ADHD AND NEURODIVERSITY

Masking energy diary

See where masking costs you, and where you recover

Many neurodivergent people spend the day trying to pass as neurotypical. You copy how others talk, rehearse conversations and hide the fidgeting. Masking runs in the background and drains energy you never see on a to-do list. This diary makes the cost visible.

Why track it

Research with autistic adults and with adults with ADHD links long hours of masking to exhaustion, anxiety and low mood. Many people need hours or days to recover.

Masking is not wrong. Sometimes it keeps you safe or helps you get through a meeting. The goal is choice. You decide where the effort is worth it, and you build in time to recharge.

What counts as masking

- Hiding stimming, fidgeting or the need to move.
- Forcing eye contact or scripting small talk.
- Over-preparing so nobody sees you forget or run late.
- Laughing along when you have lost the thread.
- Hiding sensory discomfort from noise, light or clothing.

How to use this sheet

1. After each main part of your day, note the setting and what you hid or changed.
2. Rate the effort from 0 to 10, and your energy afterwards from 0 to 10.
3. Write what helped you recover, and how long it took.
4. After a week, look for patterns. Where does masking cost most? Where do you feel safe to unmask?

Tips

✓ Be curious, not critical. You are gathering information, not grading yourself.
✓ Recovery counts as part of the day. Plan it in, like any other appointment.
✓ Share the diary in therapy if you like. It gives us a clear picture to work from.

Want support with this? Joseph offers online therapy across the UK. **act-cognitive-therapy.com/start-therapy** or call or WhatsApp 0750 001 6004.

Important. This worksheet supports therapy. It does not replace it. If you feel unsafe or at risk, contact your GP, call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option, call Samaritans free on 116 123, or call 999 in an emergency.

© 2026 The Psychotherapy Clinic Limited. Written by Dr Joseph Poullis, HCPC PYL20471. Free to print for personal use.

My masking diary

One row per setting. Effort and energy from 0 to 10.

Day	Setting	What I hid or changed	Effort 0–10	Energy after 0–10	What helped me recover

Where did I feel safe to unmask this week?

One small mask I will put down next week:

Important. This worksheet supports therapy. It does not replace it. If you feel unsafe or at risk, contact your GP, call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option, call Samaritans free on 116 123, or call 999 in an emergency.

© 2026 The Psychotherapy Clinic Limited. Written by Dr Joseph Poullis, HCPC PYL20471. Free to print for personal use.