

# Are you masking your mental health?

Have you ever pretended to be “okay” on the outside when you felt far from it on the inside? If you find yourself hiding emotions or mental health struggles to blend in with the people around you, you may be “masking”. While it may feel good temporarily, masking over time can lead to greater emotional distress and make it even harder to seek help when it’s needed.

## 5 SIGNS YOU MAY BE MASKING

It’s not always easy to tell if you’re hiding your true emotions. However, the following signs can help identify if you might be masking your mental health:

1

### **Feeling exhausted after social interactions.**

Masking can be draining. If you find yourself running out of steam being around others, it may be because you’re putting on a mask during those interactions.

2

### **Avoiding negative emotions.**

If you frequently change the subject when conversations get personal, or downplay feelings of sadness or anger with phrases like, “I’m fine”, you may be masking deeper struggles.

3

### **Feeling disconnected from yourself.**

Masking can create a rift between how you feel internally and how you present yourself externally. This can make it more difficult to recognize and deal with your challenges and can lead to feeling “numb” emotionally.

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4

### Being hyper-focused on perfection.

Striving to appear perfect in all areas of life — work, relationships, appearance — can be a way of masking insecurities or mental health issues.

5

### Deflecting or engaging in unhealthy coping mechanisms.

While a little laughter can be a great way to cope with stress, constantly making jokes to avoid discussing real feelings could be a sign that you're avoiding difficult underlying emotions. That suppression of feelings can fester and may lead to more unhealthy coping mechanisms like alcohol abuse or smoking, overeating, or over-exercising to distract yourself from your feelings.



### Learn to recognize if you're masking

The [LiveWellSD program](#), powered by WebMD®, offers several resources you can use to improve your mental health — including a mood tracker tool. Using the tool, you can record daily feelings to recognize emotional patterns and identify potential masking triggers.

### You are not alone — we're here to help!

Looking for additional support in identifying the signs of masking? Use the State of South Dakota [Mental Health Resource Guide](#) to learn about the many mental health benefits available to you from your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to medical and mental health services from your Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® benefits — there are multiple tools and treatments available to you.

