

Through a New Lens: Understanding the Autistic Perspective

Presented by:

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Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)

Agenda

- ❑ About AANE
- ❑ Developing a Shared Language
- ❑ Autism Through a Neurological Lens
- ❑ Q&A

AANE.org helps Autistic and otherwise Neurodivergent people build meaningful, connected lives. We provide individuals, families, and professionals with information, education, community, support, and advocacy — all in an inclusive atmosphere of validation and respect.

An Inclusive Community

Autistic Adults, their Family Members, & the Professionals who serve them comprise our Board of Directors, Advisors and Staff.

Committed to **welcoming individuals** of all gender identities, races, ethnicities, cultures, ages, sexual orientations, and neurotypes.

Information, education, community, and support for . . .



Adults

(post high school & select supports for teens)

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)



Family & Friends

(of children, teens, and adults)

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)



Professionals

(educators, therapists, employers & more)

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)

AANE is committed to racial equity.

HERE'S WHAT AANE IS DOING.

What do you know about autism and neurodiversity?

Developing a Shared Language

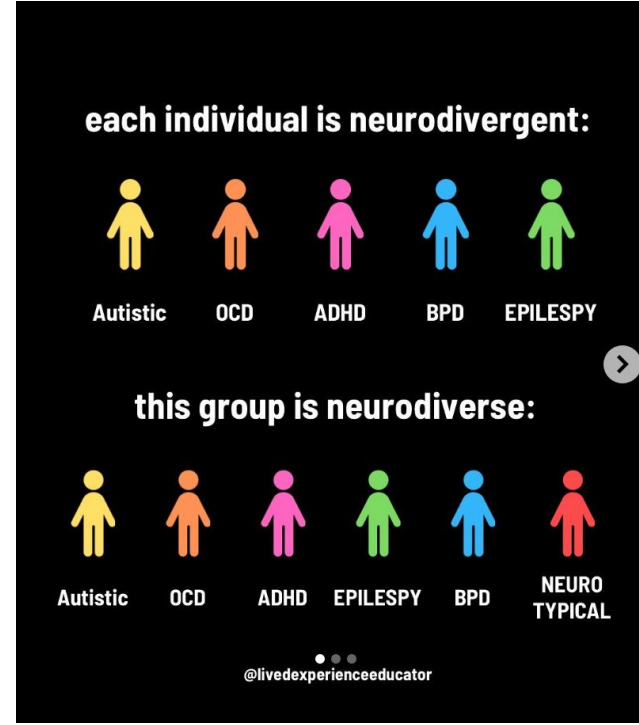
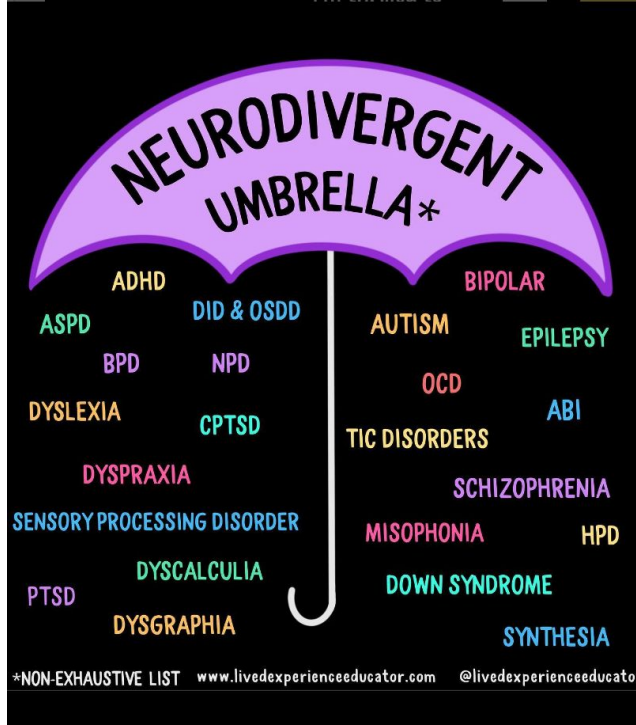
What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is the diversity of human brains and minds – the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.

