

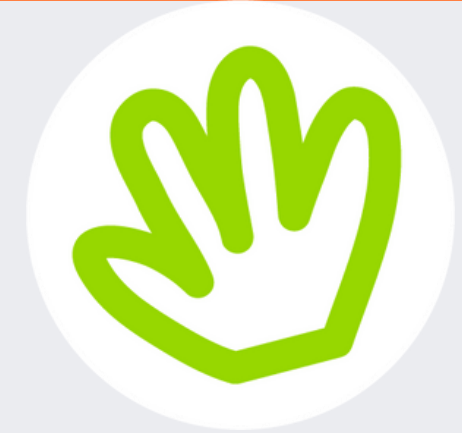
Autism Friendly Work Practices



IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY

Speaker:

James Moroney
Training Officer



MY NAME IS JAMES



I am a Training Officer with AsIAm which means I teach people about Autism in schools, communities and workplaces. Outside of work my special interest is Rowing.



Who we are:

AsIAm is Ireland's Autism Charity, we are dedicated to removing the invisible barriers often faced by Autistic people and families, so that every Autistic person can enjoy the same chance in society. Our vision is for Ireland to be a country where every Autistic person is accepted as they are. Our purpose is to create an inclusive society for Autistic people that is accessible, accepting and affirming.



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What do ASI Am do?

Community Support

Training and Accreditation

Child and Family Support

Adult Well Being & Employment Support

Community Engagement

Corporate Affairs



IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY

Agenda

Neurodiversity

What Autism Is

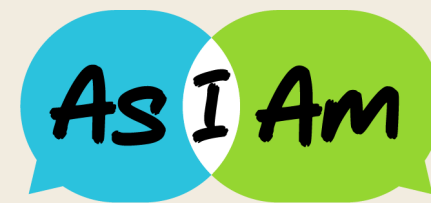
Judgements and Attitudes

Sensory Experience and Stress

Social Imagination and New Experiences

Social Interaction and Communication

Supports



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Neuro-Affirming Language

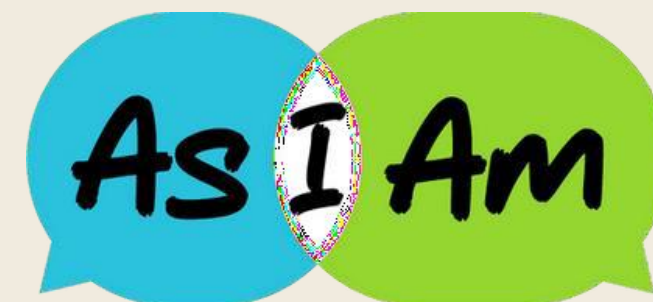
Autism

Autistic person

Neurodivergent

Neurotypical

Neurodiverse



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Neurodiversity



Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity was first coined by Judy Singer in the late 1990s. It concerns the idea that neuro-developmental differences like autism arise from natural differences in the human brain.

