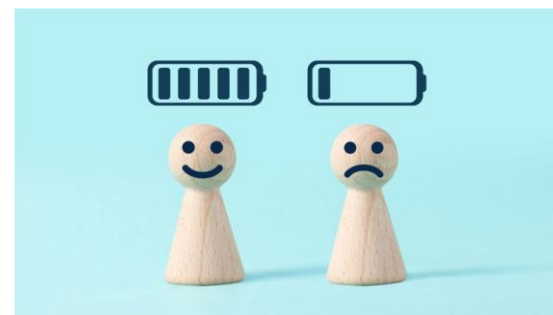


Social Battery & Camouflaging/Masking



What is a social battery?

The term "social battery" describes the amount of energy a person has for socialising. People with a full social battery have plenty of energy for social interactions, whereas those with a low social battery may often feel that it needs "recharging."



At times, we all need to recharge our batteries. Some people do this by being around other people and others by being alone. Some people recharge their batteries by engaging in physical activities, where others might recharge by having a relaxing hot bath - but what if you don't know what has drained your battery, or indeed how to recharge it? Here are some ideas to explore...

- I've noticed she/he becomes overwhelmed if there are lots of people and it's easier if she/he is with a chosen friend, is this something we could do at school too?
- We're finding he/she is exhausted at the end of the day. I think it's because they may be finding social interactions draining, is there a way school could support with some quiet times/ calming activities during the day?
- We find at home that he/she is very sensitive to noise, they have told us that they find it too noisy in school. Can we work on a way for them to communicate this with their teacher so that they can remove themselves when they find it overwhelming.

You know your child best. There are some behaviours that you will only see at home; by communicating this with school you can help them understand your child better and work together with your child's best interest at heart.



Camouflaging/Masking

We all camouflage/mask at times. If, for example, you are feeling shy or anxious about meeting someone new, you might 'put on a brave face' to cope. For some neurodivergent people, camouflaging/masking happens every time they talk to someone and this takes a lot of effort and energy.



Some neurodivergent people feel very different from everyone else and might feel like they have to hide their neurodiversity or try to find ways to cope with the things they find difficult. We call this 'masking/camouflaging'.

It is a bit like a chameleon changing the patterns on its skin to fit into the surroundings; the chameleon is still there, but it is trying to look like everything else around it.

Examples of camouflaging/masking for your child may include forcing themselves to make eye contact with other people even if they find it challenging; thinking of a list of questions to ask every time they meet someone new so they do not run out of things to say, or pretending they 'get' the rules of social interaction when they don't.

How to support your child after a day of camouflaging/masking

- Camouflaging/masking can be exhausting. Give your child space at the end of the day. Refrain from asking them questions about their day until they are ready.
- Allow them to unwind in a way that suits them. This may be having some quiet time on their own, stimming, listening to their favourite music, watching their favourite tv show, playing outside, colouring, talking, hiding under a big blanket, having a snack.
- Your child may have some big feelings and some challenging behaviours at home. Acknowledging that this behaviour is a way of communicating with you can be helpful for you and your child.

'They're fine in school'

Some children are very skilled at camouflaging/masking. This can make it difficult for schools to identify any difficulties that the child may be having. You may have been told that 'they are fine in school', even when you are reporting different behaviours at home.

Below are some ways to begin to have conversations with school about supporting your child:

- Talk to the person your child sees most- their class teacher in the first instance. For secondary it might be a form tutor.
 - Keep track of any meetings you have for future reference.
 - If you need more support, ask to speak to the SENCO.
 - Try to frame questions around what might be causing the behaviour and tackle that, not the behaviour itself. See some examples below:
- I think he/she might be changing their behaviours to try and fit in, is this something that's happening at school too? Could you have a look, and can we meet again to talk about it?

What might drain my child's social battery?

- Being with more than one friend
- Noisy environments
- Saying hello to teachers in the morning
- Busy playground
- Birthday parties
- Playdates
- Family gatherings



What might re-charge my child's social battery?

- Opportunities to be alone
- Physical activities
- Speaking with a 'safe' person
- Listening to music
- A cosy blanket
- Watching their favourite tv show