


What If I'm Not Making It Up?

You are allowed to take up space, exactly as you are. 



Understanding imposter syndrome and self-doubt when exploring autism

Many autistic people spend years – sometimes decades – questioning themselves. If you find yourself thinking, “What if I’m not really autistic? What if I’m making it up?” you are not alone. These feelings are incredibly common and they do not mean your experiences are not real. 



WHY DO I DOUBT MYSELF?

People question themselves for many reasons, especially after years of masking, coping, or being misunderstood.

-  “Others have it harder.”
You might compare your struggles to others and feel yours aren’t “bad enough”.
-  “I can cope sometimes.”
Being able to manage occasionally doesn’t mean things aren’t still difficult or exhausting.
-  “No one noticed before.”
Many autistic people are missed or misunderstood, especially when they’ve learned to mask.
-  “I make eye contact / I have friends.”
Autism is not about one trait. Everyone’s experiences are different.
-  “I’m too successful / too high functioning.”
Achievement and autism are not opposites. Many autistic people work incredibly hard to cope.
-  “Maybe I’m just overthinking.”
It’s natural to doubt yourself when you’ve spent your whole life second-guessing your experiences.



MASKING CAN MAKE IT HARD TO SEE

Masking is when we hide or suppress our natural traits to fit in, feel safer, or avoid judgement.











-  It can make you look “fine” on the outside.
-  It can hide how much effort and exhaustion it takes to get through the day.
-  It can make it harder to recognise your own needs and struggles.
-  It can lead to burnout, shutdowns and self-doubt.


If you are good at masking, it makes sense that you might question yourself.

Your struggles are still real, even if others can’t see them. 

STRUGGLING SILENTLY IS STILL STRUGGLING





Just because your difficulties aren’t obvious to others, does not make them any less valid.


 Sensory overwhelm	 Masking to survive
 Social confusion	 Shutting down
 Constant exhaustion	 Anxiety and burnout
 Needing routines	 Meltdowns (seen or unseen)
 Feeling different	 Feeling lost or misunderstood

These experiences matter. You matter. 

YOU DO NOT NEED TO “PROVE” ANYTHING







You do not need a diagnosis to deserve support, rest, understanding or accommodations.


-  You do not need to be in crisis to be valid.
-  You do not need to fit a stereotype to be autistic.
-  You do not need anyone’s permission to explore yourself gently.
-  You are allowed to listen to your experiences and take them seriously.

Your experiences are enough. You are enough. 

IT’S OKAY TO EXPLORE GENTLY

You don’t need to have all the answers right now. Exploration is not a destination – it’s a journey.

-  It’s okay to have questions. _____
-  It’s okay to take your time. _____
-  It’s okay to change your mind. _____
-  It’s okay to not know. _____
-  It’s okay to put it down and come back later. _____
-  It’s okay to explore for you. _____



A KIND NOTE TO MYSELF

What would you say to a good friend who is feeling uncertain and doubting themselves? Now say those kind words to yourself.



GENTLE REMINDERS

-  Questioning yourself does not mean your experiences are not real.
-  You know your experiences better than anyone else.
-  It is okay to seek understanding and support.
-  Many autistic people have walked this path before you.
-  You are not alone.

You are allowed to take up space, exactly as you are. 

-  Trust yourself gently.
-  You deserve compassion.
-  You deserve support.
-  You deserve to be believed.
-  You deserve to be you.

