

APA WEBINAR

Supercharge Your Presence

Strength in Neurodiversity: Creating a
Workplace Where Everyone Can Belong

Daniel Wendler, PsyD

June 29 2023, 1 PM



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

DISCLAIMER

- The views expressed in this presentation are those of the presenter/s and may not reflect the views or policies of the American Psychological Association.



NOTE

- No CE credit will be offered for this webinar.
- A “Certificate of Attendance” will be emailed to live attendees only. Attendees must watch for a minimum of 45 minutes to receive the certificate.



LOGISTICS

- A recording along with the slides and resource guide will be emailed after the session to everyone who registered for the webinar.
- It can take up to 2 weeks to receive the recording.



HAVE A QUESTION?

- You are on mute
- Although you won't be able to unmute during the webinar, please submit your questions for our speaker/s by using the Q&A box located on the webinar screen.



PRESENTER: Daniel Wendler, PsyD



- Two-time TEDx speaker on autism
- Founder of [ImproveYourSocialSkills.com](https://www.improveyoursocialskills.com)
- Best-selling author on social skills
- Clinical psychologist in private practice



MY STORY



MY STORY



MY STORY



MY STORY



MY STORY



MY STORY



The Plan For Today

Understanding
Neurodiversity



Applying
Neurodiversity to
Autism



Creating
Workplaces Where
Everyone can
Belong

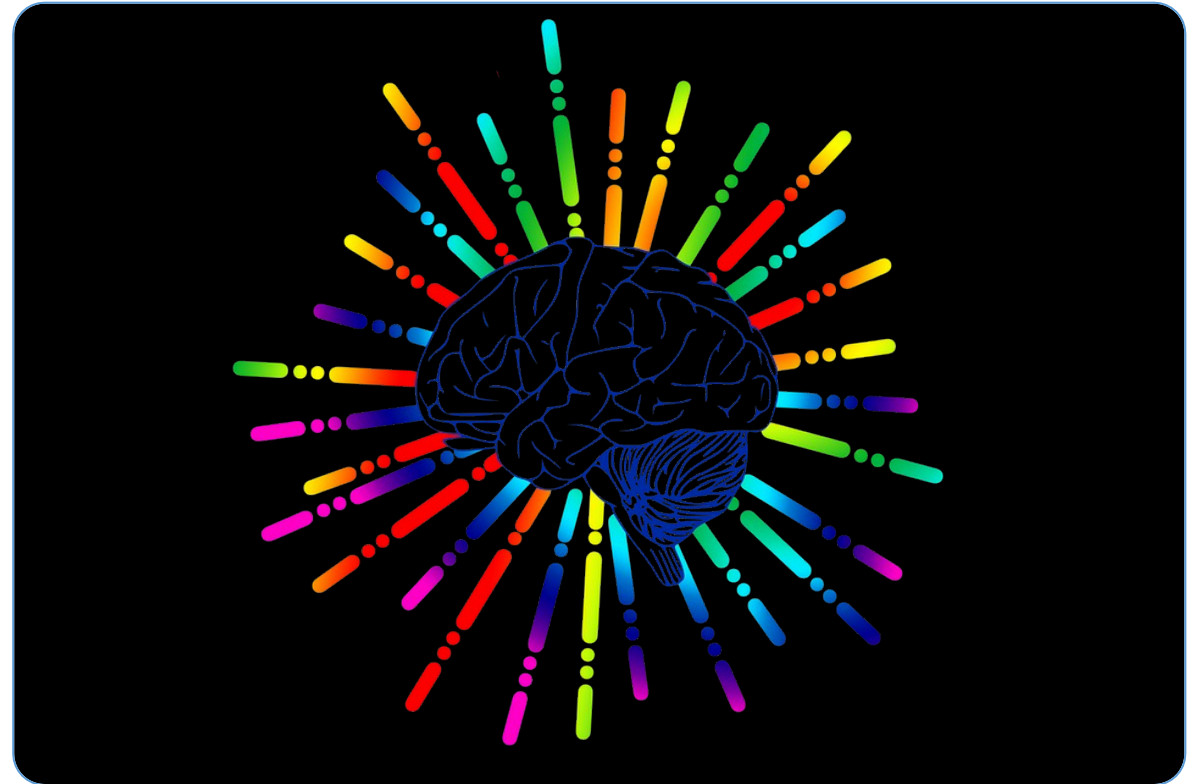


Understanding Neurodiversity



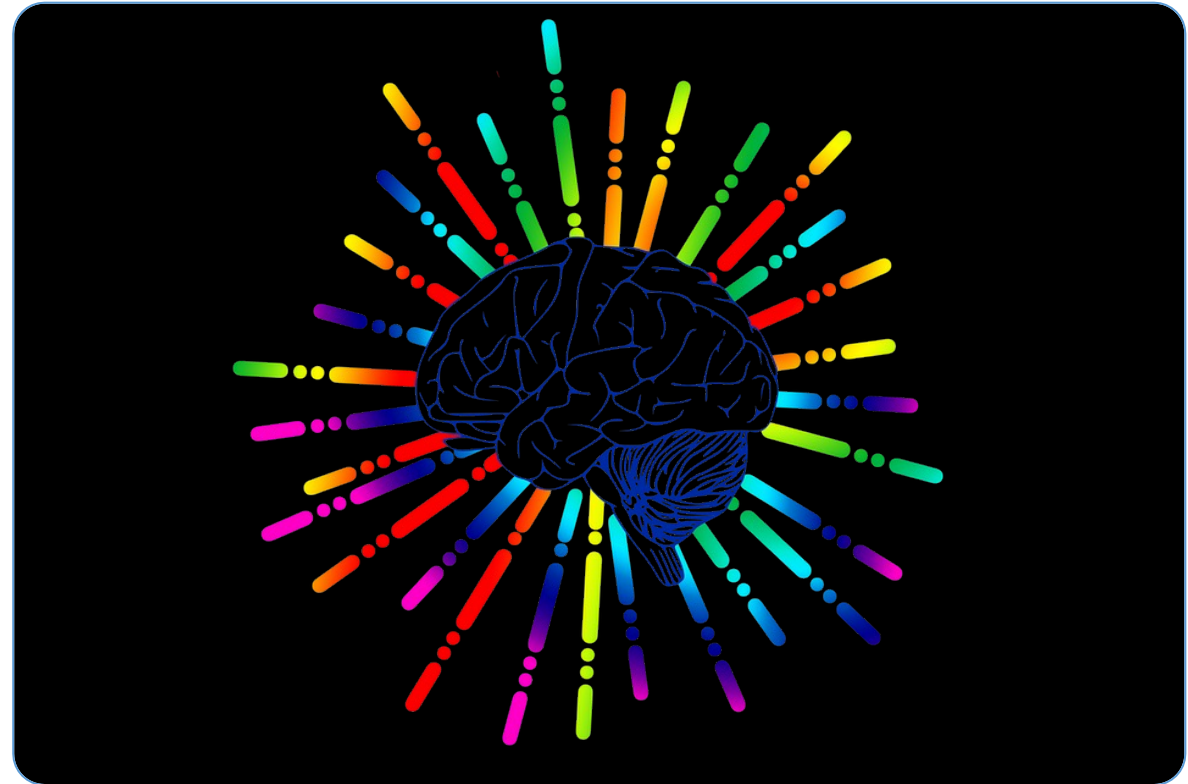
Useful Definitions

- **Neurodivergent** – Someone whose brain performs differently than what society considers the norm
- **Neurotypical** – Someone whose brain functions in the way expected by society
- **Neurodiverse** – A group with both neurodivergent and neurotypical people
- **Neurodiversity movement**– A grassroots effort advocating for improvements in how neurodivergent people are viewed and treated in society



A Quick Word On Inclusive Language

- **Neurodivergent** NOT “abnormal”
- **Neurotypical** NOT “normal”
- **Neurotype** NOT “disorder”
- **Autistic** NOT “person with autism”
- **When in doubt – ask!**



The Polar Bear's Predicament



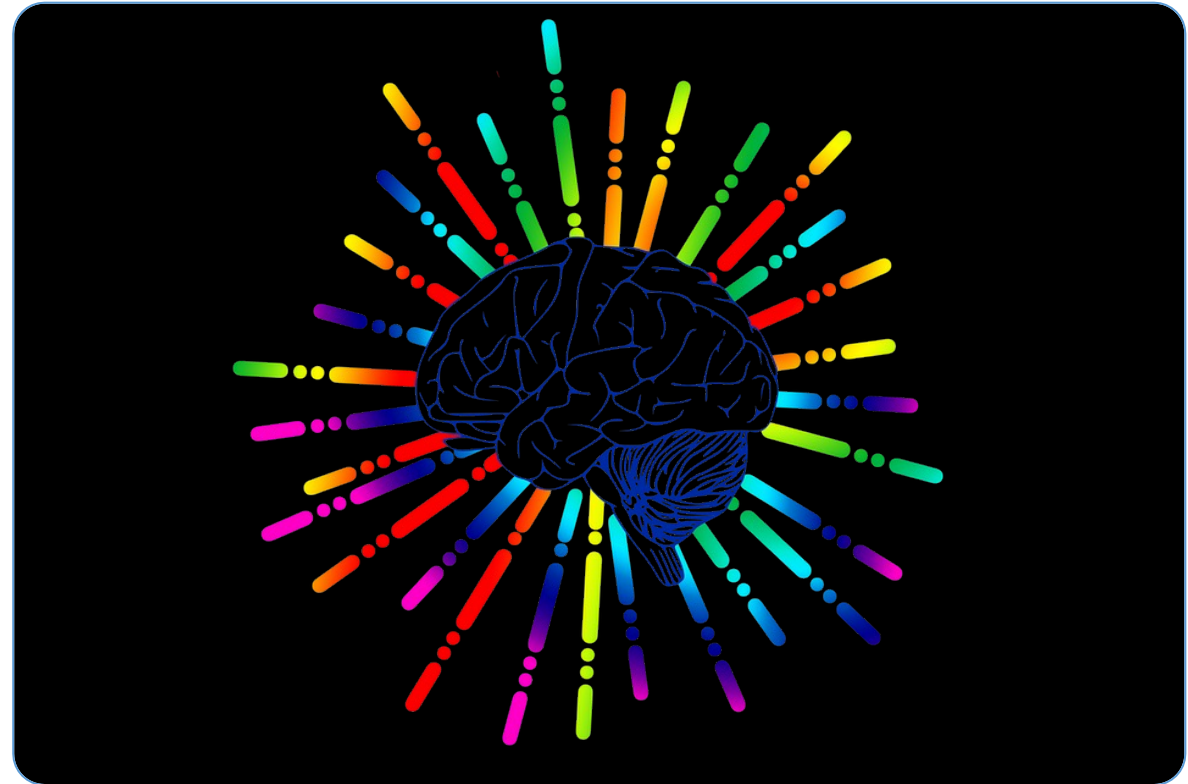
I am different,
not less.