Nick Walker, Neurocosmopolitanism, 2014



- Term coined by Australian sociologist Judy Singer in the late 1990s
- Natural variations in individual cognition
- There is no “normal” or “average” human brain



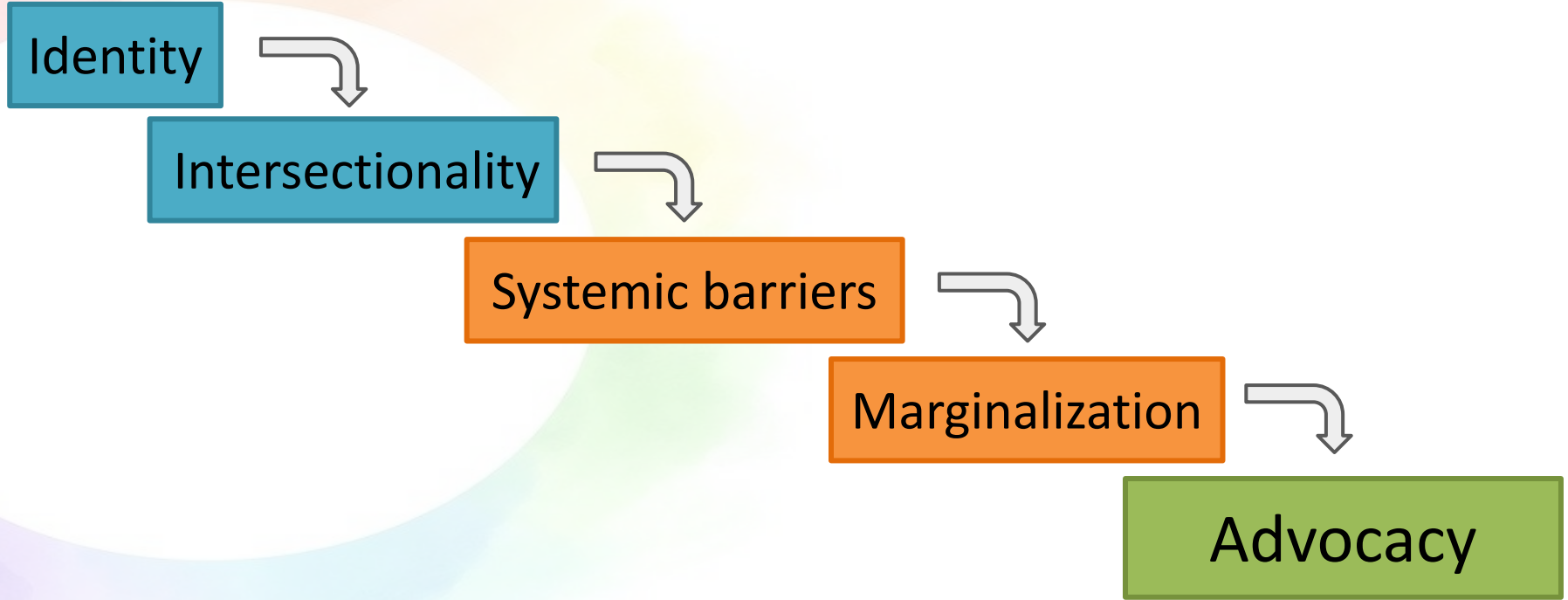
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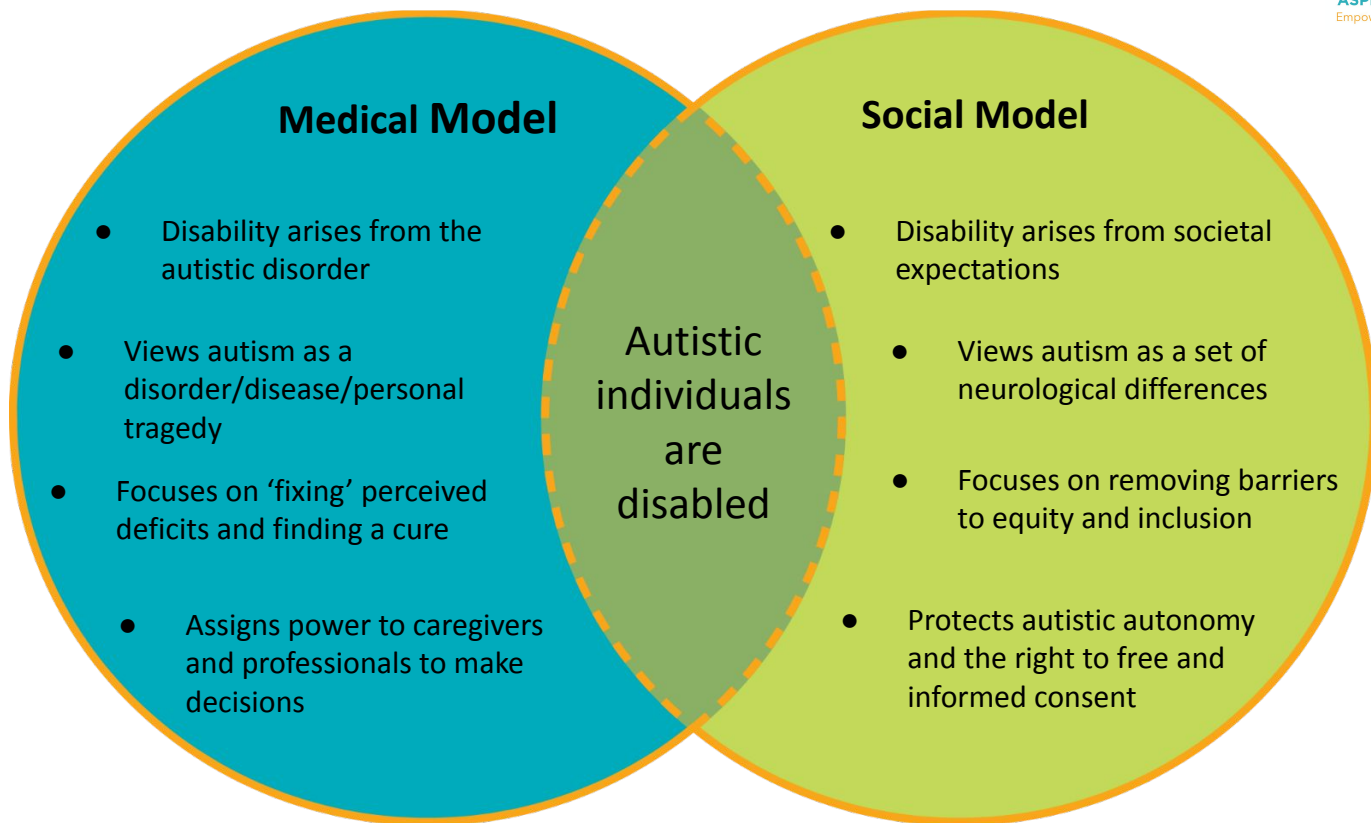
Identity and Intersectionality

