

What is masking? So masking is what autistic people do to protect themselves so that they feel safer and more comfortable because autistic people tend to find that because they think and behave in ways that are different from most other people. They get called out for that. They get judged for that. They, it's seen as negative by other people. And autistic people will then pick up on that and feel ashamed of themselves or find themselves in very awkward, uncomfortable situations where they feel unsafe. So masking is what autistic people do to protect themselves, so they might sort of have a look around and see how other non-autistic people are behaving and try and behave more like that so that they go unnoticed. Many autistic people are aware of the fact that they mask, but actually also many autistic people are oblivious of the fact that they mask. It becomes second nature and they don't even realise that they're doing it. But it is all about protection to help them feel safe and secure.

Masking can be identified as something that an autistic person might consciously or unconsciously do in an environment to make them feel more comfortable. Suppressing stimming for example, if you are someone that moves your hands when you're talking about something, it might be seen as socially unacceptable to do that in the environment that you're in. So suppressing those natural urges that makes you feel comfortable in that environment. It can be really hard. Planning in advance. Trying to make sure that you know what you're going to say. The kind of conversations that you're going to have, the kind of responses that you're going to make in a particular conversation. All these things are going through an autistic person's mind, trying to fit into that social environment. It's almost like learning lines, like being an actor in your daily life. You can imagine if an actor is acting for 7 to 8 hours a day. That's going to be tiring. So, as you can imagine, masking is really hard work.

So masking is basically trying to act as neurotypical as possible in social settings. So the best way to say that I have a lot of friends that, have ADHD are now diagnosed with, who actually you almost used to think that were part of the popular kids in school. Like they were able to kind of hide themselves from everyone else around them, mainly because of fear of being judged. You know, and of course, being associated with kids that maybe would be more active, like have meltdowns. So it's kind of just that way of kind of trying to get by in a neurotypical society.

Allowing an autistic person to be themselves is the best way to support them when it comes to masking.