



UW AUTISM CENTER

CENTER ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & DISABILITY

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

This presentation is property of the
University of Washington and
may not be duplicated or changed.





Understanding Autism and ADHD



Who Am I?

- Sara Eileen O'Neil Woods, PhD
- Licensed Psychologist
- Assessment across the lifespan,
- Therapy, Training, Consultation, Research



Who Am I?

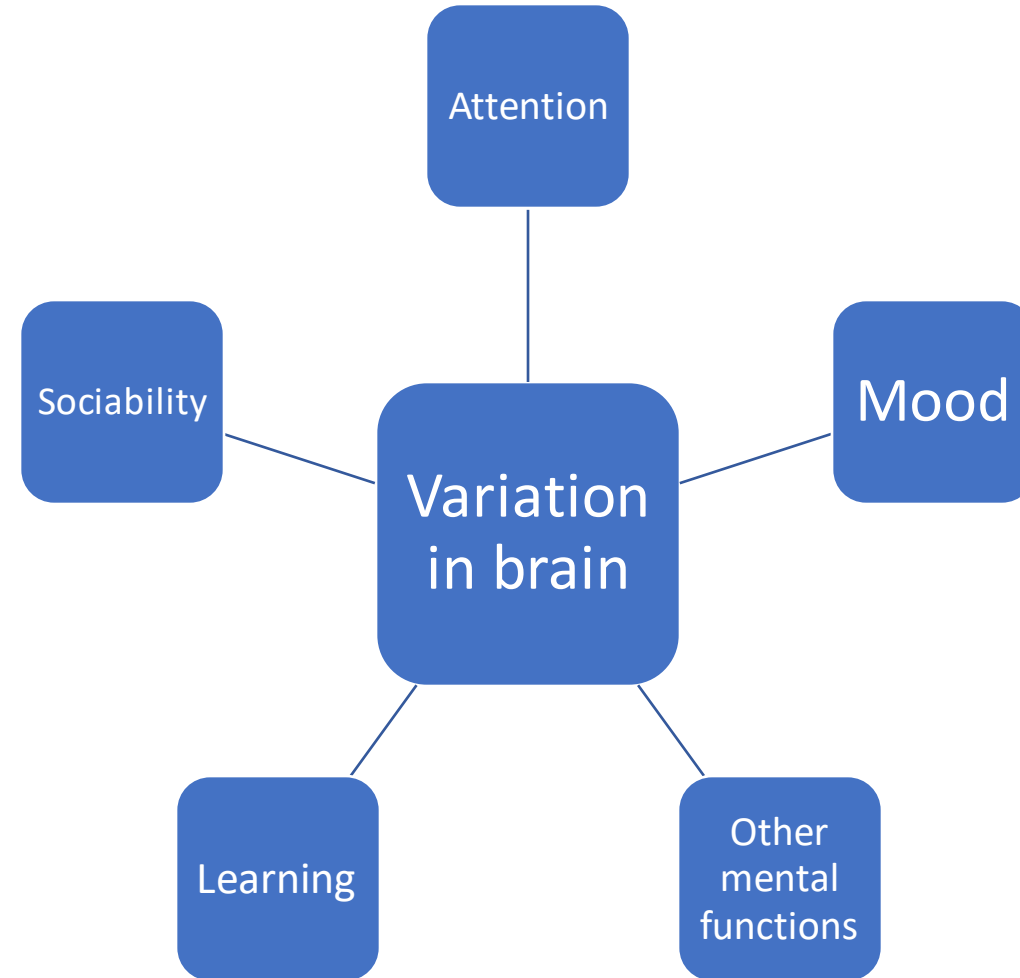
- Chelsea Deaconson, M. Ed., BCBA, LBA
- 14 years in behavior
- Ages 2-27
- Autism, ADHD, OCD, down syndrome, fragile X, and more.





What is
neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity



Neurodiversity paradigm

- Autism as a different way of being



Neurodiversity Paradigm

- Neurodiversity:
 - Natural
 - Valuable part of human diversity





Neurodiversity Paradigm

The idea of one “healthy” “normal”
mind or brain is culturally
constructed



“Diversity,
when
embraced,
acts as a
source of
creative
potential”



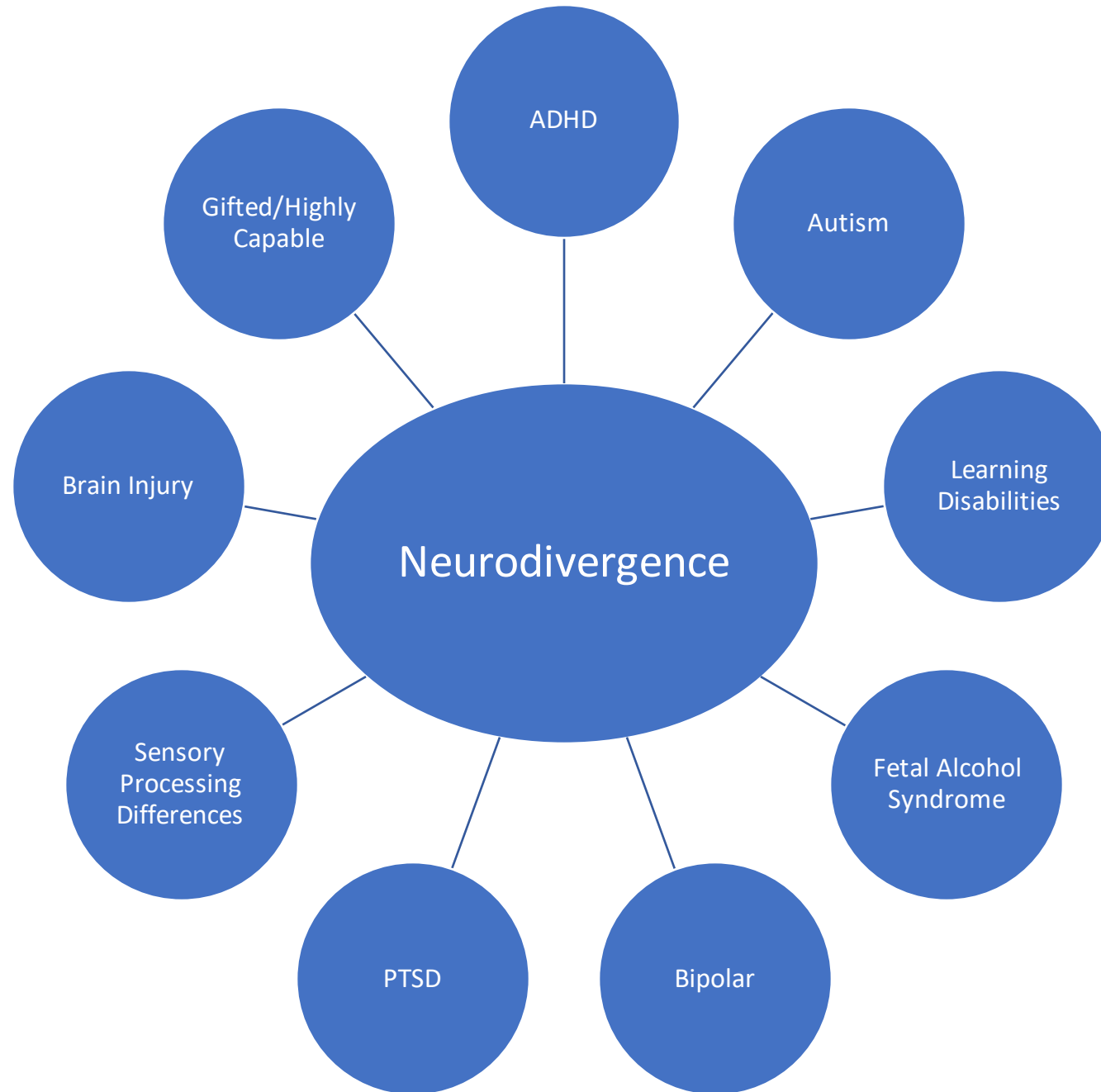


What is
neurodivergence?

A photograph of a wooden boardwalk with a yellow flag on a pole, set against a background of lush green trees and a cloudy sky. The boardwalk is made of light-colored wooden planks and has a dark metal railing with yellow wooden posts. The flag is a small yellow triangle on a tall silver pole. The background is filled with dense green foliage and a bright sky with some clouds.

Neurodivergence

- Mind diverges from the dominant societal standards of “normal”
- Not necessarily autistic
- Kassiane Asasumasu



Getting the language right



This group is NEURODIVERSE.
It has more than one type of brain.

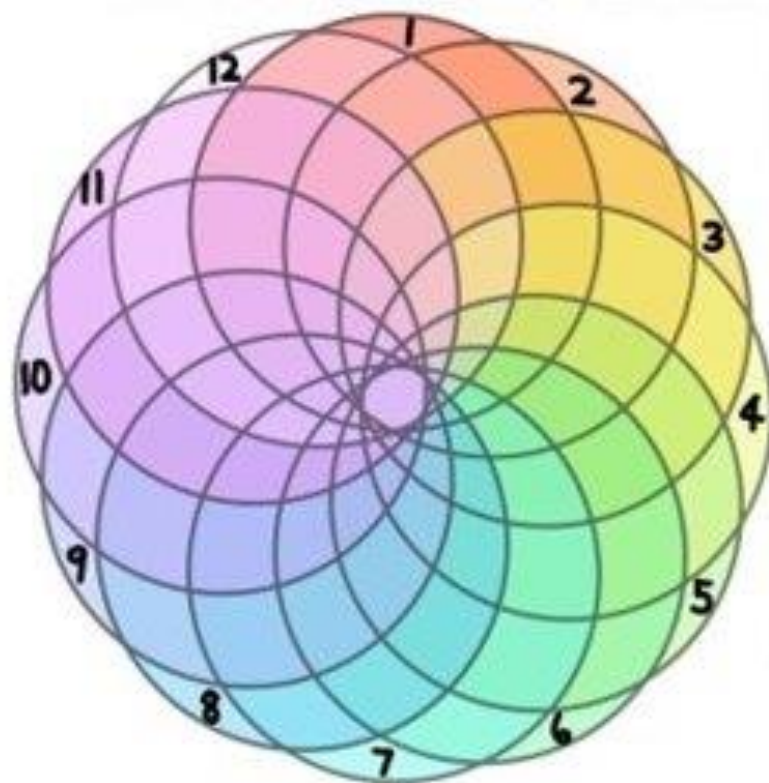
(including a neurotypical brain!)

Getting the language right



This is NOT a neurodiverse group
because there's only one neurotype.

INTERSECTIONALITY

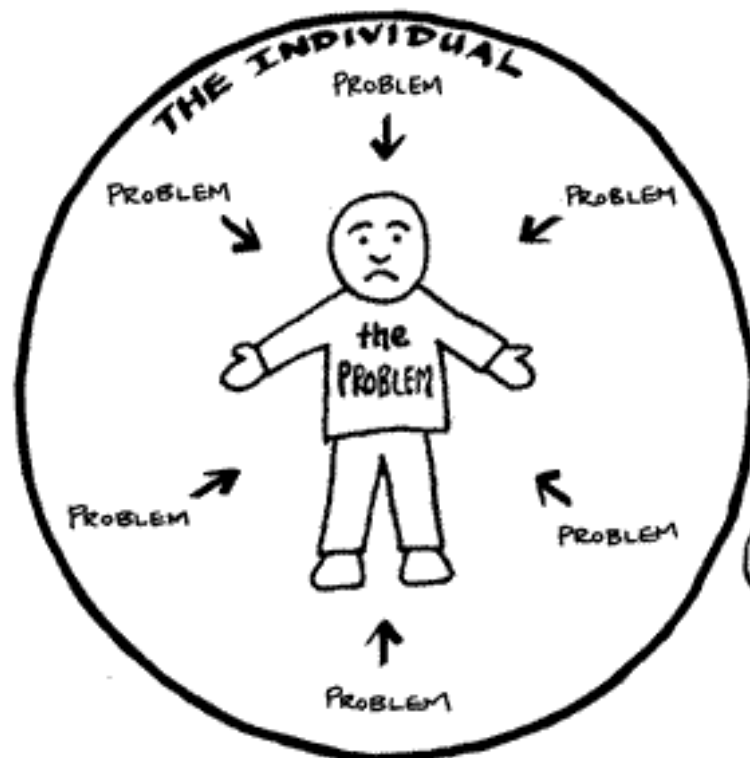


- 1 Race
 - 2 Ethnicity
 - 3 Gender identity
 - 4 Class
 - 5 Language
 - 6 Religion
 - 7 Ability
 - 8 Sexuality
 - 9 Mental health
 - 10 Age
 - 11 Education
 - 12 Body size
- (...and many more...)

