experience. The penultimate chapter is a reflection on success as an adult autistic female, it was good to read that there is consideration of difficult times, such as the menopause.

Overall, this book can be recommended especially for teachers, parents and those with autism, it further can be a useful text for mental health and learning disability professionals.

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