BUILDING A CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERSE VOICES

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April 2025
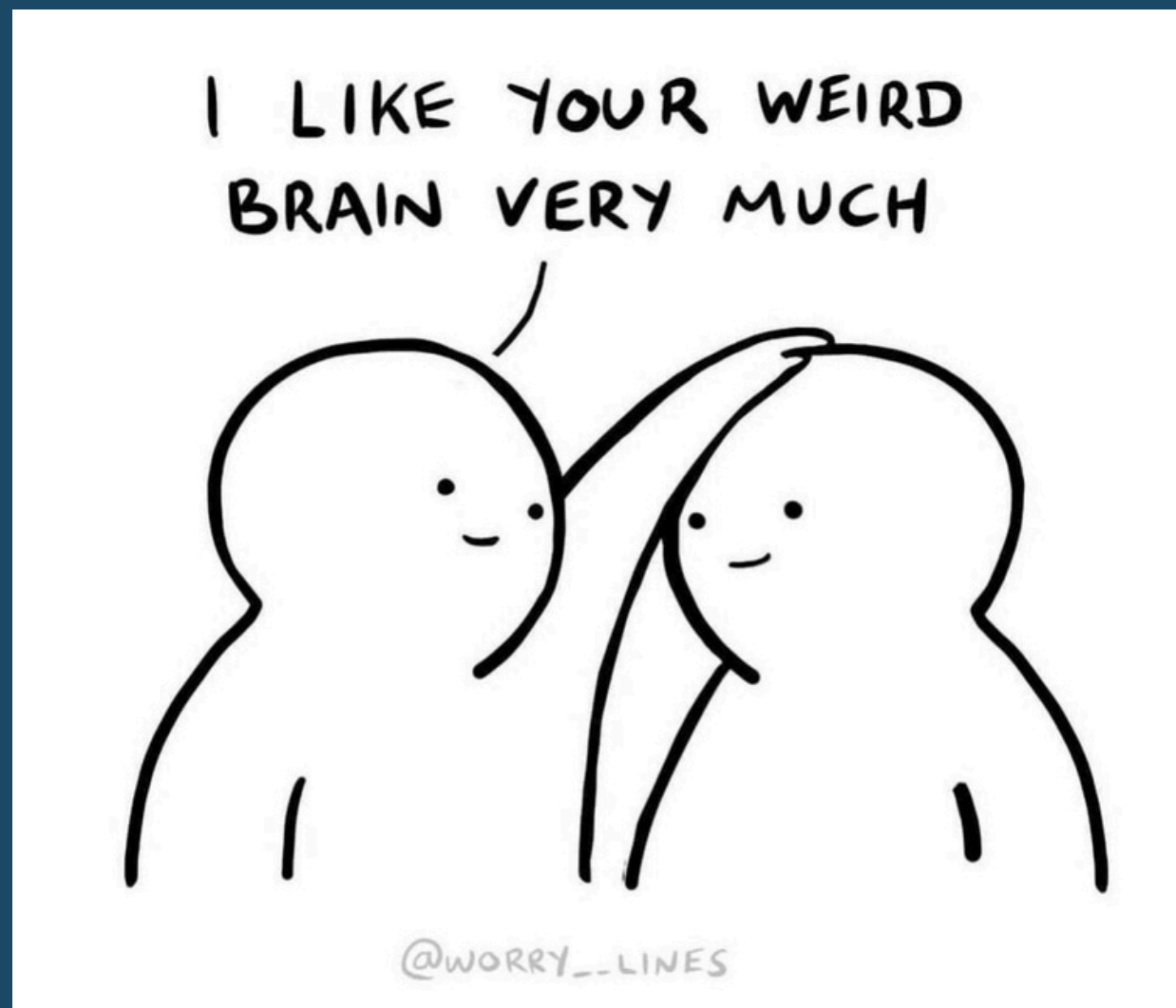
INTRODUCTION

Lisa Lewis
Founder

MindMosaic
inclusive hr

Inside the Mind:
A Better Way to See, Support & Work Together.

Here's what's coming up!

I LIKE YOUR WEIRD BRAIN VERY MUCH

@WORRY__LINES

▶▶ **This isn't just a presentation—it's a mindset shift.**

1. What Neurodivergence is, and it isn't.

2. Medical Model vs. Strengths-Based Thinking
Perception: *How the way we define people shapes how we treat them.*

3. Communication & Collaboration
How We Connect: *Why understanding different brains leads to better conversations—and better teams.*

4.. Complimentary Minds
Neurodivergent + Neurotypical = Magic
Exploring how diverse thinking styles create balance, brilliance, and innovation.

THE CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION

▶▶ **WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE PERCEIVE ABOUT YOU THAT'S COMPLETELY WRONG?**

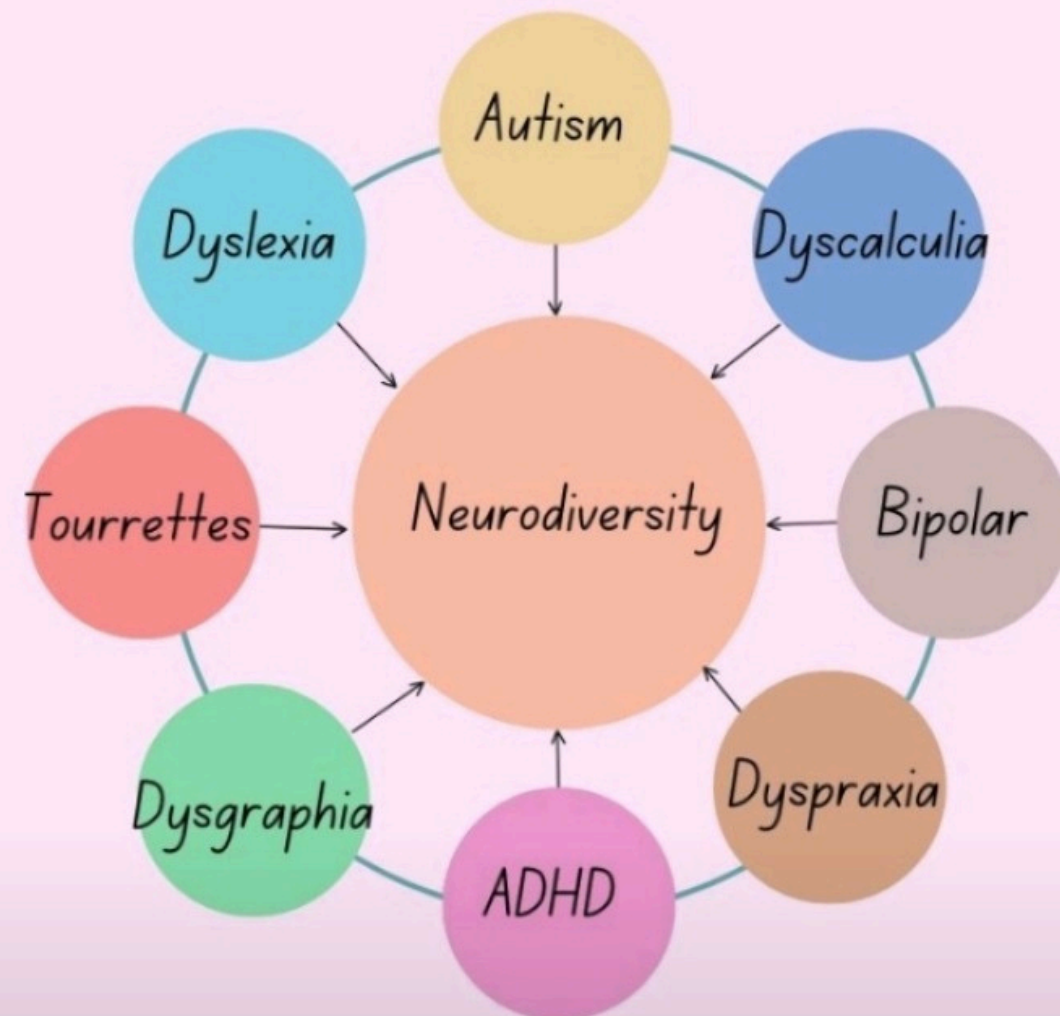▶▶ **AND HOW HAS YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOURSELF—AND OTHERS—CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?**
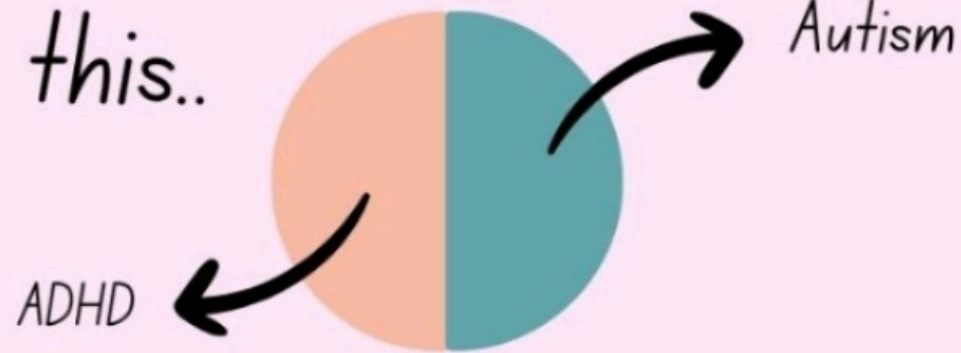
9 year old me

