

Other people should understand:

Masking and how it impacts Autistic youth



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What is masking?

Hiding autistic traits or acting in a “less autistic” way. People mask in different ways, and may not know they are doing it.

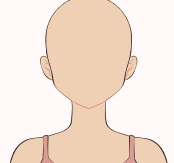
Masking can look like...

 **Using social scripts**

 **Supressing stims**

 **Forcing eye contact**

 **Forcing body to stay still**

 **Hiding true personality**

Add your own:

Why do we mask?



- Pressure to fit in and act neurotypical
- To avoid judgment or being misunderstood
- Trying to “stay safe” in places not made for us
- Wanting to feel seen as “normal”
- Masking may be rewarded socially

Remember:
Masking is not lying. People often mask without knowing they are doing it. People sometimes want to mask (e.g., during a job interview).

The Impact of Masking

Mentally demanding

Exhausting

Stress & burnout

Hurts self-image

Feeling “unseen” or misunderstood

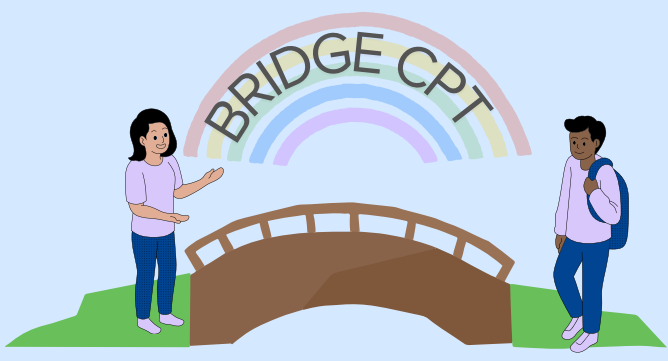


Benefits of Unmasking With People You Trust

- Build more authentic connections
- Improve understanding of who you are
- Freedom to be yourself and communicate however you prefer



Scan to hear directly from autistic youth!



How Others Can Make Unmasking Feel Safer

Fill out the page or circle what helps you feel safer to unmask

What is an allied space?

Allied spaces are **defined by autistic people** and what they want/need.

To be an ally, other people can:

- Notice signs of masking for each person
- Build trust and understanding
- Change what you expect
- Adjust how you communicate
- Be kind and make support obvious

Example: Checking in about energy levels.
For example, “how’s your 'social battery' right now - full, getting low, empty?”

Allied spaces happen when...

- ♥ People know about autism
- ♥ Flexible communication
- ♥ Sensory-friendly
- ♥ Curiosity, not judgement
- ♥ Respect for all communication methods
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____

It can feel safer to unmask when other people say...

- ♥ “Communicate however works for you - I’ll listen just as much if you talk, type, point, draw, or whatever else you need”
- ♥ “Move your body however you need, no eye contact needed- I know you’re listening”
- ♥
- ♥



All communication styles are welcome here