

Camouflaging Autistic Traits

The Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q) is a self-report measure of social camouflaging behaviors. It should be used to screen autistic individuals who do not currently meet diagnostic criteria due to their ability to mask their autistic traits for social acceptance and safety purposes.

There are (25) questions on the CAT-Q that measure three categories:

- **Compensation (9):** These are Strategies used to actively compensate for difficulties in social situations.
Examples: copying body language and facial expressions, learning social cues from movies and books
- **Masking (8):** These are strategies used to hide autistic characteristics or portray a non-autistic persona.
Examples: adjusting face and body to appear confident and/or relaxed, forcing eye contact.
- **Assimilation (8):** These are strategies used to try to fit in with others in social situations.
Examples: Putting on an act, avoiding or forcing interactions with others.





Importance:

The CAT-Q addresses some of the issues with the outdated definitions of autism in the research literature. It can also be a diagnostic tool to identify a patient with autism who might score below the threshold of other autism diagnostic tests due to *Masking*.

Current Research at CHCO:

In a study of 20 transgender individuals, 10 assigned male at birth (AMAB) and 10 assigned female at birth (AFAB) patients starting hormones clinically were given the CAT-Q.

Preliminary results, AMAB patients who scored lower on the CAT-Q had an ASD diagnosis.

Patients who scored higher on the CAT-Q did not have an ASD diagnosis.



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