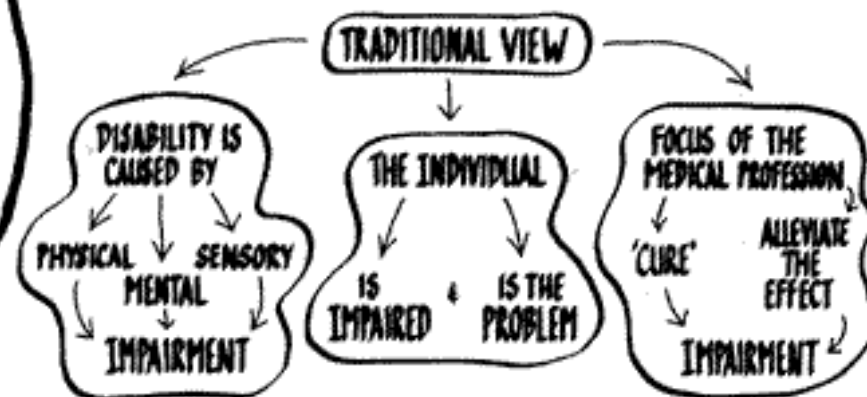
Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw -

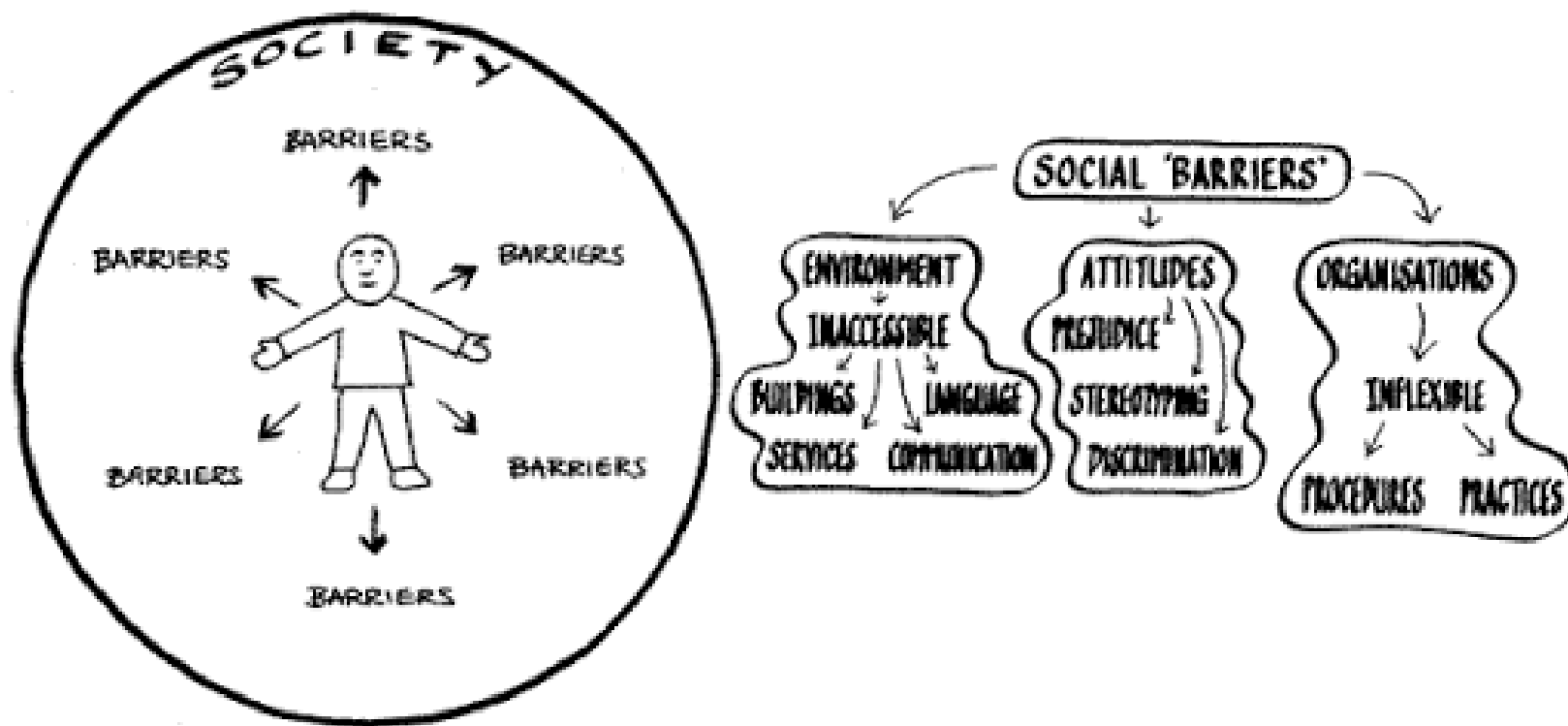
THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY



IMPAIRMENTS AND CHRONIC ILLNESS
OFTEN POSE REAL DIFFICULTIES BUT
- THEY ARE NOT THE MAIN PROBLEMS



THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY



Let's take a look
at our pets through the
MEDICAL MODEL...



NeuroWild

Such cuties!

Nothing wrong with either
of these fur-babies, right?



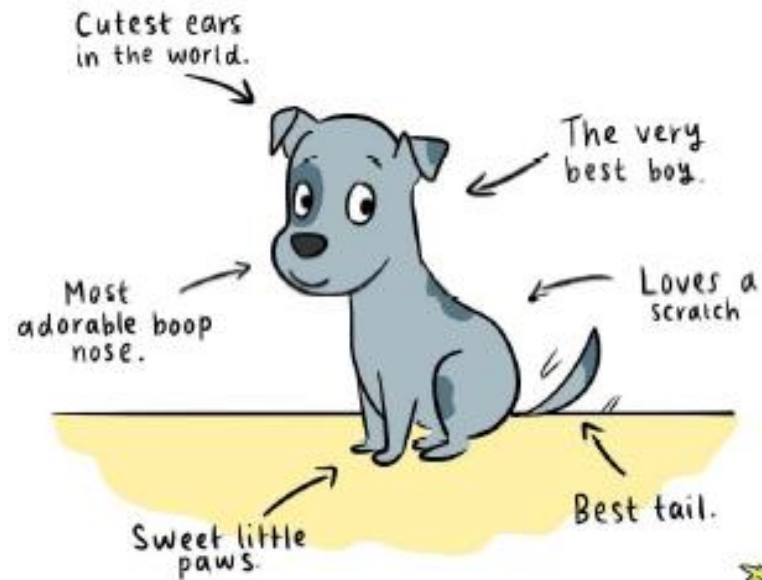
NeuroWild



Let's have
a closer look.



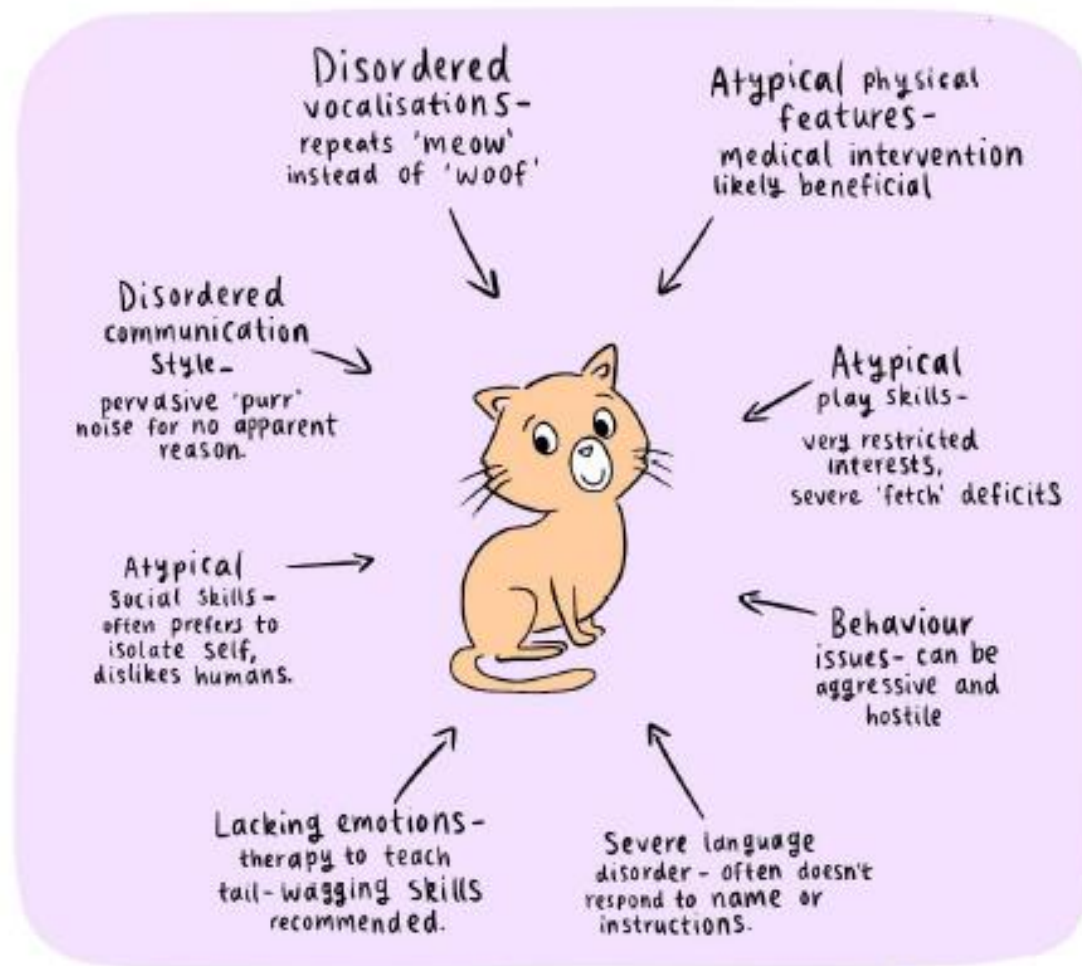
Here we have a very good boy. He loves people, loves a nice walk, and his tiny wiggly bottom brings JOY to everyone who sees it.





I'm afraid I have bad news. The other pet has deficits too many to name. I fear the next image may shock you.

Pet with Severe communication + behavioural disorder (courtesy of the medical model)





What is autism?



What Is Autism?

Clinical description

Community perspective

Deficits in reciprocity

Unconventional
communication/connection
style

Impairment in nonverbal
communication

Focus on literal
communication, distinctive
emotional expression

Difficulty understanding,
developing, and/or
maintaining relationships

Specific social
needs/preferences

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013;
Harrington, 2022)

Autistic people may look different when they listen

- They may stare into space to focus

- Rocking or fidgeting quietly may help them focus



- Sitting differently may be more comfortable

- A blank expression may mean they're thinking

- Biting chewelery or chewing gum may be helpful

What Is Autism?