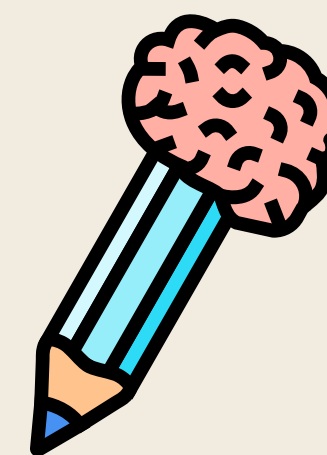
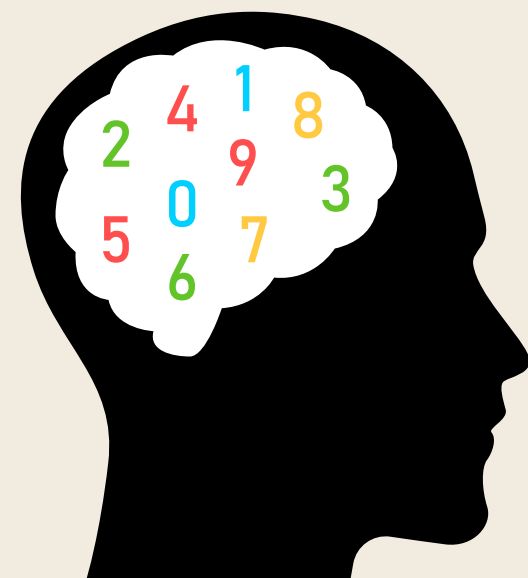
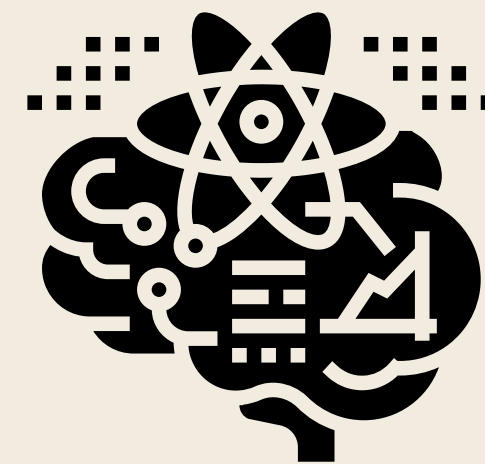
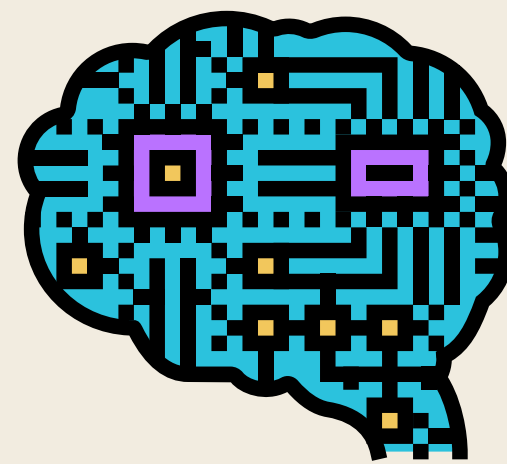
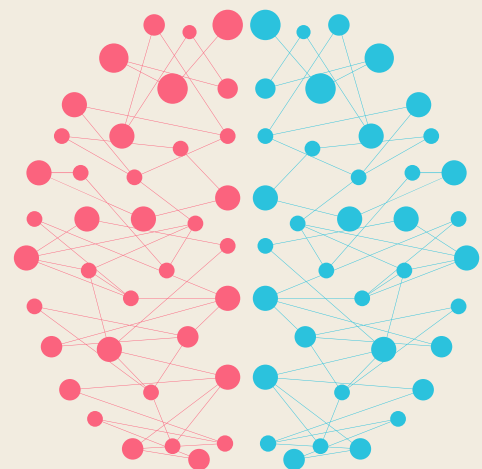
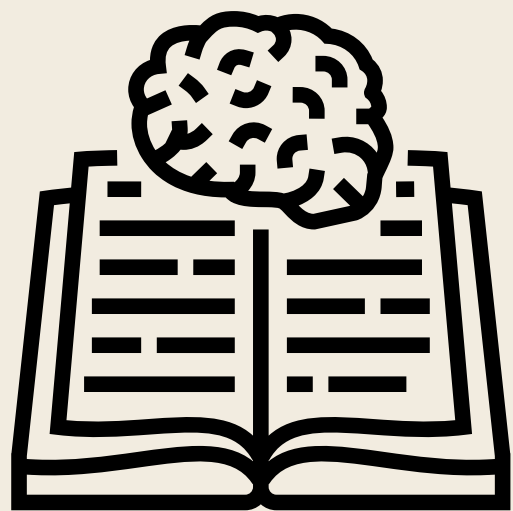
"Why not propose that just as biodiversity is essential to ecosystem stability, so neurodiversity may be essential for cultural stability?"



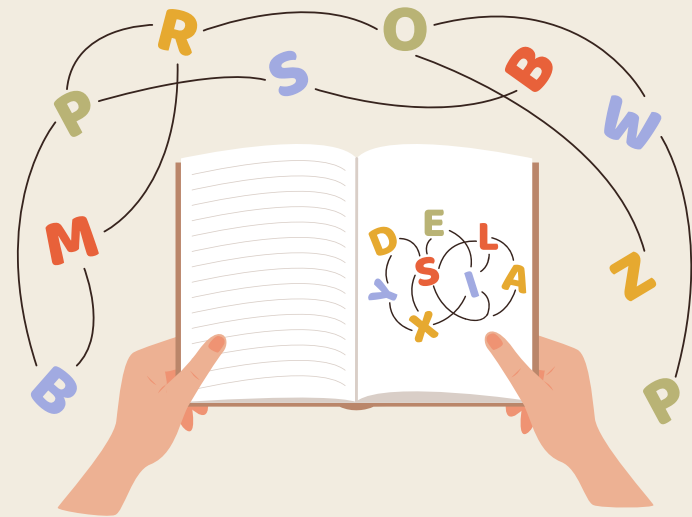
What is a Neurotype?



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Neurotypes you might have heard of:



Dyslexia



ADHD



Autism



Dyspraxia



Intellectual
disability



Tourettes



Neurotypical

Neurodiversity in Pop Culture



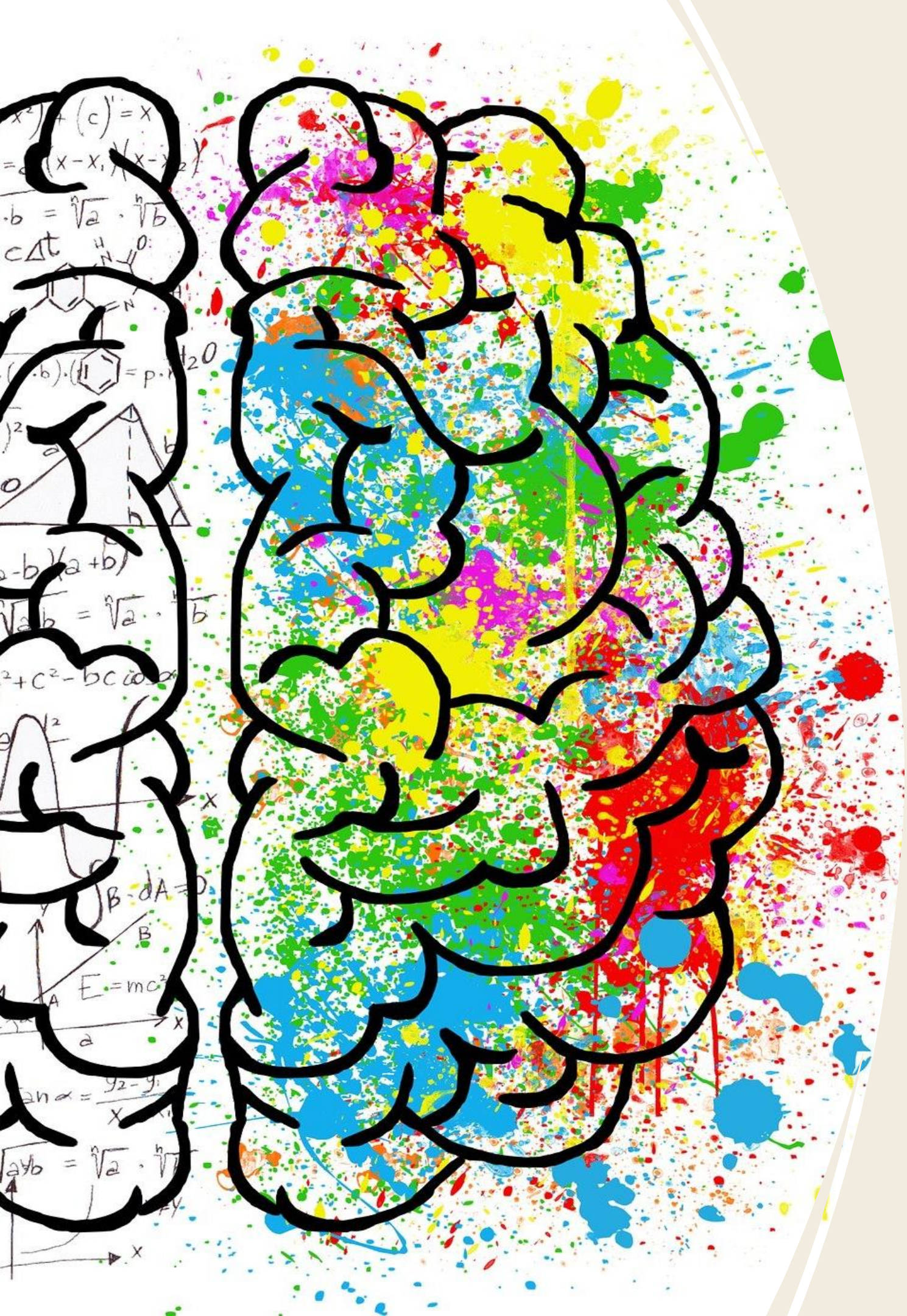
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What Autism Is

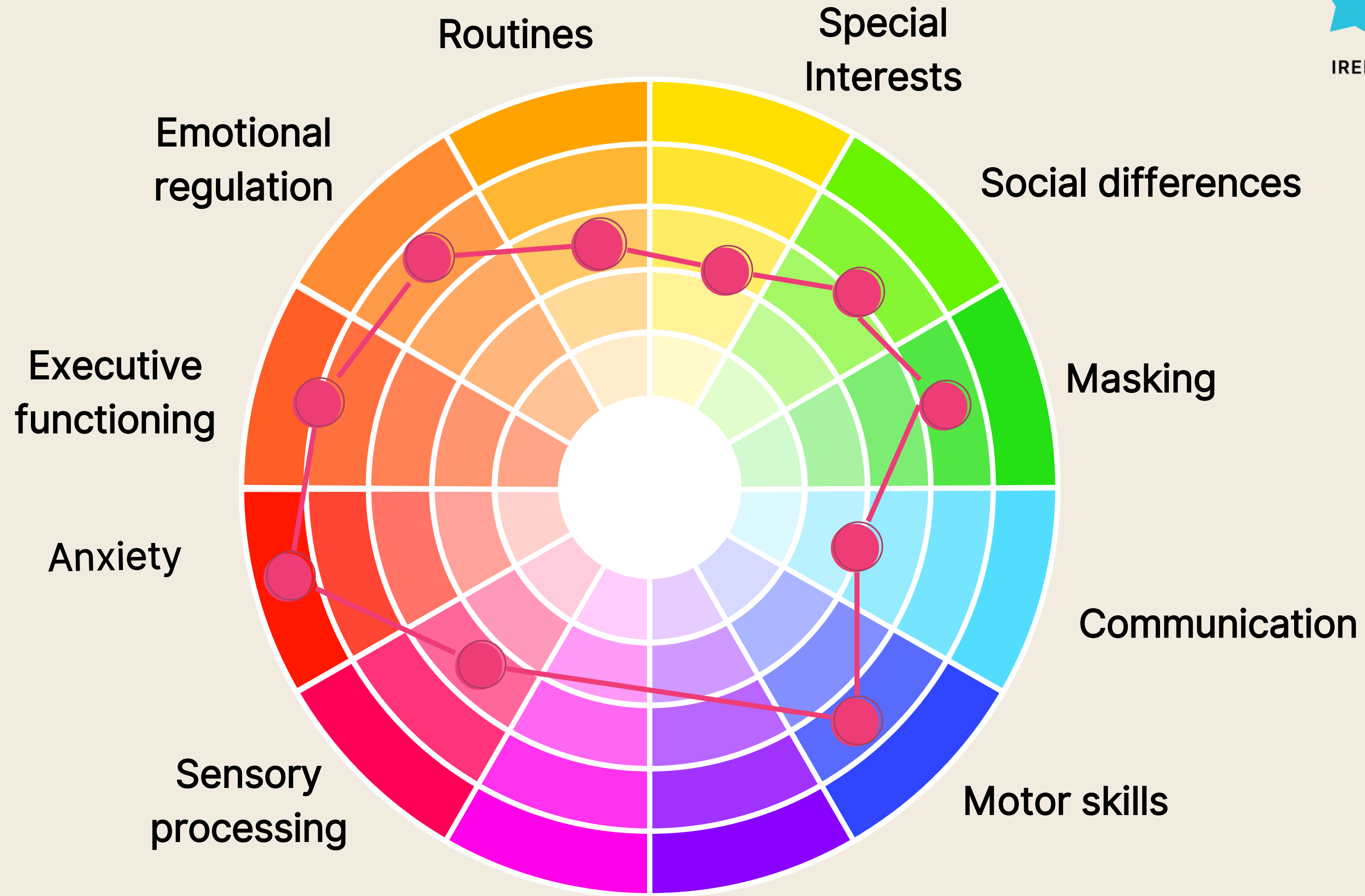




It's a Difference

Autism is an **invisible, neurodevelopmental condition or difference** which relates to how a person **communicates and interacts** with others and how they **experience the world** around them.





Autistic Strengths



Hyperfocus



Attention to detail



Perspective



Observation skills



Creativity



Strong
memory



Reliable



Expertise

Myths



Autism is caused by bad parenting

Autism is caused by vaccines

Autistic people are unsociable

He doesn't look autistic

That child is just being bold

Autism can be cured by good diet

Autism only affects boys

Autistic people lack empathy

Autistic people are geniuses

Prevalence



The NCSE has recently reported a prevalence rate of 1 in 20 having a diagnosis of Autism.
5% of the population



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Disclosures and Accessing Supports



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An 'All About Me' form. At the top left is a speech bubble containing the text 'All About Me'. To its right are three input fields with labels: 'Name', 'Age', and 'My favourite things are:'. Below these is another input field labeled 'I am really good at:'. On the right side of the form is the 'As I Am' logo and the text 'IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY'. The main body of the form consists of six colored boxes, each with a checkmark and a label: 1. Green box: 'I communicate by:'. 2. Light blue box: 'For me to trust you, it helps if you:'. 3. Purple box: 'To learn, I need:'. 4. Pink box: 'If I am feeling comfortable, you will know because I will:'. 