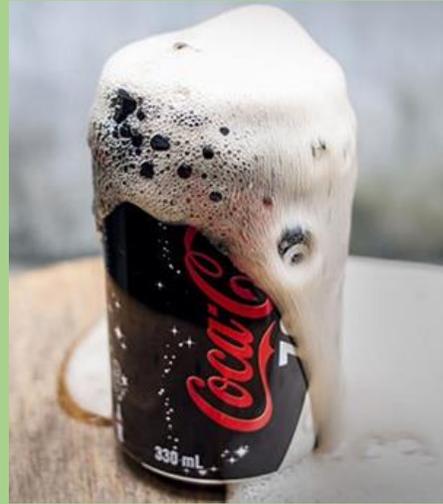


Masking involves trying to hide your true self so others will accept you. It's also referred to as camouflaging. This means that children with any difficulties act in ways that other people will think are appropriate and to try and be accepted socially.

This can have an extremely negative effect on a child's mental health over time.

**The "coke can effect"**  
*The child bottles everything up all day and lets it all out once home from school.*

Children will often 'pretend' they are OK and often disassociate with their internal body sensations (interoceptive processing) to cope.



*"When children behave different across different environments, with different people, it does not indicate that they are able to 'behave better' or choose how to behave. It indicates that they are able to 'mask'. Blaming parents for their children's differences is abusive. More often than not, a child's parents are their safe people and their need to mask is decreased where they are accepted and loved unconditionally." (Kristy Forves-InTune Pathways.)*

When a child is taught from an early age what is considered acceptable behaviour, they may push themselves to meet the needs of others and in turn neglect their own methods to self-regulate. Then after periods of being away from the family home for example a school day will often 'meltdown' on immediate return home to their 'safe place'.

## What is 'Masking'?

Due to neurological differences, often simple everyday sensations of sound, smell and touch for example can cause a primitive reaction (fight, flight, freeze response). This can make environments feel unsafe and overwhelming to the nervous system.

Girls in particular are very good at masking their worries and anxieties. They will often smile, laugh, and joke with other children, appearing to get on with school work and have many friends. However across the whole school day this can cause a huge strain to keep up.

*"Some children appear 'fine' in school, but a parent will express concerns about their well being. This isn't them having 'dramatic' parents, this is them having parents who know their child holds in feelings until they're home". (More than one neurotype)*

