

Presenting a certain face to the world is something that most people are very familiar with. The different masks that people wear in the course of a day act as a social disguise and help them to get through a variety of situations.

The reasons behind the different masks that people wear vary considerably, but they can be both positive and negative. Some reasons include:

- To gain social acceptance...to be liked
- To hide excitement
- To hide happiness
- To hide vulnerability
- To hide the truth
- To hide fear
- To hide anger
- To hide sadness
- To hide depression
- To hide pain
- To deceive
- To manipulate

We all wear masks at some time in our lives—it's part of human nature. The problem comes when masks become the norm and we lose ourselves in the process of trying to please others. It is important to have self-awareness about the different masks we wear and the reasons behind it-- recognizing the masks we wear is one way to make sure that they do not gain control of our true "self."

⇒ *The different masks that people wear can be used in a positive or negative way. Just be aware you are using them.*

ACTIVITY: THE MASKS WE WEAR

Create a mask that shows the different "faces" you present to society.

On the **outside of the mask**, put the faces you show your friends, family, teachers, for example. You can show these behaviours any way you like—with pictures, poetry, colours, words/slogans/phrases, etc.

On the **inside of the mask**, show who you really are. On the outside of the mask you may have pieces of yourself, but you may also have misrepresentations. For example, you may behave in an outgoing manner at a party with your friends, but you may actually feel somewhat shy. You may be nice to others—sweet and innocent to your parents or grandparents, but swear when you are with your friends. On the inside of the mask, show your true self. Again, you may illustrate your true self any way you like—with pictures, poetry, colours, words/slogans/phrases, etc.

On the back of the mask, in a paragraph or more explain the significance of the images/words/phrases...you chose

TEACHER TALK:

- ⇒ How difficult is it to be yourself around your family, friends, and other people?
- ⇒ Who would you find it difficult to be yourself around? Why do you think this is true?
- ⇒ Do you really know who your “self” is?
- ⇒ What or who influences how you see yourself at any given time?
- ⇒ How much impact do friends have on how you see yourself? What is the impact of your family, advertising, school, and society?
- ⇒ What are the masks we often wear to hide who we really are?
- ⇒ How do you feel when you are wearing one of those masks? Real? Phoney? Scared? Confident?
- ⇒ If you were to continue to wear a mask, and you were never allowed to really be yourself, what do you think would happen to you over time?

Think of a party or something you might have attended recently. Now imagine you are telling your friends about it. What kinds of things would you share? JOT THEM DOWN. No one will look at them, so be honest.

Now, if you were telling your parents about this event, what information would you give them? JOT THIS DOWN

How does this information differ from the info you gave your friends?

Think about a third group of people, for example your grandparents or your three-year-old brother/nephew.... What information would you share with them? JOT THIS DOWN. How does this information differ from the last two?

Now, expand on these ideas, do we behave differently with friends than you would with your grandparents, or parents? How do you behave with different groups of people? Why might you behave differently?

"Masks"

Author Unknown.

Don't be fooled by the face I wear, for I wear a thousand masks,
and none of them are me.

Don't be fooled. For God's sake don't be fooled.

I give you the impression that I'm secure, that confidence is my
name and coolness my game.

And that I need no one. But don't believe me.

Beneath dwells the real me in confusion, in aloneness, in fear.
That's why I create a mask to hide behind, to shield me from the
glance that knows,
but such a glance is precisely my salvation.

That is, if it's followed by acceptance, if it's followed by love.
It's the only thing that can liberate me from my own self-built
prison walls.

I'm afraid that deep down I'm nothing and that I'm just no good,
and that you will reject me.

And so begins the parade of masks. I idly chatter to you.
I tell you everything that's really nothing and
nothing of what's everything, of what's crying within me.

Please listen carefully and try to hear what I'm not saying.
I'd really like to be genuine and spontaneous, and "me."
But you've got to help me. You've got to hold out your hand.

Each time you're kind and gentle, and encouraging,
each time you try to understand because you really care,
my heart begins to grown wings, feeble wings, but wings.

With your sensitivity and sympathy, and your power of
understanding,
you alone can release me from my shallow world of uncertainty.

It will not be easy for you. The nearer you approach me,
the blinder I may strike back
but I'm told that Love is stronger than strong walls,
and in this lies my only hope.

Please try to beat down these walls with firm hands,
but gentle hands, for a child is very sensitive.

Who am I, you may wonder.

I am every man you meet, and also every woman that you meet,
and I am you, also.