5. Orange box: 'If I am feeling overwhelmed, you need to:'. 6. Yellow box: 'If I am feeling overwhelmed, you will make it worse if you:'. At the bottom of the form is a small disclaimer: 'AsIAm does not take responsibility over the content that is added independently to this document.'

Reasonable Accommodations

- Must provide appropriate measures for staff to allow them to do their job.
- Adapting the environment/equipment.
- Flexible working times, work from home, adjusted attendance
- Assigning and substituting tasks to suit the abilities/strengths of the employee.
- Training

Grants

- Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant – provides up to €6350 for adaptations to the workplace environment or purchasing of adaptive equipment. E.g. Alternative Communication and PPE
- Wage Subsidy Scheme – Subsidies the employment of a person with additional needs on the scheme.
- Employee Retention Grant – Help retain employees who might acquire an illness, condition or impairment.
- Disability Awareness Support Scheme – Provide Training for Employers about disabilities. – Work In Access



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Judgements and Attitudes

Judgement and Attitudes

“Abelism is discrimination based on the belief that people with typical abilities are superior”.



Ableist remarks we hear sometimes

Comments

“They/you don’t look Autistic”

“Everyone’s a little bit Autistic!”

“Wow, you’re so brave”

Go to Responses

“There is a special handshake, but we’re not really supposed to tell anyone about it!”

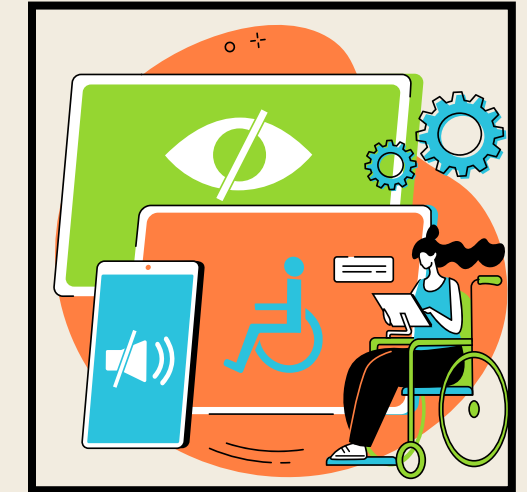
“Everyone gets cold but that does not make them ice-cream!”

“I don’t think it’s brave to love my child!”