Clinical description	Community perspective
Repetitive behavior	Special calming/creative/exploring strategies
Rigidity	Precise thinking
Restricted interests	Passion for knowledge
Sensory difficulties	Sensory Processing Differences

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013;
Harrington, 2022)

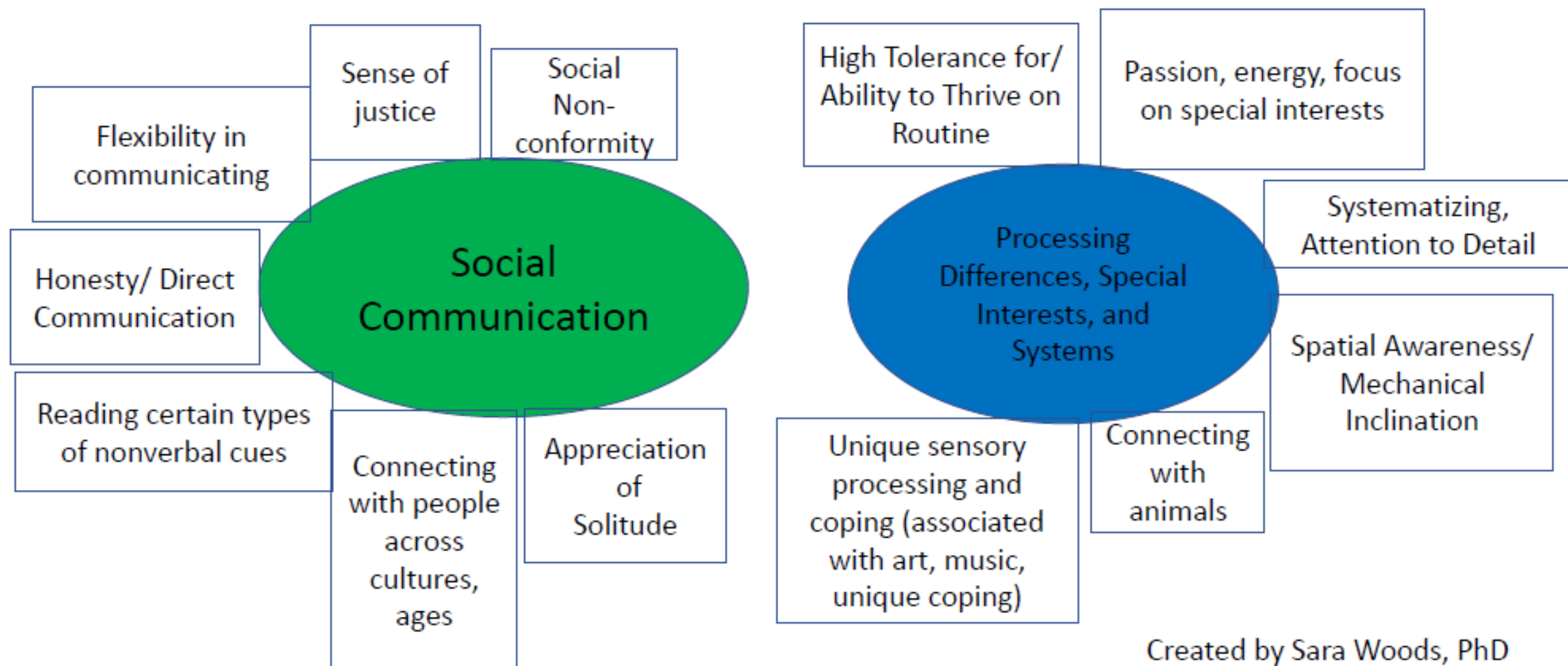
Social vs Medical Model of Disability For Autism: Some Examples

Social	Medical
Autism as difference	Autism as disease/illness
Environment needs to be modified	Individual needs to be cured/treated
Research focused on making life better for autistic people and celebrating their strengths	Research focused on preventing autism and changing autism
Parents celebrate and advocate for their kids	Parents mourn their kids' illness
Autistic people actively included in advocacy and research, valued for their expertise	Autistic people excluded or treated as subjects to be examined/studied


The background features a series of concentric, overlapping circles that create a tunnel-like effect. The colors transition from a light blue on the left to a light green on the right. The circles are semi-transparent, allowing the colors to blend together.

Autistic Strengths

Strengths Associated with Autism



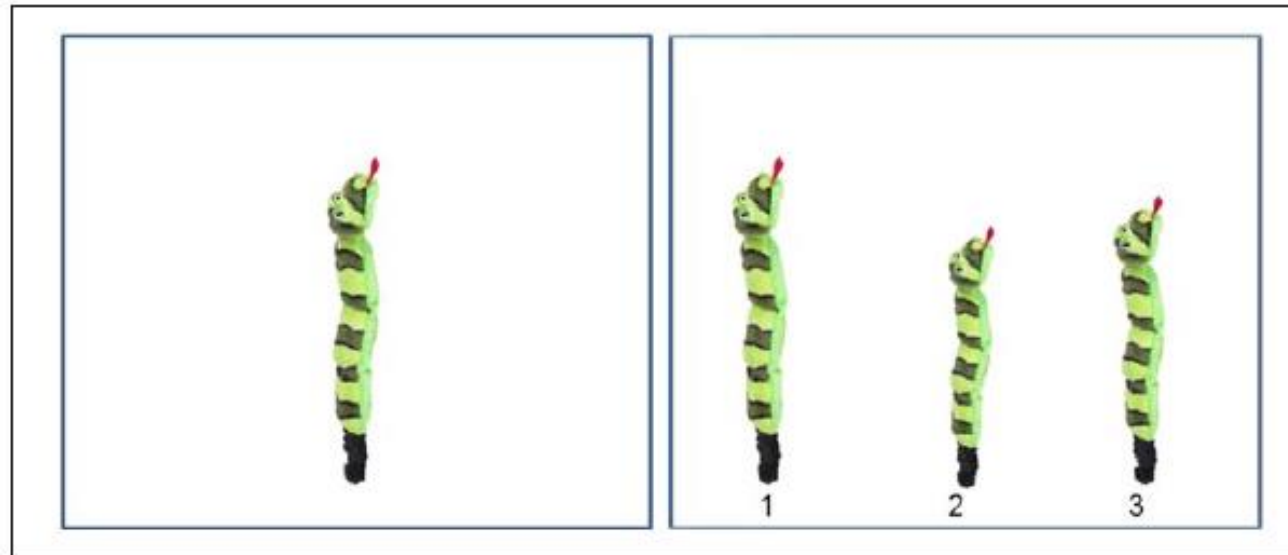
Created by Sara Woods, PhD
UW Autism Center



Social Non-Conformity

The Line Study

Children were told: “Most people think that this snake is the same size as this one. Which snake do you think is the same size?”



Yafai et al., 2014; Similar results found with autistic adults (Bowler & Worley, 1994)

Ivanova on autistic strengths

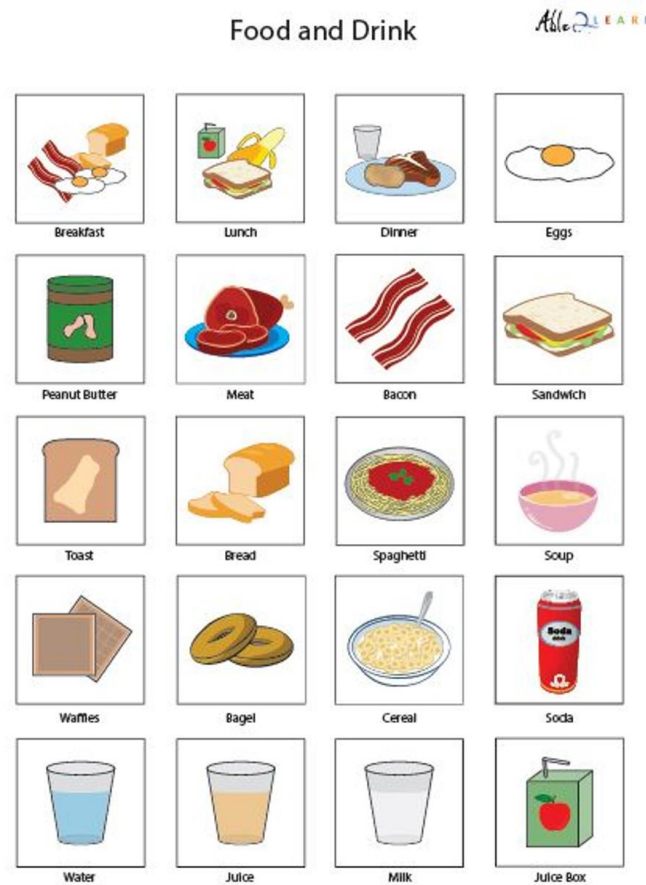




Social Non-Conformity

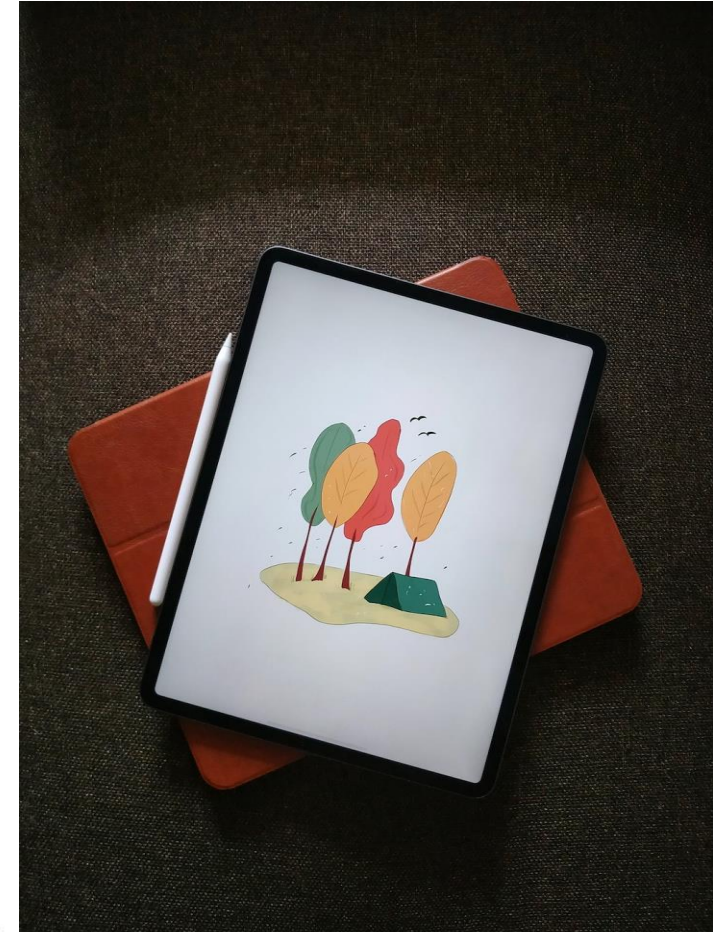
- New ways of thinking and playing
- Resistant to peer pressure
- Good leaders

Flexibility in Communicating



© 2015 Able2Learn Inc.

© 2015 Able2Learn Inc.





