

THE MORE YOU KNOW AUTISM SERVICES

AUTISM MASKING



WHAT IS MASKING?

Masking, or social camouflaging is defined as “the use of strategies by autistic people to minimise the visibility of their autism in social situations” (Hull L, et al 2018)

HOW DO PEOPLE MASK?

People can mask in a variety of ways. Some may mask by repressing traits associated with autism, such as stimming in public places or social situations. Other’s may mask by developing behavioural repertoires such as making and maintaining eye contact, playing roles such as “the class clown” or developing a “script” to help them to navigate social interactions.



WHY DO PEOPLE MASK?

Masking can be either a conscious or subconscious behaviour. Many people report they mask to help them to feel as though they “fit in” with others. It can also be a consequence of having behaviours reprimanded or discouraged growing up to meet the expected “social norm” or etiquette.



THE DOWNSIDE OF MASKING

Although many people modify their behaviour dependent on their environment or the company they are in, this is different to masking. Masking for a person with autism can be extremely tiring, and lead to an increase in mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression or be a contributing factor to burnout.



THE DOWNSIDE OF MASKING

Oftentimes, the behaviours that people engage in while masking (eg: making eye contact) increase anxiety levels as their brains have more information to process which can be overwhelming. Likewise, behaviours they try to suppress (eg: stimming) can be very useful coping strategies for reducing anxiety and improving emotional regulation



Furthermore, masking stops an individual from being their authentic self. As humans, most of us just want to be accepted, celebrated and loved for the person we are.

