

# Autism and The Black Identity

Every autistic child deserves to be seen, understood, and valued for who they are. For Black autistic children, that journey can sometimes be more complicated.

Many Black families find themselves navigating both autism and the challenges that come with racial stereotypes and bias. Some children may be misunderstood, overlooked, or expected to behave in ways that do not reflect who they truly are. These experiences can affect how children are supported at school, in healthcare settings, in community spaces, within the justice system, and in other environments where they should feel safe, understood, and supported.

Your Autism does not look the same in every person. There is no single way to be autistic, just as there is no single way to be Black. Every child has their own strengths, interests, personality, and way of experiencing the world. text

Many autistic people mask at different points in their lives. Masking is the process of hiding or changing autistic traits to fit social expectations or avoid being misunderstood. For many Black autistic people, masking can carry an additional layer. Along with navigating expectations around autism, they may also be navigating racial stereotypes and concerns about safety. Some Black autistic adults describe masking not only to fit in, but also to protect themselves from being judged more harshly or perceived as threatening. While masking can help someone navigate certain situations, constantly trying to determine when it is safe to mask, when it is safe to unmask, and how others may interpret them can be emotionally and mentally exhausting.

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One of the most powerful things families can do is create spaces where children know they do not have to hide parts of themselves. Home can be a place where children are encouraged to communicate in ways that feel natural, celebrate every part of their identity, and know they are valued exactly as they are. Families can also help others understand their child by advocating when behaviors are misinterpreted and reminding others to look beyond assumptions and stereotypes.

Being Black and being autistic are not separate parts of a person's life. Together, these identities shape unique experiences, perspectives, and strengths.

Children do not need to change who they are to belong. They deserve communities, schools, healthcare providers, and relationships where every part of their identity is welcomed, understood, respected, and celebrated.

