



Learn. Develop. Succeed.

UNDERSTANDING **NEURODIVERSITY**

awareness | acceptance | advocacy





Land Acknowledgement

We are privileged to be gathered here on the unceded, traditional, ancestral lands of the x^wməθk^wə́yəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



About LDS

Learn. Develop. Succeed.



Individualized instruction



Serving learners aged 3 - adults



BC nonprofit charity



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Our Talk

1. What is neurodiversity?
2. What are learning differences?
3. The reality of learning differences
4. Neuroaffirming spaces
5. Q&A



What is Neurodiversity?



**Brain-based differences are
natural and valuable forms of
human diversity.**



Origin of the term “neurodiversity”

“Neurodiversity” has been an anchor in the movement toward empowerment, inclusion, and acceptance of brain-based differences.



Brain Functions

Input: your brain gets information from your senses.

Processing: analyzes information, compares it to what you know, and determines meaning.

Output: how your brain reacts or responds (problem-solving, conversing, emoting)





Brain like a Highway System

Roads and highways	Neurons and Pathways
Traffic	Electrical Signals
Traffic lights and signs	Brain functions
Roadblocks	Cognitive Challenges
Traffic Flows	Optimal Brain Function

Activity

Quick Draw



What are Learning Differences?



At LDS, we embrace neurodiversity by using the term "learning differences" instead of "learning disabilities."

This shift in language is rooted in our belief that differences in how we process information are natural and valuable, not inherently negative.



Learning Differences Are:



A neuro-developmental condition that affects the learning process

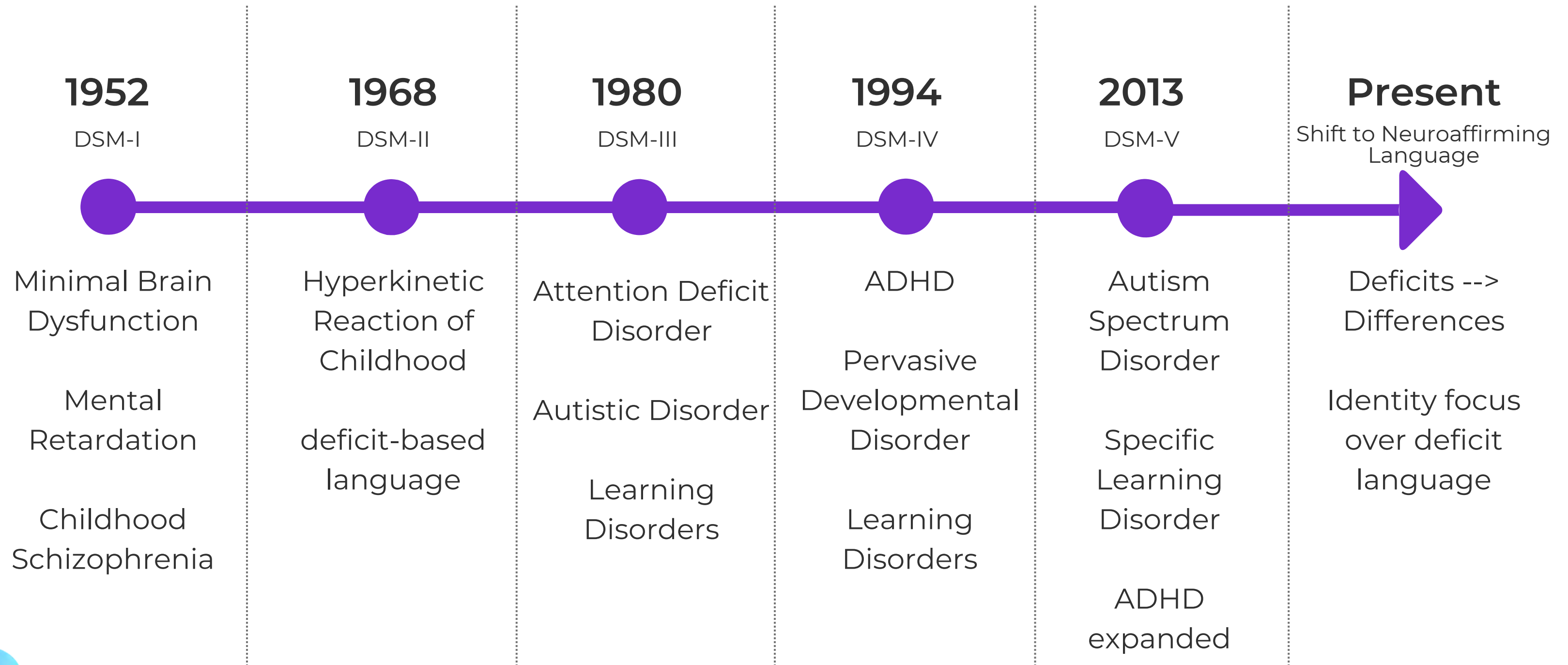


Impairments in reading, writing, mathematics, executive functioning, memory and attention

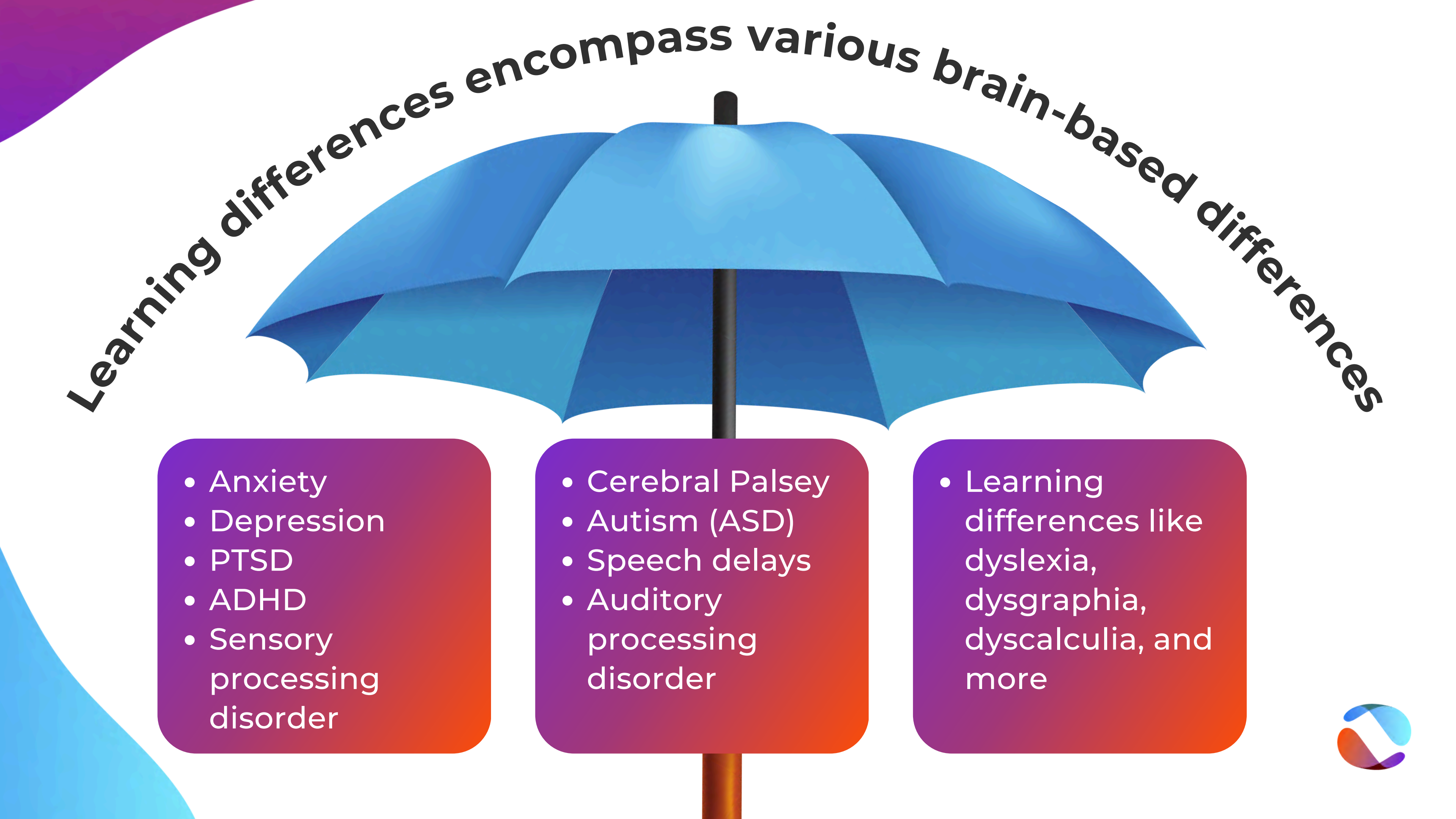


Are not lacking intelligence or necessarily effort, they overwhelmingly affect those with average to above average intelligence and cognitive abilities

Evolution of Learning Differences



DSM = Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. (American Psychiatric Association)



Learning differences encompass various brain-based differences

- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- ADHD
- Sensory processing disorder

- Cerebral Palsey
- Autism (ASD)
- Speech delays
- Auditory processing disorder

- Learning differences like dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and more



10% of children and youth in Canada
have a *diagnosed* learning difference.



Activity

Reading Comprehension





On our farm in Ghana, we grow cocoa trees. My grandfather planted them many years ago. Our part of Ghana is perfect for growing cocoa trees. We have very heavy rains during the rainy seasons, and it is also very hot here.

The cocoa grows out of the trunk of the cocoa tree. It grows in pods. Pods are like big fat cucumbers. I help to pick the pods when they are ripe. We use a big knife to cut them off.

Once we cut the pods off the tree, we split them in half. Inside are many seeds. These are the cocoa beans. We scrape them into a large pot and let the bags to the city where he sells them.

When the bags are sold, they will be sent by ship to other countries. Then the beans will be roasted and ground up to make cocoa. Maybe you will drink some cocoa that I picked on my farm in Ghana!



Questions

Number each step in the order that it happens.

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| a. ____ sell beans | f. ____ drink cocoa |
| b. ____ scrape pods | g. ____ dry beans |
| c. ____ grind beans | h. ____ bag beans |
| d. ____ pick pods | i. ____ split pods |
| e. ____ ship beans | j. ____ roast beans |

How do you know the cocoa trees are old?

- a. They are tall
- b. They have seeds
- c. Joy's grandfather planted them
- d. All of the above

What climate is best for growing cocoa trees?

- a. Wet and cold
- b. Hot and dry
- c. Hot and wet



Answers

Number each step in the order that it happens.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. _8_ sell beans | f. _10_ drink cocoa |
| b. _3_ scrape pods | g. _4_ dry beans |
| c. _6_ grind beans | h. _7_ bag beans |
| d. _1_ pick pods | i. _2_ split pods |
| e. _9_ ship beans | j. _5_ roast beans |

How do you know the cocoa trees are old?

- a. They are tall
- b. They have seeds
- c. Joy's grandfather planted them
- d. All of the above**

What climate is best for growing cocoa trees?

- a. Wet and cold
- b. Hot and dry
- c. Hot and wet**



The Reality of Learning Differences

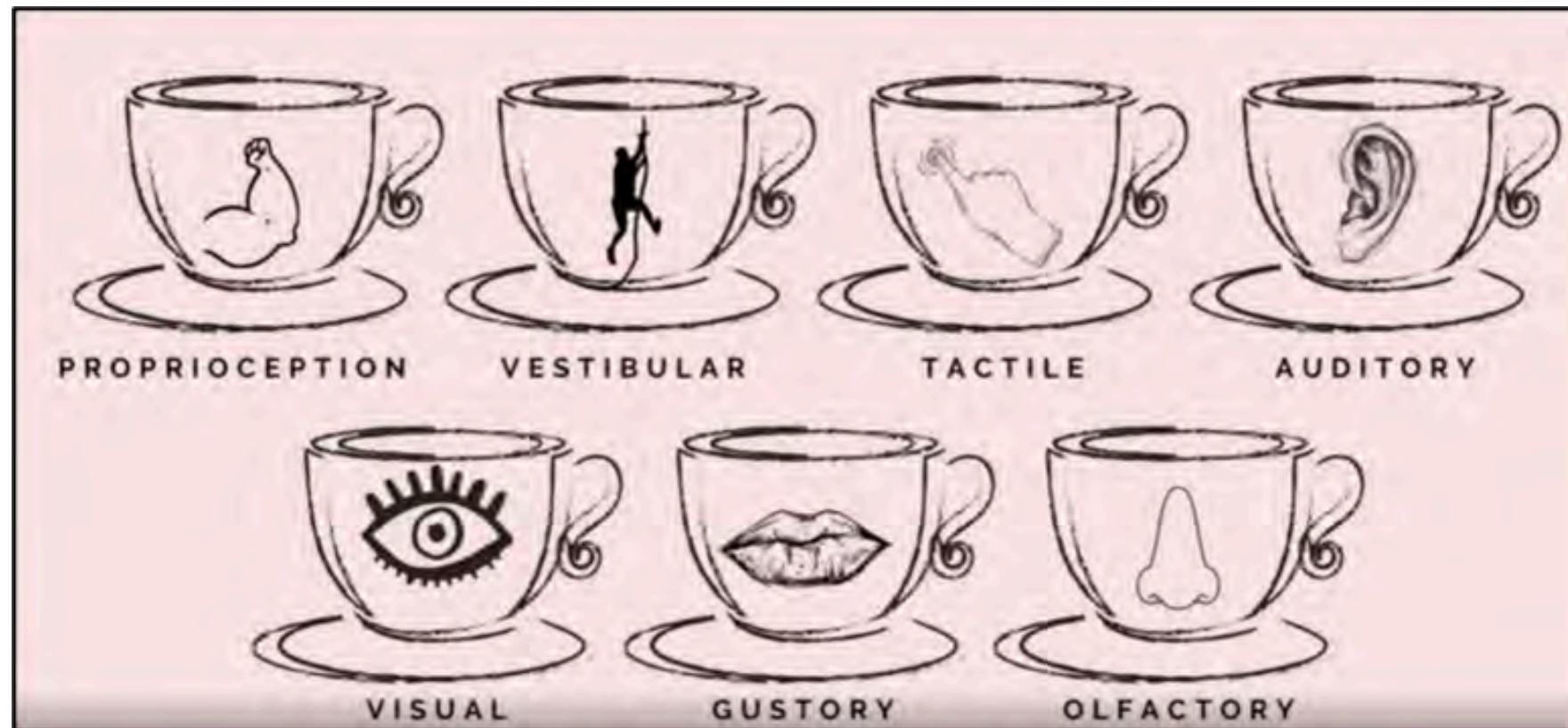


Common Learning Differences

- Dyslexia (reading)
- Dysgraphia (writing)
- Dyscalculia (math)
- Auditory Processing Disorder
- Language Processing Disorder
- Autism
- ADHD



Sensory Processing





Executive Function

A set of cognitive processes that are necessary for the cognitive control of behaviour: selecting and successfully monitoring behaviours that facilitate the attainment of chosen goals.



Mental Health

When learning differences are misunderstood or unsupported, it can result in stress and frustration, impacting overall well-being. Neurodivergent individuals are at a significantly higher risk for developing mental health conditions.



Exclusion

More than half of Canadians with disabilities, including neurodivergence, experience some form of exclusion from schools and workplaces.

Exclusion can manifest in numerous ways, such as bias, condescension, discrimination, isolation, and marginalization.





Masking

Mimicking of neurotypical behaviours despite finding social interactions stressful or confusing.

- Excessive eye contact
- Suppressing stims
- Imitating social cues
- Changing tone of voice

It takes immense cognitive and emotional energy, which can cause distress, anxiety, depression, meltdowns and social exhaustion over time.



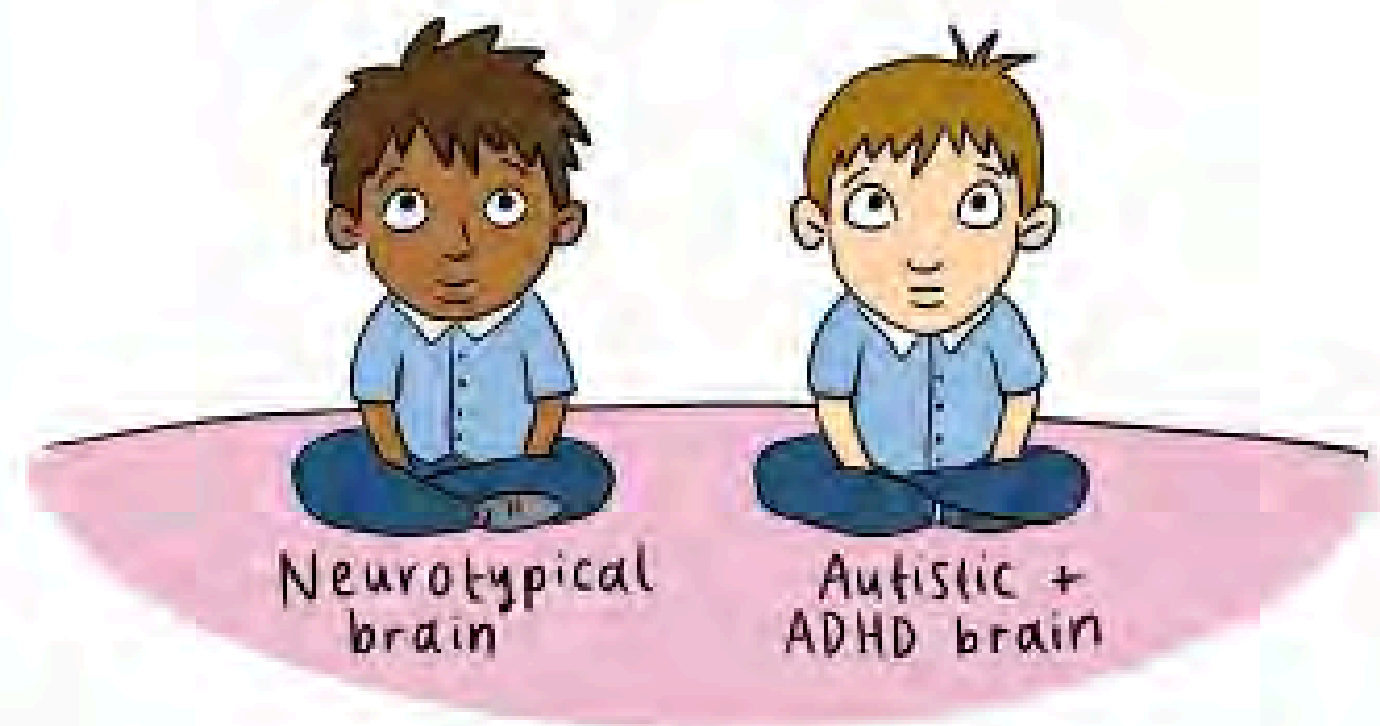
This is what
GOOD LEARNING
looks like.



RIGHT?

NeuroWild

Let's have a CLOSER look
at these two brains...

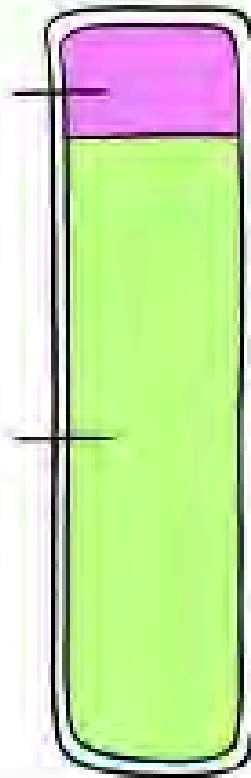


NeuroWild



'I'm getting pretty hungry'

FOCUSING ON MY WORK



This child can
FOCUS on LEARNING
when he is STILL +
LOOKING.



Neurotypical
brain

This is what GOOD LEARNING
looks like for this child.



'Must not get in trouble'

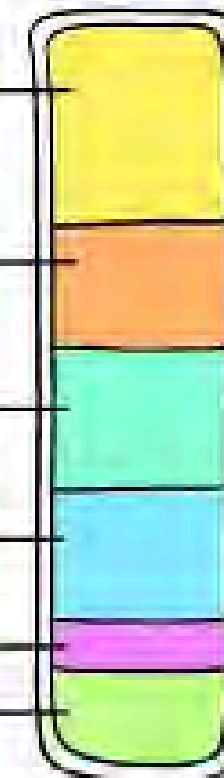
'That fan is SO LOUD and that flickering light hurts my eyes'

'Must keep eyes on teacher. Ouch. Don't look away. Ouch. MUST LOOK.'

'Must stay still. Don't move. Don't move.'

'OW. THIS TAG'

FOCUSING ON MY WORK



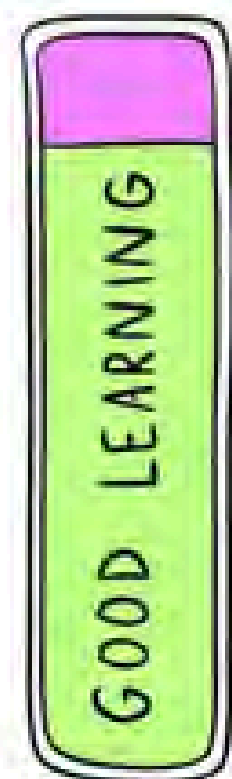
This child CANNOT
FOCUS on LEARNING
when he is STILL +
LOOKING.



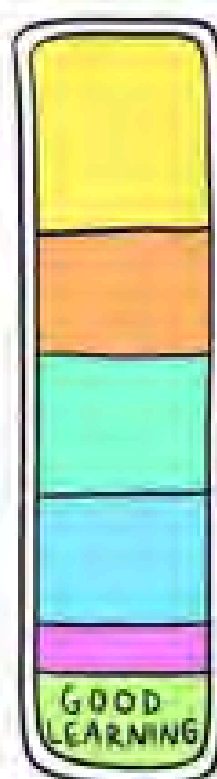
Autistic +
ADHD brain

This is NOT what GOOD LEARNING
looks like for this child.





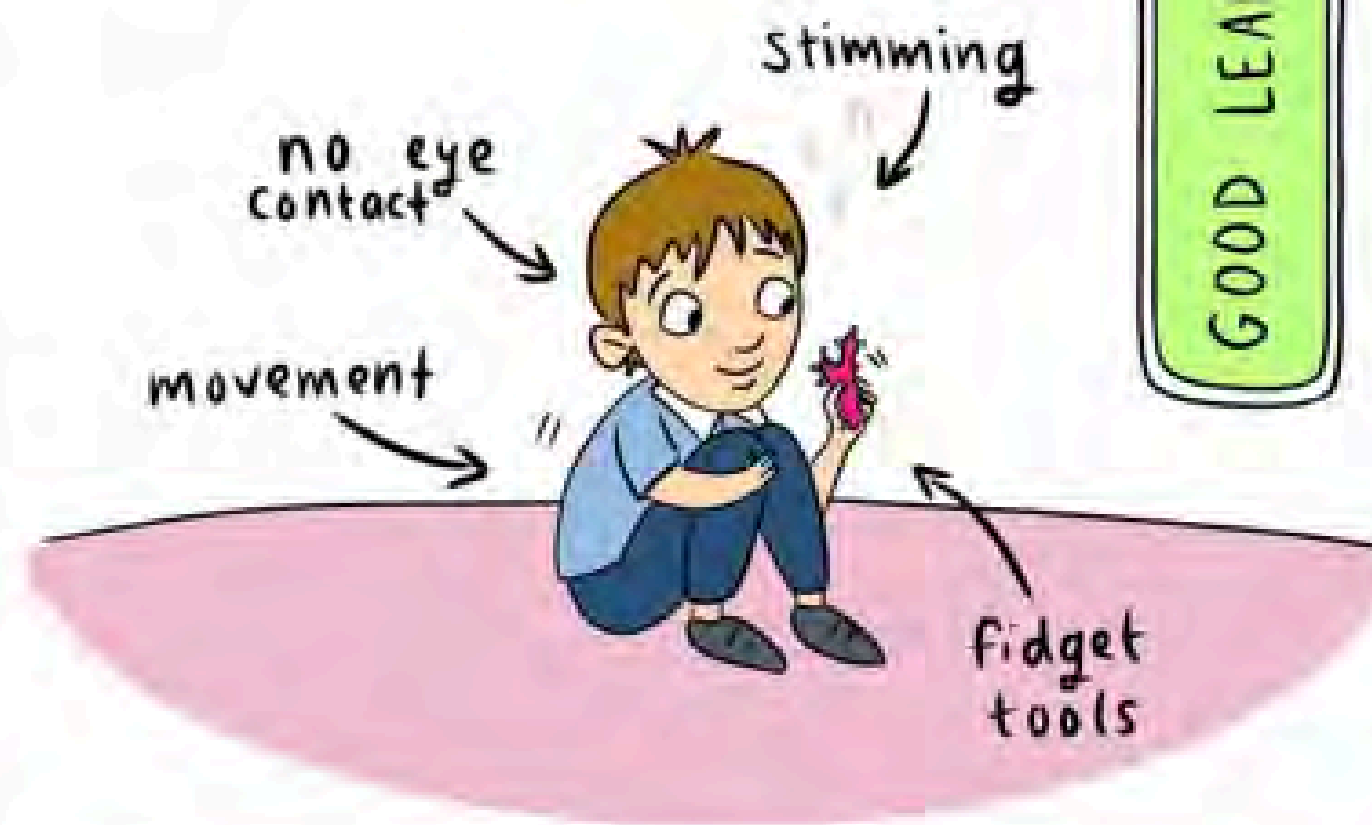
If the main goal
is GOOD LEARNING...



Neurodivergent kids
can't be asked to do this



In most Neurodivergent
kids, GOOD LEARNING
looks like:



This is the RIGHT WAY for
this child to LEARN.





All students must be
allowed to do GOOD LEARNING.

NeuroWild



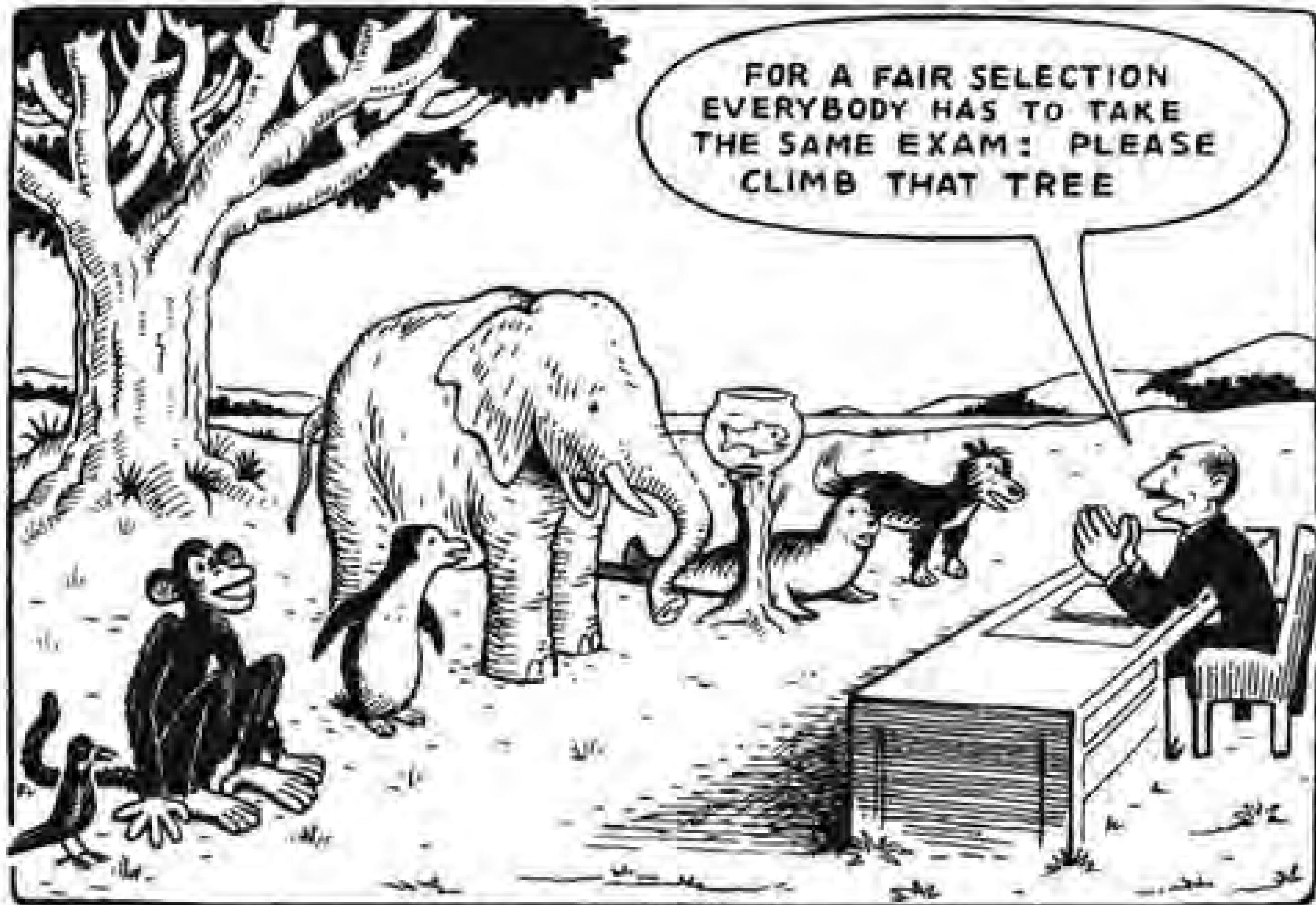
It's important to remember
that GOOD LEARNING doesn't always
look the same for each kid.

NeuroWild



Neuroaffirming, Supportive Environments





Supportive Environments

1

Continuous learning about neurodiversity and what it means to be neuroaffirming



Knowledge, Acknowledgement, and Empowerment

Acknowledge and respect an individual's neurodivergence, how it affects them, and their unique experiences.



Using Strengths-Based Language

Strengths-based language significantly affects how we view an individual.

INSTEAD OF...	...USE STRENGTHS-BASED LANGUAGE
Deficits	Differences or difficulties
Rigid thinking, inflexibility, fussy	Preference for predictability and sameness
This child cannot...	How can we make it possible for this child to...
Hyper/Hyperactive	Energetic, enthusiastic
Bossy, defiant	Natural leader, has strong beliefs, determined



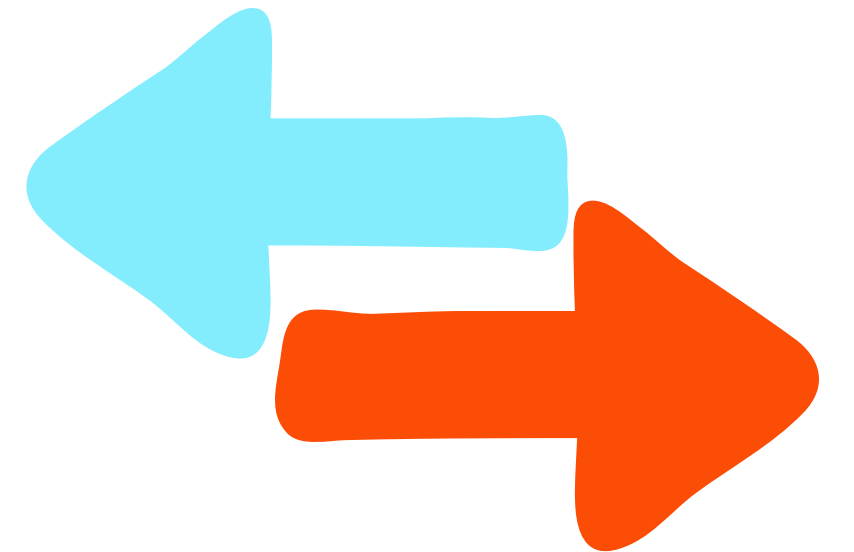
Supportive Environments

- 1** Continuous learning about neurodiversity and what it means to be neuroaffirming
- 2** Establish routines and set clear expectations



Communicate with Families

- Establish two-way communication to gather and share insights into strengths, preferences, and needs.
- Work closely with parents/guardians/caregivers to create actionable plans.
- Set clear goals and expectations, and use jargon-free language.
- Speak with respect and from a place of empathy; consider the parent/guardian's mental health.



Accessible Structure

- Explicit goals and outcomes
- Plain, literal language
- One topic at a time
- Three-point presentation
- Contextualize to bigger picture



Supportive Environments

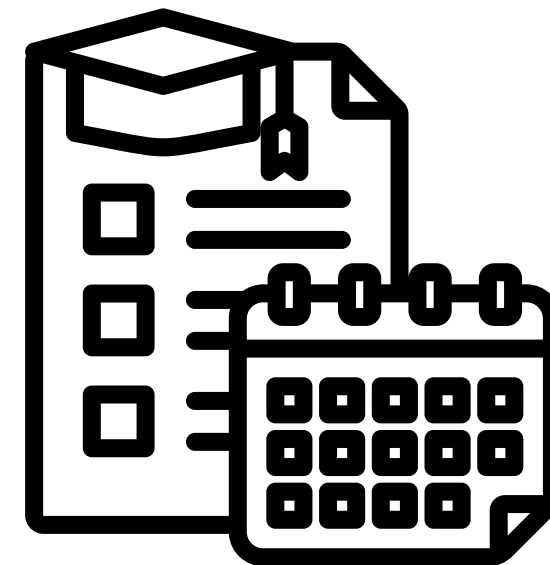
- 1** Continuous learning about neurodiversity and what it means to be neuroaffirming
- 2** Establish routines and set clear expectations
- 3** Provide accommodations and modifications



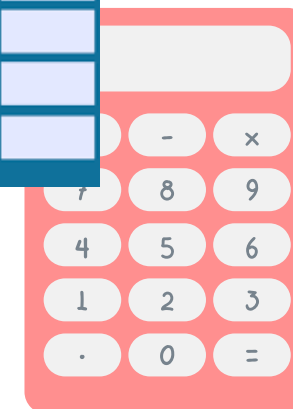
**Accommodations and modifications
help the entire organization,
not just the individual.**



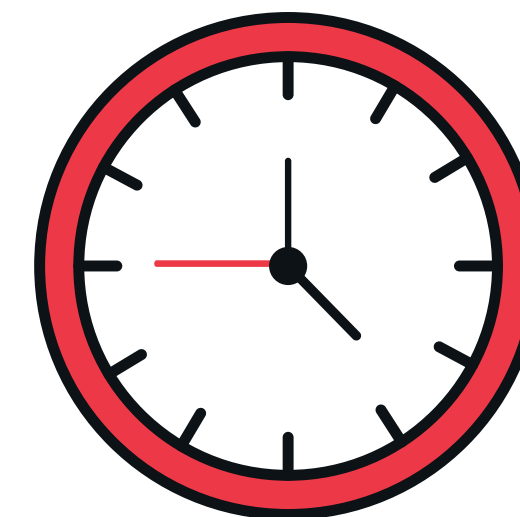
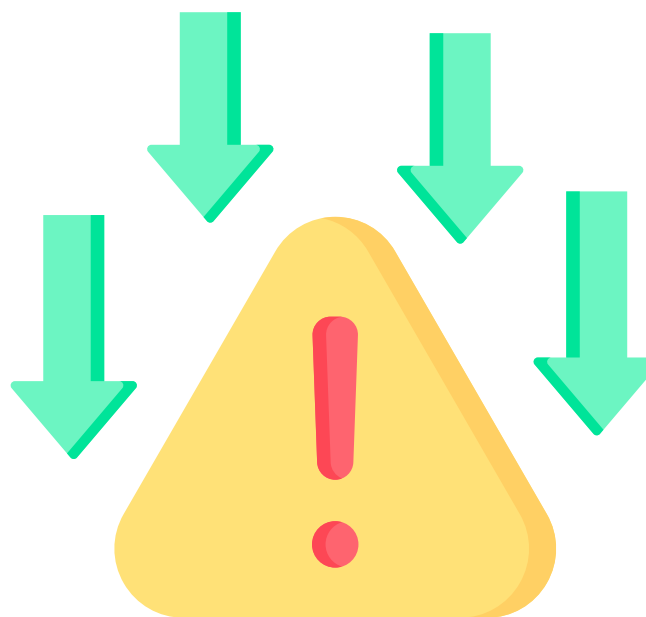
Examples of Accommodations & Modifications



