

Autistic Masking or Camouflaging



What is masking?

Autistic masking is when an individual learns how to perform certain behaviors and how to suppress other behaviors in order to appear typically functioning, rather than autistic. Masking is common among autistic individuals who do not require a substantial amount of support. Those who mask are aware of societal expectations, and use masking to disguise autistic traits, such as self-stimulating behaviors.

Why do autistic people mask?

Individuals may mask to reach positive social goals, such as getting a job or to make and keep friends.

Examples of masking

- Mirroring facial expressions
- Scripting social conversations before they happen
- Imitating gestures, such as sustained eye contact

How can I tell if someone is masking?

Masking is more common and more likely in situations where an autistic individual feels like they need to conform to social rules. It can be hard to tell if someone is masking because the goal is for the individual to blend in with the mainstream.



The Impact of Masking on Mental Health

- Research has found an association between masking behaviors and poorer outcomes related to mental health.
- Mental health concerns reported by women include low self-esteem, stress, exhaustion, anxiety, and depression.
 - Masking seems to be especially common among autistic women, and may be related to women being diagnosed later in life compare to their male counterparts.
- Masking's relationship with mental health is linked to the degree of effort and not to the severity of autistic traits being camouflaged.

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