



Summary of a study by Liz Pellicano and Felicity Sedgewick, 2017

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WOMEN WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION (ASC) DESIRE FRIENDSHIPS AS MUCH AS ANYONE ELSE BUT FACE PARTICULAR CHALLENGES IN FORMING AND MAINTAINING THEM.

This study sought to understand the differences and similarities between the challenges faced by women on the spectrum and neuro-typical women in forming and maintaining friendships. This small study is unpublished and forms part of a larger study. The researchers hoped the findings could point to specific strategies to help girls and women navigate their social worlds.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN WITH ASC IDENTIFIED WERE:

- interpreting social subtleties of friendship
- difficulty responding to social conflicts
- understanding romantic innuendos
- dealing with social anxiety

SIMILARITIES REPORTED INCLUDED:

- sharing their thoughts and feelings with friends
- having romantic relationships of similar length and level of seriousness
- becoming more self-aware and self assured with age

DIFFERENCES REPORTED FOUND WOMEN WITH ASC:

- have fewer, closer and intense friendships
- have more social anxiety in relation to the challenges posed by social aggression (i.e. being cut off by friends, and gossip) and therefore limiting their social interactions as a result
- use the internet to maintain friendships more than typical women do
- have more difficulty understanding implied meaning in conversations, social expectations, and motivations of others

The full article can be viewed here:

<https://spectrumnews.org/opinion/viewpoint/friendships-pose-unique-challenges-women-spectrum/>