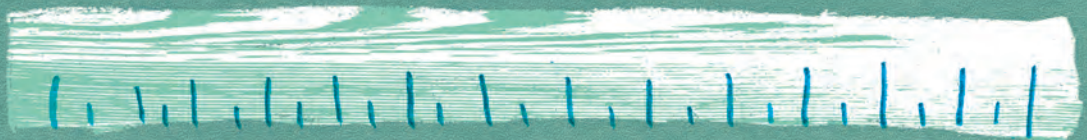


# ASPERGER'S RULES!



HOW <sup>TO</sup> MAKE SENSE  
OF SCHOOL <sup>AND</sup> FRIENDS



BY Blythe Grossberg, PsyD

# CONTENTS

---

## **Chapter 1**

- 7 Introduction
- 9 How This Book Works
- 10 Recognizing Your Talents
- 11 Making SMART Goals
- 12 Looking at Your Goals

## **Chapter 2**

- 14 Your Feelings and Emotions
- 15 *Test Yourself:* How Well Do You Understand What You Feel?
- 16 Understanding What You Feel
- 18 Listening to Your Body
- 20 Understanding How Other People Feel
- 22 Ranking Your Problems
- 23 Decoding Your Fears
- 26 Dealing With Change
- 27 Getting Upset in Class
- 30 Knowing When You Need a Break
- 33 Preparing a Talk With Your Teacher
- 34 Getting Extra Help
- 35 Goal Setting: Feelings Rules

## **Chapter 3**

- 36 Teachers and Asking for Help
- 37 *Test Yourself:* How Well Do You Ask for Help?
- 38 Telling Your Teacher About Asperger's
- 39 Explaining How You Work in School
- 41 Finding Information for Your Teacher
- 41 Thanking Your Teacher
- 42 Asking for Help With School Work
- 44 Asking Your Parents for Help

- 45 Goal Setting: Teacher Rules and Helping Rules

## **Chapter 4**

- 47 The Unwritten Rules of the Classroom
- 48 *Test Yourself:* How Well Do You Understand the Unwritten Rules of the Classroom?
- 49 Checking Your Body Language
- 51 Communicating With Your Teacher
- 58 Participating in Classroom Discussions
- 62 Goal Setting: Classroom Rules

## **Chapter 5**

- 63 Other Situations in School
- 64 *Test Yourself:* How Well Do You Handle Recess, Lunch, and Other Situations in School?
- 65 Navigating Recess, Gym, and Lunch
- 69 Dealing With Special Occasions at School
- 72 Finding Other Ways to Make Friends With Kids and Adults at School
- 73 Goal Setting: Rules for Other Situations in School

## **Chapter 6**

- 74 Friends, Classmates, and the Other Kids
- 75 *Test Yourself:* How Do You Interact With the Other Kids at School?
- 76 Making Friends
- 78 Having Conversations
- 87 Dealing With Annoying Situations
- 88 Saying "No"
- 90 Apologizing to Kids
- 90 Joining an Activity
- 91 Arranging a Get Together

# CONTENTS

---

- 94 Knowing the Rules for Hanging out With Other Kids
- 95 Being a Good Friend
- 96 Goal Setting: Friends and Classmates Rules

## **Chapter 7**

- 98 Bullies and Mean Kids
- 99 *Test Yourself: How Well Do You Handle Bullies?*
- 100 Dealing with Bullies
- 103 Understanding Less Obvious Bullies and Mean Kids
- 109 Staying Safe Online
- 112 Goal Setting: Bullies, Mean Kids, and Cyber-Safety Rules

## **Chapter 8**

- 114 Healthy Habits
- 115 *Test Yourself: How Well Do You Treat Your Body?*
- 116 Getting Enough Sleep
- 118 Eating Well
- 120 Having Good Hygiene
- 122 Getting Dressed
- 124 Goal Setting: Healthy Habits Rules

## **Resources**

Websites, Books, and Games (Yes, Games!) to Help You

## **About the Author**

# CHAPTER 1



# INTRODUCTION



This book helps you understand all the rules of the classroom, even those the teacher doesn't state outright.

Learning the rules of behavior is an important part of school.

Though they are very smart and talented, kids with Asperger's sometimes struggle in school. They often have a hard time understanding other people, particularly when people don't state exactly what they mean. If you share some traits with Asperger's kids, or if you have Asperger's, you may find yourself in the strange situation of having a lot of information about a subject at school, or an opinion about something being discussed in class, but not being able to figure out a way to tell your teacher about your ideas. Your classmates may have an easier time getting teachers to listen and understand what they are trying to explain. That is because they know certain ways to act and rules for communicating that are not spoken or written down. Kids with Asperger's sometimes have a more difficult time understanding these unwritten rules, and may feel frustrated and misunderstood.

