

ICF CONVERGE

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Neuro-Informed Coaching

Functional Literacy is A Hidden Competency

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Do any of these
sound familiar?



“I just don’t think
she’s ready for
coaching because she
won’t complete
my intro-packet.”



“He was a definite
yes for coaching,
but then he
disappeared and
won’t respond
to my outreach.”



“She was making
so much progress
in coaching ...
and then she
ghosted me.”



“This client
has really
great sessions,
but then
never seems
to do their
homework.”



“It takes more
than half the session
get to a topic,
and then it
could still
change again.”



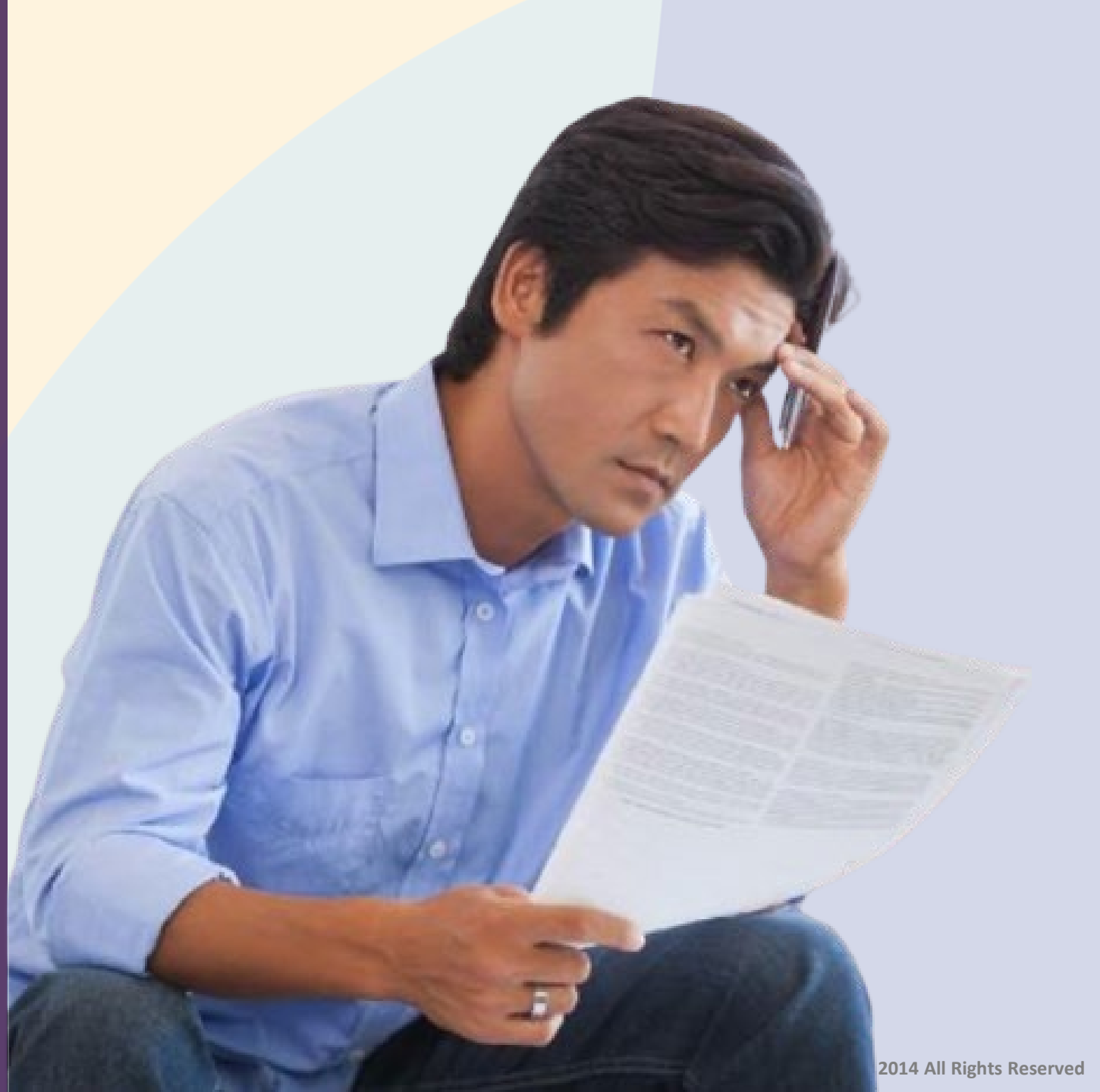
“My client seems to take everything personally and is quick to blame others. They resist attempts to look at their role.”



“She just doesn’t
seem to be motivated
to follow through.”



“I can’t put my
finger on it,
but something
feels ‘off’ in
this coaching
engagement.”



“Should I fire this client?
They’re always late
or re-scheduling;
they text me at
odd hours, but are
not showing up for
their sessions.”



Neuro-informed coaching competencies include (at least):

- Neurodiversity Fundamentals
- Recognizing Neurodiversity
- Importance of Neuro-Informed Coaching
- Risks when Coaching Isn't Neuro-Informed
- Benefits & When to Refer
- Brain Fundamentals (Rudimentary)
- Contexts for Understanding Neurodiversity
- Empowering Concepts for Coaching Neurodiversity
- Effective Tools & Techniques for Neurodiversity
- Communication Techniques for Neurodiversity
- Practice Processes & Procedures
- Ongoing Education

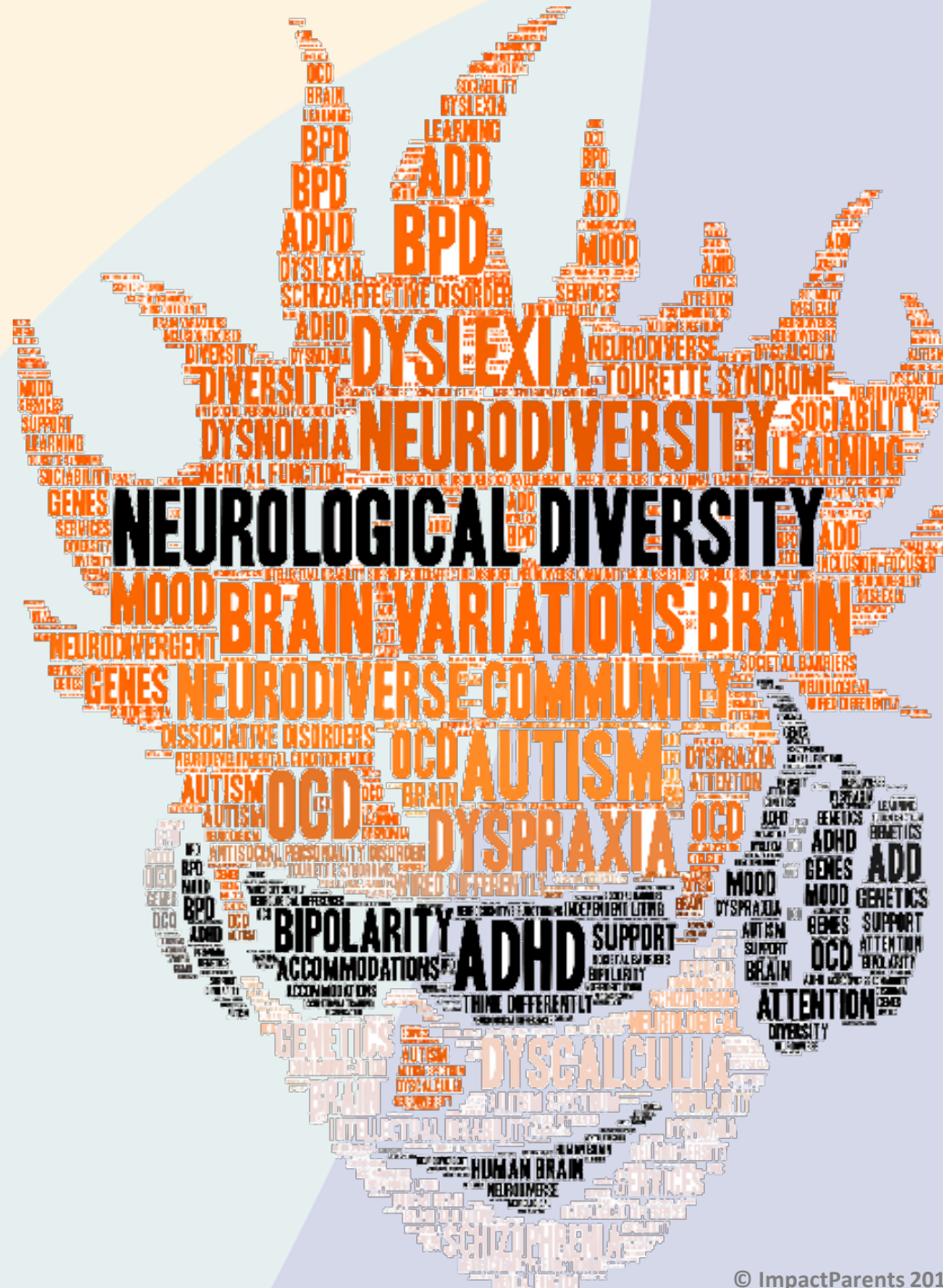


Today we'll focus on these five:

- **Neurodiversity Fundamentals**
- **Recognizing Neurodiversity**
- **Importance of Neuro-Informed Coaching**
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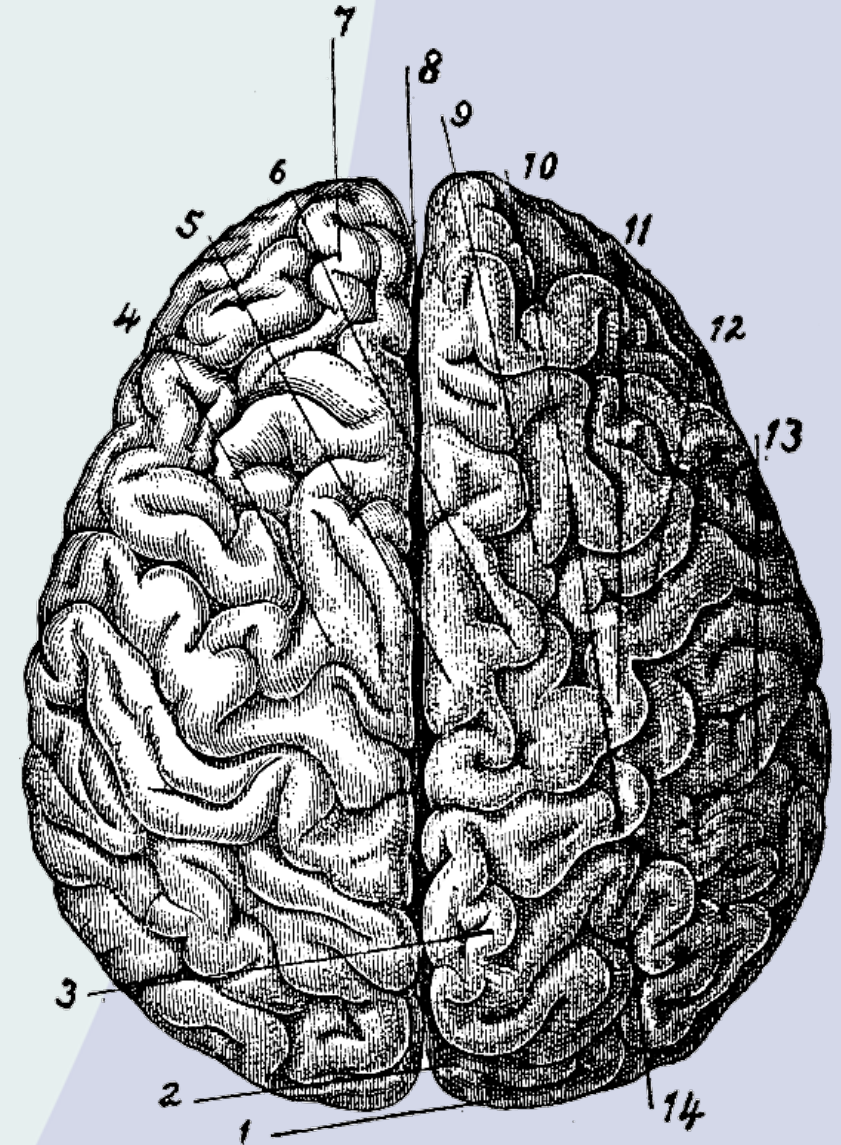


What is Neurodiversity & Neurodivergence?



“Neurodiversity is the idea that everyone experiences and interacts with the world around them in different ways based on differences in their brains. Variations are not failings or deficits; they’re just... different.”

*Jeff Copper, PCC , Attention Talk Radio
ICF Neurodiversity Panel, May 2022*



The Brain Does Not Discriminate

Neurodiversity

- Coined to promote equality and inclusion of 'neurological minorities.'
- Idea that variations in human brain functions are normal, not deficits.
- Observable in all aspects of life (social, learning, attention, mood & self-directed regulation and action).
- Present in all racial, ethnic, gender, religious and/or socio-economic groups.





Neurodivergence

- Some individuals' brains diverge from what is considered typical or 'neuro-normative'
- Can be acquired or genetic
- Not intrinsically positive or negative, desirable or undesirable

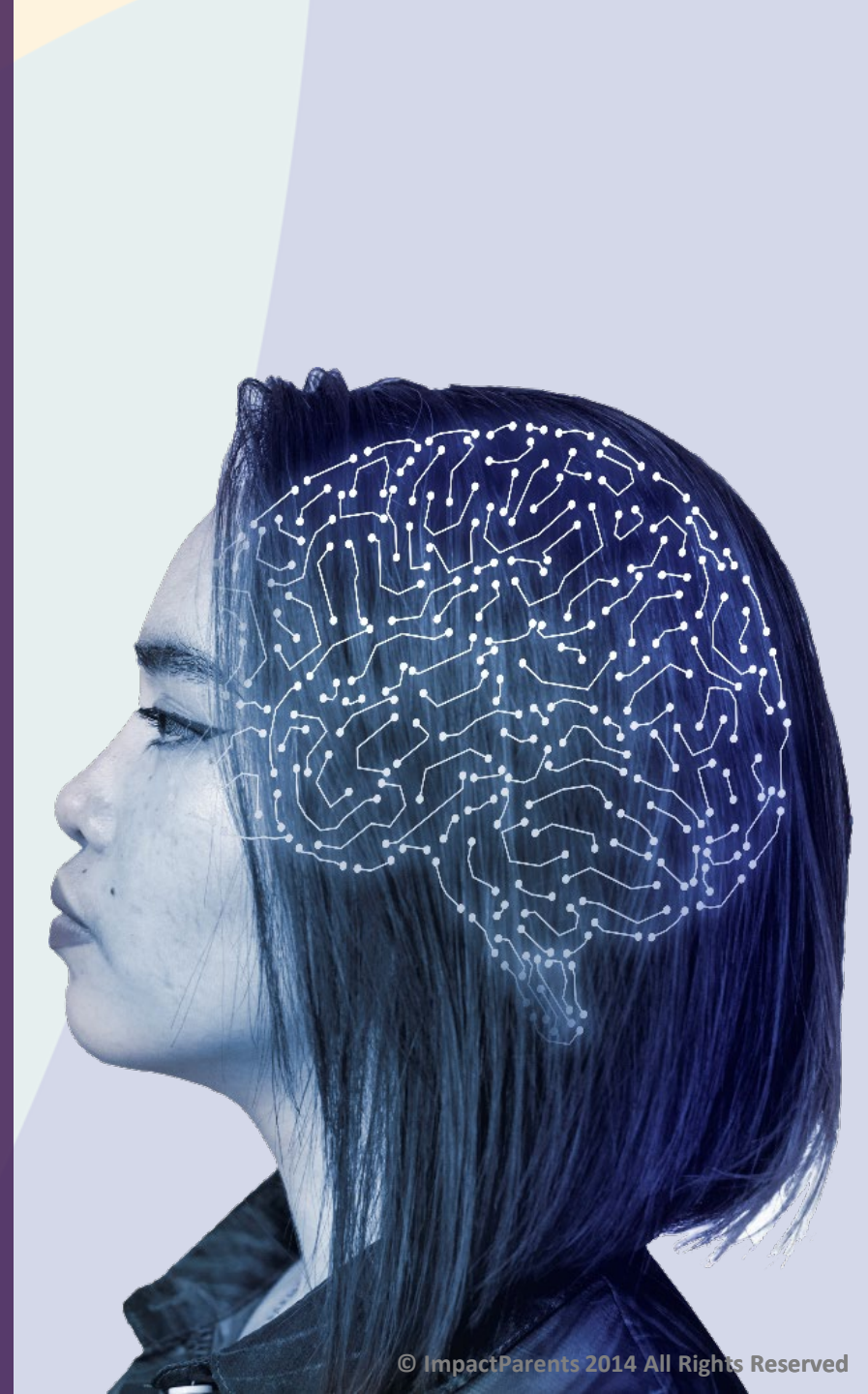
Neurodiversity numbers: variable & higher than expected

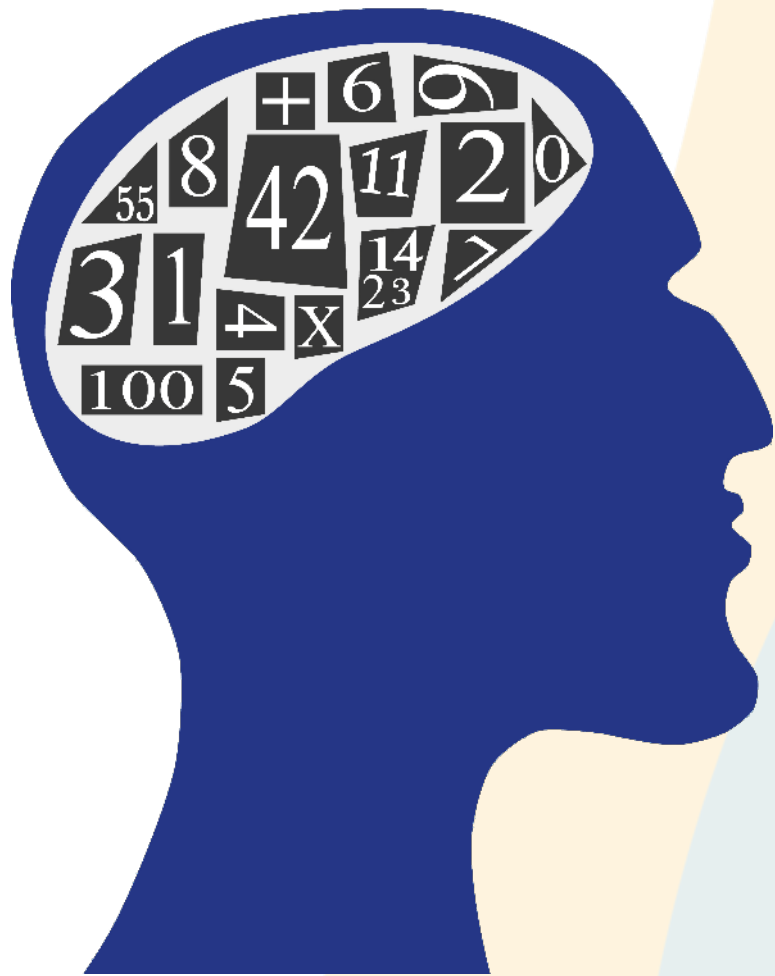
- ~2 out of 5 adults showed symptoms of anxiety or depression in 2021⁽¹⁾
- > 20% of students have learning &/or attention issues⁽²⁾
- “Between 30% and 40% of the population are thought to be neurodivergent. The remaining majority are neurotypical.”⁽³⁾
- Estimate: 1 in 36 (2.8%) 8-year-olds Dx with ASD; 2.21% of adults (U.S.) Dx with ASD. (CDC)

1) Centers for Disease Control, 2021

2) National Centers for Learning Disabilities, 2014

3) ADHDAware.org.uk





Where Have You Encountered Neurodiversity?

- Friends &/or Family
- School/Work &/or Community
- Personal Experience

Differences in 'Brain Wiring' Can Be Genetic or Acquired ...

Genetics and/or Brain-based Conditions
(ADHD, anxiety, autism, depression, etc.)

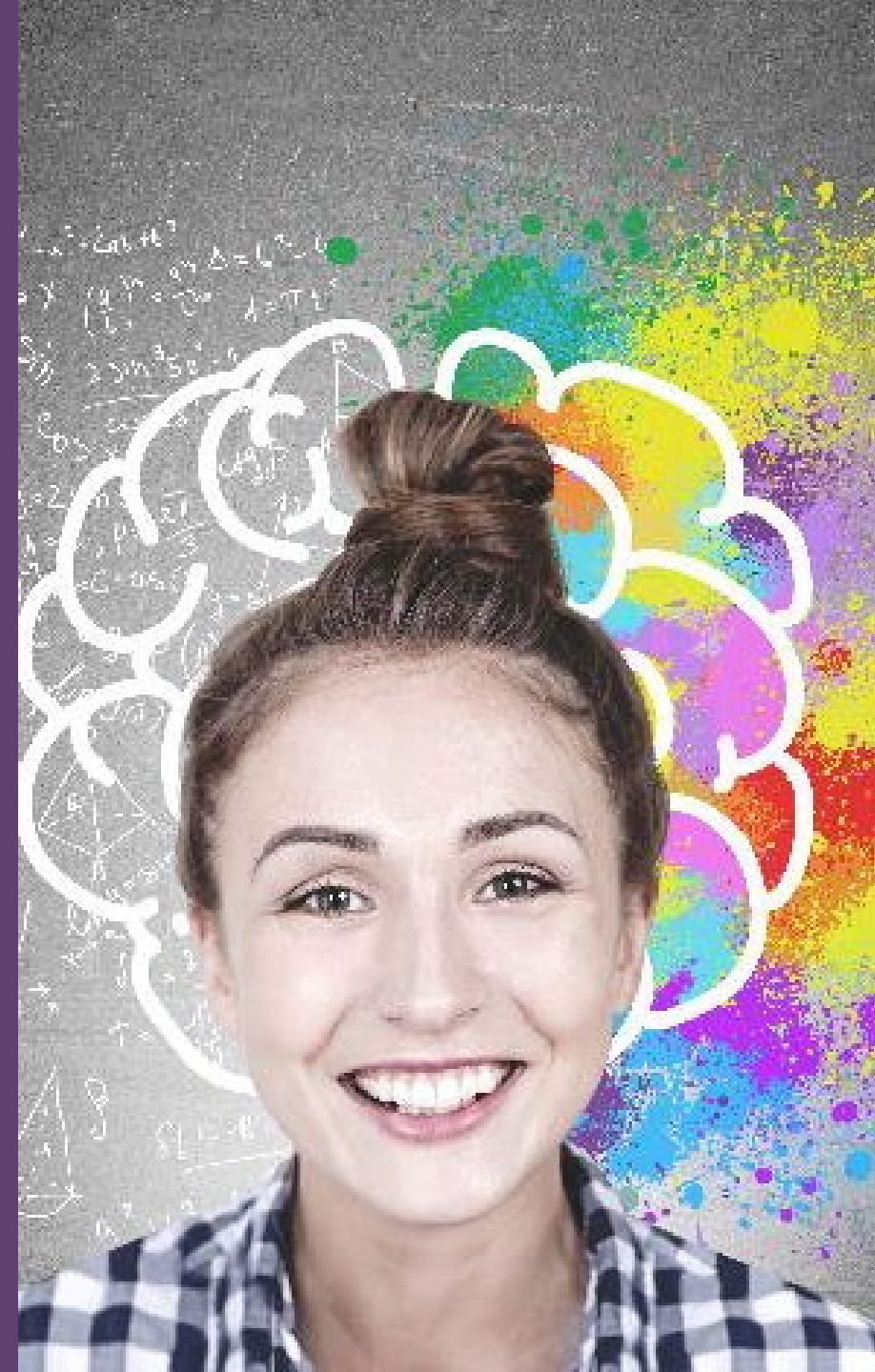
Giftedness
(2e = Twice exceptional)

Trauma/PTSD, trauma
(life experiences, whether treated or untreated)

Processing Differences
(language, dyslexia, sensory sensitivities, etc.)

Brain Injury, Side Effects & Hormones
(consequences of many health conditions & incidents)

VUCA Environment
(volatile, uncertain, complex, & ambiguous + stress responses)

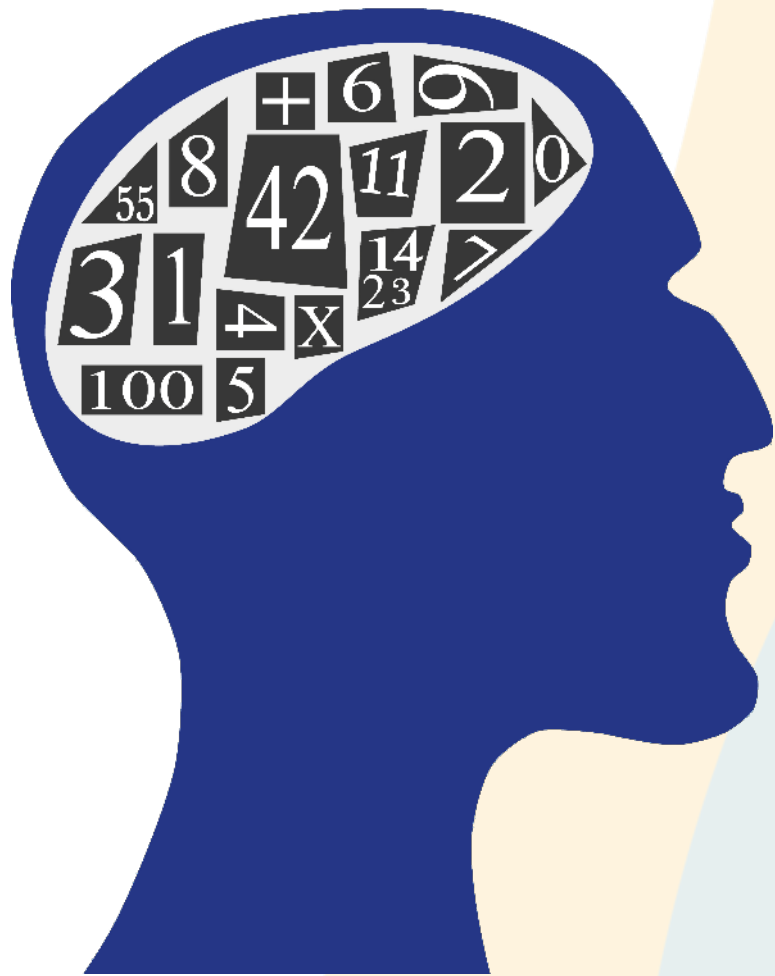


Neurodiversity Manifests in Both Gifts & Challenges

- Outside the Box Thinking
- Processing Style Differences
- Pattern Recognition
- Excitabilities & Sensitivities
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Resilience
- Innovation
- Visionary



- Disorganization
- Impulsivity (and/or Hyperactivity)
- Memory Challenges
- Attention Regulation
- Emotional Regulation
- Physical Self-Regulation
- Sensory Differences
- Excitabilities & Sensitivities
- Energy Regulation / effort 'tax'

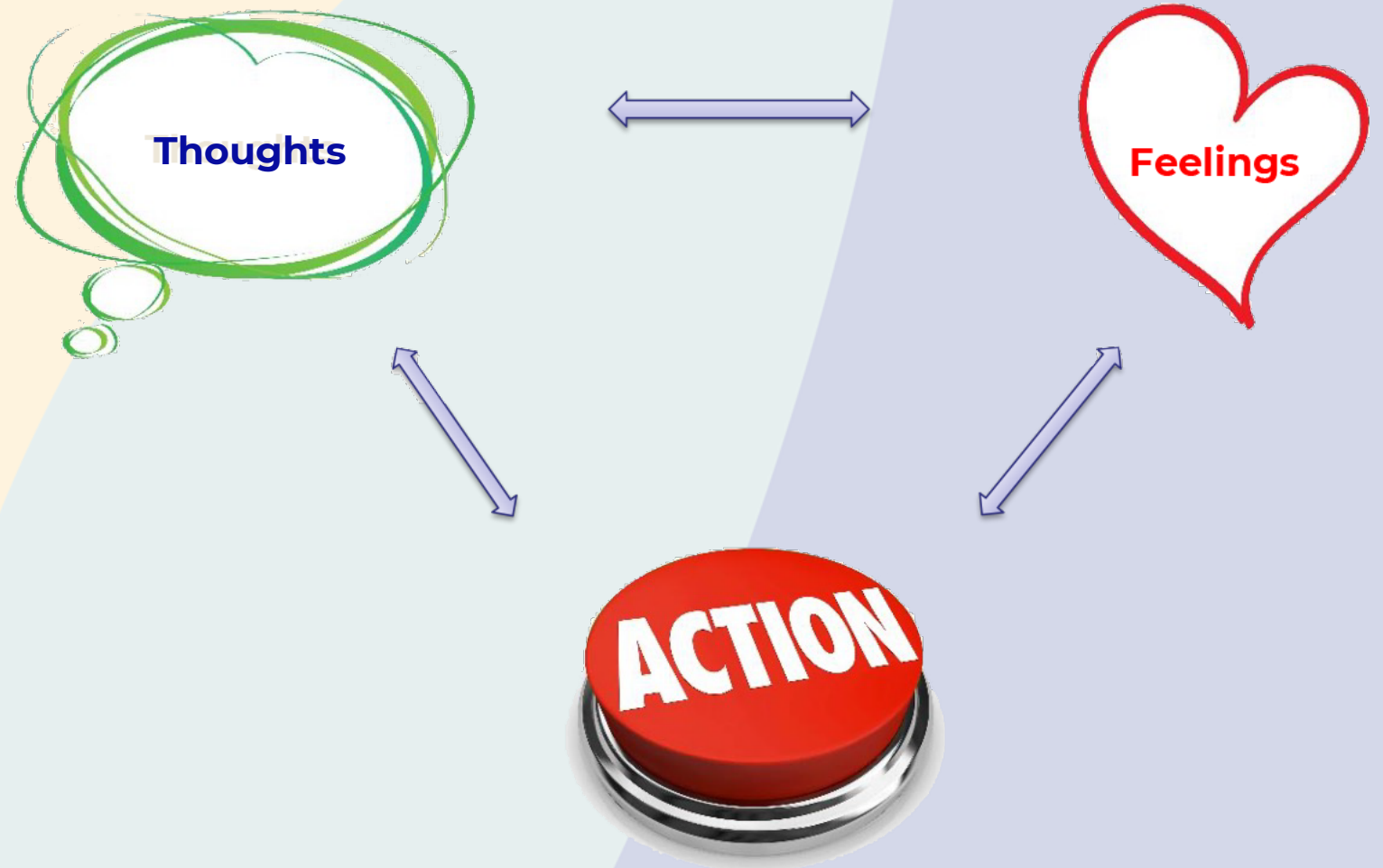


Group Discussion:

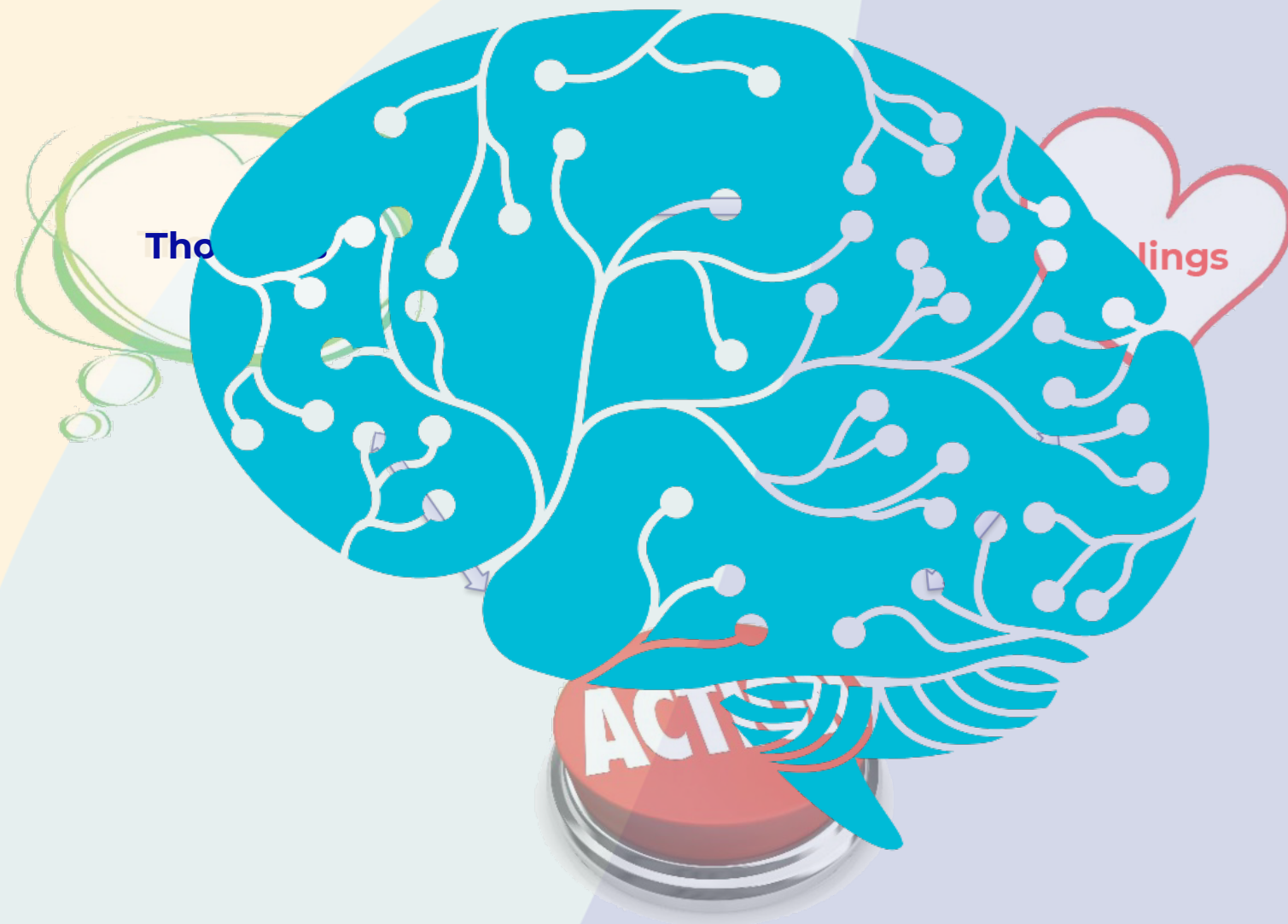
How Has Neurodiversity Shown Up in Your Life or Work?

- Mental health/brain-related diagnosis
- Physical and/or psychological trauma
- Twice exceptional (2e)
- Midlife “crisis”/menopausal human
- VUCA (stress/uncertainty)
- Other

Neuroscience of Coaching Teaches ...