Dr. Temple Grandin



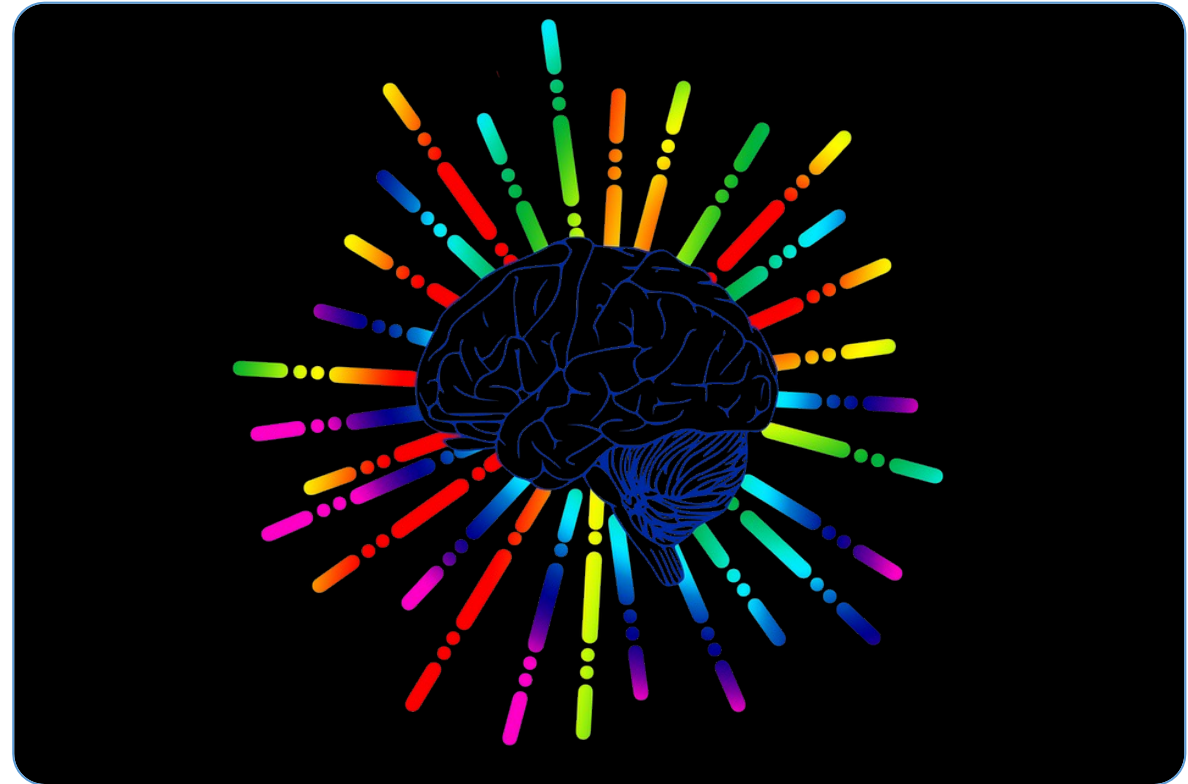
What is Neurodiversity?

- **Neurodiversity is a natural part of human diversity:** Brains work in different ways, and that's okay.
- **Typical is not better:** People whose brains work in less common ways have unique strengths, not just challenges
- **Our environment affects our abilities** – A “disability” might simply be a person in an environment that isn't set up to accommodate them
- **We can design environments that allow everyone to flourish**– Instead of creating environments that meet typical needs, we can meet all needs.



The Social Model of Disability

- Disability is not caused by a condition.
- It is caused when society fails to accommodate the needs of that condition.
- Society automatically meets the typical needs, but people with less typical needs get left out.

