# Masking: A Self-Reflective Exercise "Understanding My Authentic Self."

Am I Masking? You can use this to explore if, how, and why you may be masking parts of yourself.

### What is Masking?

Masking is a common and often unconscious strategy Autistic and Neurodivergent people use to reduce traits, avoid stigma, or feel safer in social spaces.

Masking includes things like: Minimising or hiding stims (e.g., hand flapping, rocking, fidgeting) Forcing eye contact Copying facial expressions or tone (consciously or unconsciously) Suppressing meltdowns or shutdowns Pretending to understand when requiring further explanations or processing time

Mimicking others' interests, speech, or emotions (consciously or unconsciously)

### When Do I Mask?

Think of times or places you feel the need to

"act" or "perform."

Common settings I feel I must mask include: [] School or work [] Around friends [] With family [] Online [] With health professionals [] Other

# Why Do I Mask?

Reflect on the "whys" - the reasons you might be masking: [] I fear being judged or bullied [] I want to avoid conflict [] | was taught it's "polite" or "normal" [] | feel unsafe being myself [] I want to make others comfortable [] People don't appear to like me when I don't mask

> [] | only fit in when | mask [] Other

## How Does Masking Affect Me?

What does masking feel like - physically and/or emotionally? [] Tired or exhausted after social events [] Anxious or tense [] Disconnected from my identity [] I struggle to know what I enjoy or believe in [] Burnout or experiencing shutdowns [] Disengaged from social outings [] Nauseous or headachy [] Write or draw your experience

## What Helps Me Feel Safe to Unmask?

Who are the people I feel I can be myself around?

What environments support me (e.g., quiet space, stim-friendly, no pressure/expectation to speak)? What routines or tools help me reconnect with myself?

#### Reminder:

Masking is a survival response, not a personal failure. You deserve environments that support your full, authentic self - not ones that demand performance to feel accepted.

Unmasking can be powerful, but it's not always safe, and the ability to unmask without fear of judgement, exclusion or harm is a privilege not afforded to all.