

MASKING... MAKE IT YOUR SUPERPOWER.

A guided workbook based on my experiences as a “late” diagnosed neurodivergent adult - from exhausted to empowered!

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A few important things before we dive in. Boring but necessary...

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Neurodivergence is a broad spectrum. Therefore, it's important to highlight that this document is written by someone who was diagnosed with Autism Level 1 + ADHD in their 30's (late diagnosed) and who has high masking abilities, low support needs and was previously in a senior level corporate position. One size does not fit all when it comes to neurodivergence.

The target audience of this document are adults who are exploring their own neurodivergence, perhaps also late-diagnosed.

What this booklet is — and what it isn't. This resource is designed for informal educational and personal development purposes. It's based on my lived experience as an autistic person and my work as a life coach. It is not medical, psychological, psychiatric, or therapeutic advice, and it is not intended to diagnose or treat any condition.

I'm a life coach — not a psychologist, therapist, or registered health professional. Coaching is a forward-focused personal development practice. It is distinct from therapy and counselling, and this booklet reflects that.

Importantly, if you're experiencing significant distress, burnout, or mental health challenges, please reach out to a qualified health professional who can give you the right support.

A note on results. The reflections and frameworks in this booklet are a starting point for self-exploration. Lived experiences shared are my own. Your experience will be uniquely yours, and individual outcomes will vary.

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HEY YOU!

And welcome. I'm Peter - let's go on a journey together >>>

I'm a mindset & reality coach, who happens to be autistic! In fact, I was diagnosed with Autism Level 1 and ADHD in my early 30's, but I instinctively knew before then. In my diagnosis report, I was characterised as low support needs, high masking ability, and high intellect - not important, but helps frame my diagnosis within the broad spectrum.

After many deep-dives into who I am, and realigning my life - I'm so proud to be able to share what I learned with you.

After University I spent 15 years in the corporate world - I was a high-achieving hunter (that's industry slang for sales) where performance was a day-to-day necessity.

Turns out I was unconsciously running an extremely sophisticated social performance every single day — and paying for it with my energy, my identity, and eventually my health.

The thing is, for the vast majority of my time in sales, I didn't even know I was autistic! How was I even supposed to know what masking was?! But when everything did unravel (post-pandemic), this is the part that took me the longest to figure out — that masking could actually be a strength.

That's what this booklet is.

It's the guide I wish I'd had. It's designed to help you understand yourself more clearly, and start using one of your most impressive abilities on your own terms.

There's no right way to move through this. Take your time, and when you need - I'm only a few clicks away...

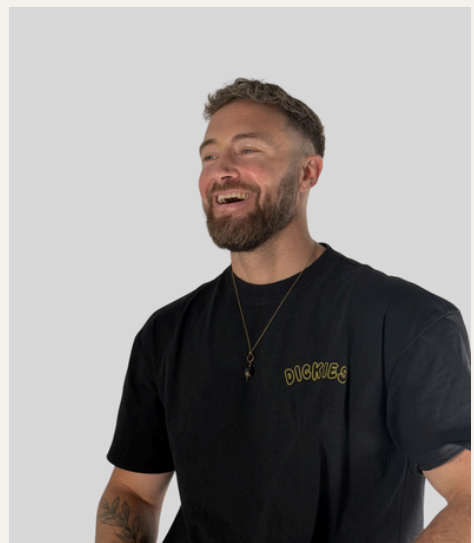
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Ready? Let's go!

Peter L.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This is a workbook, not a textbook. So grab a pen, find somewhere you actually feel like yourself, and take your time.

There are explanations, reflections, and exercises throughout. Some sections will click immediately. Others might take a few days to sit with — and that's completely fine.

- Do this in a low-demand environment where you don't feel the need to perform. The irony of trying to fill out a workbook about unmasking while you're masked is real.
- Be honest, not impressive. Nobody's marking this.
- You're allowed to go at your own pace.
- Oh, and if you're like me, you're going to scribble a lot of things down, so it may be best to use a journal. Be sure to have plenty space for all your incredible insights that are about to explode!



SECTION ONE: LET'S TALK ABOUT MASKING

I've had many masks over the years and continue to use them to my own benefit. From the workplace, to high-stakes business negotiations, dating, big social events and everything in between, the mask has been a superpower of mine...
But only once I mastered how to maximise them.