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Culture
- Neurotype



Disability is defined by societal expectations





There's a lot of language out there...

From a medical model to a self-determined approach

Medical Model/Diagnostic	Person-First	Identity-First
Autism Spectrum Disorder	on the Spectrum	Autistic
Asperger Syndrome	Asperger profile	Autist
High Functioning Autism	Autism	Neurodivergent


An evolving conversation about language...

Shifting from a medical model to a self-determined approach

Person-First	Identity-First
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the Spectrum • Person with Autism • Suffers from Autism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic • <i>Neuro-spicy</i> • Neurodivergent

Not Sure? ASK!

Person-First vs. Identity-First Language

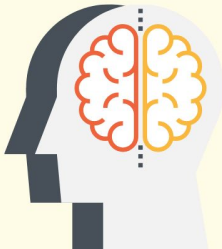


PERSON

People-first language emphasizes the individuality, equality and dignity of people, rather than defining people primarily by their disability

IDENTITY

Identity-first language puts the disability first and is viewed as part of who they are, not something that's happened to them



ENGAGINGMINDSLEARNINGGROUP.COM

An evolving conversation about language...

Shifting from a medical model to a self-determined approach

Low Functioning	High Functioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presumes incompetence• Minimizes strengths and abilities• How the world experiences the individual• linear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limits access to supports• Minimizes obstacles and challenges• How the world experiences the individual• linear

Autism Through a Neurological Lens

What is Autism?

