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# Things I Should Have Known



## Synopsis

An unforgettable story about autism, sisterhood, and first love that's perfect for fans of Jenny Han, Sophie Kinsella, and Sarah Dessen. New York Times bestselling author of *Tell Me Three Things* Julie Buxbaum raved: "I couldn't put it down." Meet Chloe Mitchell, a popular Los Angeles girl who's decided that her older sister, Ivy, who's on the autism spectrum, could use a boyfriend. Chloe already has someone in mind: Ethan Fields, a sweet, movie-obsessed boy from Ivy's special needs class. Chloe would like to ignore Ethan's brother, David, but she can't. Ivy and Ethan aren't comfortable going out on their own so Chloe and David have to tag along. Soon Chloe, Ivy, David, and Ethan form a quirky and wholly lovable circle. And as the group bonds over frozen yogurt dates and movie nights, Chloe is forced to confront her own romantic choices and the realization that it's okay to be a different kind of normal.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers (March 28, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544829697

ISBN-13: 978-0544829695

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 48 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #255,224 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #306 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Siblings #578 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Dating & Sex #1449 in Books > Teens > Romance > Contemporary

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up • LaZebnik's latest novel, following *Epic Fail*, takes the meddling matchmaker trope and gives it a charming modern-day twist. Chloe Mitchell's life isn't perfect, but it sure looks like it is from a distance: she's popular and beautiful, and she's got a gorgeous boyfriend wrapped around her finger. At home, things are much messier. When she decides that her older sister, Ivy, who is on the autism spectrum, might be feeling romantic urges, Chloe decides to take up the challenge of finding Ivy's soul mate. If only her reviled classmate David Fields weren't inserting himself into

Chloe's life. Like Jane Austen's classic character Emma Woodhouse, Chloe is inclined to act first and ask questions later, and the chain of events unleashed by her actions end up in a disaster that exposes truths about her sister and Chloe herself. Although the Los Angeles setting occasionally seems generic, the adult characters could have used some fleshing out, and some plot twists aren't as surprising as one might desire, the dialogue has a snappy, realistic quality that will keep readers engaged. Best of all, Chloe and her sister are so authentically portrayed, they nearly leap off the page. VERDICT This story about a girl who upends her own life by trying to help someone else is a winning read for young people ready for a realistic romance about life's challenges. Suggest to fans of *Clueless*, also inspired by Austen's *Emma*.  
—Sara Scribner, Marshall Fundamental School, Pasadena, CA

March 2017 ALAN Pick! One of Bustle's "16 Best Young Adults Books Coming in March 2017" One of Children's Book Review's "Best New Young Adult Books March 2017" "This hilarious, sweet and romantic book reminds us that if we open our hearts, life offers up so many wonderful kinds of normal." —Justine Magazine "There's just something about [LaZebnik's] writing that keeps me coming back. Her characters have fully realized lives; she strikes a great balance in her stories between the romantic and the familial... [LaZebnik] explores particularly complicated sibling relationships here, and does so in a way you can feel, in equal parts, the devotion and frustration leaping off the page." —Forever Young Adult "Heartwarming." —Entertainment Weekly "LaZebnik's wise and tender new book...is [a] touching story of two sisters." —The Huffington Post "More a love story about sisterhood than romantic, it's a story that will illuminate what it's like to live an ordinary teenage life when you have autism." —Bustle "We highly recommend *Things I Should Have Known*...a thought-provoking portrayal of autism and the people it touches." —HelloGiggles "LaZebnik hits it out of the park with her story about pretty, popular Chloe and her loving relationship with her older, autistic sister, Ivy... With perceptiveness and ample skill, LaZebnik paints a vivid picture of what the sibling of a person with high-functioning autism might go through. Never resorting to stereotype, she depicts appealing, three-dimensional characters who flesh out a narrative that is compassionate, tender, funny, and wise all at once. This insightful, well-written story will entertain readers while inspiring meaningful empathy." —Booklist, starred review "Readers with special needs siblings are the natural audience for this, but the wit holds broad appeal, and the mostly nonjudgmental insights will certainly give readers a new perspective on young adults on the spectrum and those who love, protect, and

advocate for them." **Bulletin** "In this insightful account of misconceptions, family conflict, and the ironies of love, LaZebnik (*Wrong About the Guy*) examines the evolution of several relationships. . . . Writing with honesty and wit, LaZebnik offers a thought-provoking portrayal of how people can come together despite, or perhaps because of, their differences."