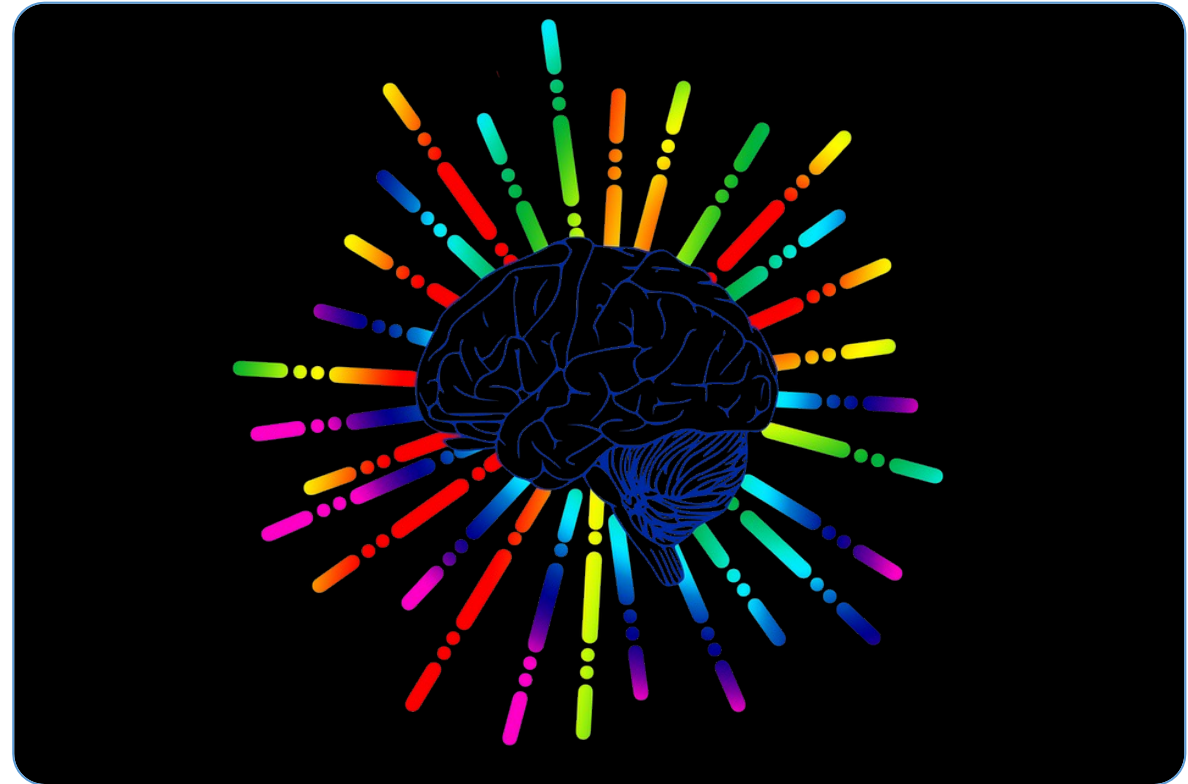


MIKE OLIVER (23 July 1990). "THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL MODELS OF DISABILITY"



The Social Model of Disability

- A Deaf person is fully able to enjoy a movie – if the theater provides subtitles
- An Autistic person is fully able to understand a conversation – if the speaker uses explicit verbal communication.
- A person with two left feet is fully able to enjoy the dance floor – if the DJ plays the Macarena



MIKE OLIVER (23 July 1990). "THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL MODELS OF DISABILITY"



Understanding Autism Through Neurodiversity



What is Autism?

The DSM says...

- Persistent difficulty in social interaction
- Restricted & repetitive patterns of behavior, interest or activities
- Present since early life



What is Autism?

But autism means much more ...

- Unique perspectives
- Innovative thinking
- Deep joy from special interests



What is Autism?

In the workplace, autism could bring strengths...

- Fresh ideas
- Deep knowledge on area of interest
- Commitment to ethics



What is Autism?

And it can bring challenges...

- Miscommunication
- Stress from sensory overload
- Difficulty with change or adaptation



If you've met one
person with autism,
you've met **one**
person with autism

Dr. Stephen Shore



What is Autism?

People with autism need

- Understanding
- Acceptance
- Customized supports



What is Autism?