From my own experience, and from what I hear from the people I work with, putting on a mask helps to "fit in" and appear more "normal".
Spoiler Alert - "normal" doesn't exist!

Here are some common masking traits:

- Making and maintaining eye contact even when it's uncomfortable
- Modulating the tone and volume of your voice
- Suppressing stims (fidgeting, rocking, repeating sounds or words)
- Mirroring other people's body language and facial expressions
- Filtering your words before you say them — sometimes extensively
- Pretending to understand social cues
- Performing emotions that are expected rather than felt
- Hiding interests, reactions, or ways of thinking that feel "too much"

NOTE: *This isn't a diagnostic checklist — just a way of helping you recognise patterns you might relate to. If reading this is making a lot of things click into place for the first time, that's worth paying attention to. And if you haven't yet spoken to a professional about whether you might be neurodivergent, that conversation is worth having with someone qualified to help.*



For me, and many others, masking started young. So much so, that it became an auto-response, like autopilot.

And because it became so automatic, I didn't even realise I was doing it.

Masking isn't weakness. It isn't dishonesty. It's an incredibly intelligent adaptation to an environment that wasn't designed for how our brains work.

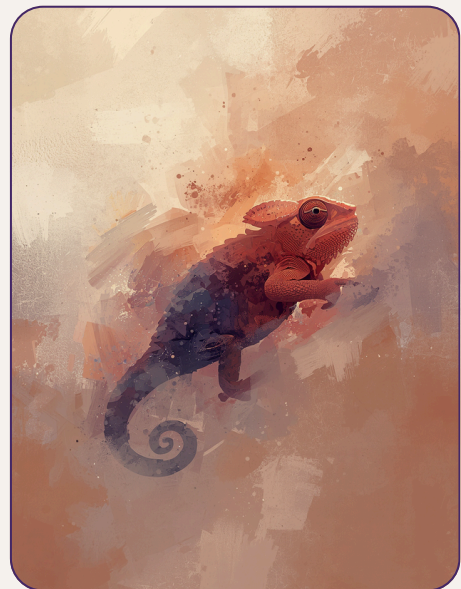
For me, masking was a genuine social survival strategy. I would find myself in a certain social circle, and would reinvent myself to fit the mould... Well, in the past anyway!

And it's also worth knowing that there's another way to relate to it — one where you're the one in charge. I can't wait to share that plot twist with you!

REFLECTION

**When and where did your masking begin?
Think back. When do you first remember
adjusting who you were to fit in or feel safe?**

What situation were you in?



What were you trying to achieve — safety, connection, acceptance?



SECTION TWO: THE COST OF UNCONSCIOUS MASKING

Here's what nobody tells you when you're in the thick of it: unconscious (autopilot) masking is expensive.

Not financially (well, maybe!). Energetically. Mentally. Physically.

When your mask is running on autopilot — when it's not a choice but a reflex — it creates a very particular kind of toll. Here's what I experienced:

Burnout: The kind that builds slowly and then hits you hard. For me, it lasted well over a year — and I've heard similar stories from so many of the people I work with. If this sounds familiar, please know you're not imagining it.

Loss of Self: When the mask runs constantly, it becomes hard to know where it ends, and you begin. I had this creeping uncertainty about who I actually was — my preferences, my values, my personality — because the performed version took up so much space.

People Pleasing: After decades of performance, people pleasing becomes almost automatic. I'd say yes, when I meant no. I was managing everyone else's comfort at the expense of my own.

Hyper-Independence: Asking for help requires vulnerability. Vulnerability feels dangerous when your default is to perform competence. So guess what, I used to do it all on my own, and exhausted myself in the process.

Chronic Self-Doubt: I spent years not showing the real version of me. I would question if the real me is ok to show?!

(Spoiler Alert: it is worth showing!)

These were all tough chapters, but huge life lessons, and of course - it gets better!
Let's keep going!



REFLECTION

What has masking cost you?

This isn't about blame or shame — it's about honest accounting. You can't make a different choice until you understand what the current one is costing you.