25 year old me

Last week me

WHAT NEURODIVERGENCE IS *and what it isn't...*

People think neurodiversity is **this..**

Autism

ADHD

neuro g|fted

Autism

Dyslexia

Dyscalculia

Neurodiversity

Tourrettes

Bipolar

Dysgraphia

Dyspraxia

ADHD

But, neurodiversity is like this and a lot more!

neurogifted.com

NEURODIVERSITY
We are all neurodiverse.

NEUROTYPICAL
The average or the norm.
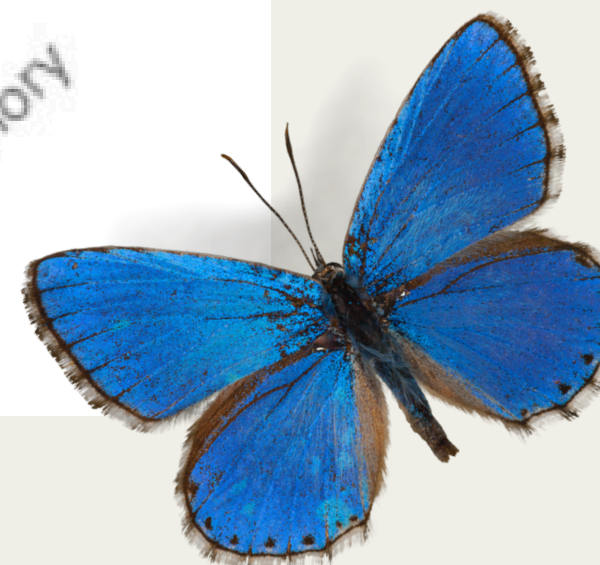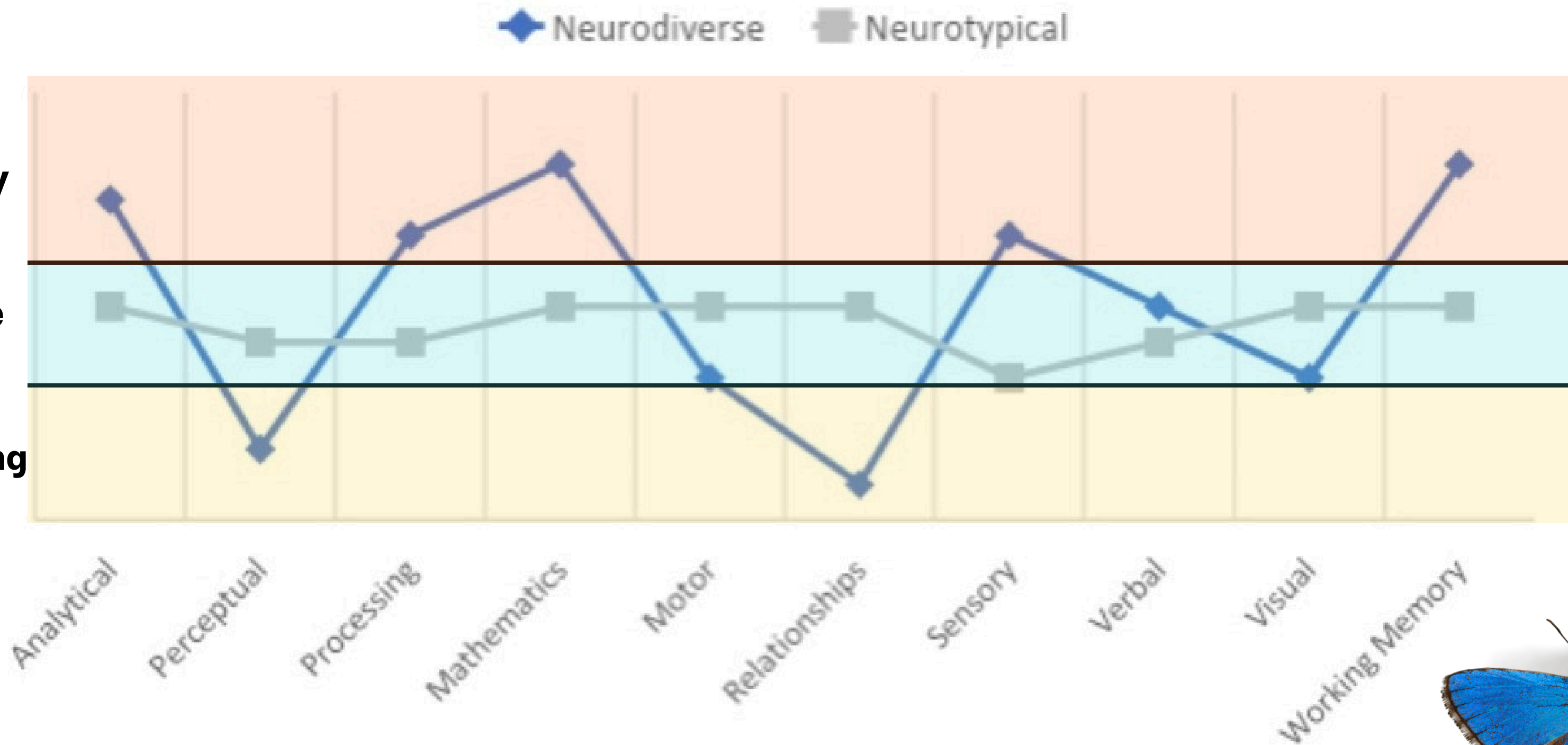
NEURODIVERGENT
Someone whose brain diverges from the norm.