All people need

- Understanding
- Acceptance
- Customized supports

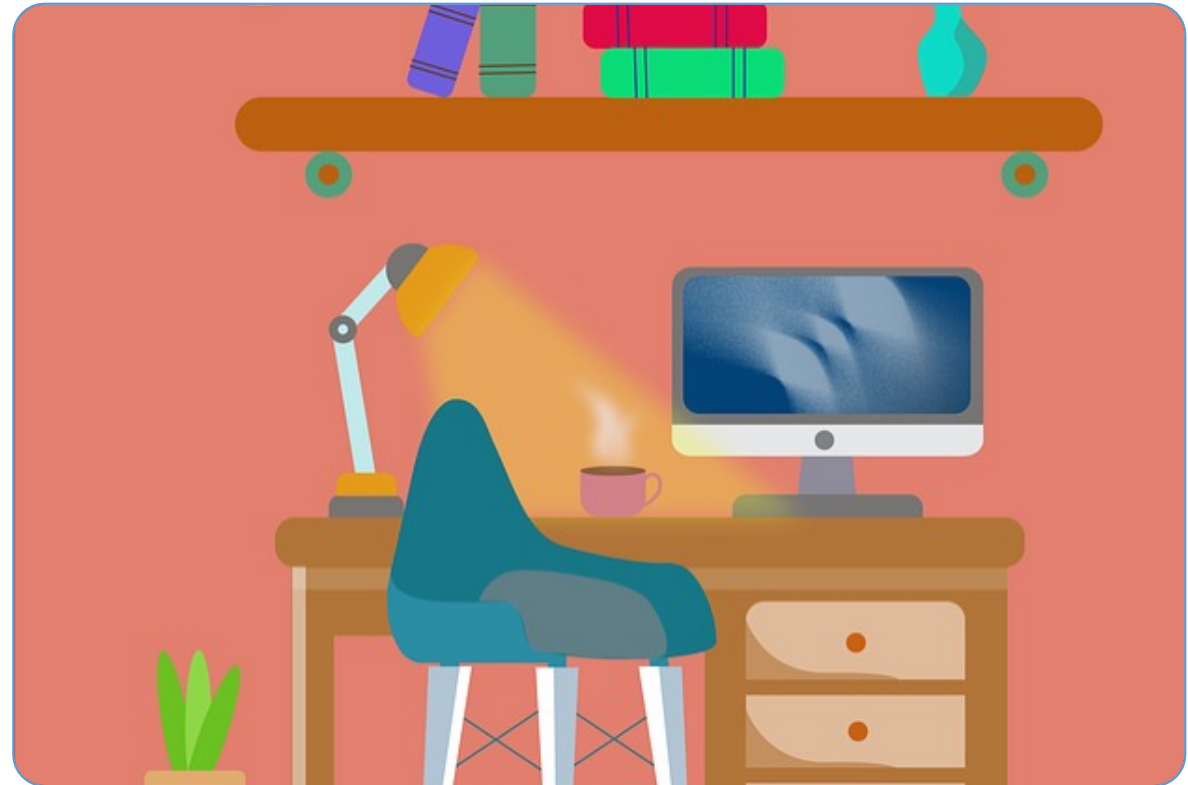


Creating a workplace for everyone



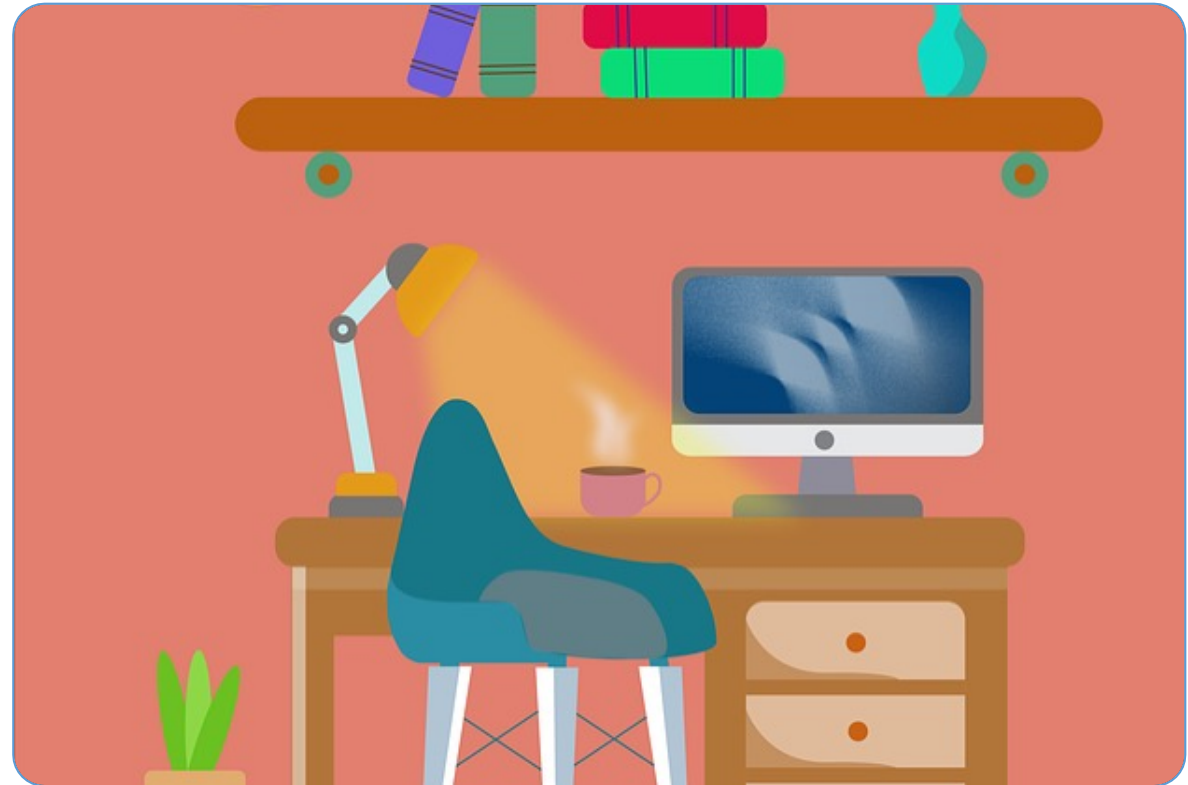
Sensory Needs

- Reasonable changes for the environment
- Allow them to control their own sensory experience
- Help them avoid or plan for strong negative sensations.