Enjoyment of Solitude

Honesty and Direct Communication

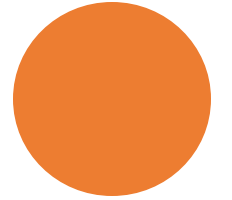


Special Interests

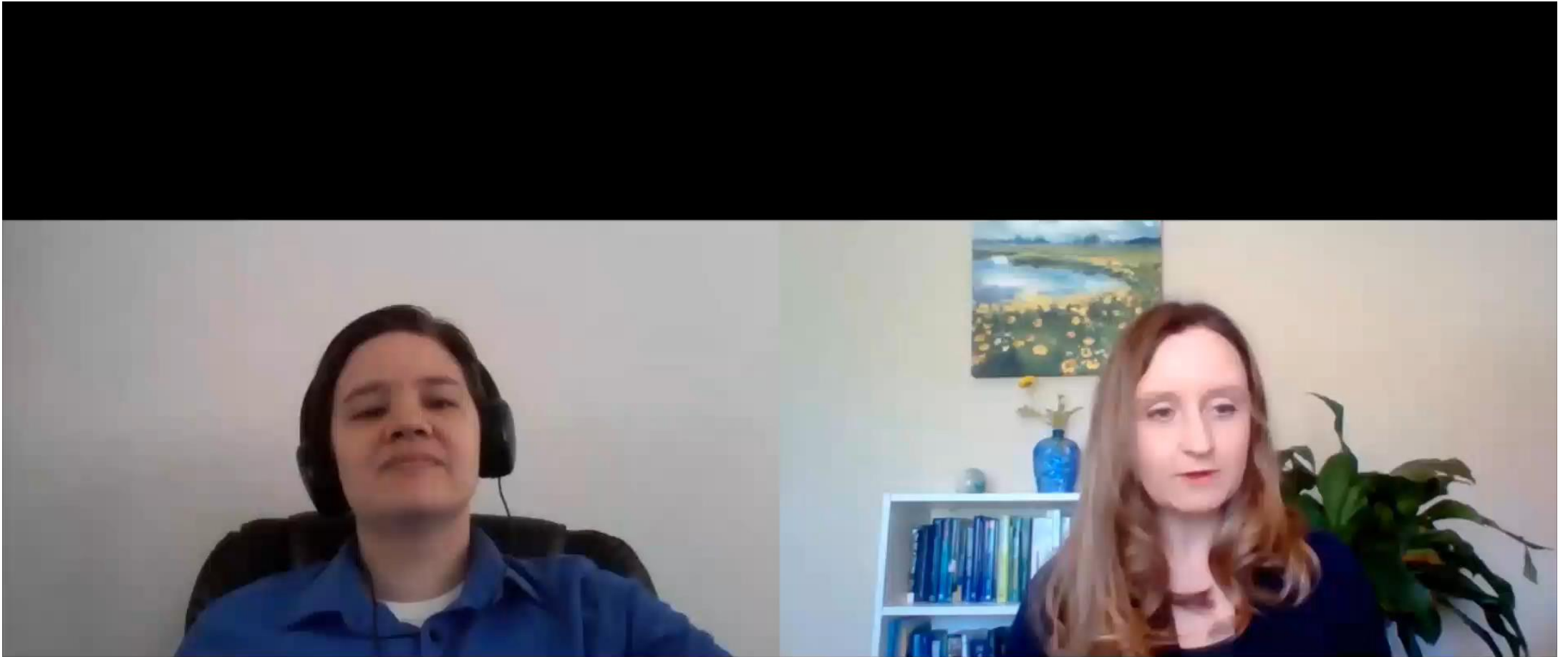


Special/Restricted Interests

- Useful in learning and careers
- Useful in connecting with others
- Life satisfaction
- Coping skills



Special Interests can compensate for struggles



Chatting and Infodumping

**EITHER WAY IS
A-OKAY!**



**IF YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT
LOTS OF THINGS, THAT'S
CALLED "CHATTING."**

**IF YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT ONE
THING VERY DEEPLY, THAT'S
CALLED "INFODUMPING."**



**MOST PEOPLE PREFER TO CHAT,
WHICH CAN MAKE IT HARD FOR
PEOPLE WHO LIKE TO INFODUMP.**



**YOU CAN HELP THEM TO FEEL
INCLUDED BY BRINGING UP THEIR
FAVORITE TOPIC.**

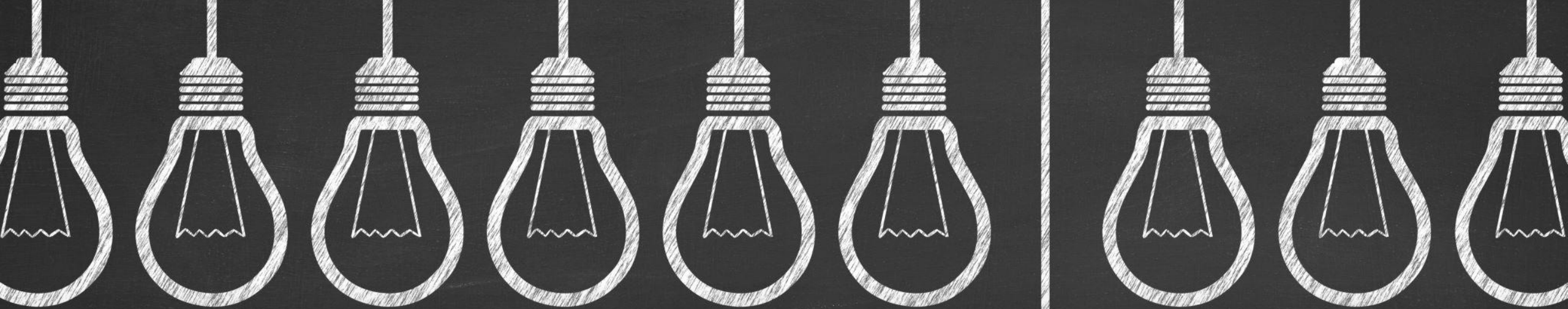
Laser Focus and
Routine = Good
Combination for
Mastering New
Skills



Dr. Hardwick



Lamar Hardwick

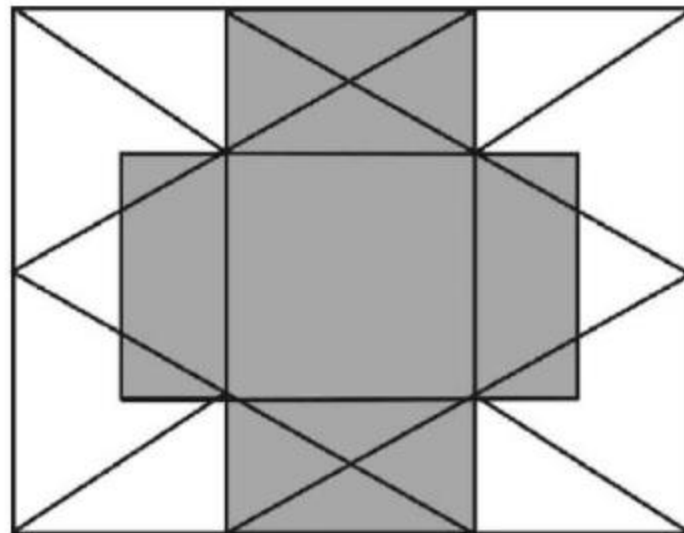
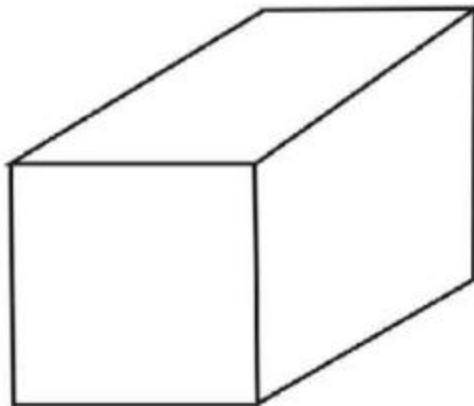


Cognitive Strengths



Embedded figures

(Spikins et al., 2018)



Visual
Search

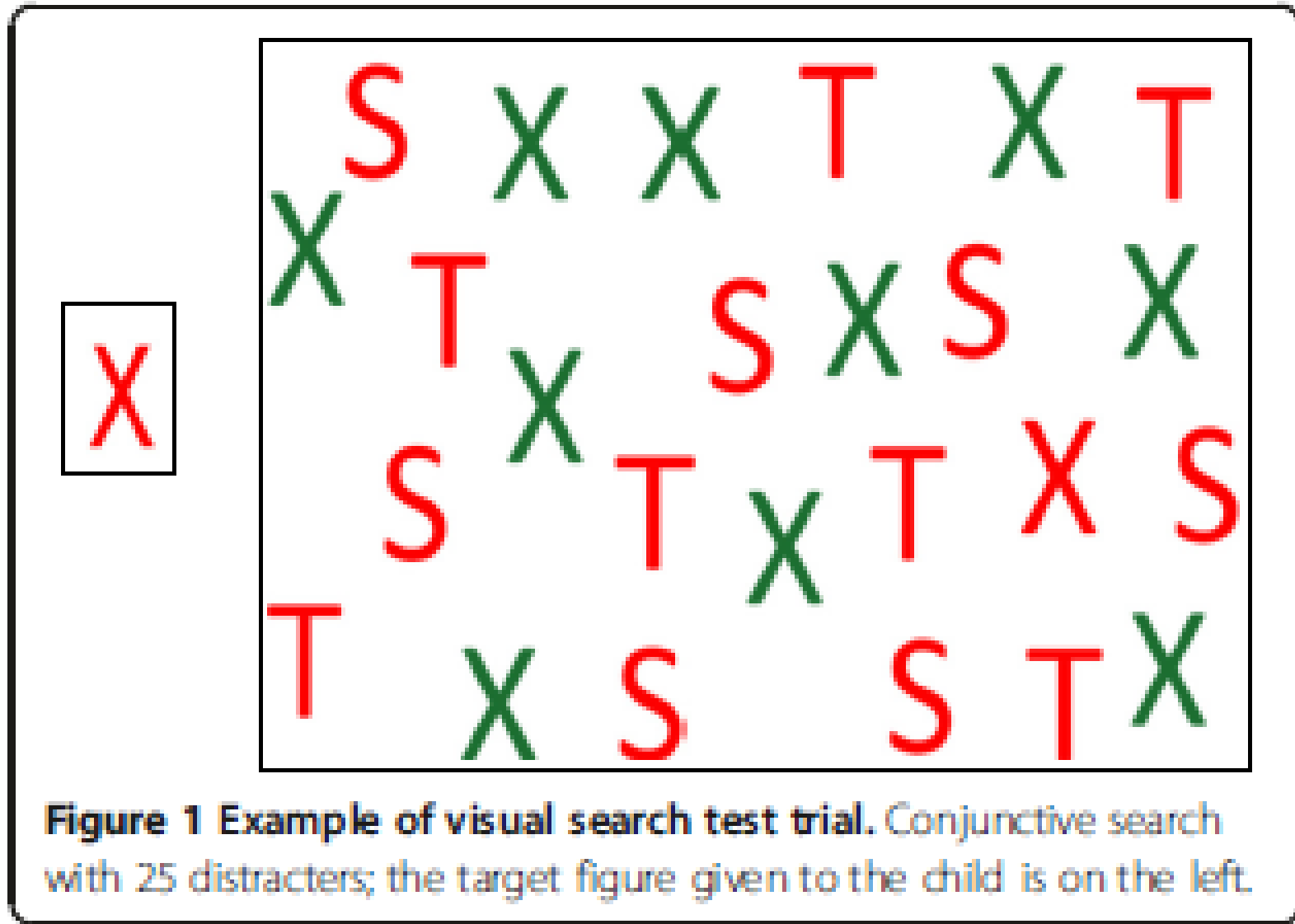


Figure 1 Example of visual search test trial. Conjunctive search with 25 distractors; the target figure given to the child is on the left.