Everyone has to learn rules of behavior because these rules help school—and life—run well. In some ways, school is like a board game. If there are no rules, people simply can't play the game in a way that makes sense to them and others. While other kids may seem to understand the rules without having them explained, kids with Asperger's may have to learn and review the rules more directly. This doesn't mean that kids with Asperger's are less intelligent. It's just the way they learn. This book will explain these rules to you and help you set goals about learning and following these rules.

Learning the rules is an important part of school. In fact, a large part of school isn't just taking tests, reading books, and writing. Instead, it's learning how to communicate with your teachers and friends in a way that helps them understand you and that lets them know you understand them. While this part of school isn't graded, it's nevertheless very important. If you can understand what your teachers want and expect from you, you will be better able to show your true talents in school.

This book makes school easier for kids like you by explaining the confusing—and often unexplained—rules of the classroom. It will help you understand your teachers and their expectations, even the expectations of you they don't state out loud. You will learn how to understand your feelings and handle uncomfortable emotions. You

will learn rules and behaviors to help you have an easier time with teachers, friends, and classmates, and you will acquire **strategies** to make your schoolwork easier to do and understand. You will learn rules for hanging out with other kids and dealing with bullies. You will learn more about your talents and how to use them to your advantage in school. Finally, you will learn how to maintain healthy habits to help you feel good.

Not all of the examples used in the book will apply to your life, and that's okay. Once you get comfortable with the rules in this book, you will be able to apply them to many different situations.

This book helps you **decipher** that other part of school—the part that the teachers don't always talk about but that is critical to how you feel and perform at school. Using this book will help you understand the rules at school, even those that are never written down. Subjects covered in the book include:

- Rules to understand teachers, classmates, and friends.
- Rules to feel valuable and comfortable in school.
- Rules to communicate and make friends with other kids.
- Rules to develop and use your talents.

## HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

Each chapter in this book will cover a specific part of life—including the **rules** of the classroom, ways to get along with classmates, and how to work with teachers. Each chapter will explain the rules about how that area of school works and then help you **brainstorm** ways in which you can improve in that area and give you a chance to practice those ways. Finally, you will come up with reachable and realistic goals for yourself related to that area. **Goals** are steps you can take, with the help of your parents, teachers, counselors, and friends, to improve in a certain area.

While reading this book, consider yourself a scientist who tries out new ideas or formulas in the laboratory and then sees how well they

**strategy:**  
a way of doing things that helps you use your skills and that can make the task easier and more comfortable for you.

**decipher:**  
To figure something out, such as a code or other people's behavior that may at first appear confusing.

**rule:**  
An accepted way of doing something. There are many rules about students' behavior in schools.

**brainstorm:**  
a problem-solving technique that involves a person or group coming up with ideas about how to solve a problem or accomplish a goal.

**goal:**  
an idea about the progress or achievement you would like to make in a certain area. Goals can be long- or short-term.

work. Don't be afraid to try something new. After all, that's the process that scientists use to come up with a new idea or invention. After you try something new, you will think about how it worked or didn't work, and what you need to do differently in the classroom.

## **RECOGNIZING YOUR TALENTS**

Before we discuss rules and goals, take a moment to think about your strengths. You have a lot of great talents that you should understand and appreciate. Now is a good time for you to sit back and think about your unique skills and traits. What are your top five talents—the qualities you possess that make you special?

### **My Top Five Talents**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

You can write about qualities you have, such as “I am kind to animals,” “I am responsible about doing my chores,” or “I am nice to little kids.” You can also write about talents you have, such as “I’m good at building with Legos,” “I’m creative in designing paper airplanes,” “I can write creative songs,” or “I know a lot about Medieval history.”

Even though you have a great deal of talents, you may also recognize areas that you would like to improve. Throughout this book, you will set goals for yourself—things that you would like to change or achieve. Setting goals does not mean that you are in any way wrong or bad or lacking talent. You are already talented, so setting goals doesn't mean that you can't keep the talents you already have. Instead, designing goals is about helping yourself feel better and more comfortable at school—with other kids, with teachers, and with yourself.

