

Kieran does much work and discussion on Autistic masking.

Masking is a Trauma response.

A psychological safety mechanism made up of complex layers of physical, emotional, and social actions which an Autistic person is driven to use to self-protect and present an acceptable version of who they are.

This occurs by applying, in fluctuating degrees, often un-contextualised and sometimes rehearsed, learnt behaviours to appropriate situations; whilst simultaneously suppressing both natural behaviours and self-identity, or conversely projecting an exaggerated identity.

All this happens partly consciously with the person quickly learning to dissociate from the act; and from then on subconsciously: pre-emptive, reactive and unplanned; And all at great mental and physical cost.

Masking indicators

Suppressive factors:

Physical suppression (changing movements, vocalisations)

Emotional suppression (Internalising emotions)

Sensory suppression

Suppression of pain

Stim redirection or suppression

Suppressing physical exhaustion

Suppressing emotional exhaustion

Suppression of identity

Social factors:

Scripting

Mirroring behaviours

Directed Echolalia (mirroring language)

Directed Hyperlexia (Hiding behind intelligent fluff)

Linguistic Masking (Playing for time)

Personality shifting

Code Switching

Pretending understanding and covering up lack of understanding

Physical Masking (clothes and Makeup)

Dissociation

Projecting Exaggerated behaviour

People pleasing

Fawning

Saying what people expect you to say

Compelled to take on more than you can cope with/Saying 'yes'

Conforming

Leaning into expected gender roles/stereotypes

Leading to experiences of:

Being taken advantage of regularly

Being easily manipulated/coerced

Abuse

Victimisation

Mate Crime

Being in vulnerable situations

Be frequently blamed/taking blame