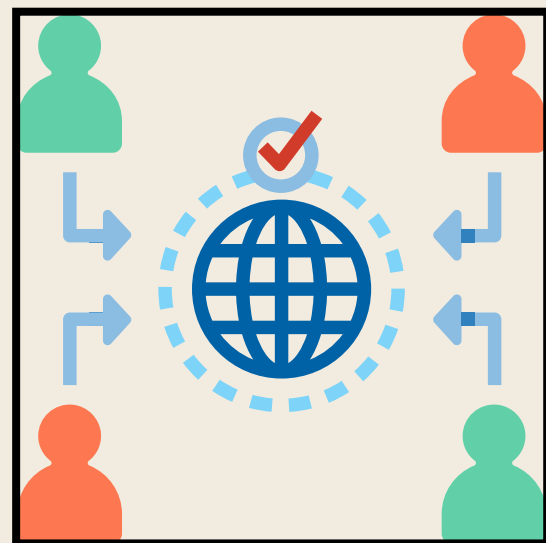
Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015

- Prevent discrimination which is defined as less favourable treatment
- **Direct discrimination**, a direct comparison must be made. E.g. Not hiring someone due to a disability
- **Indirect discrimination** is when practices or policies do not appear to discriminate against one group more than another, but actually have a discriminatory impact. E.g. Must communicate via phone

Universal Design



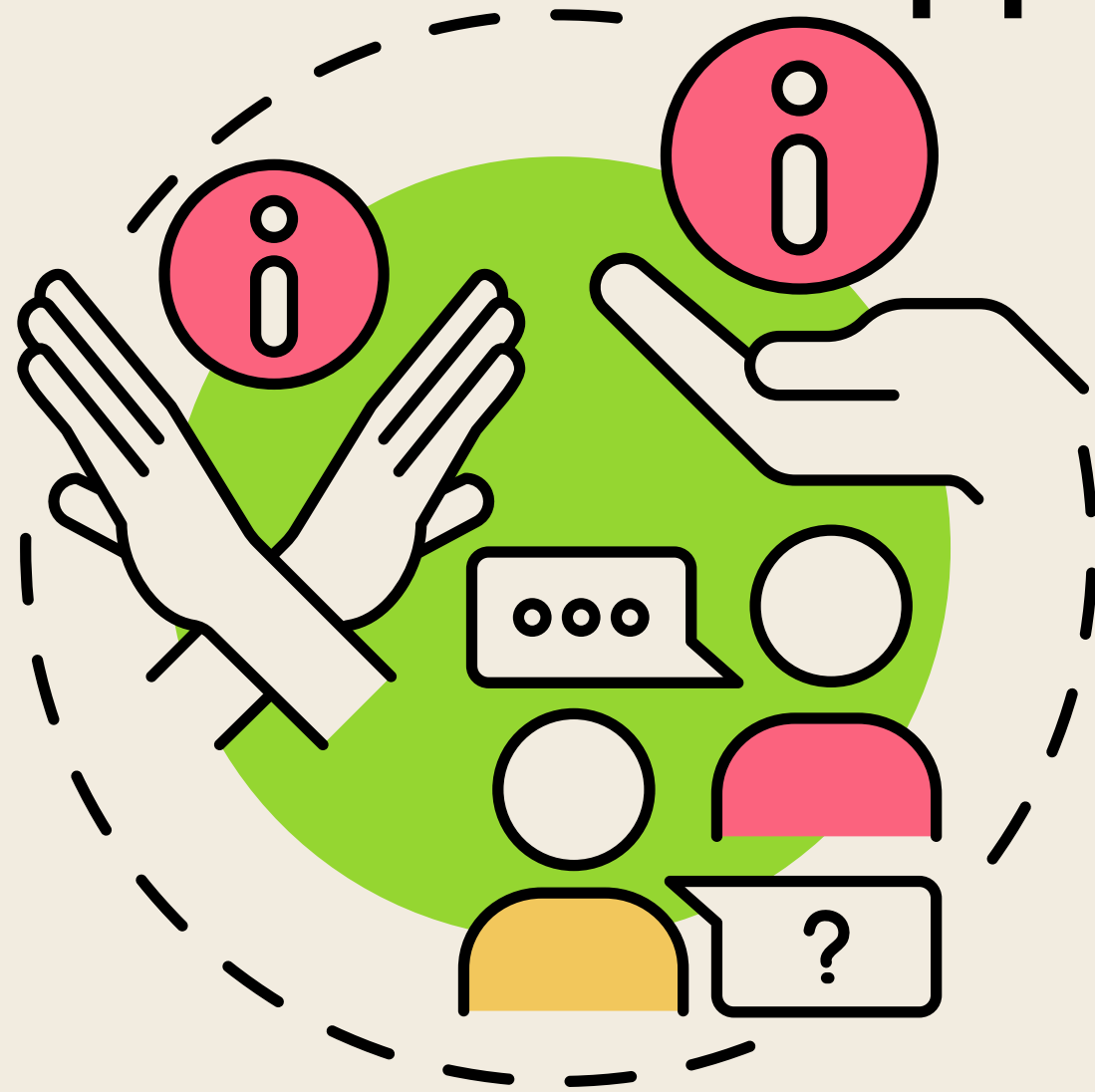
Universal Design is making spaces, products and systems usable by every kind of human. Everyone. The term was coined by Architect Ronald Mace. Also known as inclusive design, and barrier free design.