Information is Processed Differently in Neurodiverse Brains

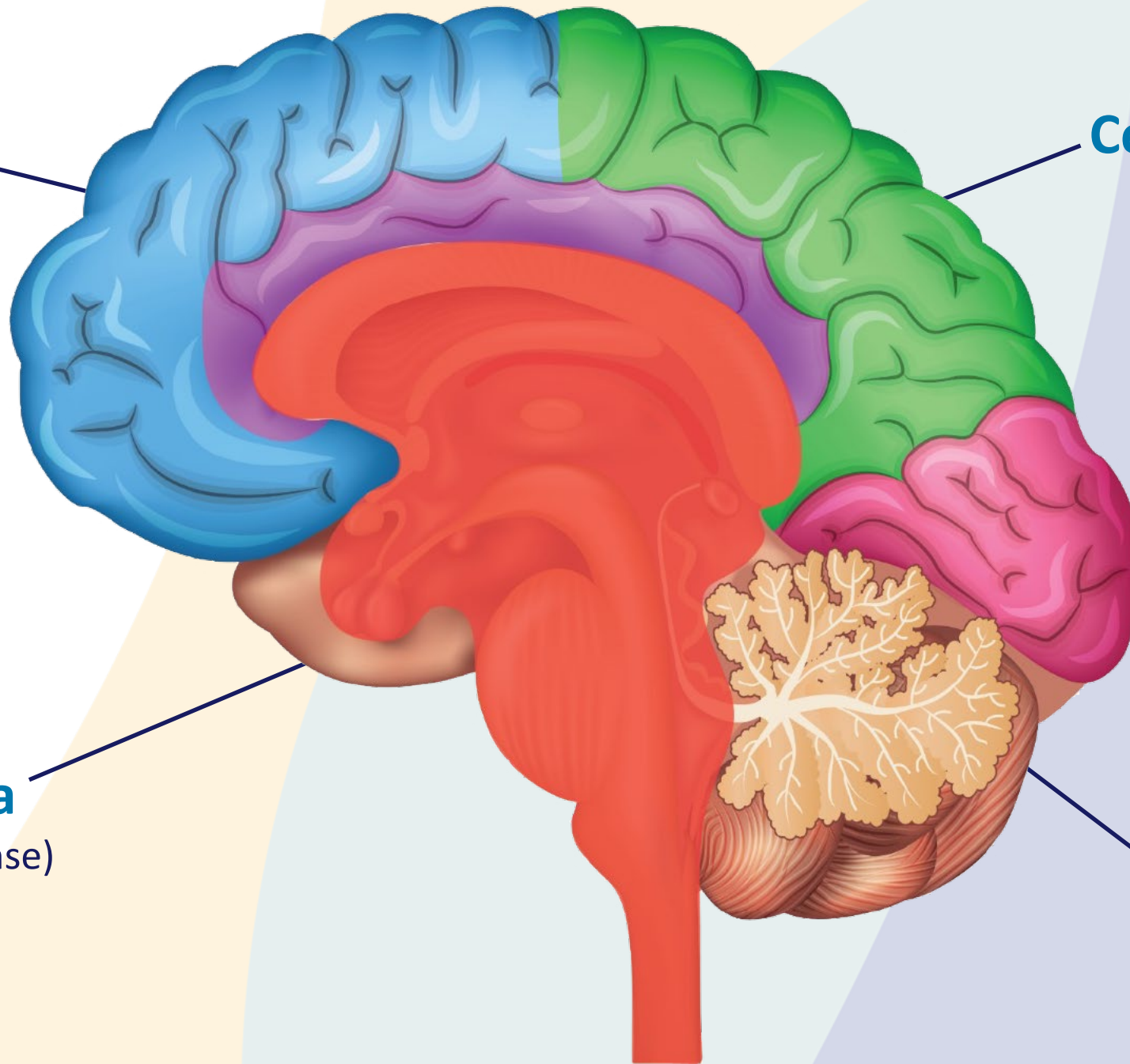


Frontal Lobe
(Executive Function)

Cerebral Cortex
(Intellect)

Amygdala
(Threat/Response)

Limbic System
(Emotions)



Neurodiversity
manifests with
(sometimes contradictory)
challenges with
self-regulation.





Neurodiversity Impacts Performance

(Organizing Self)

- Work avoidance, perfectionism, procrastination, low energy
- Workaholism, over-committing, task and time management, high energy



Neurodiversity Impacts Feelings (Self Concept)

- Shame, saboteurs, limiting beliefs & diminished self-esteem
- Defensiveness, masking, magical thinking & inflated self-concept
- Feelings can lead to SODA behaviors (Shut down, Offense, Defense, Avoid)

“self esteem hit parade”



Neurodiversity Impacts Relationships

(Emotions & Human Dynamics)

- Anger, emotional reactivity, highly sensitive, creates conflict, socially awkward
- Impulsive, trouble with follow-through, obsessive thinking or behaviors, avoids conflict

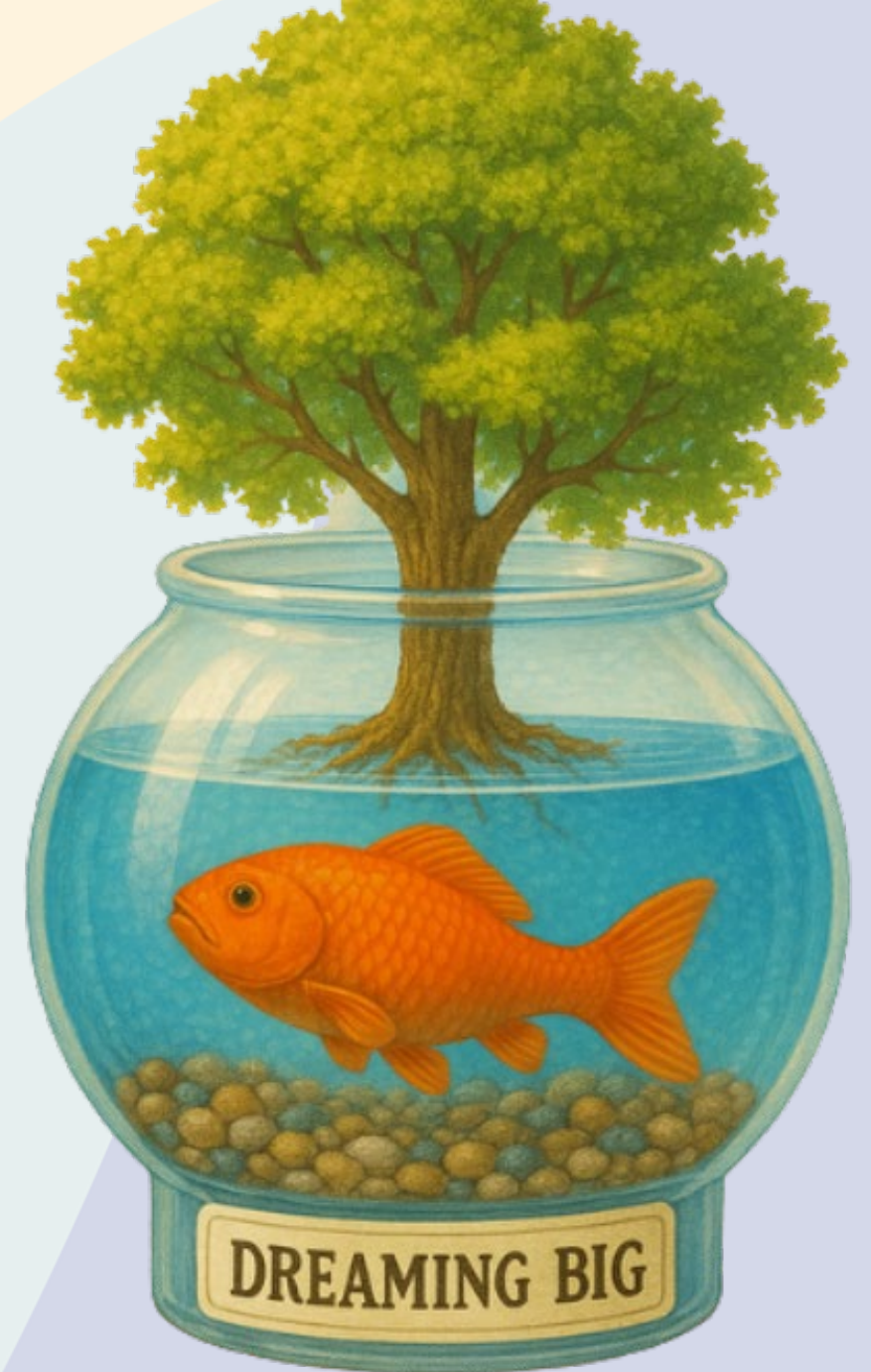
Neurodiversity Impacts Both BEING & DOING



Without acknowledgement
that there is a
reason for struggling ...
people will make up
that they're
lazy, crazy, or stupid.



“If you judge a fish
by its ability to
climb a tree,
it will live
its whole life
believing it's stupid.”



Masking Behavior: *acting neurotypically to avoid negativity*

Masking can lead to
anxiety,
depression,
burnout,
shutdown,
overwhelm,
and a disconnection
from one's authentic self.



When supports are not neuro-informed ...

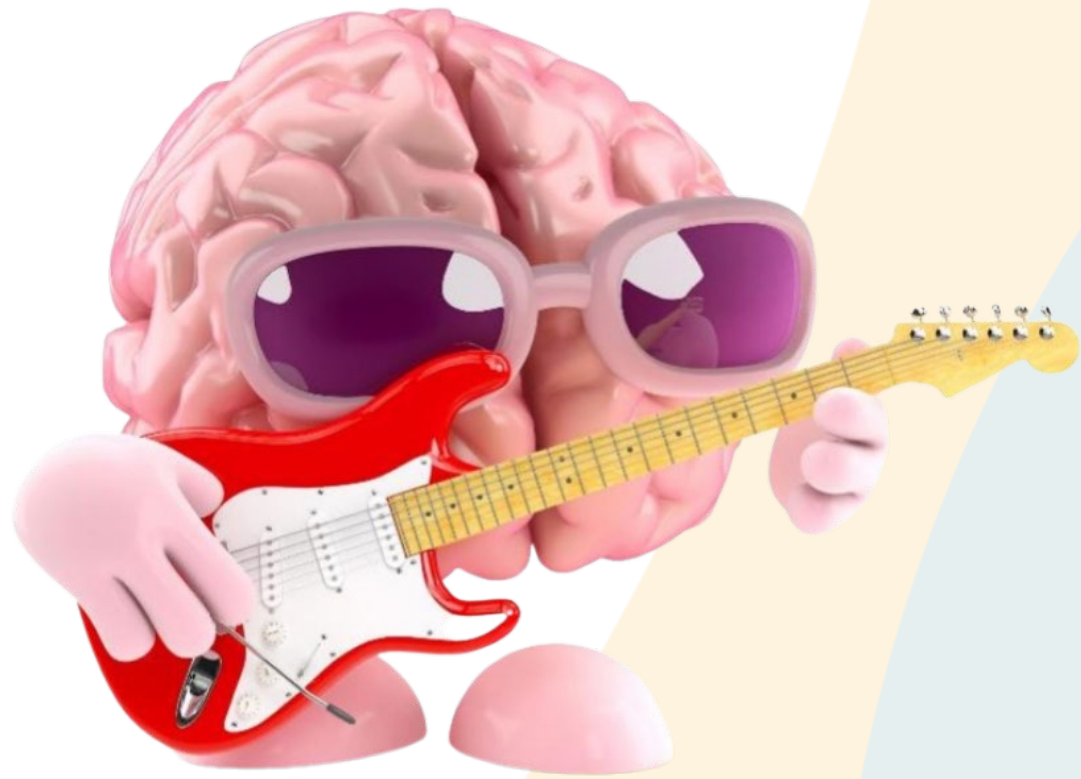
“...an individual’s adaptations to their personality and how they display their emotions to fit with societal norms ... can have a large impact on their sense of self, and lead to exhaustion, burn-out, and **poor mental health.**”

— Oxford Academic PMJ





Debrief Groups:
Discuss potential
risks of unidentified
neurodiversity
in coaching.



Coaching is a particularly
effective modality for
neurodiversity ...
when it is neuro-informed.

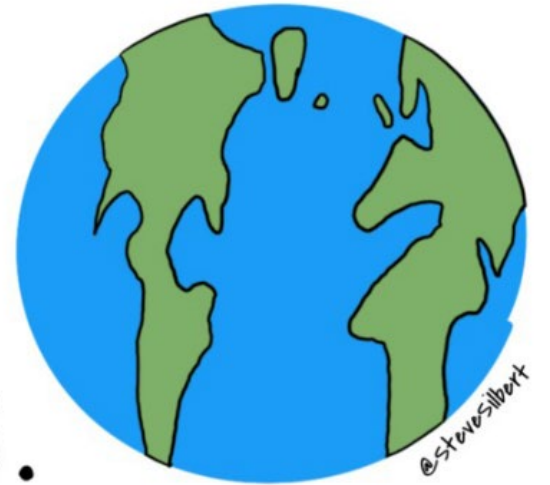
*“Words matter in
neurodiversity.
Neurodiversity advocates
encourage inclusive,
nonjudgmental language.”*

Harvard Blog November 2021

“What is Neurodiversity”

Nicole Baumer MD, MEd & Julia Frueh, MD

Words
create
worlds.





Coaching is a modality for change that invites hope, vision, and possibility to:

- Raise Self Awareness
- Forward Action

Coaching is inherently
empowering
& strengths-based,
assuming nothing
is broken that
needs to be fixed.



Coaching focuses
on motivation
& intention.



Coaching offers a
process-oriented approach
to achieving outcomes
and celebrates
incremental success.



Coaches are
able to offer
appropriate
referrals & consults
without shame.



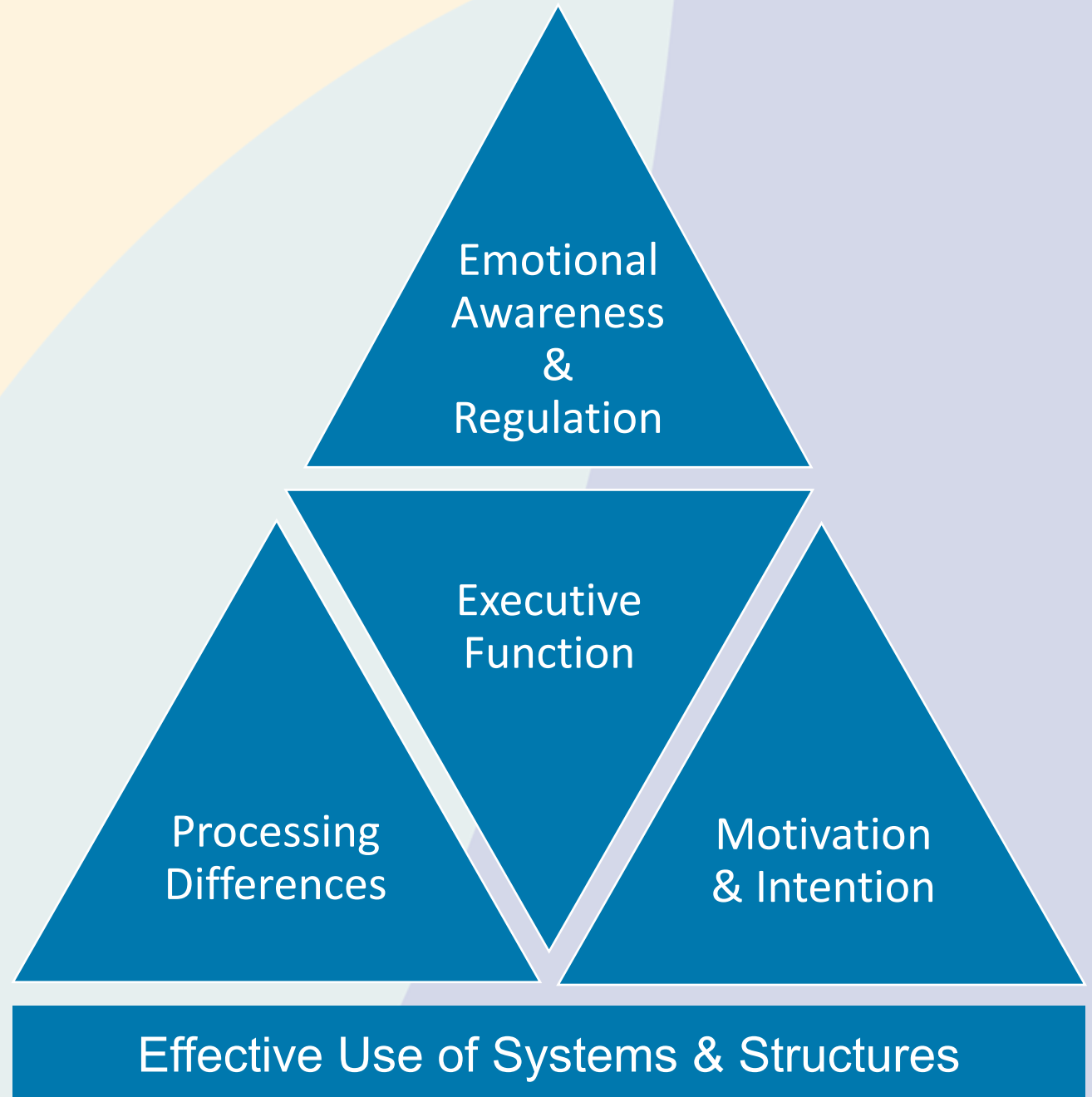
AND ...
coaching's power
is incomplete
when it
fails to create
a sense of
belonging.



