

Book Study on *The Spectrum Girl's Survival Guide: How to Grow Up Awesome and Autistic*

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Chapter 1

1. This book is written by an autistic person. In what ways does reading a book by an autistic author enhance a reader's ability to empathize with and understand the experiences of individuals on the autism spectrum?

2. How does the author's statement, "I don't think the dozens of people who have mercilessly bullied me over the years would have predicted it either," shed light on the author's resilience and personal growth? Discuss instances in the text that reveal the impact of bullying on the author's life and self-perception.

Chapter 2

1. According to the author, women aren't typically diagnosed until their 40s and 50s. How does the concept of masking contribute to the delayed diagnosis of women with autism? Discuss the challenges and consequences associated with masking, particularly for women, and consider how this impacts their understanding and acceptance of their neurodivergent traits.

Sign up for a FREE [Autism Internet Module \(AIM\)](#) account. Be sure to explore the *Girls on the Autism Spectrum* AIM for additional information.

Chapter 3

1. The author provides a list of superpowers associated with autism. What are some other superpowers that can be identified in individuals with autism based on your understanding and experiences? Discuss how recognizing these strengths can contribute to a more positive and inclusive view of neurodiversity.
2. Explore the idea of presuming competence in individuals with autism. How can labeling someone as "low functioning" impact expectations, and what are the potential consequences of underestimating the abilities of individuals on the autism spectrum? Provide 2-3 examples from the text that illustrate the importance of presuming competence.
3. Define and discuss the concept of autistic shutdown as described in the text. How does it manifest, and what are the challenges faced by individuals experiencing an autistic shutdown?

Chapter 4

1. Reflect on ways to support someone with autism who may be masking, based on the strategies mentioned by the author. How can friends, family, or educators create environments that facilitate decompression?
2. The author talks about when masking can backfire for autistic individuals. Discuss a time when you have seen this occur in your classroom or in the home environment. If you haven't seen this with an autistic person, perhaps you have seen it with neurotypicals

3. Refer to OCALI's [Autism Internet Module](#), *Girls on the Autism Spectrum*, page 11, Camouflage. Explore the link provided on the page about Kim Clairry (an adult autistic female) for further resources. Discuss how you might share this resource.

Chapter 5

1. Explore the challenges of balancing individual sensory needs in certain areas of the school environment. How can educators accommodate diverse sensory preferences and create an environment that is more sensory-friendly?
2. Creating a sensory-friendly environment in the home is essential for autistics. What specific strategies or adjustments can you share with families to support their loved one with sensory sensitivities?
3. Discover OCALI's [Inspiring Change Podcast](#), Episode 23: "We Get Stuff Done": A Conversation about Women and Autism. The author of this book is featured in this podcast. Share what stood out to you after hearing their perspectives on sensory challenges.

Chapter 6

1. How do sensory sensitivities impact the grooming routines of autistic girls, as described in the text?

2. Can you think of specific strategies or accommodations that might help address sensory challenges related to grooming in a classroom setting?
3. How can you create a supportive and inclusive environment to discourage teasing and bullying based on personal hygiene?

Chapter 7

1. The author shares various strategies for managing anxiety, such as alone time, pets, music, and special interests. How might these strategies be implemented or accommodated in a classroom setting or home environment?
2. Discuss the four-step approach suggested by the author for dealing with emotions: name what you're feeling, accept what you're feeling, express your feelings, practice self-love. How can these steps be incorporated into your curriculum and instruction?
3. What does the author mean by "building resilience within yourself"? Are there specific classroom activities or practices that you believe contribute to building resilience in neurodivergent students?

Explore the resource, OCALI 's [Grab and Go Resource Gallery of Interventions: Stress Thermometer](#)
Discuss how this tool could support your learners.

Chapter 8

1. Explore the broader themes of acceptance and diversity in the context of fashion and appearance. How can society become more inclusive and accepting of diverse styles and sensory needs?
2. The author provides tips and suggestions on finding a fashion style for autistics to support their comfort and sensory needs. How might you share this information with families?

Chapter 9

1. Discuss the author's definition of being a good friend, emphasizing treating others the way you want to be treated. How does the author address the idea that friendship is a two-way street, and both individuals need to contribute to making it a positive experience?
2. Discuss the idea that some autistic individuals find socializing draining and may need time alone for self-care. How does the author emphasize the importance of taking care of oneself and spending time alone? Explore the concept of self-love and being one's own best friend in the context of social interactions.
3. The author discussed using conversation starters to support communication challenges. Explore the resource, OCALI's [Grab and Go Resource Gallery of Interventions: Conversation Starter Cards](#). How might you use this tool with a specific student in mind? Create an example using one of the blank templates.

Chapter 10

1. How do the challenges of interpreting non-verbal cues impact autistic individuals in the early stages of romantic relationships?
2. What strategies does the author suggest for navigating the complexities of dating? What are some other strategies you might suggest?

Chapter 11

1. Discuss the author's experiences with gender expression, moving from an early fascination with Disney princesses to a preference for practical and comfortable clothing. Describe your own experiences with adjusting your clothing style to be more comfortable, regardless of what others may think.
2. How does the author navigate the tension between traditional gender roles and androgynous or gender-neutral style? Explore the challenges that individuals with autism may face in expressing their gender identity.

Chapter 12

1. Discuss the correlation between the school environment, social anxiety, and academic performance for autistic students. How might the anxiety stemming from social challenges impact learning, and what changes can schools implement to create a more supportive atmosphere?

2. Explore the tips suggested for coping with executive functioning challenges. How can teachers, parents, and peers contribute to creating a supportive environment that addresses these challenges effectively?

Discover OCALI’s resource, [Executive Function Webcast Series](#). Watch webcast 1 and discuss how people use executive function skills every day in their lives.

Chapter 13

1. Discuss the statistics mentioned in the text, where 75% of autistic students report being bullied. Why do you think bullying is particularly prevalent among individuals with autism, and what factors contribute to this high percentage?
2. Which tried and true strategies identified by the author do you think are most effective, and why? Share personal experiences.

Discover OCALI’s resource, [Bullying and Individuals with Special Needs](#). Review the resources provided and discuss how you might share these with others.

Chapter 14

1. Consider the proposed school accommodations for anxiety. How might these accommodations benefit not only individuals with autism but also contribute to a more inclusive and supportive school environment for all students?

Refer to OCALI’s [Autism Internet Module \(AIM\)](#), *Emotional Vulnerability*. Review the sections on co-existing conditions.

Explore OCALI 's [Grab and Go Resource Gallery of Interventions: Breathing Cards](#). Review the completed examples. Create a breathing card for one of your students or family members by using one of the blank templates.

Chapter 15

1. Discuss the author's recommendations for being smart and safe online, focusing on practical steps such as protecting identity and being conscientious of what you post. How can you help to create a more secure online presence for your students or family members?

2. Look at the positive statements about self-esteem on page 237. What additional statements or tips might you share with autistic females? How might you create these into a visual support for a specific student or family member?

Chapter 16

1. Reflect on the author's suggestion to shift the focus from weaknesses to strengths when working with neurodivergent students. How might this change in perspective benefit both educators and students in fostering a more inclusive learning environment? How can you help to change this focus?

2. What did you admire most about this author after reading this book? Discuss how you might share the information with others who have not read this book.