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Five Essential Tips for Teens with Asperger's Syndrome from a Fellow Aspie

When I was first diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, I wasn't sure I would ever fully adjust to the idea. But over the years as I've learned more about my disorder and myself, I've come to embrace both with open arms. Though everyone adjusts in different ways, I wish I'd realized these things sooner and I hope they help you to accept and love yourself exactly as you are.

Set goals for yourself, and allow them to evolve. I first got this idea when my teachers made a [transition plan](#) for me at the beginning of high school. It made me realize there are a lot of things I want to accomplish in life. I sat down and made a list of goals both big and small: visit Australia, learn to cook a gourmet meal, write a novel, etc.

As I worked toward my objectives, I made sure to celebrate the little victories along the way. I flew on a plane for the first time and started helping my mom cook dinner once a week. I used writing as a creative and therapeutic outlet, and realized that instead of the next great romance novel, I was more interested in chronicling my life with Asperger's and the obstacles I've overcome. As my list grows and evolves, it's rewarding to look back at my accomplishments and ahead to my next adventure.

Conflict with my parents came from a lack of understanding about Asperger's. My parents are wonderful people and have always supported me, but we've had our challenges. To them, I shirked my responsibilities and refused to communicate. But from my perspective, I often genuinely forgot chores and felt comforted by isolating myself in my room after overwhelming days at school.

I asked them to look at some [resources](#), even showed them a few of my personal journal entries. It made such a difference! They were able to better recognize the days I was struggling, and they asked what was going on and how to help. Eventually, I was able to approach them on my own because I no longer feared they'd misunderstand. Most parents truly want to help, but can't until they understand what they're dealing with.

Be kind to yourself. As an Aspie, it's an automatic reaction to blame yourself for your shortcomings and compare yourself to others. I've never been strong at math, and regularly kicked myself for getting straight C's in the subject while everyone else got A's and B's. After a particularly tough test where I received a 79% (so close to the B I dreamed of), a good friend broke me of my self-loathing cycle. "If you're [judging](#) yourself for a C, don't forget the 98% you got on our history pop quiz." I will surely never be an accountant, but so what? Punishing myself for being weak in a subject won't make me better at it, and it certainly won't make me happier. The moment I stopped judging myself, I could finally see that no one else was judging me, either.

Feeling intimidated in the real world? Know your rights. I'll be starting college in the fall and moving away from home for the first time. The idea alone was downright scary at first, especially because I was nervous that no one would want to accommodate someone with my condition. I decided to get informed and researched [housing nondiscrimination laws](#). Not only did it calm my fears, I felt empowered. I was taking control and actively preventing anyone from taking advantage of me by fighting with knowledge. My confidence has taken the anxiety out of home-hunting, and I'm certain that I'll soon find the right place for me.

Use your own methods, even if it's not the "norm." The cool thing about being an Aspie is that our brains work in different ways than everyone else's, and that can be a

great thing! I loved [this story](#) about Chris playing goalkeeper in little league soccer. He only used his feet, and was pretty successful. Instead of embracing this, an adult ordered him to use his hands and ended up costing the team the win. If you find a route that works for you, don't let others shoot it down. They don't have to like or understand it, but they do have to respect it!

My life is by no means without challenges, and I'm sure Asperger's will always affect me. But I've learned that the only way to overcome it is to embrace it, and to love myself for it, not *despite* it.

Kathleen Carter is a teen who has been living with Asperger's Syndrome for as long as she can remember. She strives to educate her peers and others about AS. Recently, she began focusing her efforts on writing proudly about how her experiences differ from other people her age. She is so grateful to have the opportunity to write for [EducatorLabs](#).