Which of the above resonated? Circle them or write them here:

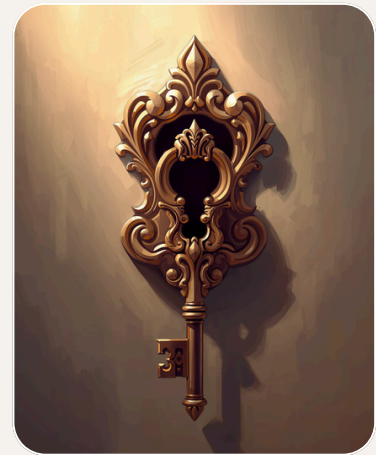
What area of your life has been most affected?

What other examples have you experienced when it comes to the toll of masking?



Note: If any of this section or other sections brings up significant distress, please reach out to a mental health professional.

SECTION THREE: THE REFRAME



Okay. Now for the part that changes everything.
The plot twist we've all been waiting for!

Masking, when it's conscious — when you know what you're doing and why — is actually one of the most remarkable abilities a person can have. This was pivotal for my growth.

No doubt, you have a host of skills that you haven't given yourself credit for yet! You can read a room. You can adapt your communication style to connect with almost anyone. You can navigate complex social environments that would floor most people. You've essentially developed a set of social personas that you can deploy with precision.

That is not a flaw. That is a skill. I'm so impressed!

So, the problem was never the mask. The problem was running it on autopilot. Letting it run even when it was costing you and not knowing how to take it off.

The goal of this booklet is to help you build a conscious relationship with your masking. To know yourself deeply enough — the real you and the masked versions of you — that you can make genuine choices about when to use it, how to use it, and when to put it down.

UNCONSCIOUS MASKING

The automatic reflex you didn't choose, running at a cost you didn't agree to.

CONSCIOUS MASKING

A sophisticated tool you understand, deployed by choice, with full awareness of what it takes and what it gives you.

Same ability. Completely different relationship to it.

REFLECTION

Your first glimpse of the gift.

Have there been moments where your masking actually served you well — got you through something, helped you connect, opened a door?

Moments masking served me well:

What does it feel like to consider masking as a strength rather than a symptom?



SECTION FOUR: UNCOVERING THE REAL YOU

Before we look at the masks, we need to know who's underneath them.

This is the version of you that exists when there's no performance required. No audience. No stakes. Just you.

A lot of neurodivergent people haven't spent much time here — or feel a bit uncertain about this version of themselves, especially if the mask has been running for a long time. That's okay. We're going to explore it together.

EXERCISE: KNOCK KNOCK... WHO'S THERE? (We're About To Find Out!)

Answer these as honestly as you can. There are no right answers. Nobody is grading this.

When you have completely free, unscheduled time with no obligations, what do you actually want to do?

What topics or interests could you talk about or lose yourself in for hours?

How do you naturally communicate when you feel completely safe and unobserved? (Louder/quieter? More direct? Rambling? Lots of details? Very physical?)

What do you feel deeply, even if you rarely show it?

What are you genuinely good at — not what you've been praised for professionally, but what comes naturally to you?

What environments feel most like home to your body?

What are your values — the things that matter so much that you feel off when they're compromised?

What does the real you need MORE of in everyday life?

What does the real you need LESS of in everyday life?



SECTION FIVE: MEET YOUR MASKS



Here's something worth knowing: you probably don't have just one mask.

I developed different masks for different environments — a work mask, a social mask, a family mask, a first-impression mask. Each one is tailored, almost automatically, to what that environment seems to require.

In this section we're going to map them out. Not to criticise them — to understand them. Because a mask you understand is a tool. A mask you don't understand is running you.

EXERCISE: MASK MAPPING

MASK #1

Environment / Context:

(e.g. work, family gatherings, first dates, medical appointments, social events)

Give this mask a name or character:

(e.g. "The Professional", "The Easy-Going One", "The Good Kid", "The Fun One")

What does this mask look like?

Describe how it behaves, speaks, holds itself:

What does this mask turn up? (What qualities get amplified - e.g. confidence, humour, calm, competence?)

Why do you mask in this environment? What is the goal?

**Is this masking currently conscious (a choice) or unconscious (a reflex)?
Tick an option below:**

Conscious choice **Unconscious reflex** **Somewhere in between**

What does this mask cost you?

What does this mask give you?

On balance — is this mask working for you, against you, or both?