Hyperlexia

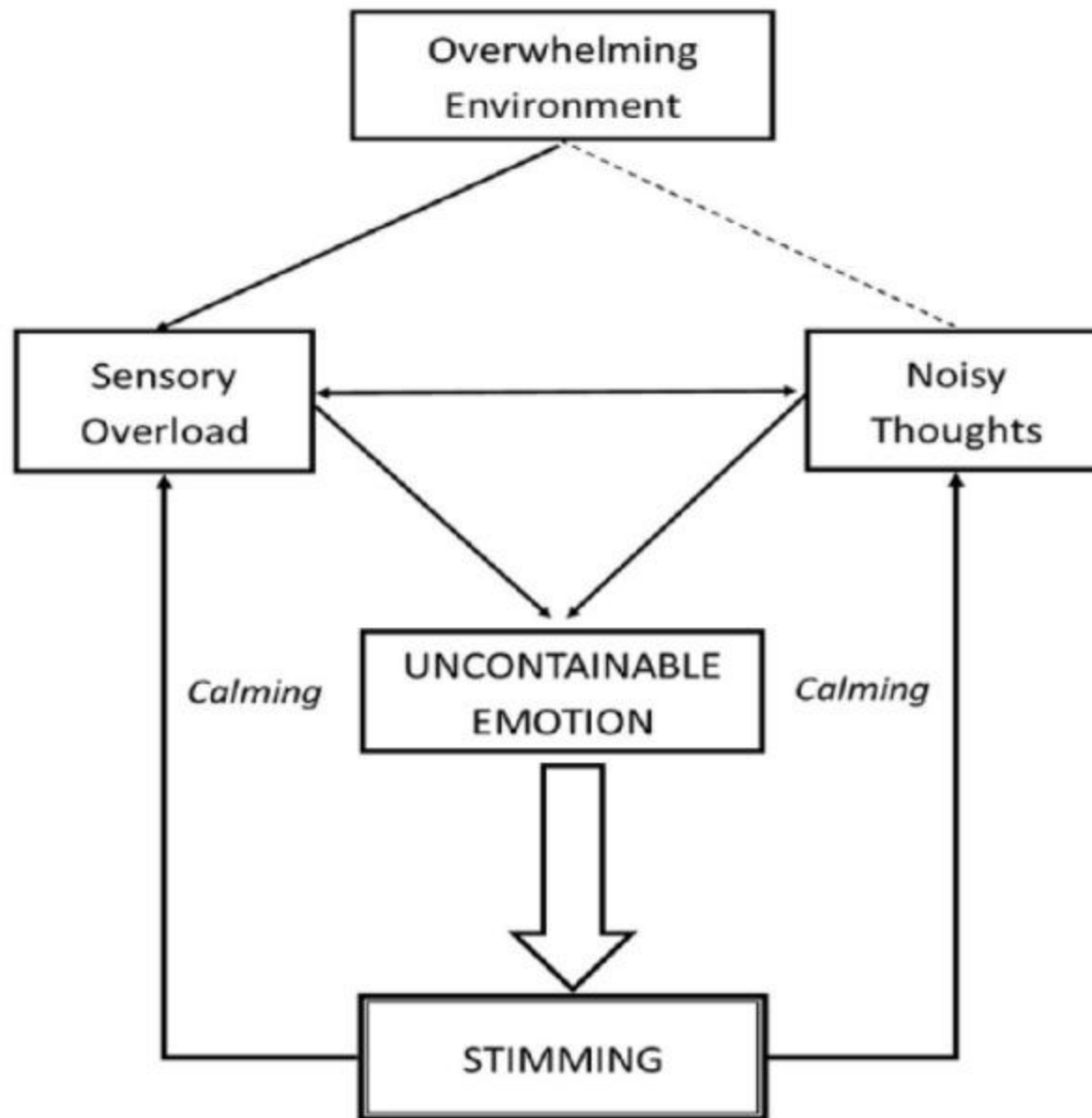
- Advanced reading skills, relative to comprehension or IQ
- Early acquisition of reading without teaching
- Orientation to reading material
- 6-20% of Autistic Children
- (Ostrolenk et al., 2017)



Analyzing
Information,
Offering
Fresh
Perspectives

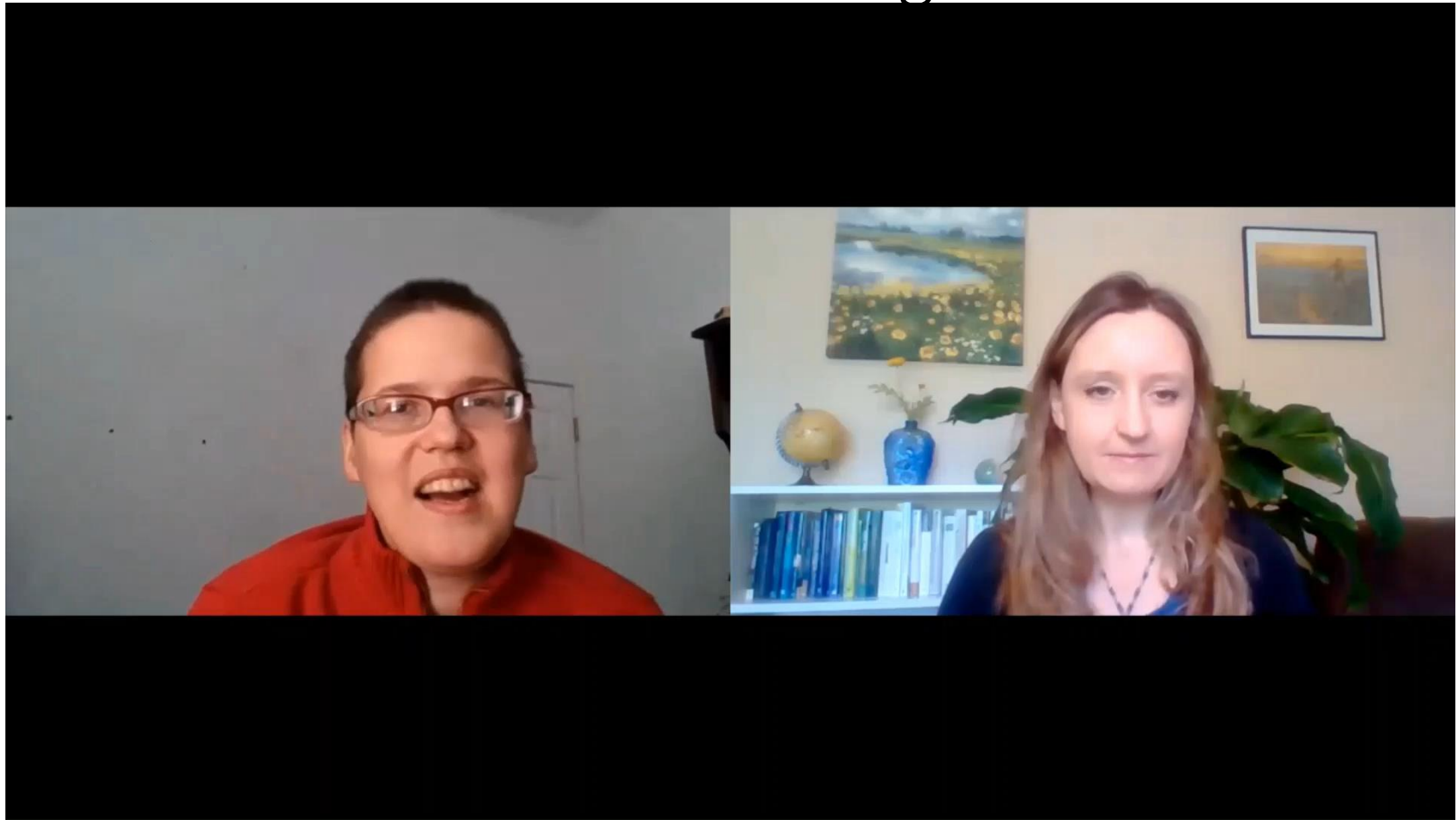


What is
stimming?





Ivanova on Visual Stimming



Sensory Sensitivity
May Be Linked to
Sensory Strengths



Animal Sounds Study



20 autistic vs 20 non-autistic
(ages 17-34) in England
Autistic > Non-autistic
when 6 animals present
(Remington & Fairnie, 2017)



Sound

- Perfect Pitch (5% of autistic people vs. .01-.05% general pop.)
- Pitch discrimination
- Memory for Music Notes
- Increased Sound Capacity



Exploring Capacity for Detecting Smells



There was cake in the jar. What other smell was hidden in the jar?
(Walker et al., 2020; in England)

ADHD



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



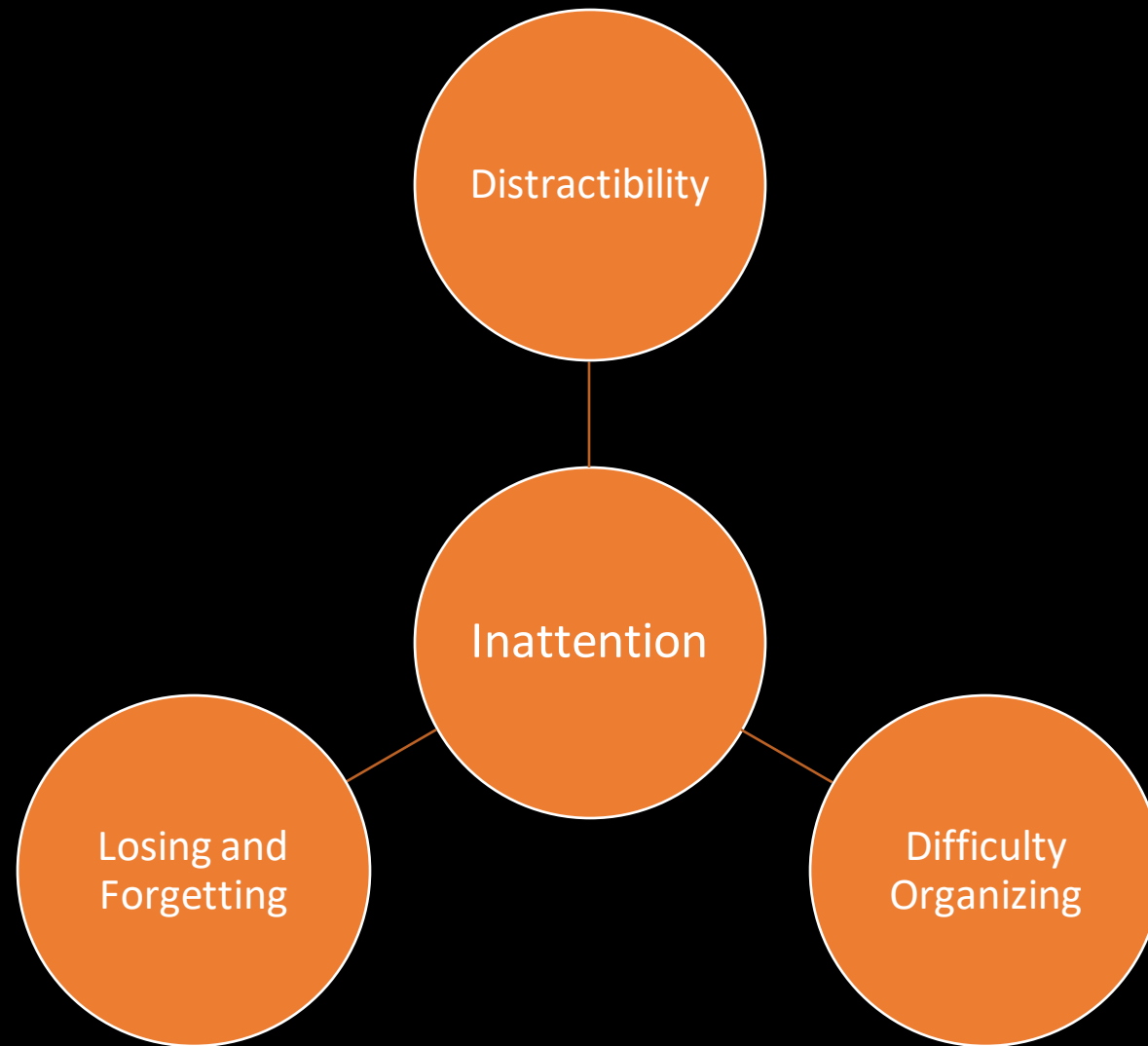
Inattention



Hyperactivity



Impulsivity



Hyperactivity

- Fidgeting
- Leaving Seat
- Running and Climbing
- Being Loud



Impulsivity



Blurting out answers



Difficulty waiting



Interrupting

ADHD Subtypes

Combined

Predominately Inattentive

Predominately Hyperactive-
Impulsive

A hand is shown holding a camera lens, with the lens's reflection showing a landscape of mountains and water. The background is a blurred natural scene with a blue sky and green foliage.

Hyperfocus

A young child with curly hair, wearing a grey jacket, is shown from the chest up, cheering with their arms raised in a dark, wooded setting. The child's mouth is open in a joyful expression, and their eyes are looking slightly to the left. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a forest at night or in low light. The word "Energy" is overlaid on the left side of the image in a white, outlined font.

Energy



Divergent Thinking

A person with dark hair, seen from behind, is wearing a grey and yellow backpack and a grey baseball cap. They are standing on a dirt path in a lush, green mountain valley. The valley is filled with tall grass and yellow wildflowers. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains, some with patches of snow or light-colored rock. The sky is overcast and grey. The word "Adventurousness" is written in a white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image, with a white horizontal line underneath it.

Adventurousness

THE ADHD STRENGTHS ICEBERG

WHAT PEOPLE
THINK ADHDERS
ARE GOOD AT:

talking
fast

creativity

WHAT ADHDERS
ARE ACTUALLY
GOOD AT:

literally anything
they find
interesting

problem
solving

working
under
pressure

learning

empathy

brainstorming

changing
the world

crisis
situations

risk-taking

getting a lot
done in a short
amount of time

unique
intuition

forgiveness

competitive
challenges

optimism

entrepreneurship

mastering
new hobbies

creating
something
beautiful

tackling new
challenges

sense of
humor

authenticity

imagination

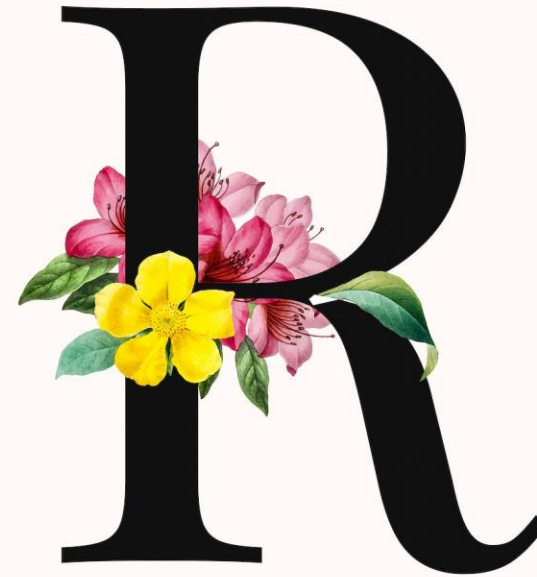
hyperfocus

UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION



Turn & Talk

- Turn to your neighbor and greet them...
 - Using only your hand
 - Using only your head
- Turn to your neighbor and tell them about your weekend...
 - Without using the letter "r"



Turn & Talk

- What was greeting and conversation like for you?
- Did you know what to do or what to say?
- Did you notice differences in communication?
- Did you get frustrated?



Unique Elements of Communication

- Body language can be powerful... but can create miscommunication!
- Difficulty in communicating can cause frustration!



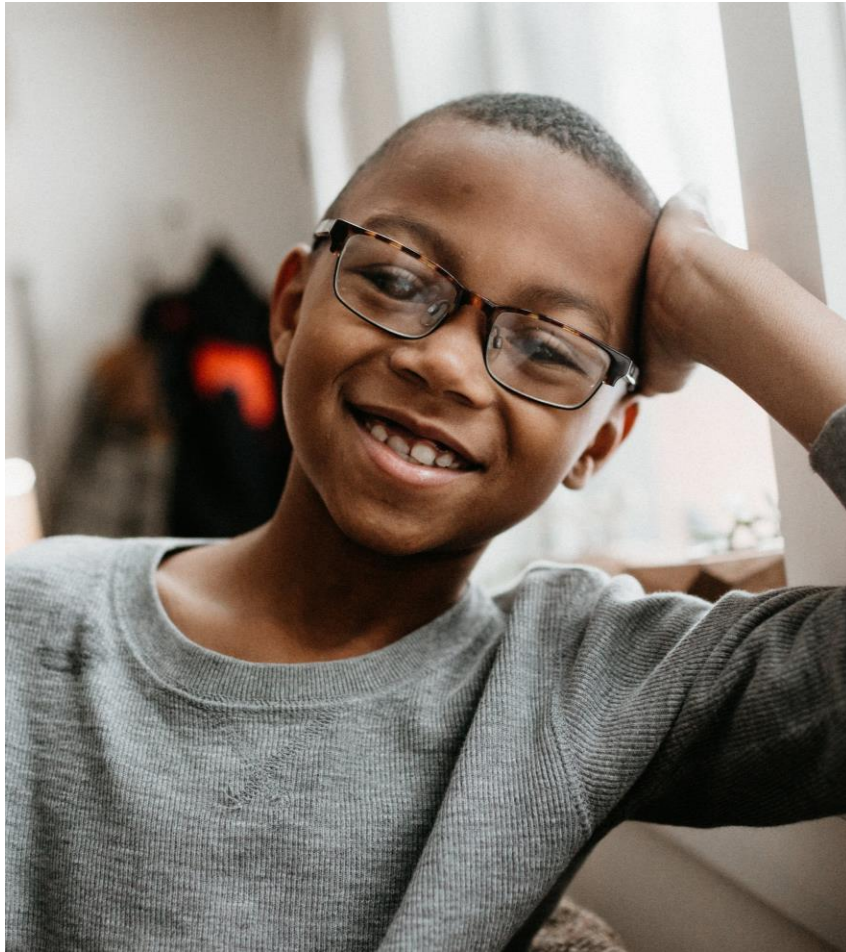
[This Photo](#) by Unknown author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#).

Unique Elements of Communication

- Autism:
 - Can understand language literally
 - May communicate through different body language
 - May have preferred topics and may be less interested in other topics
 - And much more... unique to the individual



Unique Elements of Communication



- ADHD
 - May get off topic
 - Unique pauses and fillers
 - Differences in body language
 - Interrupting
 - And much more...unique the individual



THE DOUBLE EMPATHY PROBLEM



The DOUBLE EMPATHY Problem

in a nutshell.



NeuroWild



SQUIRRELS have NO PROBLEM
communicating and making friends with
other SQUIRRELS.



NeuroWild



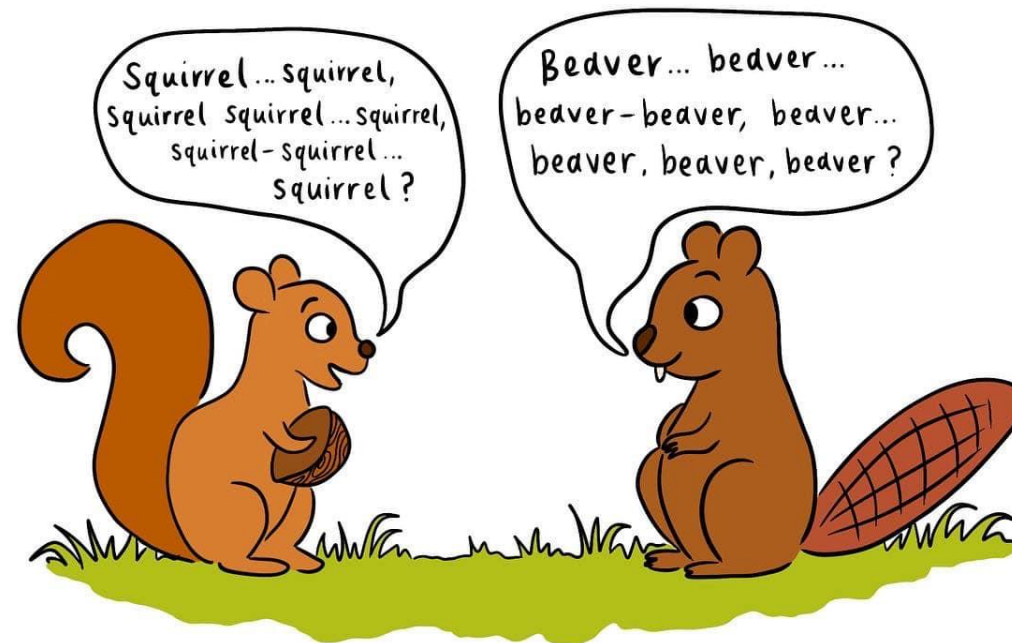
And BEAVERS have NO PROBLEM communicating and making friends with other BEAVERS.



NeuroWild



BUT when SQUIRRELS and
BEAVERS try to communicate...



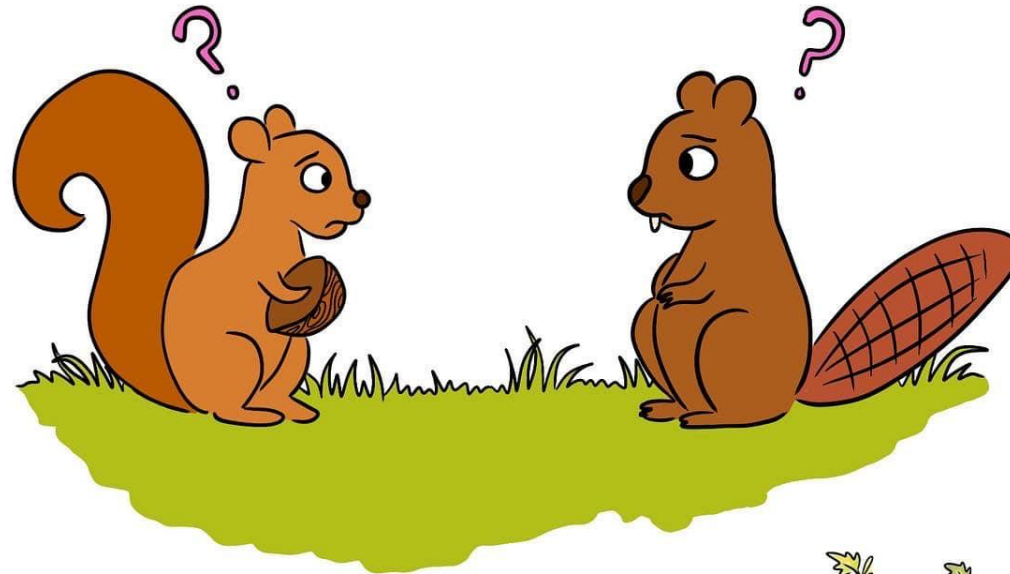
NeuroWild



MISCOMMUNICATION OCCURS.

Whose fault
is it?

Who is responsible
for fixing it?



NeuroWild



Curiously, Society decided that it's ONLY the SQUIRRELS' job to repair any miscommunications.



NeuroWild



CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLAY



Considerations for Play

- Incorporate special interests
- Leave room for breaks
 - Room for stimming
 - Room for quiet
- Leave room for parallel play



under [CC](#)

[This Photo](#) by Unknown author is licensed under [CC BY](#).



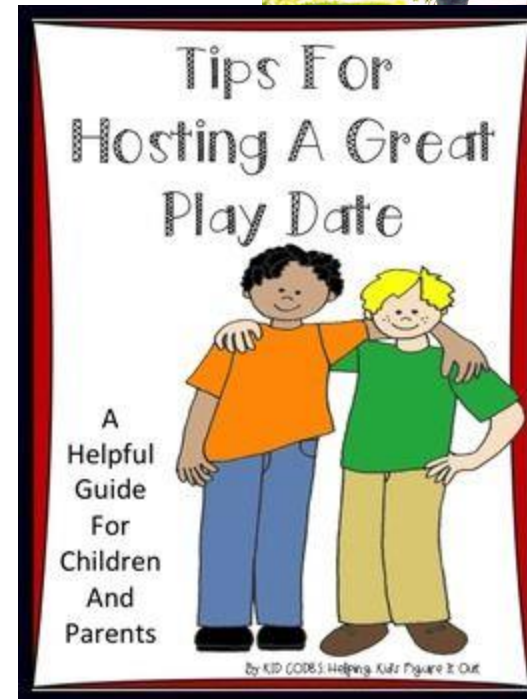
UW AUTISM CENTER
CENTER ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & DISABILITY
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Considerations for Play

- Start short
- Prepare for transitions
- We all play differently!



