

relates to our ability to feel what is happening inside o

Masking is a strategy used by some autistic people, consciously or unconsciously, to appear non-autistic in order to blend in and be more accepted in society. Masking can happen in formal situations such as at school or work and in informal situations such as at home with family or socialising with friends.

Autistic people have described masking as:

* tightly controlling and adjusting how you express yourself (including your needs, preferences, opinions, interests, personality, mannerisms and appearance) based on the real or anticipated reactions of others
* Times when you behave in a certain way to fit in with others.

Examples of this, which may be done consciously or unconsciously, include:

* using facial expressions, perhaps by mirroring others’, that wouldn’t come naturally to you
* forcing yourself to make eye contact or monitoring how much eye contact you are making
* changing speech or tone of voice, for example by using less direct phrasing, or being more or less animated
* suppressing, reducing or hiding stimming (such as hand flapping or echolalia), or switching to less noticeable stims such as playing with a pen
* reducing visible reactions to sensory sensitivities (for example being very sensitive to touch but not flinching or wincing when someone shakes your hand)
* planning in advance what you want to say to someone (known as ‘scripting’), which you may or may not find difficult to adapt in the moment based on their responses
* Girls are often better at maskingtheir social and communication differences than boys.
* Girls may internalise their feelings and develop more ‘typical interests’ which may be linked to masking .
* Be more passive than males.

body. It provides information about internal regulation, for example when we feel thirsty, hungry and full, regulating body temperature, heart and breathing rates, social touch, muscle tension, itching, feeling nauseas and regulating sleep.

**Masking**