Any other insights, notes, actions for this mask?

(Repeat for Mask #2, #3, etc.)



SECTION SIX: THE SKILLS INVENTORY

Now for the fun part.

Each of your masks has developed real, legitimate skills. Skills that took years to build and that most people simply don't have. Let's name them — because you can't leverage a strength you haven't acknowledged.

EXERCISE: YOUR AMAZING SKILLS

Go back to each mask you mapped in Section 5 & answer these questions.

What social skills do the masks have?

(e.g. reading the room, conflict de-escalation, putting people at ease, mirroring, active listening)

What professional skills do the masks have?

(e.g. presenting, managing up, appearing calm under pressure, communicating across different levels)

What do the masks understand about people and environments that others might miss?

What have the masks helped you achieve that the unmasked version of you might have found harder?

What surprises you about the list of skills?



SECTION SEVEN: MAKING THE SWITCH

You've now got a clearer picture of who you are underneath the masks, and who each mask actually is. That awareness alone is significant. Most people — neurodivergent or not — never get here.

Now let's talk about the switch.

It's clear to me that the difference between **unconscious** and **conscious** masking comes down to one thing: choice.

Unconscious masking is automatic. Your brain picks up on a high-stakes situation — the possibility of judgement, exclusion, conflict, or failure — and the mask goes up before you've even clocked what's happened. You're performing before you've decided to.

Conscious masking means you've assessed the situation, made a decision about which version of you is best placed to show up, and chosen accordingly. You're still the one driving.

This doesn't mean the mask never goes up automatically — habits run deep and brains are fast. But over time, with practice and self-awareness, you start to catch it earlier. You start to notice the moment of choice.

EXERCISE: YOUR CONSCIOUS MASKING INTENTION

For each of your masks, write a conscious intention — a statement of how you want to relate to this mask going forward.

Example: "My Work Mask is a skilled communicator and I'll choose to deploy it deliberately in client presentations, while letting more of the real me show in smaller team settings."

Mask 1:

Mask 2:

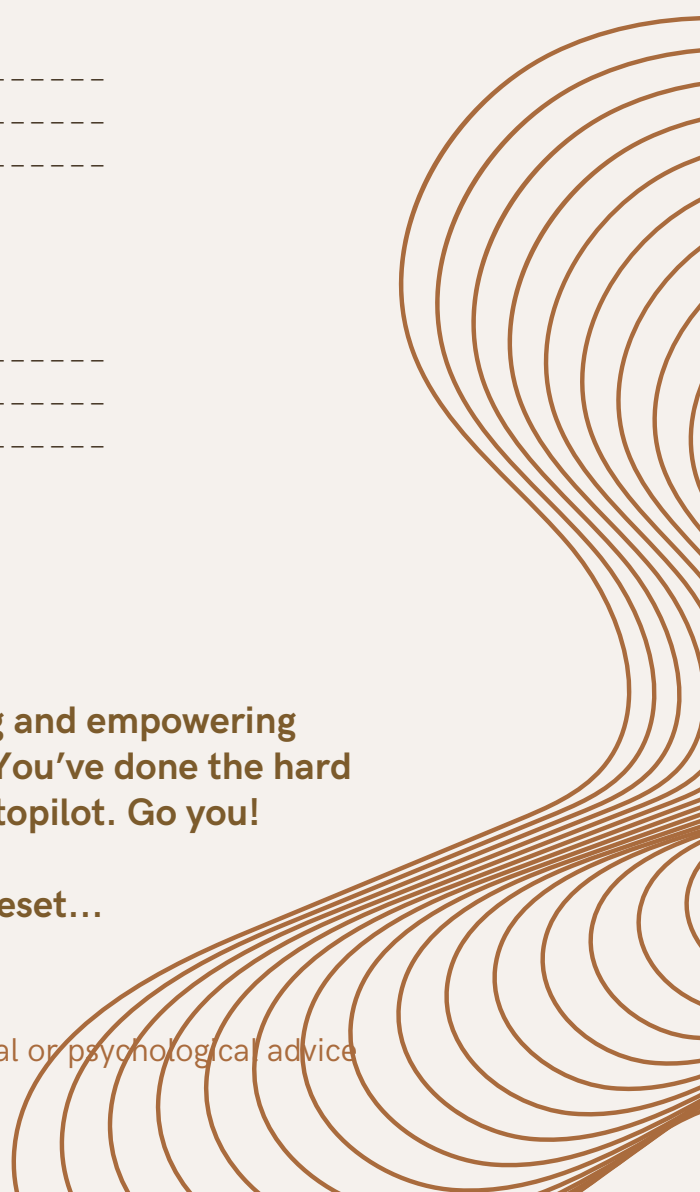
Mask 3:

Mask 4:

Mask 5:

Ok awesome, section 7 is done!
Conscious masking is the KEY to unlocking and empowering your skills as a neurodivergent individual. You've done the hard work, and created the ability to remove autopilot. Go you!

Next we're going to look at the important reset...



SECTION EIGHT: YOUR DECOMPRESSION STRATEGY

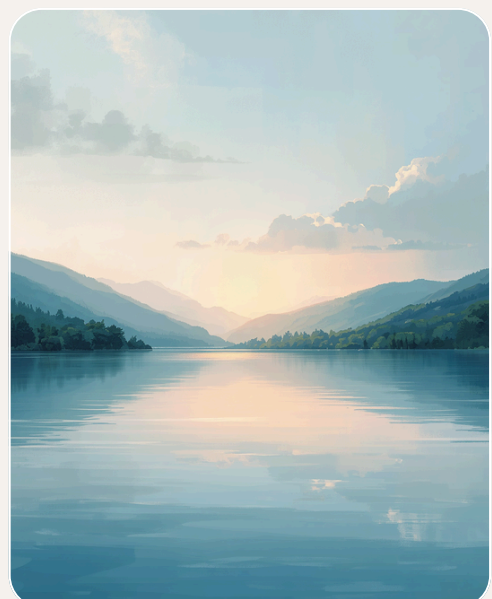
Let's be real about something: even conscious masking takes a lot of energy. You can be completely intentional about when you deploy the mask and still need to decompress afterwards. That's not a failure — that's just how it is.

Building a recovery strategy that's actually designed for how you are wired — not borrowed from others — is non-negotiable. It's what allows you to show up fully when you choose to, and restore properly when you're done.

EXERCISE: WHAT DOES COMING BACK TO YOURSELF LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

**What do you instinctively reach for after a heavy day of masking?
(Even if you haven't thought of it this way before)**

**What environments help you decompress?
(Silence? Nature? Familiar spaces? Certain lighting
or sounds?)**



What sights, sounds, textures, tastes or movements help you feel like yourself again?

What activities let your brain rest without requiring performance?

How much solo time do you need after a heavily masked day to feel like yourself again?



Note: If any of this section or other sections brings up significant distress, please reach out to a mental health professional.

EXERCISE: DESIGN YOUR DECOMPRESSION

My non-negotiable after a heavy day is:

The thing that helps me come back to myself fastest is:

My ideal decompression environment looks like:

I know I'm back to myself when:

One thing I'm going to stop judging myself for needing is:



SECTION NINE: IT'S TIME TO LEVEL UP!

You've just done something most people never do.

You've looked honestly at how you show up, what it costs, what it's worth, and who you actually are underneath it all. That takes guts.

Kudos to you!!

But this was just the starting point of a beautiful new future for you. The work of moving from unconscious to conscious masking, of building a life that genuinely fits how your brain works, is ongoing.

And it's also genuinely exciting, because once you have the map, everything starts to look different.

Now ask yourself - **can I go deeper?**

That's where I come in. I'm a mindset & reality coach, and I work one-on-one with people all around the world who are unlocking their new chapters. From online calls, live App-based support to over 20 digital tools, my coaching experience is immersive and crafted around you.

Coaching isn't digging up the past - it's about **creating your future**.

Book your **free alignment call** — no pressure, no pitch. Just a real conversation about where you are vs where you want to be.

Book yours here: www.peterlochhead.com

For Insta: DM the word SHIFT @peter.lochhead

Or email me: peter@peterlochhead.com

I'd love to meet the real, unmasked version of you.

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Share this freely with anyone who needs it.

Just don't edit it or sell it — that's not cool ;)

And remember - this resource is for personal development purposes only and does not constitute professional medical or psychological advice.