The SPIKEY PROFILE

Lisa's image of a **SPIKEY PROFILE**
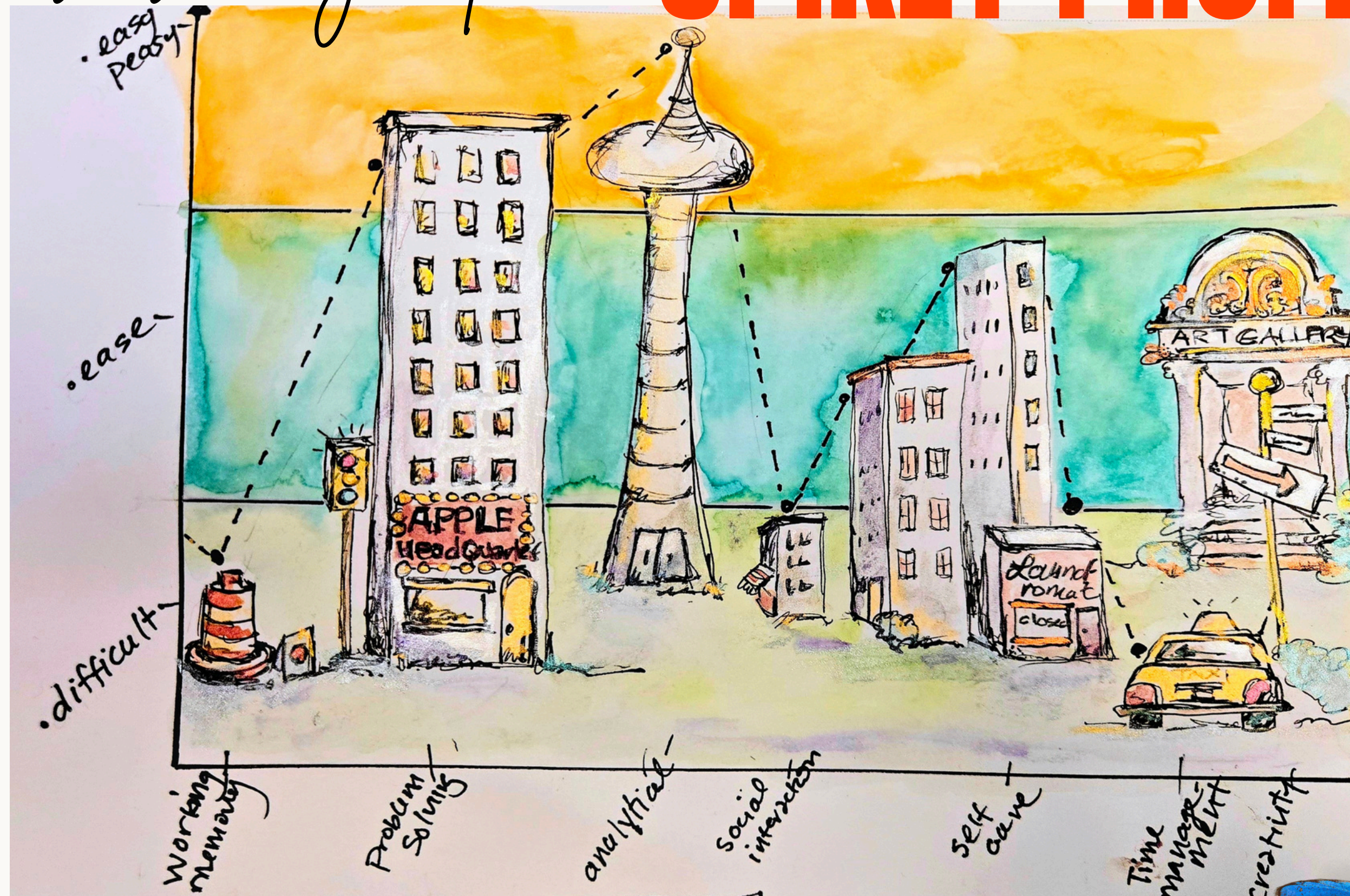
THE PARADIGM *Shift*
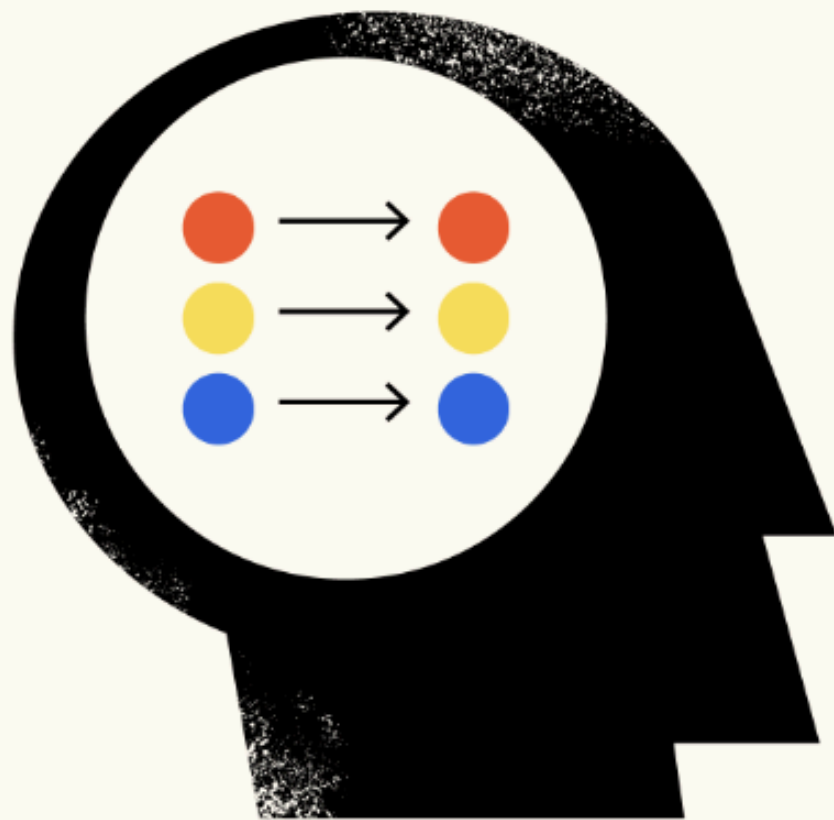
LINEAR THINKING