**Publishers Weekly** "An eye-opening look at autism and those it touches." **Kirkus** "This story about a girl who upends her own life by trying to help someone else is a winning read for young people ready for a realistic romance about life's challenges." **School Library Journal** "Characterization here is spot on, as LaZebnik ably depicts the speech patterns and behaviors characteristic of people on the spectrum as well as very different versions of sibling, parental, and stepparental response. Readers with special needs siblings are the natural audience for this, but the wit holds broad appeal, and [the book] will certainly give readers a new perspective on young adults on the spectrum and those who love, protect, and advocate for them." **The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books** "A charmingly honest, insightful story about love, family, and frozen yogurt. So good you'll finish it in one sitting!" **Robyn Schneider**, author of *The Beginning of Everything* and *Extraordinary Means* "Things I Should Have Known is funny, compassionate, and loving. LaZebnik writes with authority and ease, capturing the complexities of sibling bonds and first love, and crafting characters to root for from start to finish." **Emma Mills**, author of *First & Then* "At once romantic and touching, perceptive and honest, *Things I Should Have Known* is about first love, the bonds of sisterhood, and living your most authentic life. I couldn't put it down." **Julie Buxbaum**, author of *Tell Me Three Things* "A fiercely honest and surprising story about family, first love, and the beauty of individuality. LaZebnik reminds us that sometimes the most wonderful things in life are the things you never expected." **Ashley Blake**, author of *Suffer Love*

*THINGS I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN* is a sweet, funny, happy-making read that offers up a touch of romance, but is much more a story about siblings, and love, and family, and all of their inherent challenges. With a quick pace, a heartwarming narrative, and immensely likable characters, it's a story that can be read and will be read easily in one sitting. Chloe Mitchell doesn't want to resent her perfect boyfriend with his perfect family and his perfect life. She doesn't want to be envious of her friends whose only worries seem to be about what parties to go to, what tests to study for, or what colleges to attend. And she doesn't. Not completely. She just wishes her life

wasn't as complicated and messy as it is. Pretending to be the perfect girlfriend is wearing thin. Try as she might, she can't keep up the facade that all is good, that she's got everything under control, and that nothing bothers her — not even the ignorant comments people make about her sister Ivy. But she doesn't want to end up a social pariah like David. She just can't figure out how to keep up appearances while worrying about what's going to happen with Ivy. She can't turn to her mom for help. Or her mom's new husband, Ron. But if she could find someone else for Ivy to spend time with, to trust, to like, and someday, hopefully, to love, then maybe she wouldn't have to be so stressed all the time. Claire LaZebnik penned a heartfelt, delightful, and moving story that conveys just how strong the sibling bond can be and how important it is to have someone in your life who understands what you're going through and who will be there for you when you need them. She introduces characters who are real and sympathetic and relatable. And she puts them in situations that are difficult, stressful, awkward and uncomfortable, emotional, and at times humorous. Through her characters, she lets readers experience what it's like to love someone with autism — the joy, the fear, the challenges, the sorrow, the hope. And with her words she will make readers smile, laugh, tear up, and fall in love with THINGS I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN.

This is a novel that will bring tears of joy and sorrow as you live alongside two sisters with very different life patterns. Chloe is a delight to meet - a sensitive soul who cares deeply for her autistic older sister. There is no easy answer, no miracle solutions - just the reality of the poignancy of love, of difference, and how kindness can lead to unexpected paths. A wonderful read.

I've yet to read a book by this author that I didn't like and this one did not disappoint. It was so good. It was fast paced and kept my attention throughout. It was cute, sweet, and made me tear up a time or two. I also liked how this one didn't shy away from men being able to show emotion. Rating: PG-13 (profanity, there's sex but it's not graphic, there are some heated kisses as well)

My oldest son (I have three) is autistic, so I was curious to read how the author wrote about sibling connections and about how to help autistic family members find meaningful romantic relationships. What I appreciated from the start was the way the author showed how all of the characters related to one another from a sister's (Chloe's) perspective--family members, friends, teachers. I was

moved by how Chloe managed comments and misperceptions about her older autistic sister--it reminded me so much of the way my sons have done the same. Very authentic and emotional. On a light note, I enjoyed the teen dialogue quite a bit. I also loved Chloe's conversations with Ivy, (and also Ethan's with David-another terrific sibling storyline). One of the things I liked most about the book was the way the author wove young love and desire into the story. I think desire is hard to describe, especially in a YA novel, but it's important that people (parents especially!) understand that people with autism crave connection just like everyone else. This may be a YA novel, but I recommend it to parents, friends and families of people with autism and other disabilities.

This book really defies categorization. I am far from a YA, but I was immediately taken with the story and characters. The writing is intelligent and insightful, and the characters ring true. I finished it, put it on the shelf and I know that I will take it down and reread it soon.

There's a saying in the autism community: "Once you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism." Claire LaZebnik gets it just right. "Things I Should Have Known" steers clear of autism stereotypes. It's fresh, authentic, tender -- and very funny.

As always, LaZebnik makes you think, feel, and laugh. I particularly enjoyed the two sibling relationships; YA novels often focus on romance or friendships (those are in the book, but the sibling connections are as important). The portrayal of the two main autistic characters was particularly memorable.

Not my favorite of hers, but engrossing and enjoyable.

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