AND ...
coaching becomes
truly powerful
when it
creates
a sense of
belonging.



Neuro-informed Coaches Understand 5 Contexts (at a minimum) ...



Emotional Regulation: 'On Alert'

Coaching Tip:

*Flooding and/or overwhelm can impact task initiation, performance or completion.
Avoid problem-solving when someone's brain is 'triggered.'*



Executive Function: 'Brain's Orchestra Leader'

Coaching Tip:

*Play to their strengths &
outsource/externalize challenges.*

Activation Management

Action Management

Memory Management

Attention Management

Emotion Management

Effort Management

Language & Information Processing Differences

(can be visual, aural, verbal, kinesthetic or pace-related)

Coaching Tip:

Get curious about how they process information and how they feel they learn best.



Motivation & Intention
are essential.

Coaching Tip:

*Identify motivators for every action,
large and small.*





Identify Motivators with **P.I.N.C.H.**

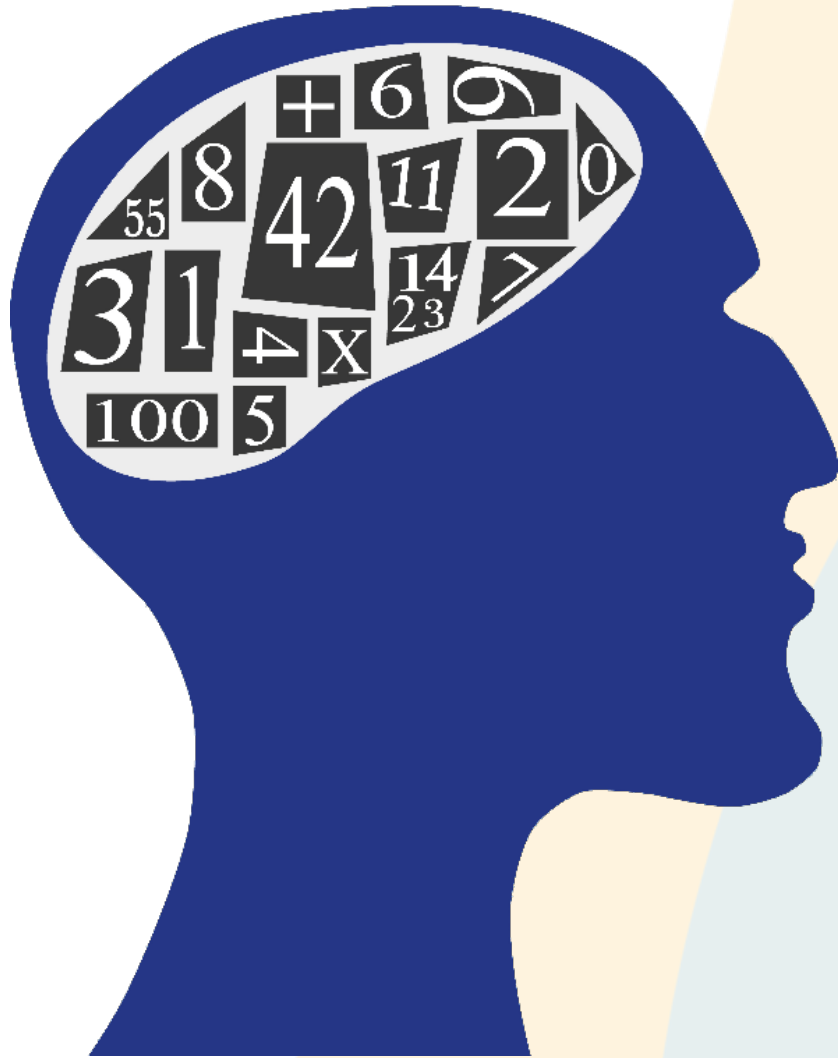
- Play (creativity & humor)
- Interest
- Novelty
- Competition/Connection
- Hurry-up (urgency)

Effective Use of Systems & Structures

Coaching Tip:

Create systems that are simple, flexible and personalized.





Inquiry:

Which of these 5 contexts are you drawn to learn more about to better support clients with neurodiversity?

1. Emotional Awareness & Regulation
2. Executive Function
3. Processing Differences
4. Motivation & Intention
5. Effective Use of Systems & Structures

Relationship between Coaching & Therapy

- The bicycle analogy
- Therapeutic is not the same as therapy
- Approach similar challenges with different approaches
- Neurodivergent clients often work with both coaches and therapists
- Coaches may communicate with therapists &/or medical doctors



Signs to Explore Underlying Neurodiversity or REFER out

- If same topic comes up again and again and again
- If you don't feel comfortable or that you're being effective as a provider
- If client discloses a diagnosis or questions that they might have a condition
- When in doubt: Get a mentor, get training, &/or make referral to a trained provider



Today we overviewed:

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Ethically,
the future for
all coaches is
neuro-informed.



Invitation: What's Next for You?

- **Get comfortable** talking about neurodiversity
- **Incorporate** neurodiversity into your initial coaching / engagement design
- **Transparently share** with clients that you're in the process of learning about neurodiversity
- **Ask permission** to share observations and raise awareness about neurodiversity, when relevant
- **Develop partnerships** with relevant specialists – therapists, coaches, et al. – for assessment, support, referral, and consult, when appropriate
- **Continue** your own neuro-informed education





Neurodiverse people
are often
specialists
in a
generalists'
world.

Wrap Up (*Neurotypical*)

What are you taking away from today that you will use to improve your coaching, your assessments, your practices, or your life?



Wrap Up (*Neurodiverse*)

- What did I *focus* on or pay most attention to in this session?
- What's my *clarity* or take-away?
- What is a realistic *action* step for me to take?
- How can I set myself up for *success* with this action?



Resources

- *Neurodiversity Guide for Coaches*
- *Understanding ADHD – A Guide for Providers*
- *The Essential Guide to Raising Complex Kids with ADHD, Anxiety & More (sample chapter)*

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Experience MCC-Trained AI Coaching by David



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