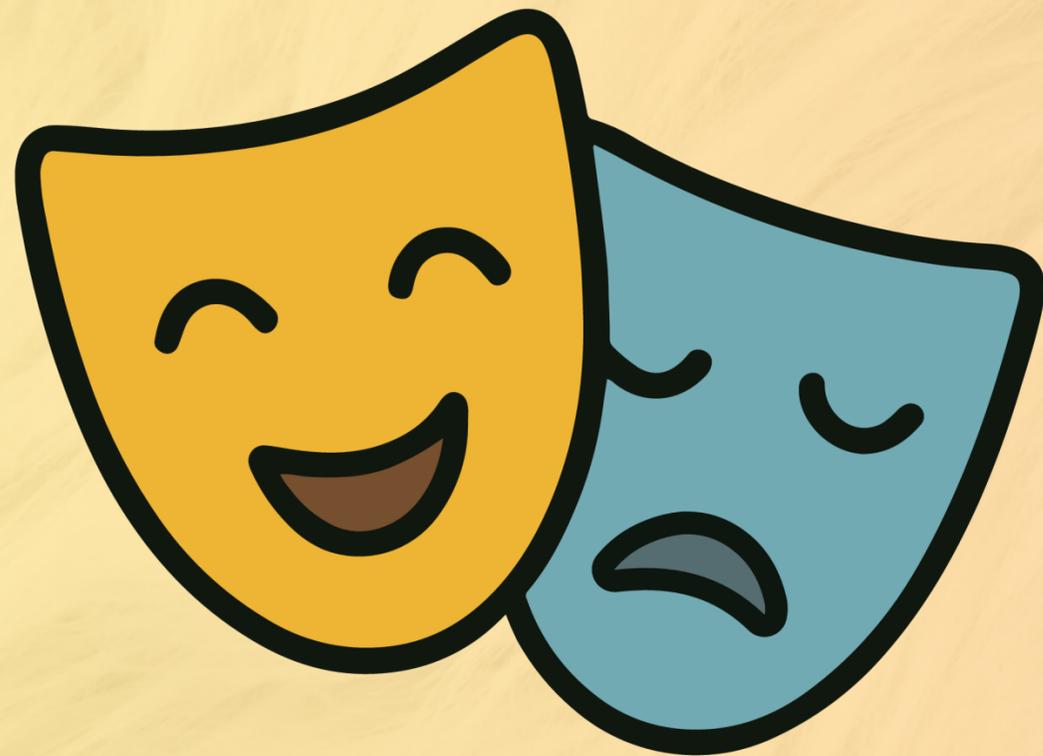


# WHAT IS MASKING?

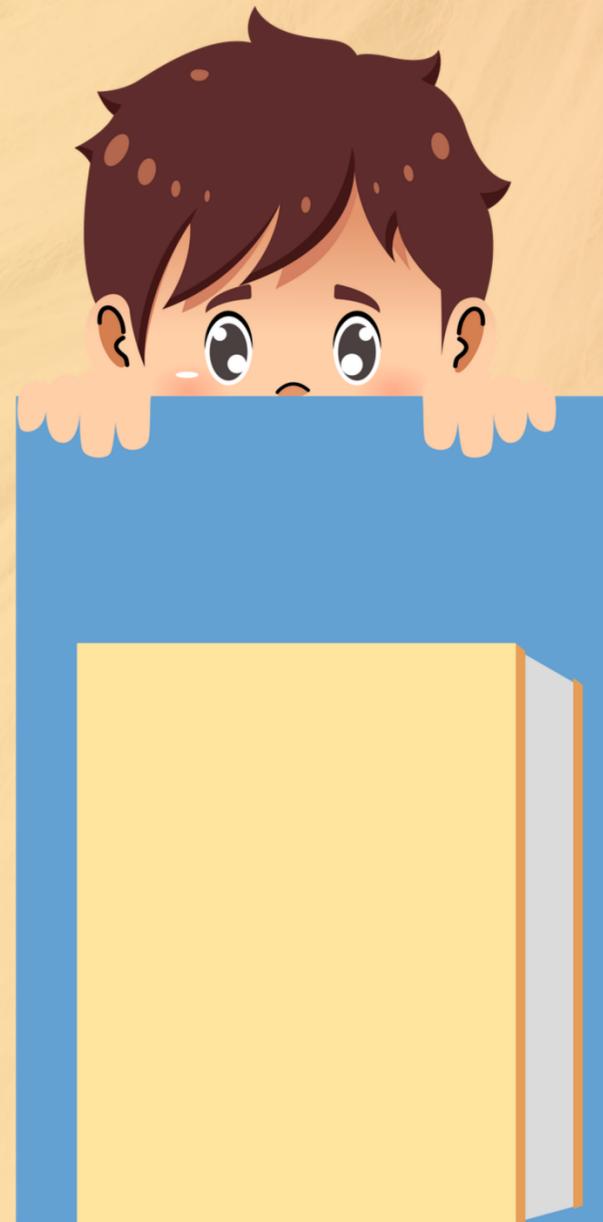


*Masking is a strategy used by individuals with autism to blend in with society. The individual does their best to act “Normal” in accordance with those around them*

# WHAT DOES MASKING LOOK LIKE?

*Masking can be broken down into 3 main parts*

- 1) Compensating for Austim related behaviors*
- 2) Constantly monitoring ones own behaviors*
- 3) Forcing actions to show assimilation*



*Masking can manifest itself in many ways however common examples are:*

- Mirroring facial expressions of others*
- Forcing eye contact*
- Hiding emotions from those around them*
- Hiding stims*
- Scripting interactions beforehand*
- Hiding interests out of fear that they are inappropriate*
- Overworking at school or in the workplace to show competence*

# Negative Consequences of Masking

*Masking done by individuals with Autism can be harmful in many ways. Often times these individuals feel misunderstood causing them to mask. The effects of masking are:*

*Feelings of isolation  
Low self-esteem  
Anxiety  
Depression  
Meltdowns & Shutdowns*



# How to Prevent Masking

In order to prevent masking, there are a few steps the individual can take:

*Unmask at your own pace and reveal your authentic self when you are ready*

*Utilize safe spaces and allow yourself to exist freely*

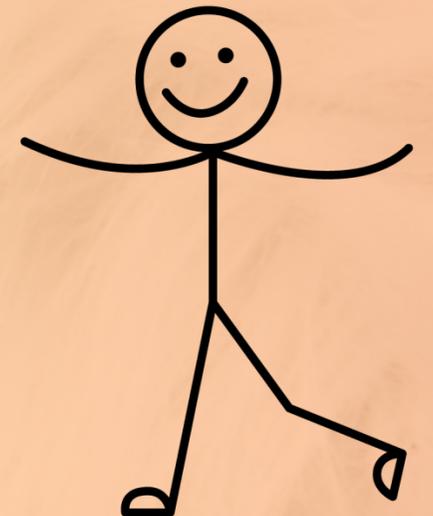
*Think about private behaviors and compare them to public behaviors. Identify behaviors performed only for others*



*Recognize when society portrays the idea that you cannot do something*

*Reconnect with personal interests even if they're considered "weird"*

*Prioritize personal comfort in all situations*



# School Supports to Stop Masking

- *Create an environment centered around trust and safety*
- *Allow students to stim without the fear of judgement from others*
- *Encourage different styles of communication from the student*
- *Encourage choice in the child's daily activities*
- *Validate their needs and feelings when triggered by external stimuli*
- *Reframe social expectations to allow for stimming and other neurodivergent behaviors*