## MAKING SMART GOALS

Just like a scientist devising an experiment, you will need to figure out exactly what you want to accomplish and how to go about it. One way to do this is to first create a **SMART** goal. Think of a **SMART** goal as following a specific formula, where S stands for **Specific**, M for **Measurable**, A for **Attainable**, R for **Realistic**, and T for **Timely**. So, the first step is to come up with a **Specific** goal, one that completely describes what you want and how you might get it. Consider the following goals:

➡ I want to make more friends.

*This is not very specific. The goal doesn't state how you are going to make more friends or where you would find more friends.*

➡ I want to join the drama club, so I can make more friends.

*This goal is very specific. It states exactly how you are going to make more friends.*

Now, the next step in making a **SMART** goal is to make the goal **Measurable**. This means you should include a quantitative indicator or due date so you can determine if and when you have achieved the goal. For instance:

➡ I would like to do better with my homework.

*This is not a measurable goal. How would you measure "better"? What do you mean by "better"? Are you trying to get a higher grade or finish your homework on time?*

So, how could you change this goal into something that is more measurable? How about something like this?

➡ I would like to improve handing in my homework so I'm only missing one assignment or fewer this month.

*This goal is very measurable. You will know if you achieve it, because you can easily count the number of assignments you miss in a month.*

How about the A in **SMART**? This refers to **Attainable**, or reachable. For example:

➡ I would like to be president of my school.

*You might be a great candidate, but this goal may or may not be attainable because there are a lot of other people running.*

To make the goal more attainable, you could change it to something like this:

➡ I would like to run for president, even if I don't win.

*This goal is attainable, as you can always run for president, even if you don't win the election.*



*It may not be realistic to figure out this problem because you don't have access to the information at NASA or the training to solve the problem yourself.*

*This is a realistic goal, because you can use the resources in the library to find out what scientists who have studied the Challenger explosion think.*

*This is a timely goal, as it relates to something you need to work on now.*

Attainable is related to the idea of R, or **Realistic**. While it is good to challenge yourself, your goal should be something you are reasonably able to accomplish with the resources available to you. Take a look at the following goals:

➔ I would like to write a research paper that figures out what went wrong with the *Challenger* space shuttle.

Instead, how about this example:

➔ I would like to write a research paper that discusses what scientists think were some of the problems that may have resulted in the *Challenger* space shuttle explosion of 1986 and offer my own theories of what went wrong.

Lastly, there's the T in **SMART**, which stands for **Timely**. That means that you want your goals to be achievable within a realistic time frame and relate to things that are important now. How timely do you consider the following goal?

➔ I would like to be a professional writer.

*While this is a great goal, you don't need to worry about it until you are an adult.*

Instead, try this:

➔ I would like to improve my essay writing skills this year in school.

## LOOKING AT YOUR GOALS

At the end of each chapter, you will be given an opportunity to develop your goals. As you are setting each goal, remember to assess how SMART it is—that is, how Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely it is. You can look in the section above if you need help remembering how to set SMART goals. Or ask your parents. The goals are yours to choose, and can be whatever you want them to be. You may stick with the idea of the goal, such as “I want to make new friends at school,” but change it so that it is more Specific or Attainable, such as, “I will join the robotics club or attend a camp this summer so I can meet new kids.”

As you set goals, write down your top three goals on a piece of paper. It might help to stick them on your bulletin board or tape them to your mirror to remind you of what you want to accomplish.

You can go on to do great things, but remember—long journeys start with a single step. Start with SMART goals, and you will realize your great potential. Have a fun and interesting trip!



# Asperger's Rules!

## How to Make Sense of School and Friends

A large part of school isn't just taking tests, reading, and writing—it's knowing the rules for behavior in the classroom and learning how to communicate with teachers and classmates. This book makes school easier for kids with Asperger's by explaining the confusing—and often unwritten—rules of the classroom. *Asperger's Rules* is filled with examples, quizzes, and exercises to help you:

- Understand your feelings and emotions;
- Ask teachers for help;
- Have good classroom behavior;
- Navigate lunch, recess, gym, and other situations in school;
- Interact with other kids;
- Deal with bullies and mean kids; and
- Maintain healthy habits.

*Asperger's Rules* helps you learn the rules, so you will be better able to show your true talents at school.

**Blythe Grossberg, PsyD**, is a learning specialist in New York City who works to help children with Asperger's syndrome and learning issues to become more effective at school.



Published by the American Psychological Association  
[www.apa.org/pubs/magination](http://www.apa.org/pubs/magination)