It is:

- A set of neurobiological differences that affect how information is processed.
- A disability
- These processing differences may affect:
 - Communication
 - Ability to form/sustain relationships
 - Executive functioning
 - Regulation (sensory, attentional, emotional)
 - Concept generalization and learning

It is not:

- ***Able to be outgrown or cured***
- A behavioral disorder
- An emotional disorder
- A mental illness
- Linear

A Neurological Lens

definition; *viewing and understanding behavior and communication as a function of an individual's specific neurological profile*

Behavior through a Neurodiversity Lens

Common Misperceptions

Disrespectful

Unwilling

Unmotivated

Lazy

Noncompliant

Mean

Arrogant



Through a Neurological Lens

Social communication differences

Sensory discomfort

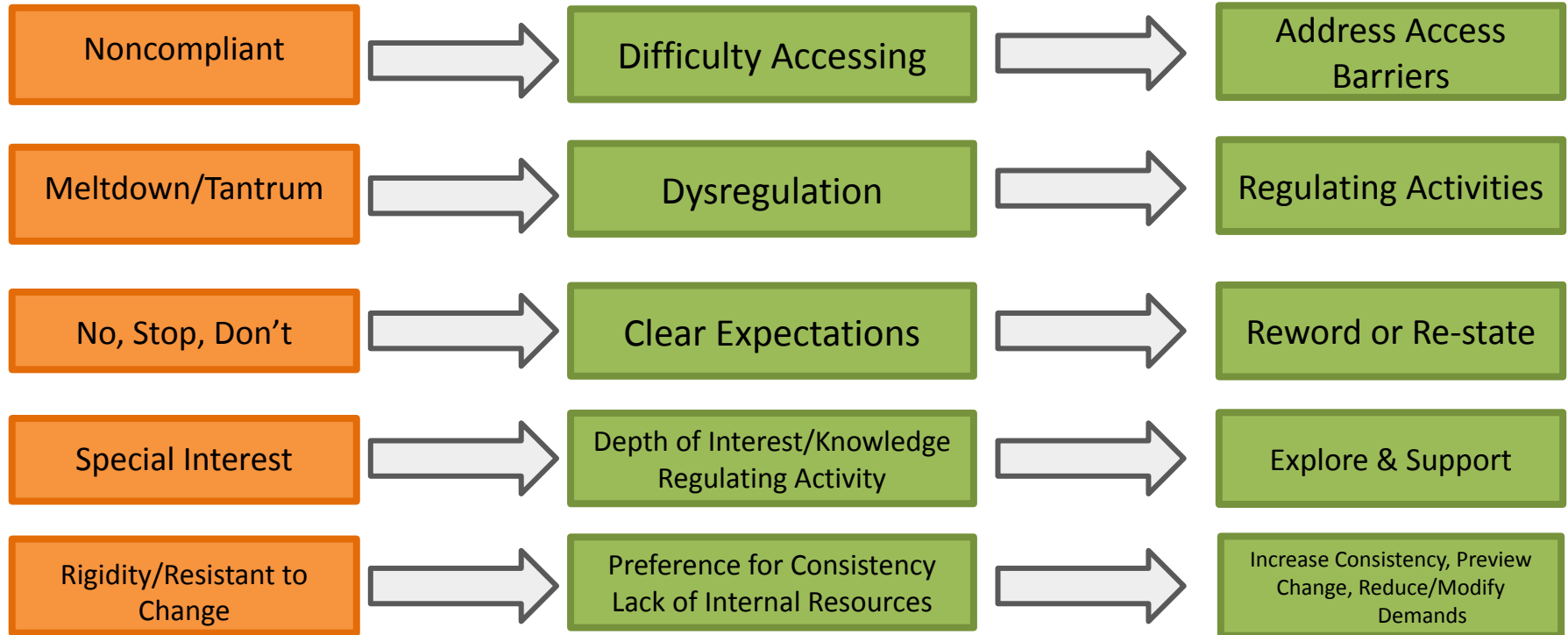
Ambiguity

Depleted internal resources

Co-Occurring Conditions

Trauma

Mindset Shift



Navigating the World is Exhausting for Neurodivergent Individuals

Sensory Processing



Executive Functioning



Social Communication



Co-occurring Conditions



Internal Resources

Self Regulation

The barriers in place today require autistic individuals to do this balancing act 24/7.

