



Sensory Processing Service

Masking



**Caring, Learning
& Growing Together**



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Masking

What is Masking or Camouflaging?

- Masking is when an individual ‘masks’ or hides behaviours (such as stims – self-stimulating behaviours) which may be seen as socially unacceptable, or when an individual artificially behaves in a way which may be seen (by neurotypical standards) as more socially acceptable.

Masking may manifest itself as:

- Becoming withdrawn and quiet in certain environments, so that any neurodiverse traits are less obvious.
- Suppressing self-stimulating behaviours, such as hand flapping or chewing.
- Some individuals may prepare topics of conversations and jokes.

What effects can masking have?

- May cause stress responses in an environment where an individual feels safe and comfortable. For example, an individual might be able to mask at school, but sensory behaviours or ‘meltdowns’ may be a lot more apparent at home
- Can have a negative impact on mental health in the longer term
- Can cause individuals to burn out, causing them to become withdrawn
- Reduce self-esteem and self-identity



What can we do to reduce masking?

- Provide regular proprioceptive activities or other feel-good strategies in all environments
- Allow movement breaks or opportunities to engage in feel-good strategies as these are essential for children to remain regulated; they should never be used as an incentive or reward or denied as a form of punishment
- Provide discreet signals for when things are too much and when a break is required
- Help people to identify more 'socially acceptable' ways of sensory seeking
- Support the culture of neurodiversity



Visit:

sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk
for more help and information.