SYSTEMS THINKING

LEFT vs RIGHT BRAIN

ANALYSIS
LOGIC
IDEA
FACTS
MATH
TRAINING

CREATIVITY
INTUITION
ARTS
CREATION
FEELING
IMAGINATION
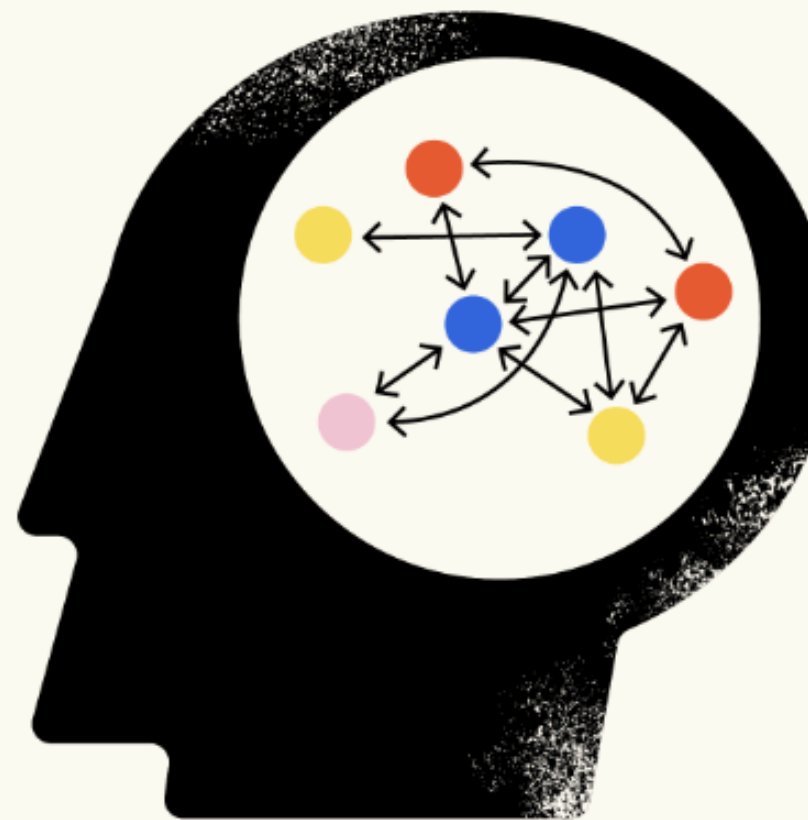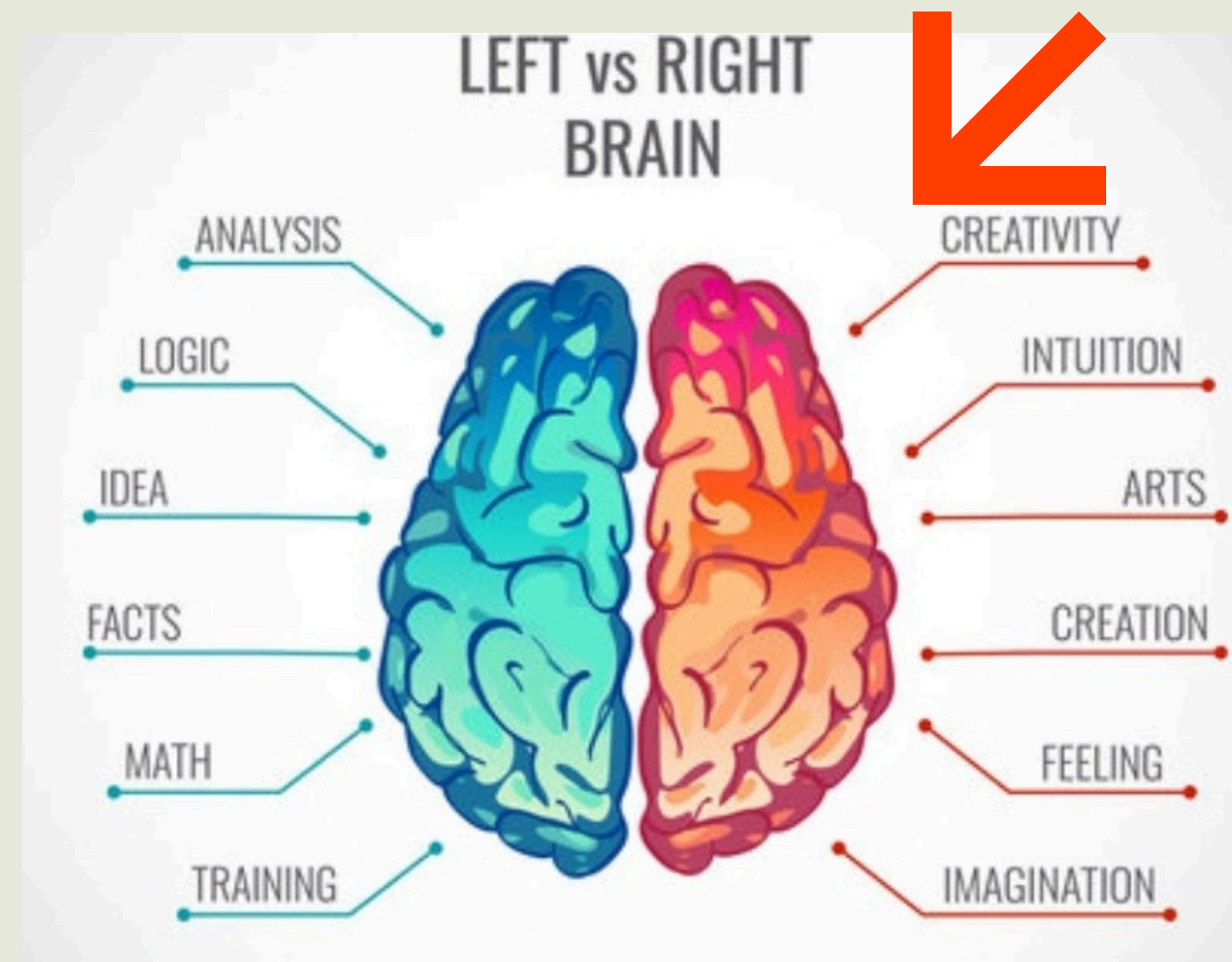
MEDICAL MODEL

versus

STRENGTH-BASED MODEL

Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus.

(e.g., strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or perseverative interests).

(e.g., a vacuum, string, bottle caps)

Deep, sustained interests that reflect passion, expertise, and intense focus—often leading to specialized knowledge, creativity, or innovation.

This often leads to a high level of knowledge, great attention to detail, and long-term memory retention.

A SHIFT IN PERCEPTION

The Medical Model

- "Poor eye contact, lacks social reciprocity"

- "Has difficulty multitasking"

- "Struggles to follow verbal instructions"

OR

The Strengths-Based Model

- Prefers deep, authentic conversations over small talk. May listen more effectively without direct eye contact.

- Focuses deeply on one task at a time—great for complex problem- solving or high-focus work.