Social Communication

Distinct ways of communicating

Find an access point

Aspects:

*Nonverbal
Communication*

*Double
Empathy*

Masking

Masking



Unmasking

Overscheduling



Taking Breaks

Forcing Spontaneity



Say No

Tolerating Extreme Discomfort



Access comfort

Hiding Interests



Sharing Interests Openly

Suppressing Movement



Move when you need to

Sensory Processing

How one processes sensory input

hyper- or hypo- responsive

Systems:

ustatory (taste)

olfactory (smell)

tactile (feeling)

visual (seeing)

vestibular

proprioceptive

auditory (hearing)

interoception

Executive Functioning

A set of cognitive processes and mental skills that help an individual plan, monitor, and execute their goals

Aspects:

organization

*planning, initiating,
and stopping tasks*

*explaining reasoning
in words*

processing speed

Co-occurring Conditions

Medical or psychological conditions that can occur alongside autism

Examples:

Anxiety
Depression

Bipolar
ARFID

ADHD
OCD

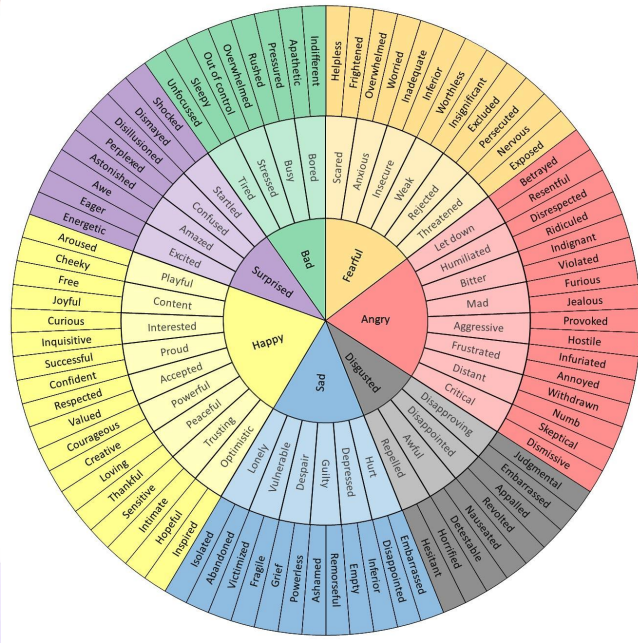
Ehlers-Danlos
Irlen

IBS
Dyslexia

Supporting Individuals with Co-occurring Conditions

- Anxiety
 - Common to autistic people
 - Can build quickly, but can also be cumulative
 - Long term anxiety can cause Autistic Burnout
- Dysregulation
 - occurs when a person is overwhelmed
 - can look different in all autistic people
 - Hypo/Hyper-Reactivity
- Supports
 - Finding a neurodiversity affirming therapist
 - Internal resources (Spoon Theory)
 - Unmasking
 - Using natural community supports.

Alexithymia & Interoception



- Autistic individuals may have a hard time naming their emotions (alexithymia) or their physical sensations (interoception)
- Feeling vs. Communicating
- Using tools like a feelings wheel, a sensations wheel, and mindfulness may help you tune in (they may not).
- Knowing this can help inform therapy and self-advocacy.