Stockman
2024



Applying Universal Design for supporting Autistic people



1. Consider
2. Acknowledge
3. Accommodate



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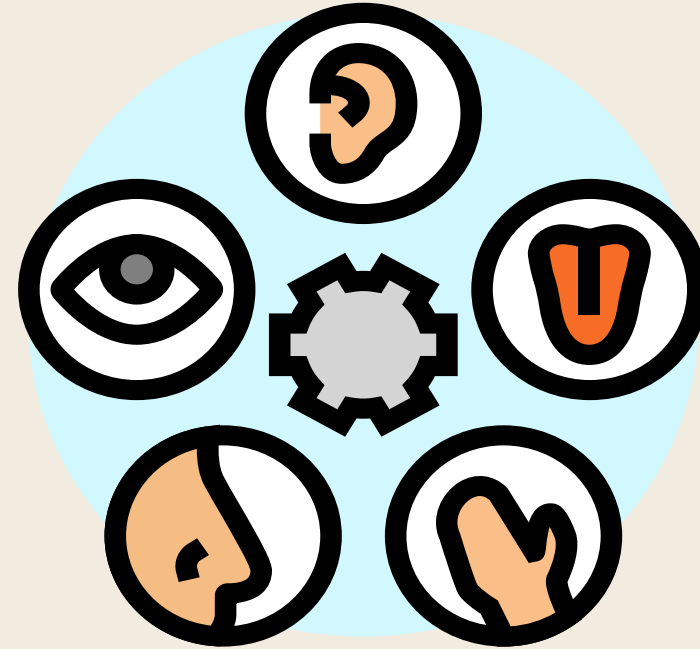


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Sensory Experience and Stress



Sensory Processing Differences



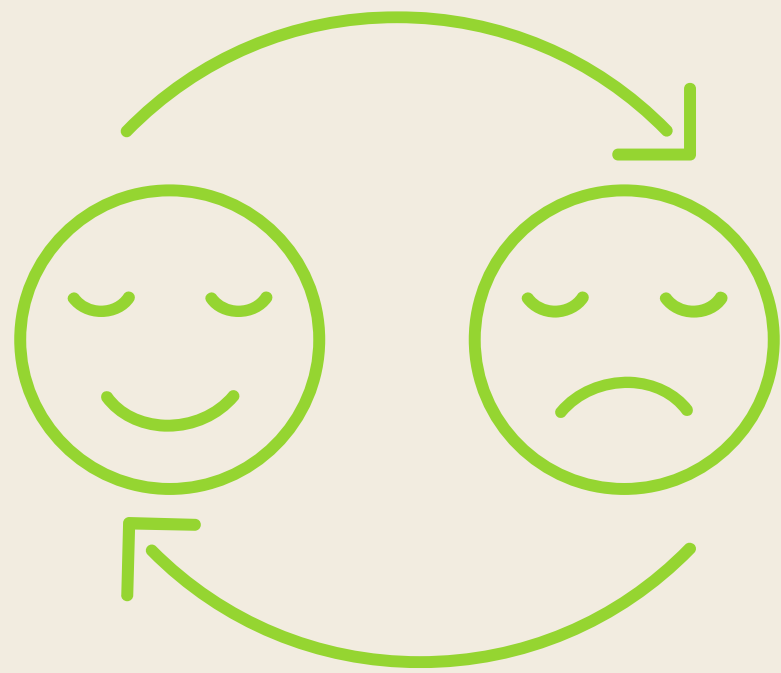
Autistic people experience the world in a fundamentally different way.