- May process information better visually or through doing. Can thrive with written or visual aids.
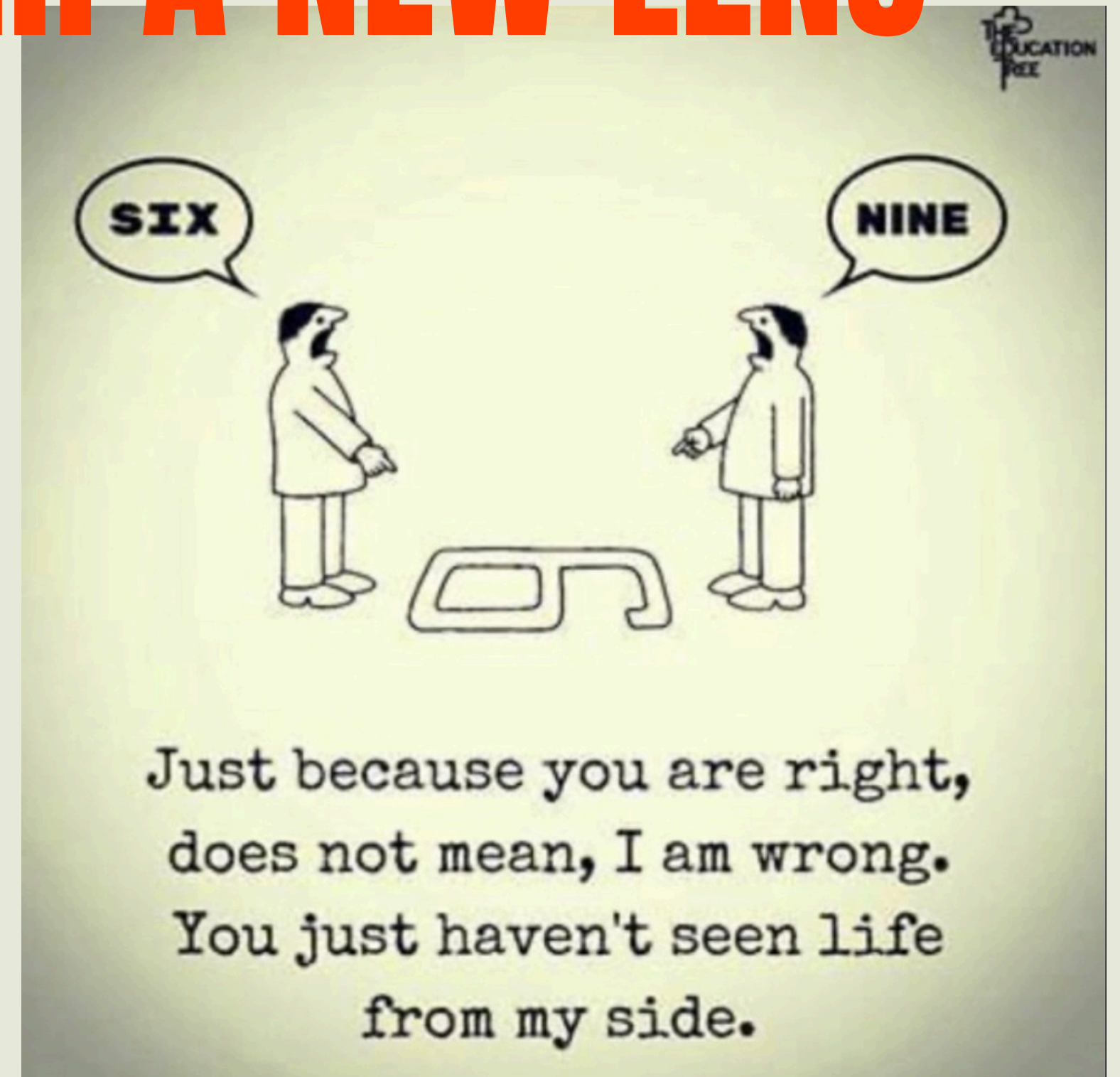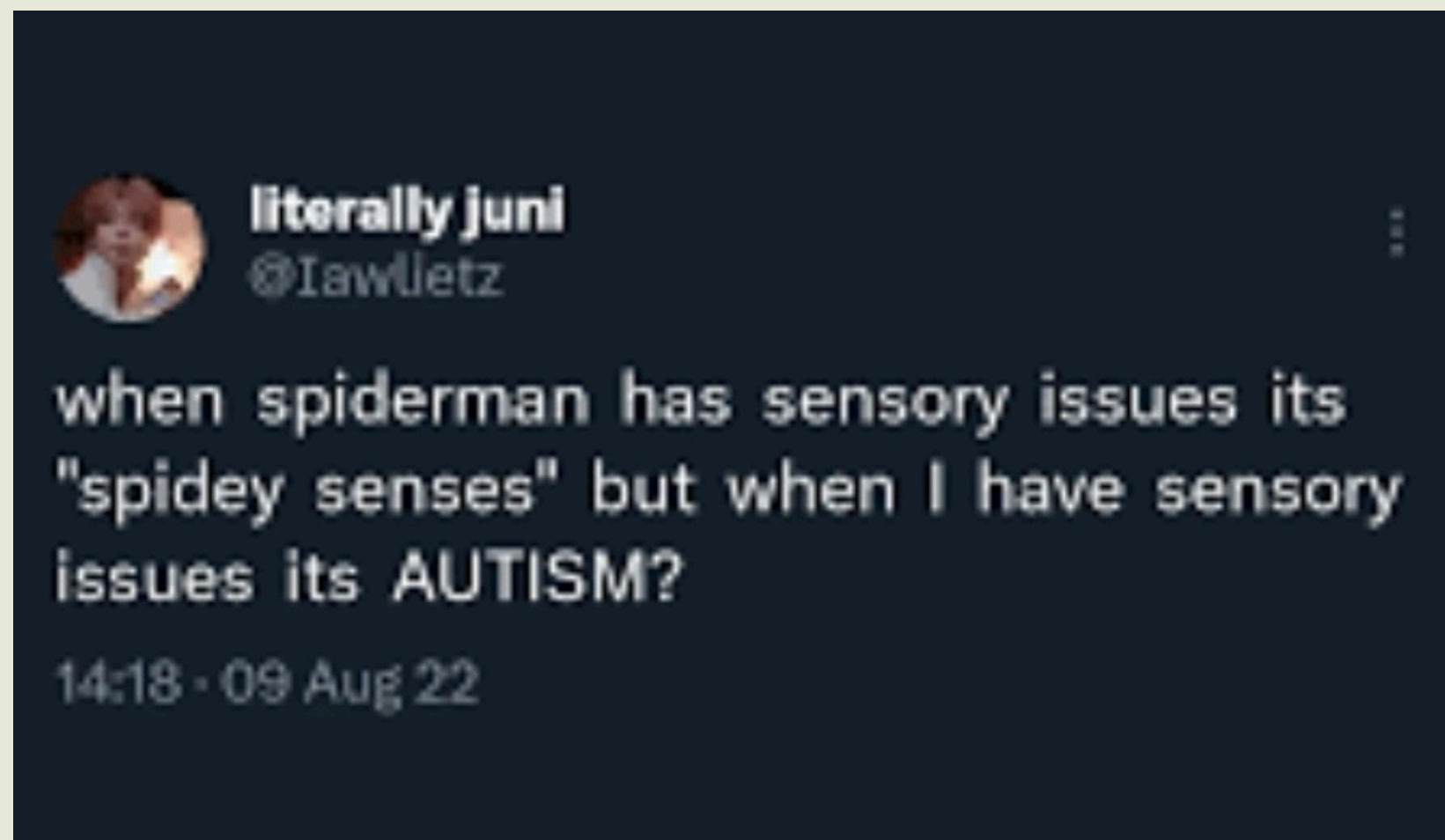
ADHDers when they aren't listening to you:

MISUNDERSTANDING PROCESSING DIFFERENCES

UNDERSTANDING THE "WHY" BEHIND A BEHAVIOR FOSTERS GENUINE CONNECTION.

ADHDoers
@ADHDoers_

Trevor Noah on Navigating Life with an ADHD Brain

my friends know so they know that in a moment

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

The double empathy problem

twoemb.medium.com

Autistic person

May struggle to:

- Read "between the lines"
- Overcome others' misconceptions about autism
- Manage sensory distractions

@NeurodiversityMB

Both parties may struggle to understand each other's **thoughts, feelings, behaviours,** and **differences.**

Non-autistic person

May struggle to:

- Form positive first impressions
- Recognize and understand autism
- Empathize with autistic sensory experiences

Neurodiversity Manitoba

Milton, D. (2012) On the ontological status of autism: the 'double empathy problem'. Disability & Society, 27(6), 883–887.

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

Study One: Telephone Game

In a 2020 study led by Dr. Crompton, researchers explored how messages were transmitted within and between different neurotype groups: autistic-only, non-autistic-only, and mixed groups. Participants played a structured "telephone game," passing along a story about a bear on an adventure.
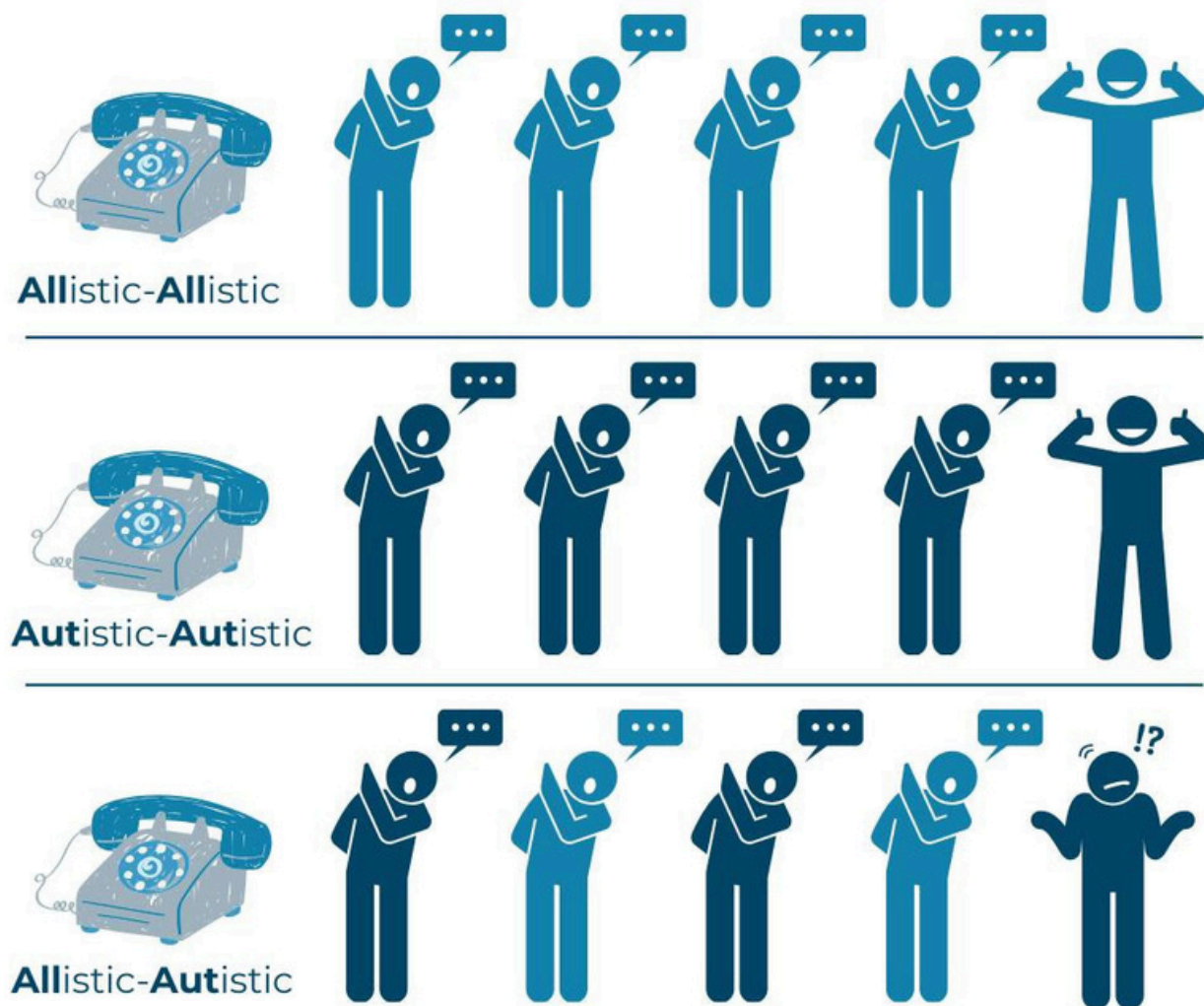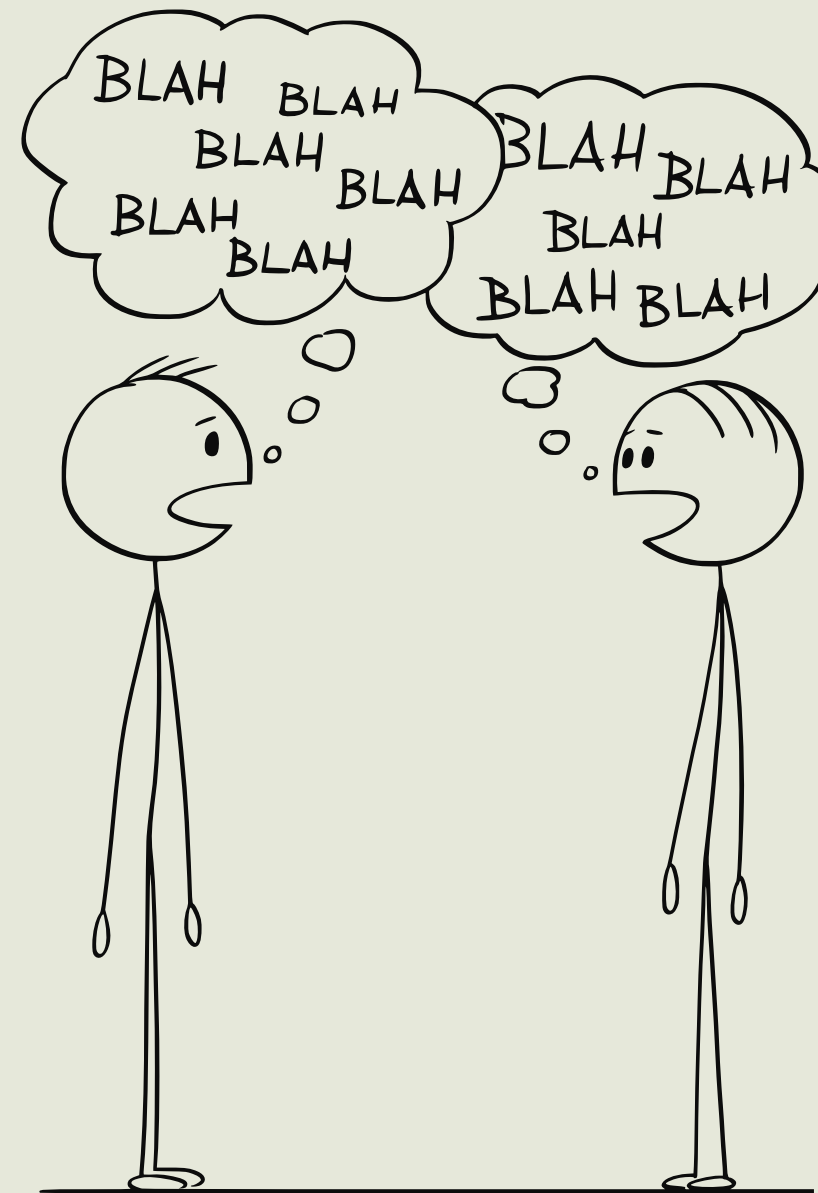
Allistic-Allistic

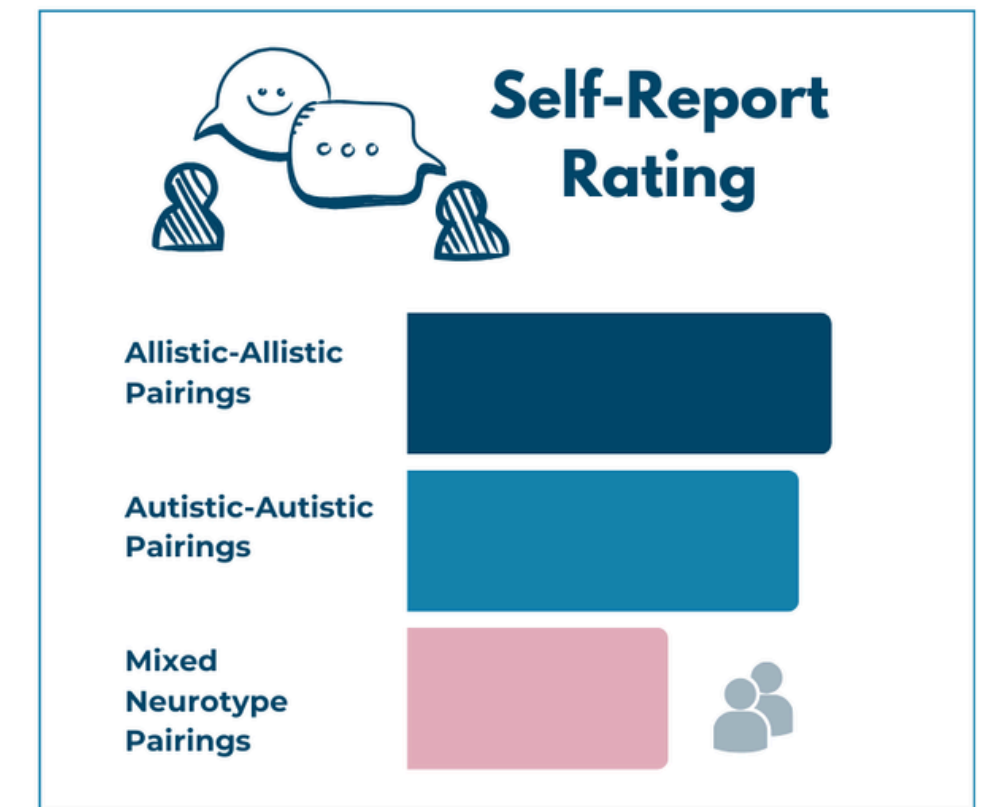**Autistic-Autistic**

Allistic-Autistic

Crompton, C. J., Ropar, D., Evans-Williams, C. V., Flynn, E. G., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2020). Autistic peer-to-peer information transfer is highly effective. Autism: the international journal of research and practice, 24(7), 1704–1712.