Author is licensed under [CC](#)



CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONFLICT



Considerations for Conflict

Conflict occurs in all relationships



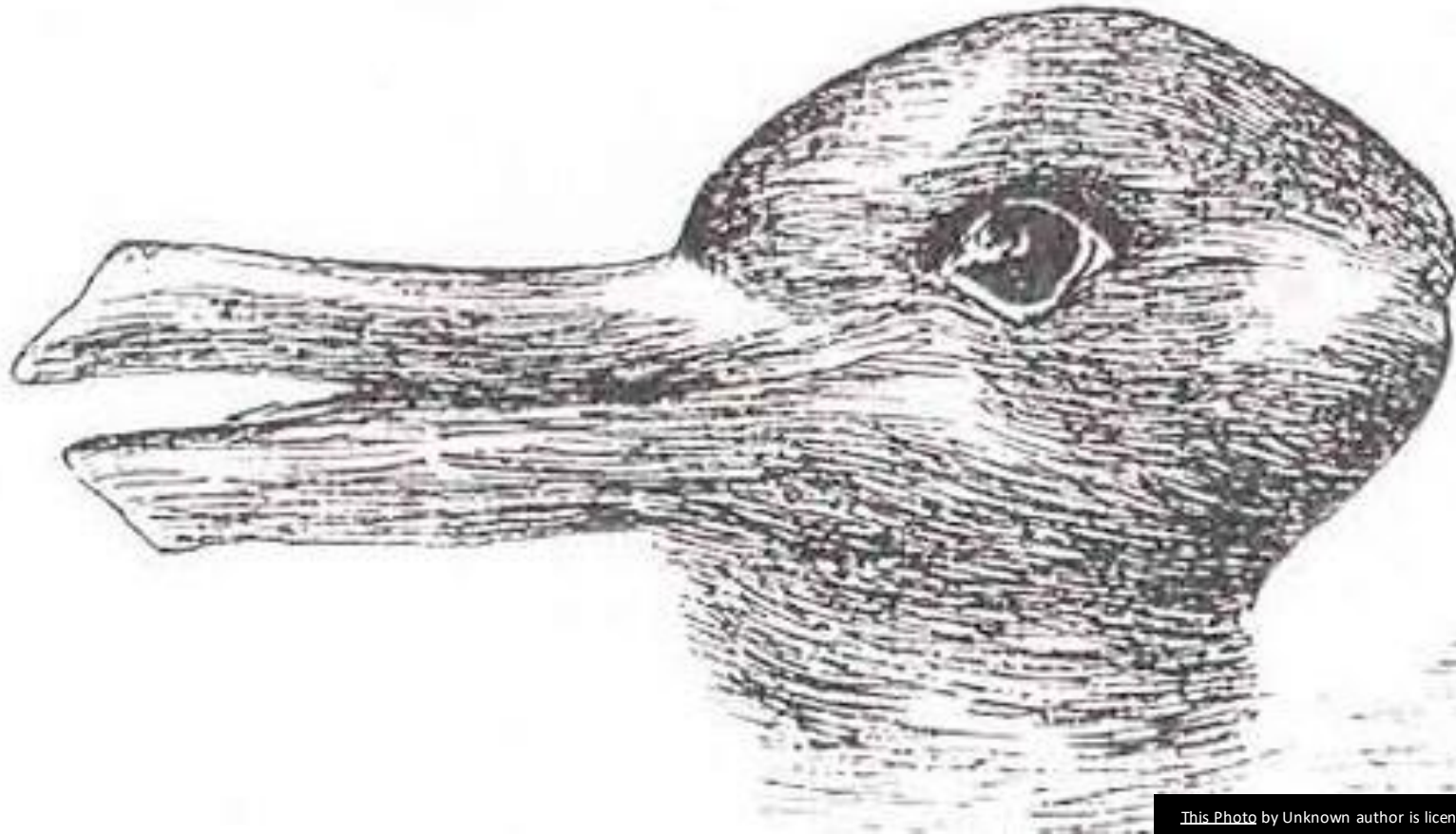
Perspective Matters



[This Photo](#) by Unknown author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#).



Who is Right?



This Photo by Unknown author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#).



Considerations for Conflict

- Teach students to compromise
 - We might not agree on who is right and who is wrong
 - Focus on moving forward



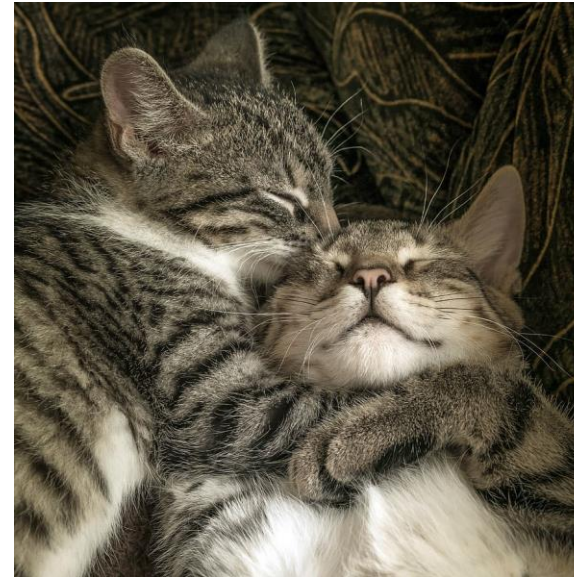
Considerations for Conflict

- Take a break
 - Children may not be able to label their emotions
- Body language
 - Neurodivergent students may not understand the same nonverbal cues
 - Neurodivergent students may use different nonverbal cues
- Sensory needs can impact behavior



Considerations for Conflict

- Sensory Differences
 - **be aware.** Look at the environment to see if it is creating difficulties. Can you change anything?
 - **be creative.** Think of some positive sensory experiences.
 - **be prepared.** Tell the person about possible sensory stimuli they may experience in different environments.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#).



Don't expect children to know the accommodations they need—
they're learning!

Conflicts can be learning opportunities for all children!





Managing Peer Conflict



Model Healthy Coping

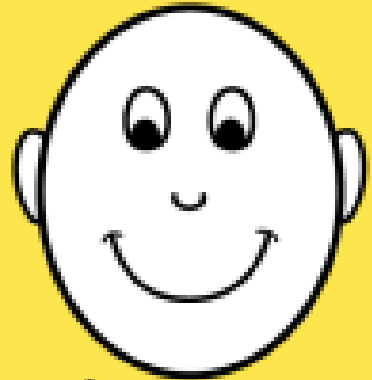
Co-Regulation

- L** Look at your child with soft eyes (open mind)
- O** Observe without judgment
- V** Validate your child's experience
- E** Experience safety together

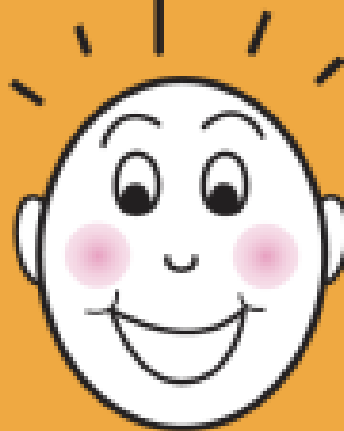


Recognizing and Coping with Emotions

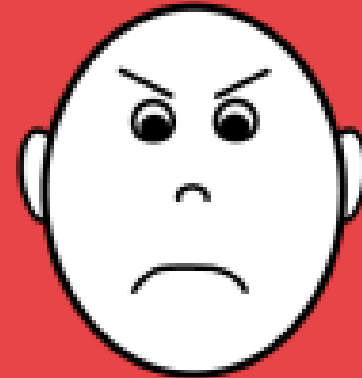
I Feel:



happy



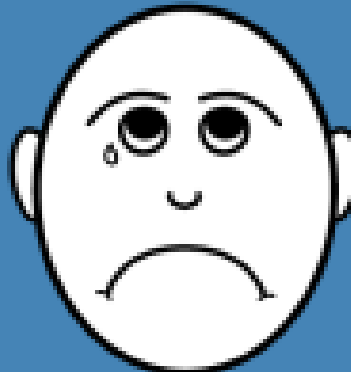
excited



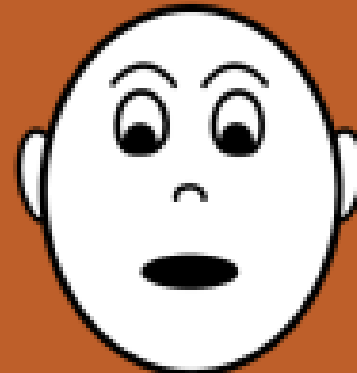
angry



tired



sad



scared

Cool Calming Corner by Supernova Momma

IN MY FEELINGS



SURPRISED



HAPPY



MAD



EMBARRASSED



I DON'T KNOW



SCARED



SILLY



SAD



CALM



EXCITED



Problem Solving Together

1

Show empathy

2

Allow the child
to describe
their concerns

3

Share your
concerns

4

Come up with
solutions
together



Collaborative and Proactive Solutions

- <https://livesinthebalance.org/>



Clear, Direct, and Concise
Communication

Say What You Mean

Do

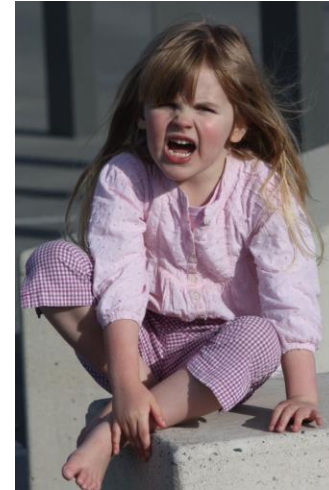
*"I'm using that.
You can use it when I'm done."*



Clear and Kind

Don't

*"Don't take my stuff!"
Harsh tone*



Assuming and Aggressive

Be Succinct

Do

Neutral

"One for you. One for me."



Straightforward

Don't

Too Loud
Too Many Words



Too much at once

Seek to Understand

Do

Find out

“What do you want to do?”



*Ask Questions
with An Open Mind*

Don't

“I know the best way to play.”



Controlling

Work It Out Together

Do

Teamwork

"Let's figure this out."



Collaborating

Don't

"I'm telling!"



Threatening



Adults model problem solving skills

DESIGN

RESEARCH

B

A



Asking questions

Websites

- Thinking Person's Guide to Autism: <https://thinkingautismguide.com/>
- Reframing Autism: <https://reframingautism.org.au/>
 - <https://reframingautism.org.au/challenging-ableism-in-education-tips-for-teachers-on-how-to-be-an-inclusive-educator/>
- Autistic Self-Advocacy Network: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>
- Neuroclastic Chatting and Infodumping: <https://neuroclastic.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Chatting-and-Infodumping-A-NeuroInclusive-Story.pdf>
- Art of Autism: <https://the-art-of-autism.com/>
- AuSome Training: <https://ausometraining.com/>
 - <https://ausometraining.com/autism-and-literal-communication/>
 - <https://ausometraining.com/empathy-and-neurodivergent-communication/>
- Not An Autism Mom: <https://notanautismmom.com/>
- <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/sensory-differences/sensory-differences/all-audiences>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@DivergentVoices>
- I Can Network: <https://icannetwork.online/talking-about-autism/>
- Children and Adults with ADHD: <https://chadd.org/>
- Additude: <https://www.additudemag.com/>
- Autism Level Up: <https://www.autismlevelup.com/>

Neurodiversity-Affirming Books

- <https://booksforlittles.com/unpolished-booklist/disability/validating-autistic-experiences/>