Context Matters: Independent Work

Social Communication



Social Pragmatics



Sensory Processing



Executive Functioning



Anxiety

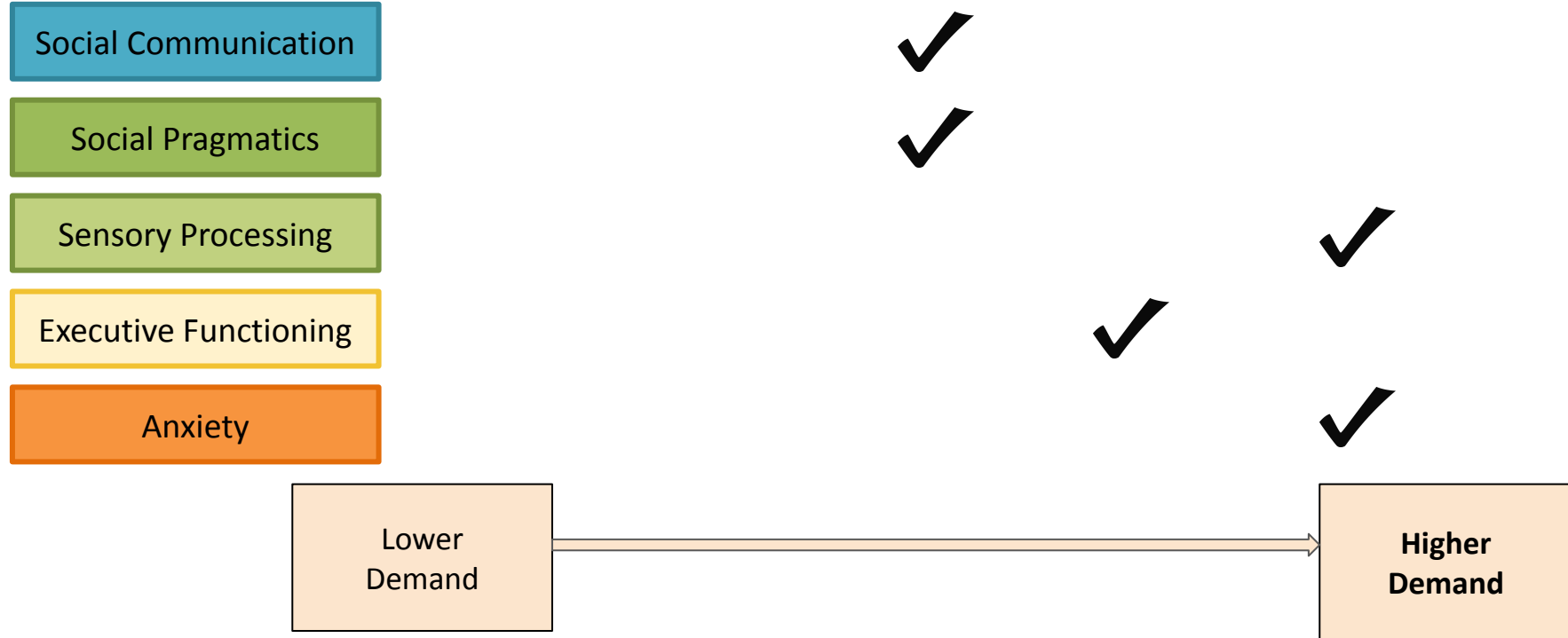


Lower Demand

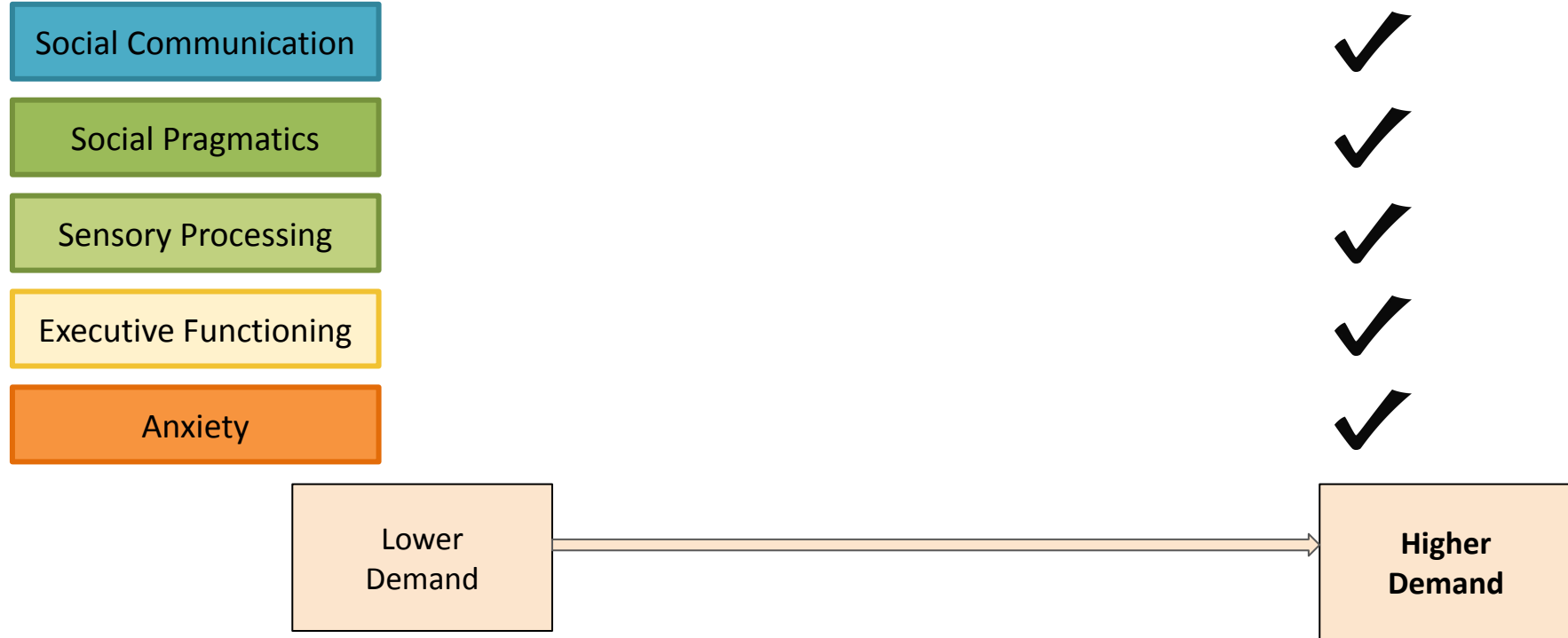


Higher Demand

Context Matters: Team Meeting



Context Matters: Lunch with Coworkers



How to be an ally every day!



- Communicate clearly and directly
- Interrupt microaggressions
- Challenge stigma, stereotypes, & bias
- Listen actively & attentively
- Validate individual experiences
- Focus on people's strengths
- Recognize deep systemic barriers
- Advocate for universal design based practices

The background of the slide is a soft, abstract graphic consisting of overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in shades of orange, yellow, green, and blue, creating a rainbow-like effect. A large, white, semi-transparent oval is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the background.

**Questions?
Comments?**

AANE Programs & Services for *Families*



Free Information & Referral for
Parents/Families of:

Children, Teens, Adults up to age 22
Adults Over 23



Support Groups for:

Parents of Children, Teens & Adults
through Age 22

Parents of Adults Over 23

For Grandparents

For Couples & Partners

For People who think their Parents are
on the Spectrum



Coaching for Parents of:

Children, Teens & Adults up to Age 22
Adults Over 23



LifeNet Independent Living Support
Program