Study Two: Neurotype Matching

They then looked at the level of connection each pair felt. Keep in mind that if autism was a deficit in communication, you'd expect these pairings to be lowest (two people who don't communicate well being paired).

But ... that isn't what they found.

Self-Report Rating

Allistic-Allistic Pairings

Autistic-Autistic Pairings

Mixed Neurotype Pairings

*This is a simplified visual representation of the study's findings. The actual results, which are more complex, can be found in the detailed study.

Crompton, C. J., Sharp, M., Axbey, H., Fletcher-Watson, S., Flynn, E. G., & Ropar, D. (2020). Neurotype-Matching but Not Being Autistic Influences Self and Observer Ratings of Interpersonal Rapport. Frontiers in Psychology.

So, TELL ME...

Can you recall something someone did that made you feel included or like you genuinely belonged at work?

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

Below are key communication and processing styles often associated with neurodivergent individuals:

- Verbal vs. Nonverbal Processing
- Direct vs. Non-direct communication
- Written vs. Spoken communication
- Sensory Processing Differences
- Social Communication Differences
- Processing Speed and Working Memory Differences

COMPLIMENTARY MINDS

LEFT VS RIGHT
BRAIN

LOGICAL
SEQUENTIAL
ANALYTICAL
VERBAL
FACTUAL
VERBAL
LINEAR
LOGIC

IMAGINATIVE
NON-VERBAL
MUSICAL
INTUITIVE
CREATIVE
EMOTIONAL
ARTISTIC
CREATIVITY

Divergent Thinking   VS   Convergent Thinking

IDEA
IDEA   IDEA
QUESTION
IDEA   IDEA
IDEA

FACT
FACT   FACT
ANSWER
FACT   FACT
FACT

COMPLIMENTARY MINDS

@gingerartmagic
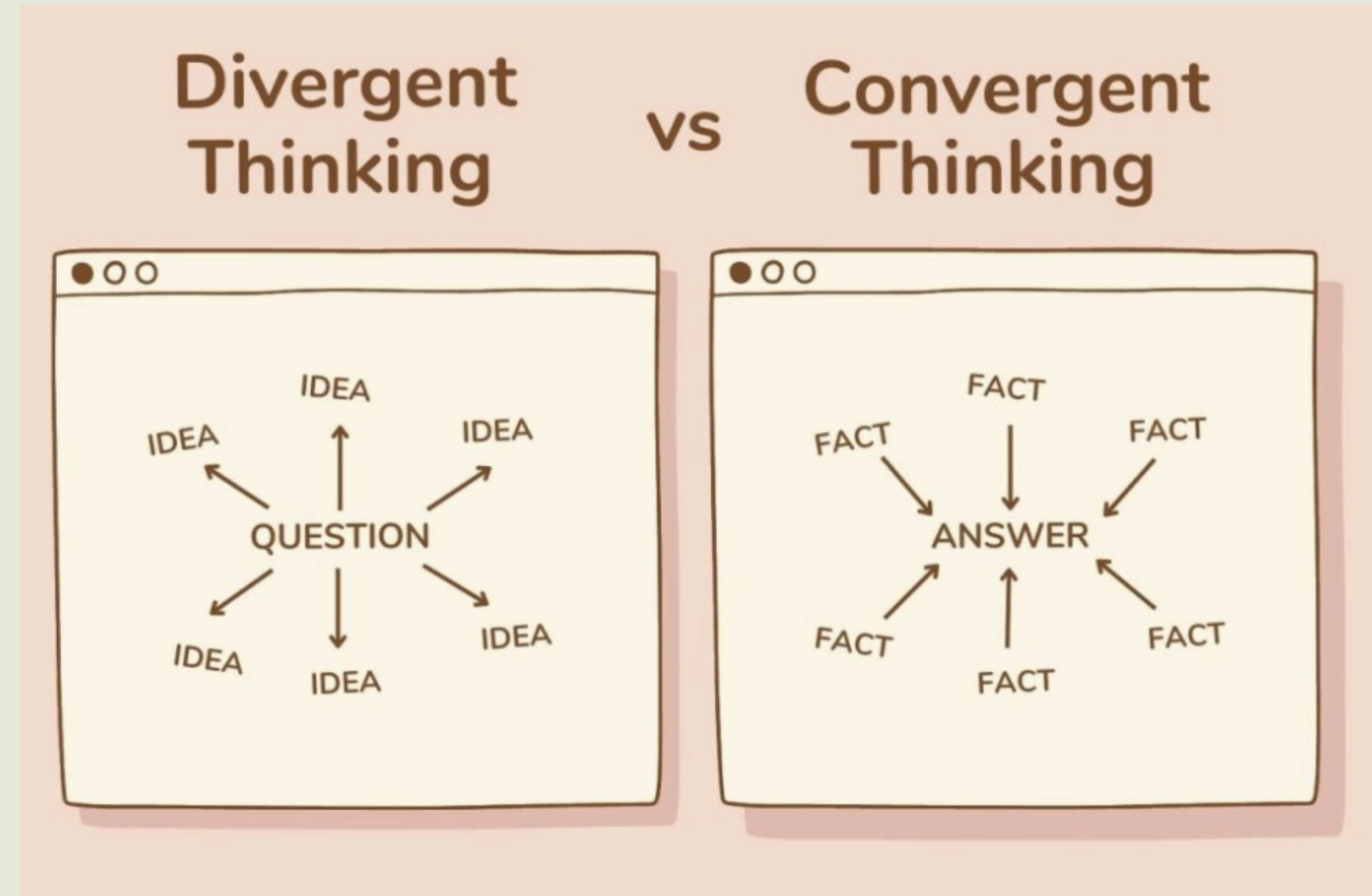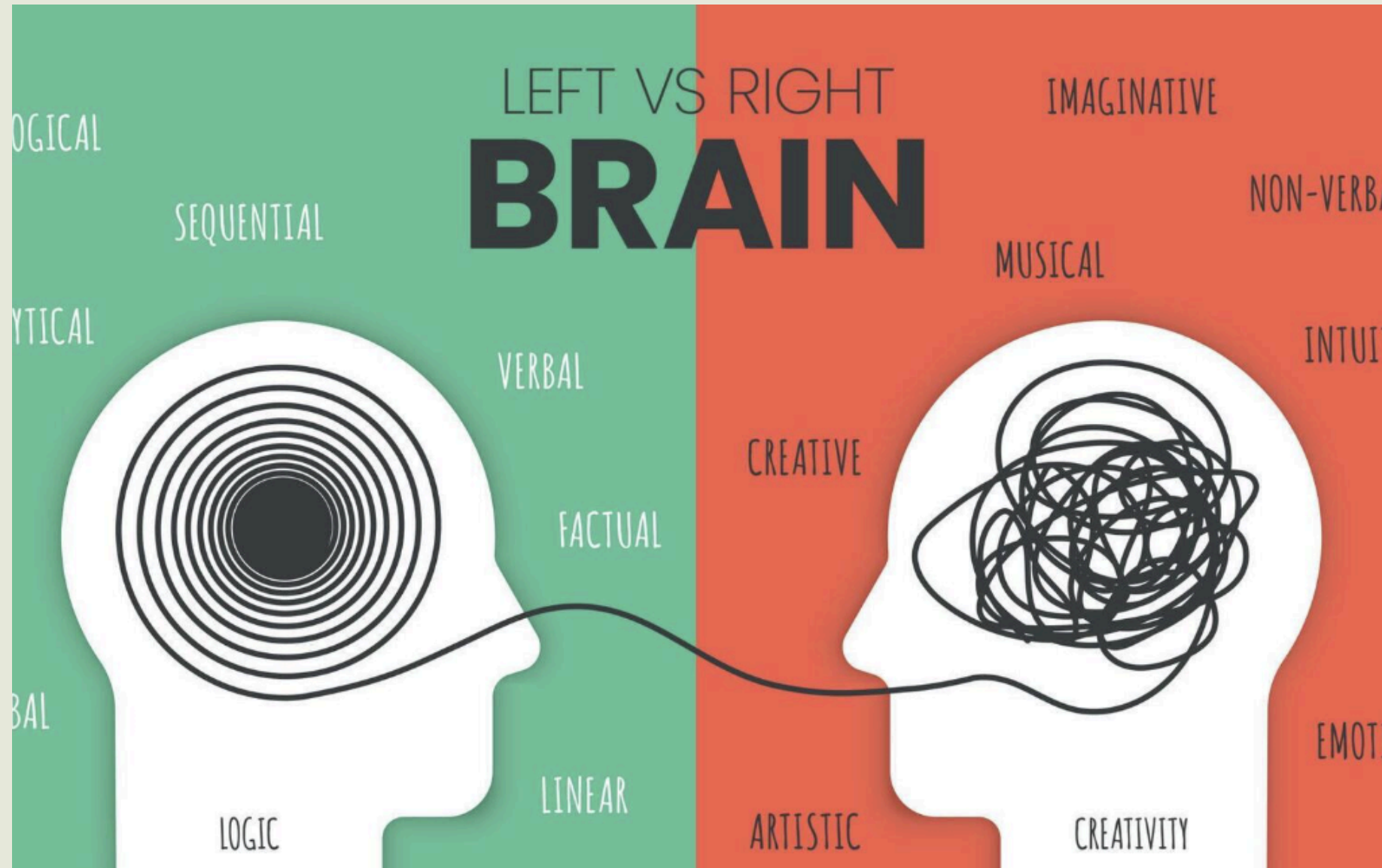
1. How we view professionalism
2. Normalize sharing your weaknesses
3. Don't make it weird
4. Does that actually work? Who knew?
5. We all need another adult, don't we?

TRY A WORKSTYLE PROFILE!
EXAMPLES

Autistic me zoning out whilst someone is giving me verbal instructions

1. **Communication Preferences**
   - How I prefer to receive feedback (written/verbal/in the moment/scheduled)
   - How do I best give input or ideas
   - How I show I'm engaged (eye contact, chat, body language, etc.)
   - What helps me feel psychologically safe during conversations

2. **Processing & Focus**
   - How I focus best (quiet space, music, task chunking)
   - When I do my best thinking (time of day, pace, breaks)
   - How I prefer to receive new information (visual, step-by-step, examples, live demo, etc.)

3. **Sensory & Environmental Needs**
   - Lighting, sound, clothing, scents (preferences or sensitivities)
   - Breaks and energy management (timing, frequency, rest needs)
   - Workspace preferences (movement, background noise, sitting/standing, etc.)

4. **Organization & Task Management**
   - How I prefer to track my work (lists, calendars, visual boards)
   - What helps me stay on track (reminders, check-ins, flexible timelines)
   - Tools or formats I like to use (apps, color codes, paper planners, etc.)

WORKSTYLE PROFILE

Work Approach & Strengths

Hands-On & Collaborative and Solitude: I work best when brainstorming ideas with others, talking out loud, creating mind maps, bouncing perspectives back and forth, and refining concepts together.

Honourable mention: I prefer a heads-up when changing my daily routine. Too many transitions or surprises make me cranky, make it hard for me to complete tasks and you won't want to be around me!

Communication Style

- **Prefers Clear Expectations:** I appreciate direct communication, knowing what's needed upfront, and avoiding last-minute surprises.
- **Expect a lot of words!** I can make a story longer, especially when we are on a topic of choice or when an idea comes to mind! Feel free to draw me back in if I go way off-topic.

Ideal Work Environment

- **Autonomy & Flexibility:** I do my best work when I have control over how I structure my time and tasks.
- **Quiet Work Spaces:** I don't stop moving and talking, but I can't think when there is movement and talking around me!

IT HAS MY STRENGTHS.....

WORKSTYLE PROFILE

Tools & Accommodations That Help Me Thrive

• **Visual & Verbal Summaries:** I retain information best when presented in various formats.

• **Built-in Recovery Time:** After a few back-to-back meetings, I need time to recharge and process. *I may hide for a while.*

•**Let's Keep It Human:** A bit of humour, kindness, and flexibility goes a long way.

How to Work Best with Me

- **Ask me anything.** I prefer open communication, transparency, and respect when others express their needs. I am not easily offended and will do what I can to support anyone who asks....even if they don't ask.

- **Provide Written Follow-Ups**: If we discuss something important, a quick summary via email or notes helps me stay organized**.**
- **Bonus points for bullet points!**

- **If you need something done, I prefer email over text.** I have a terrible memory, and text messages disappear. I use email as my to-do list.

AND WHAT I NEED TO GET THINGS DONE.

Hello, I'm Steven

My Working Hours

Mo: 09:00 — 17:00
Tu: 09:00 — 17:00
We: 09:00 — 17:00
Th: 09:00 — 17:00
Fr: 09:00 — 17:00

school bus
14:50 — 15:30

LDN

My Communication preferences are...

slack

Google Meet

EM@IL

Conditions I like to work in

I like a quiet working environment, if there is a task that needs focus.

I like having headphones in.

I need to be able to move from space to space

Things I need

COFFEE

TEAM DEVELOPMENT

IDEATION

The best way to give me feedback is ...

Feedback is a gift

I like receiving feedback face-to-face

I see all feedback as a learning opportunity, so I like total honesty.

Include examples!

Things I love

"I like hearing what others are working on."

User research is a team sport

Swarming — Sketching

Things I struggle with

Politics — "NO, but"

IN CLOSING

I invite you to...
Think of your organization, your team, and what we've talked about today around neurodiversity in the workplace.

- When you leave the webinar, if you could make one change for your workplace regarding neurodiversity, what would it be?

"I don't need to know your label.
I just need to know how you work best."
— Sam, Tech Leader in Australia

LET'S STAY
connected

Lisa Lewis, CPHR
Founder, Mind Mosaic HR

🌐 www.mindmosaic.com

REFERENCES

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3. Doyle N. Neurodiversity at Work. In: BPS, ed. Psychology At Work:Improving Wellbeing and Productivity in the Workplace. Leicester: British Psychological Society; 2017:44-62. doi:ISBN 978-1-85433-754-2
4. The National Center on Disability and Journalism. Disability Language Style Guide. Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University. 2021.
5. Robert D. Austin and Gary P. Pisano, "Neurodiversity as a competitive advantage: Why you should embrace it in your workforce ," Harvard Business Review. May–June 2017.
6. The Survey Series on Accessibility – Experiences with Accessibility and Employment (SSA-EAE). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250210/dq250210c-eng.htm. 2025.
7. Mahto, Hogan and Sniderman. A rising tide lifts all boats: Creating a better work environment for all by embracing neurodiversity. 2022. https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace.html
8. Double Empathy: https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.586171/
9. https://neurodivergentinsights.com/rethinking-autistic-communication/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Neurodiversity in the Workplace: A Strengths-Based Approach. Jo Nash, PhD. https://positivepsychology.com/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace/
2. Acquired Neurodiversity: An Overview. Author:Dr. Richard Purcell. https://carescribe.io/blog/acquired-neurodiversity-an-overview/