



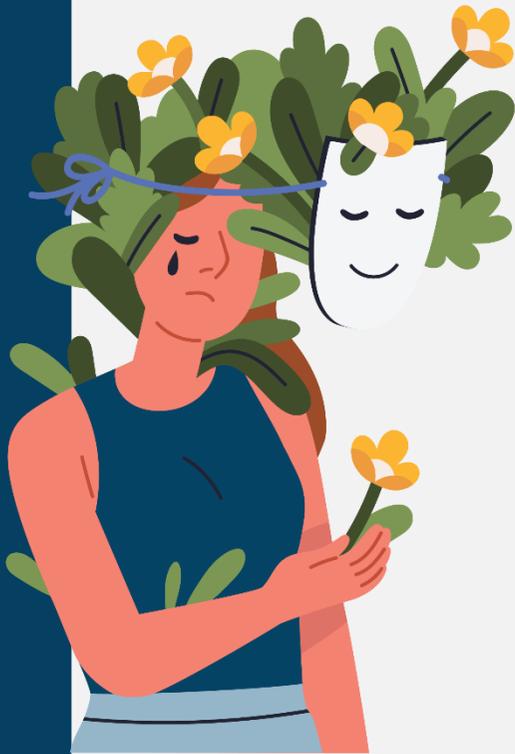
# Camouflaging

---

a quick-reference resource

# Camouflaging

Camouflaging, also known as masking, is an umbrella term for several behavioural strategies that neurodivergent people use to better fit in with society and is particularly common in the workplace.



## Behavioural strategies

- **Masking:** A form of camouflaging that involves hiding or suppressing autistic traits  
  
Example: Suppressing stims at work.
- **Compensation:** A form of camouflaging that involves compensating for autistic traits  
  
Example: Mentally practicing social situations before engaging in them
- **Assimilation:** A form of camouflaging that involves trying to fit in with others  
  
Example: Feeling like you are performing when socialising with others

## Reasons for camouflaging

Camouflaging is often an unconscious strategy that all humans develop whilst growing up, with the reliance on this decreasing with age. However, for many autistic people this reliance continues well into adulthood due to additional pressures to align with the societal and social norms of their non-autistic peers.

There are no singular reasons to explain why some autistic people camouflage, however, research highlights several different abilities, skills and attributes that may increase camouflaging behaviours. These include:

- Gender
- Social anxiety
- Executive function
- Facing stigma
- Fearing rejection

## Impact

Research has shown that camouflaging has a significant, negative impact on mental health with increased signs of anxiety and depression as well as a potential link to suicidal behaviours.

It is important to recognise that using these behavioural strategies is exhausting and the need to constantly adapt yourself comes with immense strain both physically and emotionally.

Additionally, it can also lead to a loss of identity through oppressing needs, wants and true self.

## In the workplace

Utilising camouflaging strategies in the workplace can be particularly exhausting because in addition to everything we have already covered there is also a need to understand and align to office culture and policy.

By creating a psychologically safe workplace you reduce the need for neurodivergent individuals to use these strategies – making employment more sustainable.

Not only will this gradually reduce burnout and improve wellbeing, but it will also lead to decreased turnover, increased retention and an overall more inclusive environment for your neurodivergent employees.

## Creating a psychologically safe work environment

**A safe and clear disclosure and accommodations process**

**Organisation wide education and awareness opportunities**

**Access to community groups and supports e.g., ERG's, coaching**

**Embedding neuroinclusion into the full employee lifecycle**

# Connecting with your authentic self

Reducing your use of camouflaging strategies and connecting with your authentic self can be a long and continuous process. This is a personal choice and doesn't need to happen all at once. Below are some examples of ways to connect with your authentic self:

- **Take it slow:** Although it can be positive, it can also be difficult. Take the steps you're comfortable with, when you feel ready.
- **Reconnect with what makes you happy:** Re-engaging with activities that you used to enjoy but stopped doing or exploring potential new activities that you think you would enjoy.
- **Identify soothing activities:** Identify the activities that help regulate and sooth you and utilise these activities to support feelings of overwhelm and anxiety.
- **Set boundaries:** Recognise and protect your authentic needs by setting and maintaining boundaries to create a comfortable environment.
- **Connect with the neurodivergent community:** Connecting with the neurodivergent community can provide valuable insight and support in navigating your journey to self-discovery and acceptance.



# auticon

We empower organisations to become authentically neuroinclusive by delivering expert guidance and exceptional IT solutions from our own neurodivergent talent.

To find out more about our work visit us online or on your preferred social media:

