

# HOW TO HONOR AND RETURN TO YOUR AUTISTIC SELF



Katie Bassiri, LPCC RPT-S

**There is a lot out there about “finding ourselves,” but to “find” something implies that our self was at one point lost or missing, and that’s not quite the case. When we are young, we develop a sense of self that is less burdened by outside influences, however it may be that if you are autistic and/or have experienced trauma you’ve been learning from a very young age that your ways of being are not accepted. Over time autistics are likely to have painful emotional experiences that can result in the act of disconnecting from or masking parts of yourself. By tuning in and being curious about your internal experiences, you can begin the process of honoring your needs as you “return” to your autistic self.**

## IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE AND PLACES WHERE YOU CAN “UNMASK”

- Masking is a strategy used by some autistic people, consciously or unconsciously, to appear non-autistic. While this strategy can help them get by at school, work and in social situations, it can have a devastating impact on mental health.
- It’s important to note that “unmasking” may not feel possible for some, and that privilege plays a role in masking and unmasking

## MAKE A LIST OF WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUELY YOU

- Take note of your unique traits, focusing on how they have served as strengths for you
- Remember your inner child! What makes them spin, flap, laugh, and grin?

## GET TO KNOW YOUR ND PROTECTORS AND WHAT THEY DO FOR YOU

- "Neurodivergent Protectors" like imposter syndrome, rejection sensitivity, perfectionism, masking, and overcompensating parts are known to impact autistics.
- ND Protectors are trying to protect the autistic from "Neurodivergent Shame" but may be going about it in an extreme way.
- It can be helpful to bring awareness to when these ND Protectors appear and how they show up in your life

## GIVE YOURSELF TIME AND SPACE

- Understanding and honoring yourself is a continuous process and every journey is unique!
- Embrace-Autism.com is a great website to explore autistic strengths and identity.

## EXPLORE YOUR SENSORY PREFERENCES

- Take note of what does and does not feel good in your body (taste, touch, smell, visual, sound, movement etc).
- Explore your tactile preferences with fidgets.
- Pay attention to how noise impacts you.
- Notice how you prefer to move/rest your body throughout the day.
- In spaces where you feel safe to do so, try out new body movements and ways of being in the space that honor your body’s requests