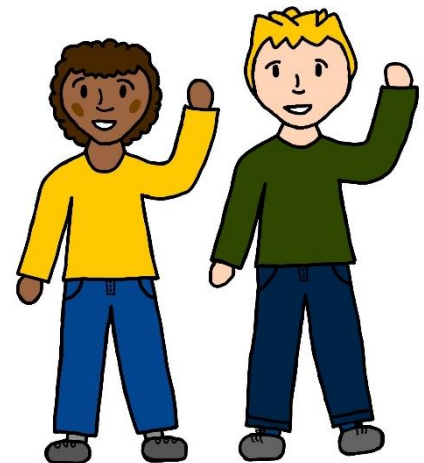


Strategies to Help Children and Young People Cope with Masking

This document is designed to support clinicians and families to have conversations that explore how to help children and young people cope with the impact of masking. It is by no means an exhaustive list of all the strategies that could be implemented to help individuals cope with masking/the internal presentation of autism but hopefully it is a useful starting point for clinicians and families.

What can someone that is supporting the child or young person who is masking do?

- Allow the person time to recover after social interactions due to the exhaustion associated with masking.
- Encourage seeking support, unmasking in a safe environment and promoting self-awareness.



What can the child/young person who is masking do?

Self-reflection → self-awareness → self-acceptance

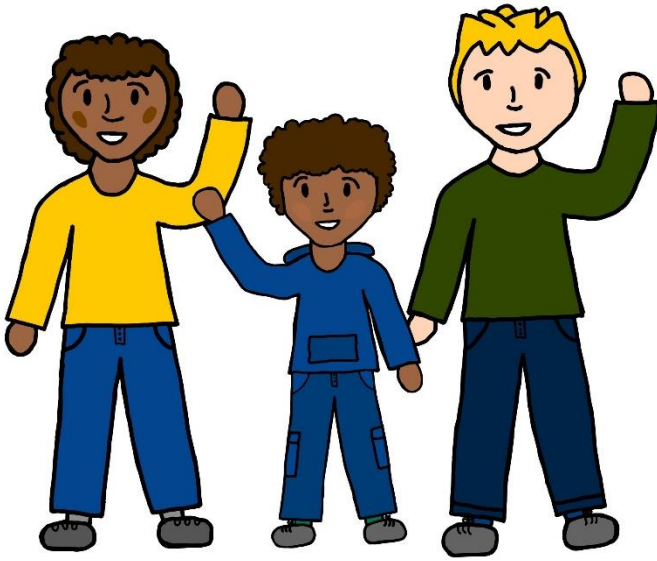
- Focus on protecting yourself and improving your own mental health and wellbeing. This doesn't mean stopping masking altogether, it just means becoming more aware of how you use the strategy to cope, and what effect it has on you.
- The worse that individuals feel about themselves the more they mask, and the more they mask the worse they feel. By learning how to change the negative thoughts and feelings that you have of yourself from masking, you may even find the need to mask less.



Strategies To Try:

- One method that could be useful is recording in a journal the situations where you mask, and how that made you feel. Then try to consciously unmask yourself in safe environments, and record whether your worst fears were met and how it made you feel. More often than not your worst fears of being judged or embarrassing yourself might not be met.
- Another helpful strategy is to build self-esteem – using self-esteem diaries.

What can everyone do?



Managing and reducing masking is crucial for well-being; it involves recognizing triggers, finding safe spaces, and communicating needs.

- Recognising triggers allows individuals to develop effective strategies to manage stress and reduce the impact of masking.
- Communication strategies – being able to express needs can help prevent overwhelming situations.

Create safe spaces using boundaries, support networks, self-care and by managing sensory overload.

- Setting boundaries - to prioritise well-being and establish limits to prevent burnout.
- Building a support network of understanding and accepting individuals can provide a safe space for autistic individuals to navigate the challenges of masking.
- Practising self-care using relaxation techniques such as deep breathing exercises or taking breaks to engage in calming activities, can help reduce anxiety and promote overall well-being.
- Practicing mindfulness can help with self-awareness and accepting emotions. Therapy can provide a safe space to discuss and process the challenges of masking. Engaging in creative outlets, such as art or music, can be therapeutic and serve as a means of self-expression.
- Prioritising physical health through regular exercise and a balanced diet can have a positive impact on mental well-being and allow individuals to better cope with the demands of masking.

References/Further Resources:

[NAS Website: Masking](#)

[Tips for Autistic Individuals to Manage Masking Autism](#)

[Masking when you're autistic | Autism Space | Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust](#)