

10 Things I Would Say to a Female with Asperger's Syndrome,
if I were her Therapist
BY: Samantha Craft

1. I would like to offer something to you, if that is okay. I believe, at this moment, I cannot in any way understand what it is like to be you. I do not believe I know what it is like to be anyone, and I understand you carry with you a vast collection of experiences and knowledge. With that said, I want to try to understand as much as I can about your journey and perspective, so that I can be here with you, not as your teacher, or counselor, or therapist, or even friend, but as another human having a human experience. I don't consider myself to know the answers; in fact, I believe you to have all the answers that we require to move through this process of discovery. I look forward to this journey with you.

2. I am here for you; you are dedicating your time and your attention, and I respect your commitment to be here. I recognize you have a choice of whom you see, and that you may or may not fit with my person as a whole. Please know that if there is anything about my presentation, my office, or my mannerisms, even my personhood that make you uncomfortable, I am open to you telling me this and will try my very best to be receptive to your input. Please know that any type of discomfort you feel, at any time, and at any moment, takes top priority above any discussion. I understand there may be many thoughts on your mind and that I am by no means able to alleviate all your misgivings, and I recognize this is not possible; yet, I still say this in hopes of creating a safe place for the both of us to sit together. I try in my practice to release the need of agenda, plan of action, or a blueprint we need follow. I am by no means perfect, but stating this to you helps me to remind myself that my top priority is you not my thoughts and needs. This allows the two of us to focus on what you believe is at the heart of your thoughts at all times, and keeps me from thinking I know the answers; as truthfully I know I do not.

3. If there is something of peak interest to you at the moment, perhaps an interest or a hobby, I am here to listen. I don't mind if you need to talk the entire time we have allotted, that is what I am here for. I am here to listen above all else, to be present, and to receive you as a whole and complete person. I don't see myself in lacking and in return I don't see you as lacking either. I think we are both where we are meant to be and I am truly honored to be in your presence. I am not going to write notes about you, if that is okay, as I wouldn't think I'd much like a person writing notes about me, but instead, I would like to offer you this paper to take home to write down your thoughts after our meeting; if you do not, this is perfectly fine with me, and if you do, wonderful. Feel free to ask me questions about my journey and respecting the therapist/client boundaries, I will offer out as much vulnerability as I can. I would take joy in meeting you equally in this journey, and will strive to remind myself when I become preachy or seem to think I know more than I do. I am human, but I know, beyond a doubt, that what is important in these rooms is not within me, but within you.

4. I wonder if you might be comfortable telling me what the driving force behind you feels like? Where do you think your inspiration comes from? Why do you think you have the intelligence you do? The drive? The stamina? How often do you think about who you are and what you are? Is this inquiry something that interests you or makes you uncomfortable, or something perhaps I am totally off base about asking? I ask, because in the females with Aspergers I have encountered, there is a depth of wisdom that honestly leaves me in awe and makes me curious as to how the universe works inside the mind; and I thought through this direction we might open doors to discovery? What do you think?

5. I am comfortable with whatever subject you want to discuss. There isn't a set topic I have in mind, nor do I feel at this time there is going to be a need for a topic. I would like to know what pops into your head, and to listen to you process your thoughts, if you are comfortable with this. I think the more I can hear you talk, the better I will be able to approach the challenges you might be presented with through the course of us working with one another. Also, this may or may not apply to you, but if you are more comfortable, I have a lovely plant set in the corner there, and I am more than pleased to watch it as you talk, if me watching you makes you uncomfortable. Also, I can respect your body language and the way you choose to communicate, because I know this is what works for you at the moment. So please know I am not evaluating your body language, tone of voice, or anything about the quality of your speech or subject matter. I understand in my working with other females with similar, but of course their own unique way of perceiving the world, that sometimes they might need a full hour just to speak and process. In the past I have scheduled hour-and-a-half blocks of time, suggesting that the client speak for half of the session, to process her thoughts, and then we meet together and have more of a back and forth discussion. What are your thoughts on this? What would work with you?

6. I believe that there is a serious need for more information about females with Aspergers. What type of information have you found? Is there something specific you think I might be able to gain knowledge from, a book or resource? If you are comfortable, I would appreciate any information you have collected that resonated for you in regards to how you feel; this might be about females with Aspergers, poetry, paintings, or any form of expression. I would especially like to hear if there is anything you wrote, perhaps a poem or a short story. I think I can gain much insight in our journey together, if I am able to see the two of us, symbolically, exploring outside of the constraints of this office, and in the realm of something you may of have created, or perhaps will create in the future. If not, would you like to tell me what you see when I show you particular paintings or what you feel when I read a poem? I have collected some items from other females with Aspergers, a variety of expressions through different art media that I store here at my side. Sometimes, with clients, we look in the basket to see if there is something that resonates?

7. In working with other females, those that have traits of Aspergers, whether diagnosed or not, I have come across a checklist of attributes that typically fits the

Aspergers experience well. I would appreciate being granted the opportunity to read this to you, to see what you think? Or you are welcome to read the list yourself, either aloud to me, or to yourself. I think there might be some connecting links here we can explore together. If you would like, we can develop a list of priorities, or address perhaps five items that caught your attention. For instance the concept of the anxiety that builds in planning for an upcoming event outside the house. Then we can decide together where to go from there.

8. I am well aware that sometimes certain techniques I have implemented in my psychotherapy practice aren't universal, in meaning they don't fit with everyone. I recognize that we are each unique in our experiences and learning modalities. I have done research on various learning styles, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and sensory integration challenges. I would like you to know that I am aware some of my approaches might not be the right "fit" for you. Such as in the past I implemented positive self-talk to a lovely client, and she explained to me that the form of therapy I was using, called "cognitive therapy," was adding unnecessary stress to the stress she already carried. I am so thankful she told me, because from there we worked together and developed a new approach. With this client we looked at her favorite books and created stories about the characters in the book; this type of approach resonated with her. With another client, she explained that she had been through years of self-help and group therapy and only initially needed a safe place to be. And so we spent many of our sessions with me listening and her sharing. Another client loved Carl Jung and the thought of the collective unconscious, so we took that route together. Please know this is your time and I want to spend the time doing what fits your style, not mine. I think, if we both explore the vast range of possibilities, we can easily find an avenue that suits your comfort-level and learning style. Also, as a reminder, nothing we establish is necessary, or set in stone, or needs to meet completion; we can change midstream; in fact, I like to do that, as it reminds me that I am not the one in control, nor do I need to be. This frees up space for me to be more present and attentive to your needs.

9. Are there any specific spiritual practices you gravitate towards? Or any types of methods of relaxation you incorporate. I found with one client that even the thought of implementing a practice was daunting and actually sparked an avoidance of doing such practices. How do you feel about goals and lists? Have you ever partaken in specific grounding exercises, self-centering, or body awareness visualizations, and is this something you might be open to exploring together? For my own self, I find that when I am in my body and aware, I can better detect where the anxiety is coming from in my environment. I can then talk to this anxiety, and other emotions I have, as if it were a person. Do you understand what I mean? Do you ever personify numbers, or letters, or parts of your body?

10. I know of someone who says she thinks people with Aspergers are: "Keepers of the Light." I like this definition, as I see such pure traits in women I have met on the spectrum or believe themselves to be on the spectrum; there is a source of pureness, innocence and this honesty that just bears all thorns. I cannot tell you how

much I long to experience some of the truths you carry and to understand what this journey of yours has brought to those around you. I see you as such a gift to me and to the world. What would you like to call Aspergers? What name shall we give this journey?