Daily schedule				5pm	
7am		12pm		6pm	
8am		1pm		7pm	
9am		2pm		8pm	
10am		3pm		9pm	
11am		4pm		10pm	



TIME FOR A
BREAK.



Supportive Environments

- 1** Continuous learning about neurodiversity and what it means to be neuroaffirming
- 2** Establish routines and set clear expectations
- 3** Provide accommodations and modifications
- 4** Promote self-regulation by reducing anxiety, frustration, and/or sensory overwhelm.



Accessible Environment

- Minimize background noise, lights, and smells
- Avoid cluttering walls with images
- Offer alternative seating options and sensory tools
- Face who you are speaking to
- Use simple language and a variety of mediums
- Encourage the use of assistive technology



Supportive Environments

- 1** Continuous learning about neurodiversity and what it means to be neuroaffirming
- 2** Establish routines and set clear expectations
- 3** Provide accommodations and modifications
- 4** Promote self-regulation by reducing anxiety, frustration, and/or sensory overwhelm.
- 5** Learn from your practice



Self Reflection

My workplace values:	
My strengths:	Info that may be helpful when working with me:
Best way to connect/communicate with me:	
Areas I may need support with:	Supports I could benefit from:



Neuroaffirming Spaces

- Difference is celebrated
- Individualism is encouraged
- Accessible modifications and accommodations
- All learning styles are valid
- Silence and stillness are not essential conditions for productivity



Upcoming Huddle

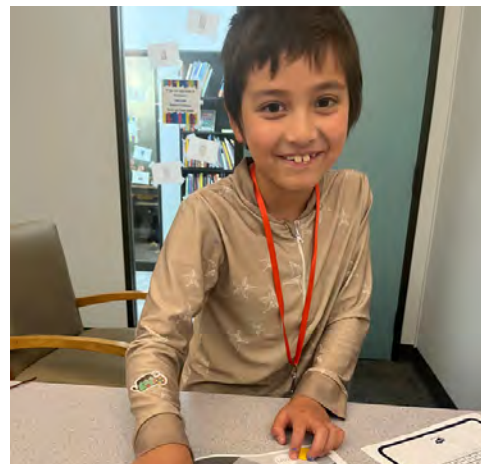
Join us **November 26, 10-11:30am** to:

- Work on case studies and consider how you might apply what you're learning.
- Bring scenarios from your context for group discussion and input from the LDS team.
- Bring ongoing questions to learn how to best support the kids and families you work with.

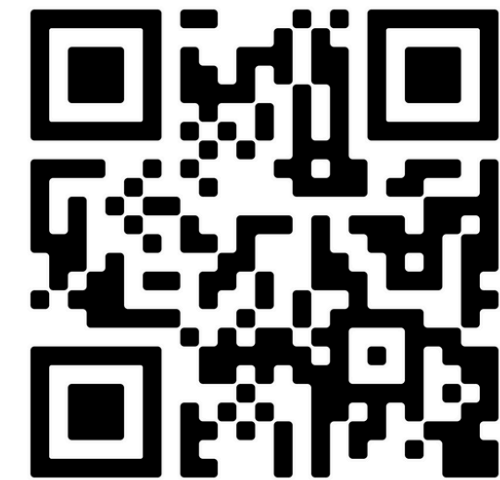
Watch your email for links to join the huddle and a recording of today's workshop.



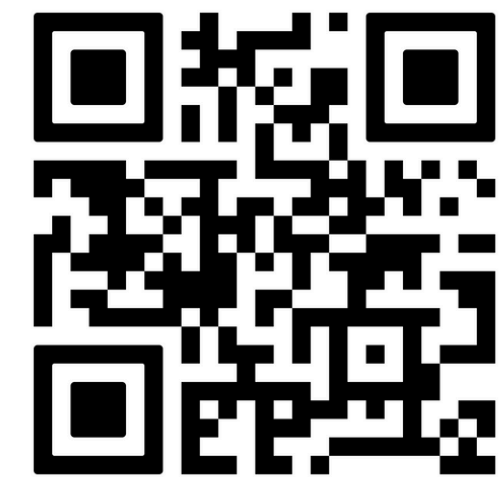
Programs and Assessments









RISE One-to-One Instruction is available online across Canada for learners with diagnosed or undiagnosed learning challenges.



Standardized Assessments - Executive Function Assessment



Information and Support

-  Professional development and parent/family workshops
-  One-to-one instruction (in person, at school and online)
-  Preschool and school-aged early intervention program
-  Formal assessment and identification of learning challenges
-  Assistive Technology services
-  Family Coaching



Questions?





Thank you!

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