Workflow Needs

- Adapt schedules to attention
- Allow for stimulation or simplicity, as needed
- Create tools & structure



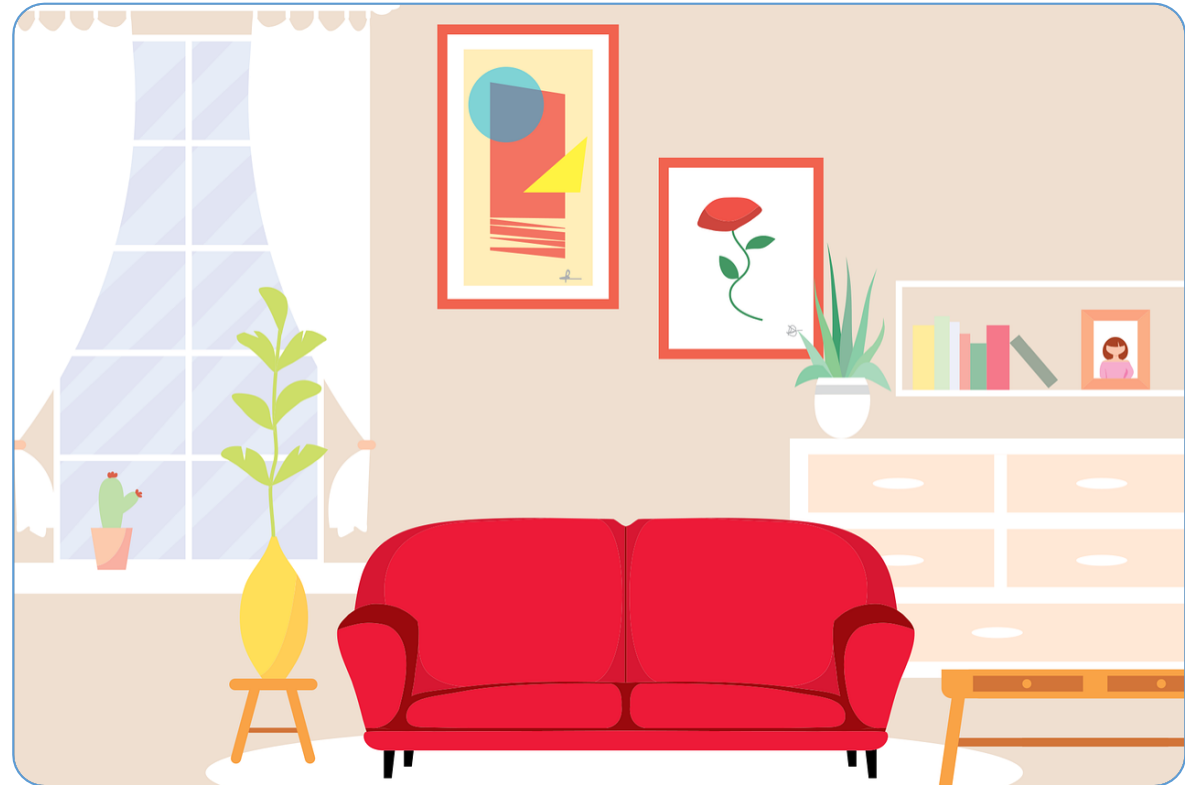
Communication Needs

- Direct and explicit communication
- Invite clarification
- Document expectations and instructions
- Write down “unwritten” rules