My Friend with Autism

Enhanced Edition



Written by Beverly Bishop

Illustrated by Craig Bishop

MELIA AND JO

BILLY ARONSON
&
JENNIFER OXLEY

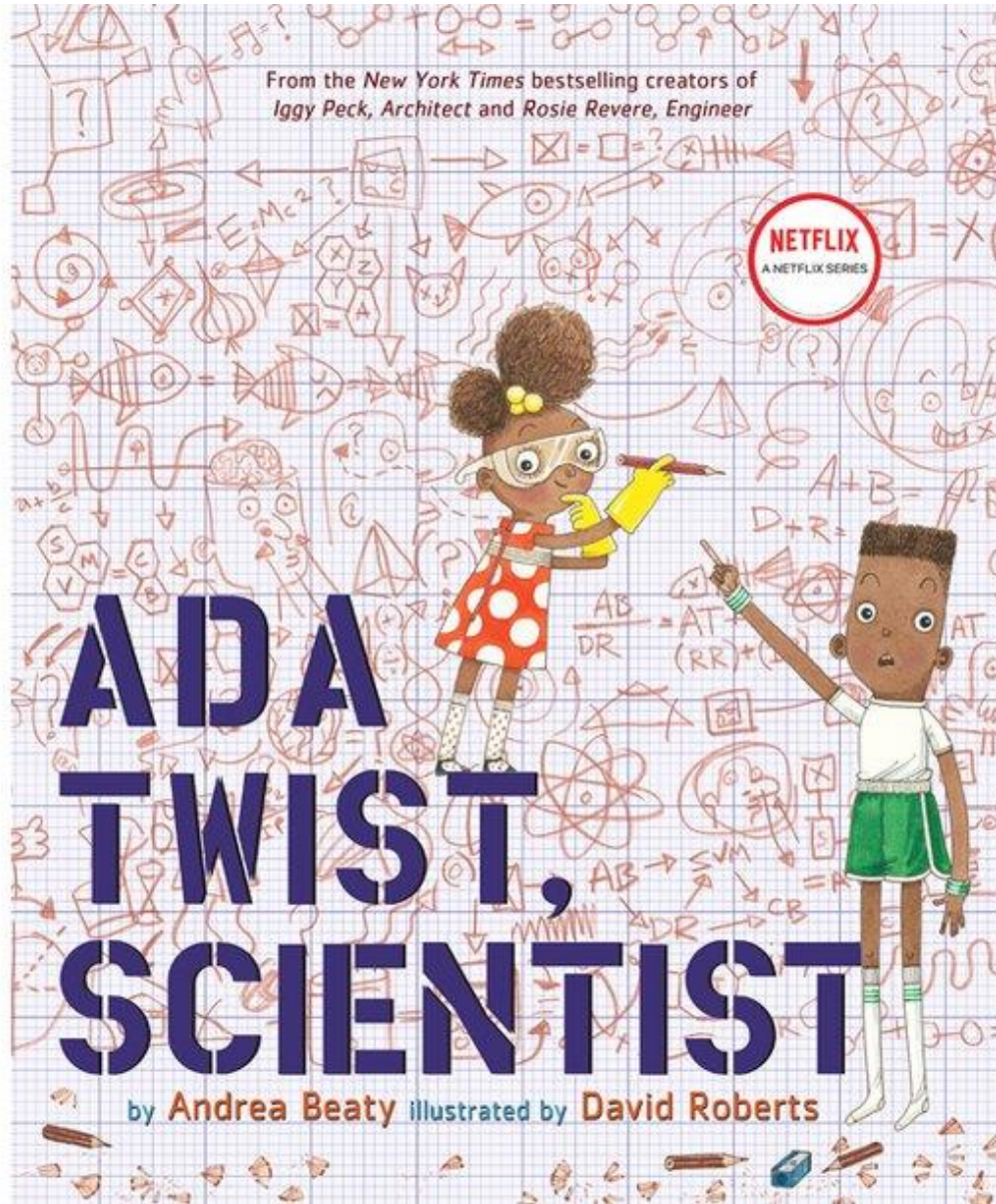


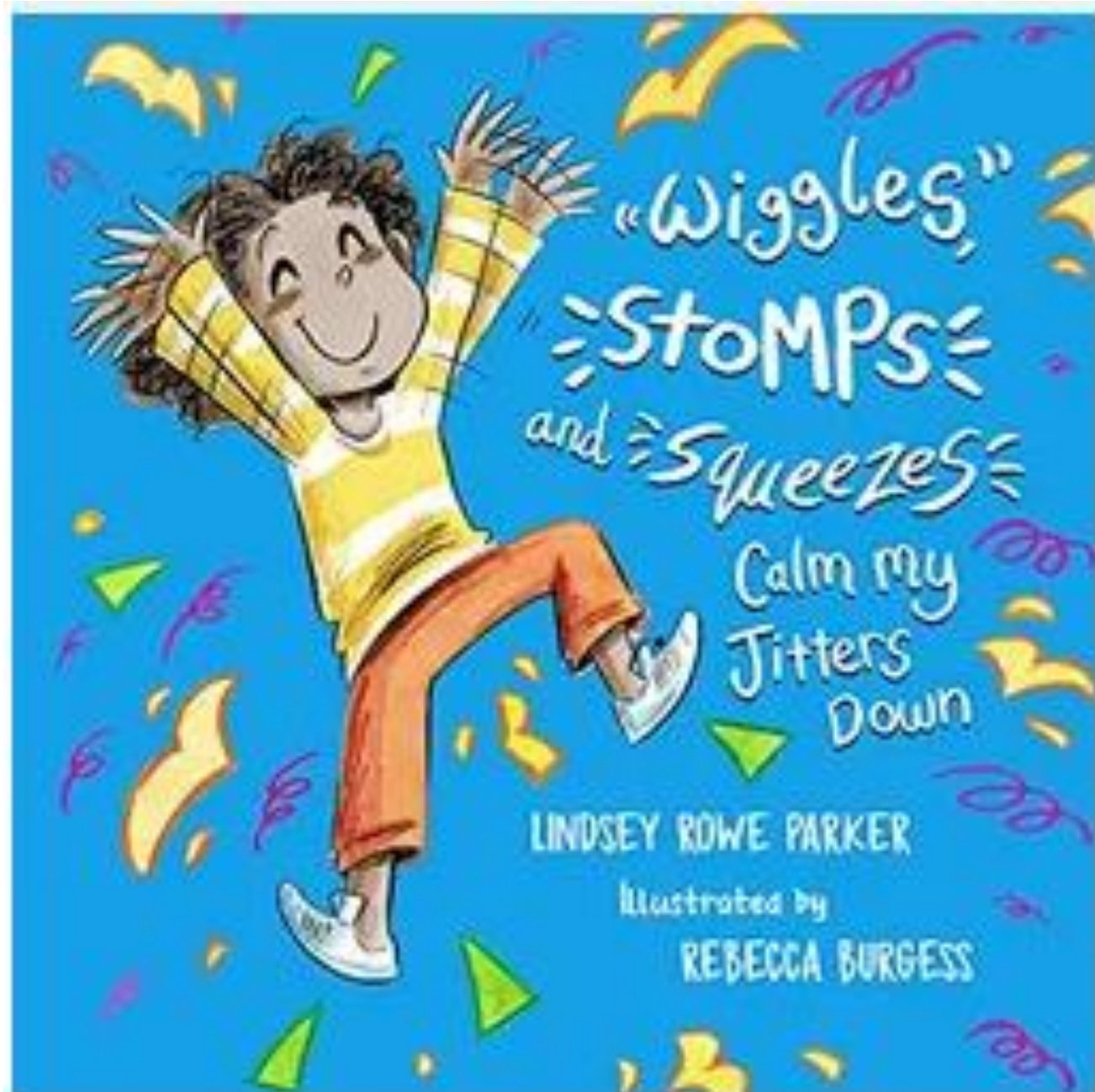
From the New York Times bestselling creators of
Iggly Peck, Architect and *Rosie Revere, Engineer*



ADA TWIST, SCIENTIST

by Andrea Beaty illustrated by David Roberts





"Wiggles,"
"Stomps,"
and "Squeezes"

Calm My
Jitters
Down

LINDSEY ROWE PARKER

Illustrated by
REBECCA BURGESS



A Crayon's Story



What?



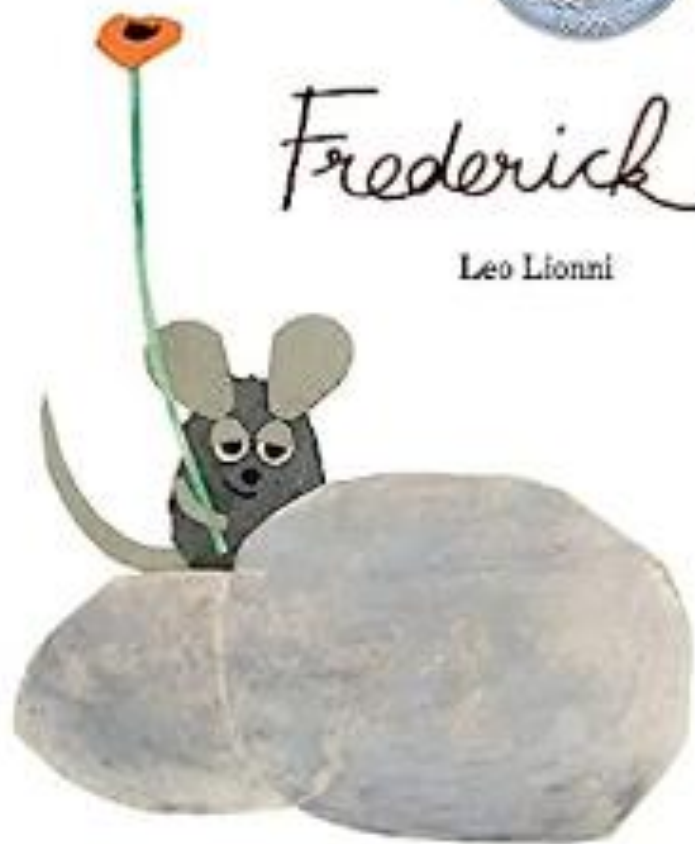
Uh-oh.





Frederick

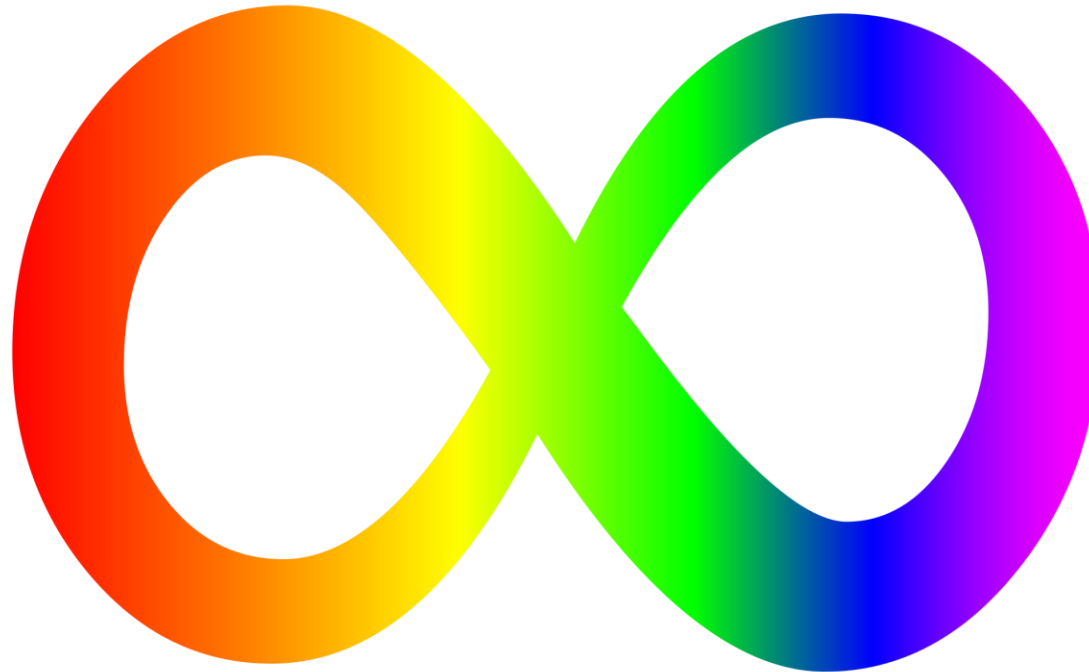
Leo Lionni



More Books
www.notanautismmom.com

Outschool

- What is autism?
- <https://outschool.com/classes/what-is-autism-ages-8-12-Cftkp548>



Movies and TV

- Loop
- Float
- Hero Elementary (AJ Gadgets)
- Proud Family
- Lilo and Stitch



- The best way to practice is to practice!
- Invite neurodivergent children into your community.
- Experience their strengths.
- Move at their pace.



Questions to Ask (Created with the help of autistic coworkers)



- What are your child's sensory differences? How can I accommodate them?
- What are your child's interests?
- How can I support your child when they are upset or in conflict?

- What has your experience been with sensory differences?
- What is your experience with autism?

Prompts for Reflection

- What's one thing you've learned about autism and ADHD?
- Share a positive experience you've had with a neurodivergent child.
- What is one step you can take to help your child understand neurodiversity?



Questions?

Thank you for attending!



Contact Information

Your Instructor:

Sara Woods, PhD sewoods@uw.edu

Chelsea Deaconson cdeac158@uw.edu

Director of Training and Consultation Services:

Robin Talley rtalley@uw.edu

Training and Consultation Services Coordinator:

Lena Tsui ltsui@uw.edu

UW Autism Center:

Phone 206-221-6806

Email uwactrain@uw.edu

Website <http://uwautism.com/>