



The Hidden Generation of Autistic Women Who Learned to Disappear

For decades, autism belonged to boys.

That was the story. The statistics appeared to confirm it. Diagnosis rates suggested males were three or four times more likely to be autistic than females, and so research, clinical training and public imagination followed that assumption. The autistic child became a specific image, and it was not a girl sitting quietly at the back of the classroom holding herself together.

What we are now beginning to understand is that girls were not less autistic. They were less visible.

Large scale population research has shown that while boys are more likely to be diagnosed in early childhood, rates between men and women narrow significantly by adulthood. The gap does not disappear because autism appears later in women. It closes because girls were missed.

They were missed because they learned how not to be noticed.

Research into masking has changed the conversation entirely. Autistic girls are more likely to copy social behaviour, rehearse language, suppress sensory overwhelm and internalise distress. They maintain eye contact when it is uncomfortable. They study tone. They become fluent in performance. The cost of that fluency is often anxiety, depression, eating disorders and burnout, which then become the diagnosis instead.

Rosie Weldon grew up inside that silence.

She was diagnosed with anxiety in the early 2000s. Then social anxiety. She achieved highly. She did not cause disruption. She learned how to be impressive and exhausted at the same time.

By university she was achieving academically but privately falling apart. She was told that if she could not talk to people she would not succeed. She believed the problem was her. She experienced severe depression and suicidal thoughts while maintaining the appearance of competence.

She was diagnosed as autistic at 25.

The diagnosis explained her life. It did not protect her from it.

Autism Acceptance Month has made it easier for women to say these words publicly. Public figures such as Christine McGuinness and Hannah Gadsby have spoken about discovering in adulthood that they had been masking for years. The cultural shift is real.

But here is the harder question.

Once women finally understand themselves, what support exists to help them live differently?

Rosie began documenting autistic womanhood online with a kind of honesty that is difficult to ignore. She did not speak in slogans. She spoke about lying on the kitchen floor after work because the day had been too loud. About December, when lights are brighter, routines collapse and expectations multiply. About the emotional mathematics of every social interaction.

In December alone, her content reached over 4,000,000 views.

Four million people do not watch because they are curious. They watch because they recognise themselves.

“I realised people were not just looking for awareness,” she says. “They were looking for something solid.”

The moment that changed everything came during a medical emergency in April 2025. In severe pain and struggling to process instructions, she was told to get herself to hospital or she would not be helped. She phoned her father, who stayed on the line until she was safe.

That night sharpened the idea that had been forming for months.

Rosie always had someone. Many do not.

AntiPocket, launching publicly on 1 April, grew directly from that recognition. It is not positioned as a campaign. It is positioned as infrastructure. A daily companion. A support system that can be embedded within corporate diversity and inclusion plans rather than referenced in April and forgotten in May.

Autism Acceptance Month opens the conversation. Rosie’s argument is that support must outlast it.

AntiPocket is not designed to be exceptional. It is designed to become normal.

Editor’s note

Rosie is an autistic founder, speaker and author of My Autistic Fight Song. Her social platforms reach millions each month and she regularly speaks and appears on podcasts about autism, ambition and relationships. AntiPocket, her support app for neurodivergent adults, launches publicly on 1 April and is available for discussion during Autism Acceptance Month.