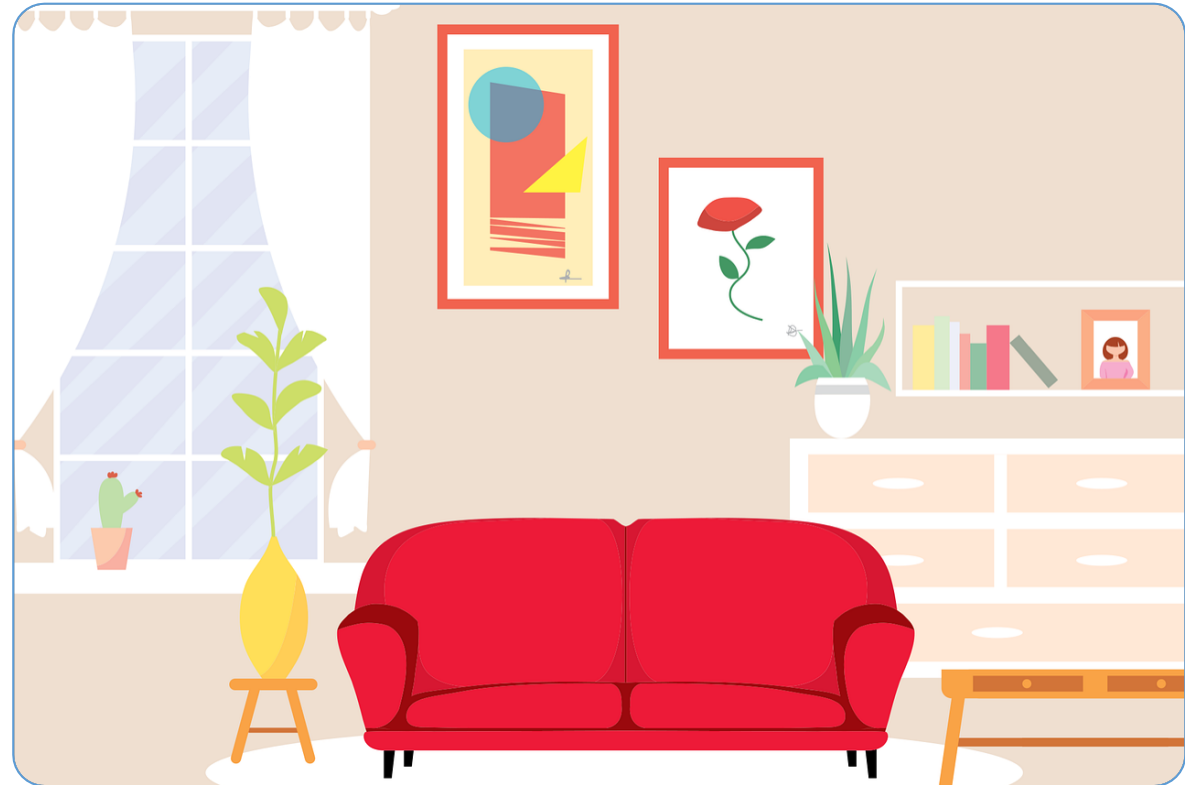
Supporting clients in the therapy room

- Make sensory objects available
- Ask about sensory needs
- Set affirming goals
- Consider reasonable policy flexibility
- Offer to adapt your approach



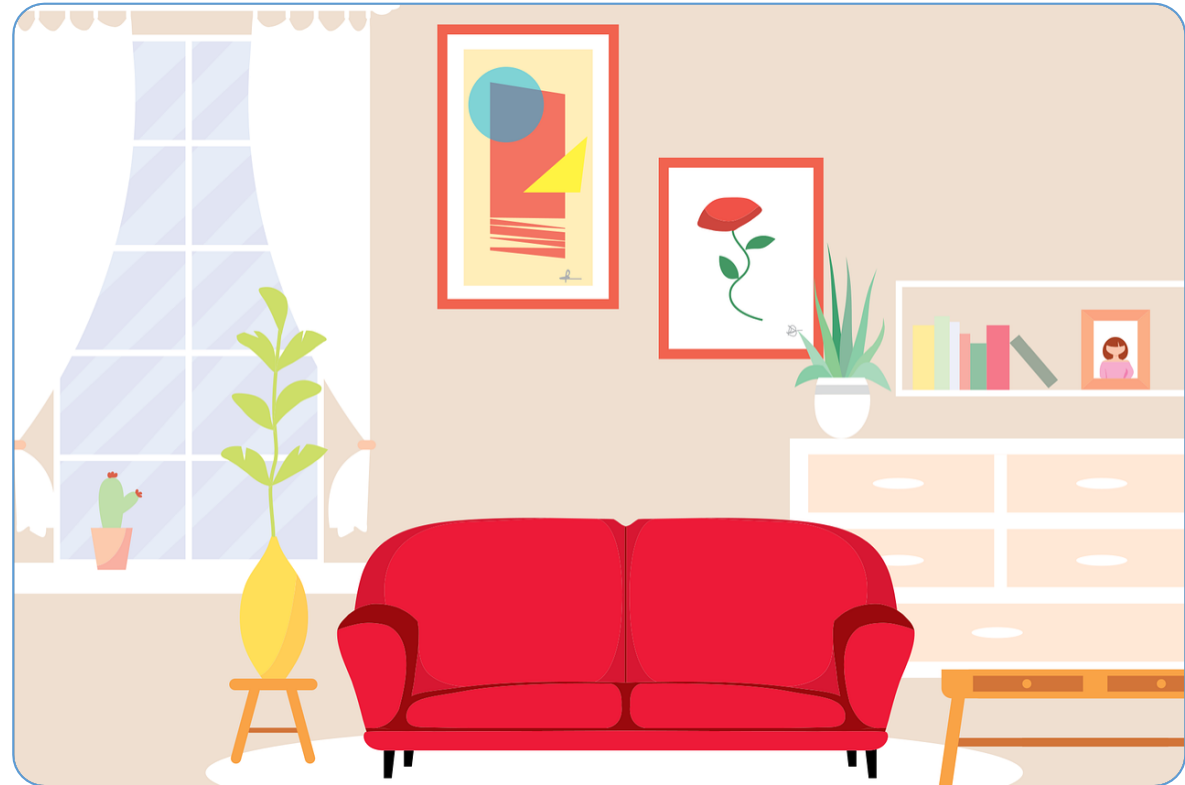
Supporting clinicians in the therapy room

- Provide time management supports
 - TimeQube for tracking session time
 - Pomodoro timer for notes
 - Reminders for deadlines & meetings
- Allow for nonobtrusive use of fidgets and sensory supports
 - Clipboard rule of thumb
 - Get informed consent from clients
- Provide neurodiversity training to supervisors