College Consultations



Conferences, Webinars, & Workshops



Neurodiverse Couples Coaching

AANE Programs & Services for *Adults*



Free information & referral
call for adults



Adult Support Groups



LifeMAP Coaching for Skills
Development



Social Activities & Events
for Adults



College Consultations



LifeNet Independent Living
Support Program



Conferences, Webinars, &
Workshops

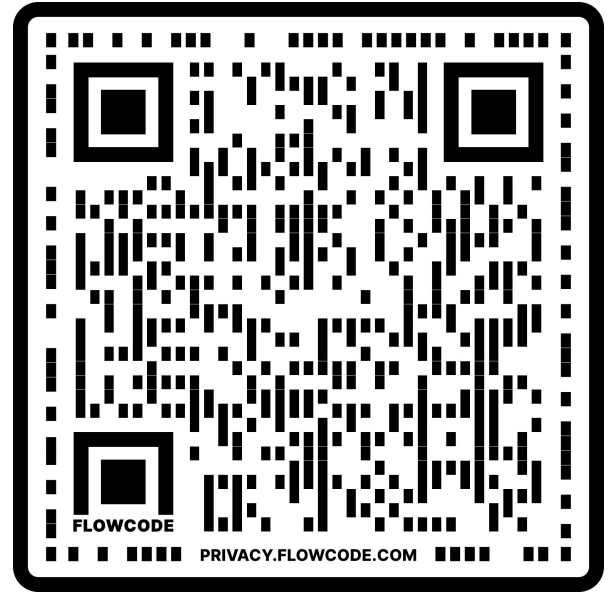


Neurodiverse Couples
Coaching

Donations from our community members help keep our webinars and other programs low-cost and free.

If you'd like to contribute, use this QR code or [this link](#).

Thank you for your support.



AANE is here to Support You!



Free Information & Resource Calls, Community and Organizational Training,
Inclusive Online Support Groups, Social Connection Opportunities,
LifeMAP Coaching, Workshops & Webinars,
& MORE!

Thank you!

Ryan Walsh

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[AANE.org](https://www.aane.org)

Still Have Questions?



Adults

(post high-school adults & select supports for teens)

www.aane.org/resources/adults/



Family & Friends

(of children, teens, and adults, including grandparents, other relatives, and partners)

www.aane.org/resources/family-and-friends/



Professionals

(educators, therapists, employers, service providers, and more)

www.aane.org/resources/professionals/

Have Questions? Need Support? www.aane.org/about-us/contact-us/