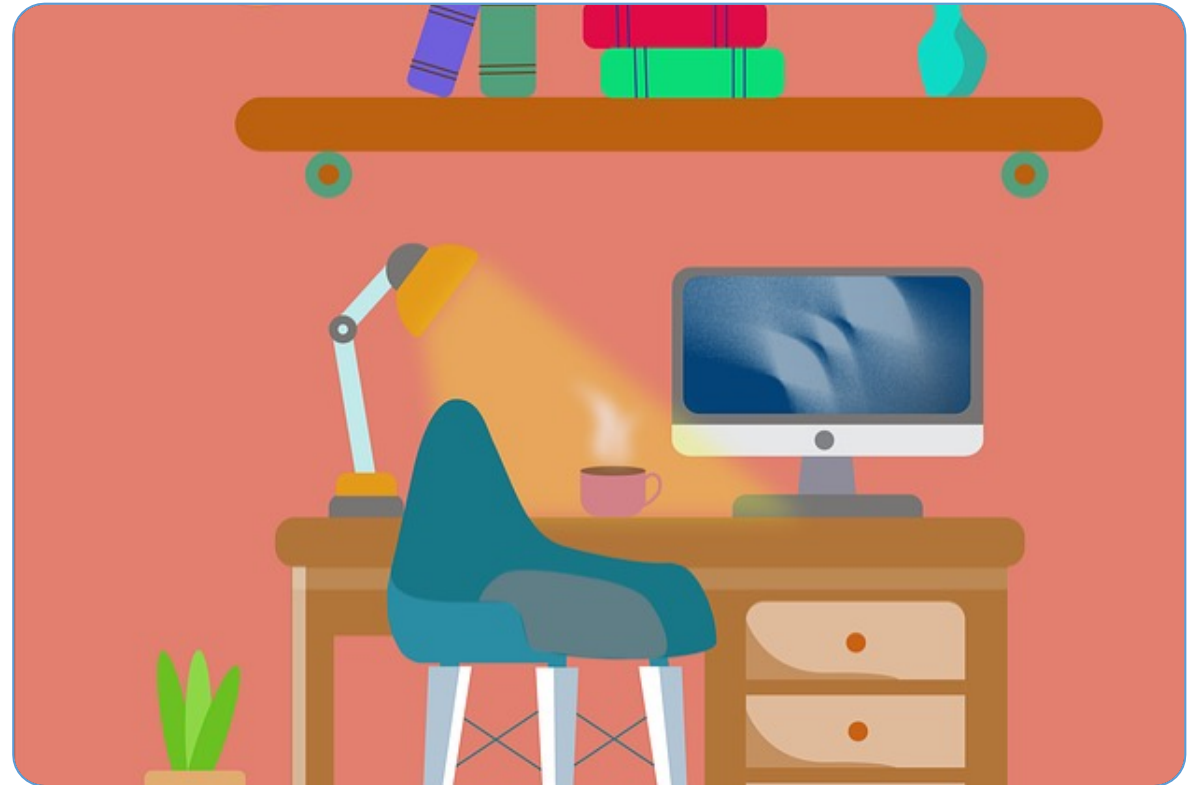
Supporting clinicians in their careers

- Provide structured social & networking opportunities
- Use competency-based hiring, not interview-based
- Offer non-clinical coaching in addition to supervision
- Invite & facilitate seeking accommodations



When in doubt...

- Assume good intentions unless proven otherwise
- Identify & accommodate unmet needs
- Allow different paths to the same goal



The Cost Of Masking

- **Masking** – Changing behavior to hide or suppress natural neurodivergent traits
- Masking changes behavior that doesn't hurt anyone; it's just different.
- Masking is draining, stressful, and creates loneliness



The Cost Of Masking

- Additional non-dominant identities increase the toll of masking.
- Masking + code switching for a Black autistic person
- Masking + hiding their sexuality for an LGBTQ person with ADHD



Being Kind without Masking

- **Kindness** – Changing behavior due to an awareness of how your actions will affect others
- Kindness changes behavior that would cause a negative effect even on someone who understands and accepts you
- Everyone has a responsibility to be kind to others.



Being Kind without Masking

Masking examples

- Resisting the desire to use self-soothing behaviors if you need them
- Pretending to prefer a “normal” hobby instead of your genuine interest
- Arranging your desk in your coworkers’ style instead of the way you prefer



Kindness examples

- Excusing yourself to self-soothe if it would be disruptive in a meeting
- Asking questions about someone’s hobby, even if it’s not your special interest
- Collaborating on how to arrange a shared work area



Create an orchestra,
not an assembly line



Continue Your Learning

- Autism Self Advocacy Network (<https://autisticadvocacy.org/>)
- Neurodiversity in the workplace (<https://nitw.org/>)
- “We’re not broken: Changing The Autism Conversation” by Eric Garcia



Stay Connected

- DanielWendler.com
- ImproveYourSocialSkills.com



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



FINAL THOUGHTS

- A recording along with the slides will be emailed to you in approximately 2 weeks
- Please complete our survey immediately after the webinar has concluded.
- Keep an eye out for Supercharge Your Team's Morale/Spirits webinar, hosted by Dr. Kyler Shumway on July 27th at 2pm ET.





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