Sensory Modulation, which is our brain's ability to tune in and out of the environment, differs for Autistic People

It allows us to reach our optimal levels of stimulation, our ideal level for work, study and social interaction.



The Impact of Environmental Inaccessibility



Wellbeing



Concentration and participation

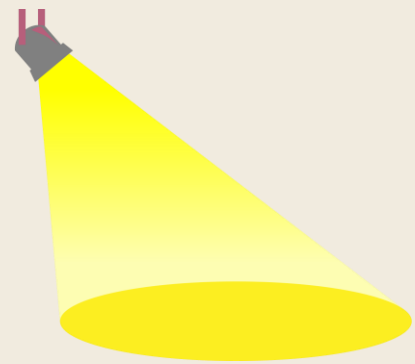


Energy Levels



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Hyposensitivity and Hypersensitivity



Sight



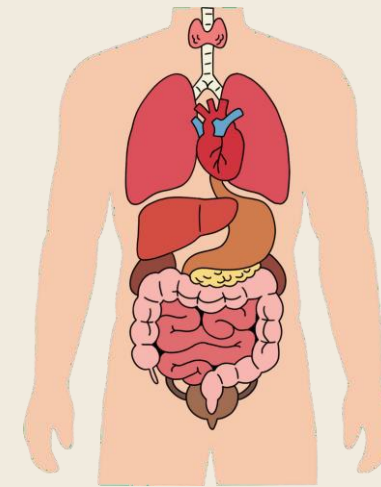
Sound



Balance



Movement



Internal



Taste



Smell



Touch

Movement and Balance

Some find Fine Motor skills harder to co-ordinate

- hands, fingers, wrists

Others find Gross Motor skills harder to co-ordinate - arms, legs, body

Balance can be difficult for some to master

Others find it easy to balance and enjoy being unbalanced



Tips for Movement and Balance



- Open spaces for navigation
- Alternative technology to support
- Give more time to complete certain tasks that require difficult movements
- Allow staff to work in locations that compliment their movement and balance
- Seating to suit needs – balanced vs. unbalanced

Internal States and Touch



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Some have a very high pain threshold - may not realise when they are being rough, happily get stuck into the sport, may not realise when they are injured

Others have low pain threshold - will feel fatigue in their body earlier, may avoid contact sports, may mistake natural pain with injury

Temperature regulation can be harder



Tips for Internal States and Touch

- Alternative uniforms and relaxed dress code
- Shoes may become comfortable and may come off
- Neutral or lower temperatures
- Alternative lunch timetables, toilet breaks, etc.
- Seating for their needs – soft vs. hard
- Fidget tools

Sight, Sound, Smell



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Loud sounds can be distressing or cause distraction – Loud voices, noise of equipment being used, music playing, electronic noises, air con, etc.

Bright Lights and too many visuals can be blinding or distracting

Smells can overwhelm - sweaty clothing, dressing rooms, cleaning products, food, etc.



Tips for sight, sound, smell

- Quiet times to reduce noises
- Rules for making noise – separate room for phone calls, low voices while socialising, headphones for music
- Use natural light where possible to light areas
- Dimmers or manual control over lights is key
- Keep the place well ventilated to reduce smells

Taste

May be picky with food

Certain flavours or textures can be difficult to consume

Can make proper and healthy nutrition hard to manage for some athletes

Dietary requirements for workplace meals may be based less on allergies and more on food preferences



Supporting Sensory Differences

Predictability – Visual Guides and
Sensory Maps

Mitigation – Changing the
Environment and Sensory PPE

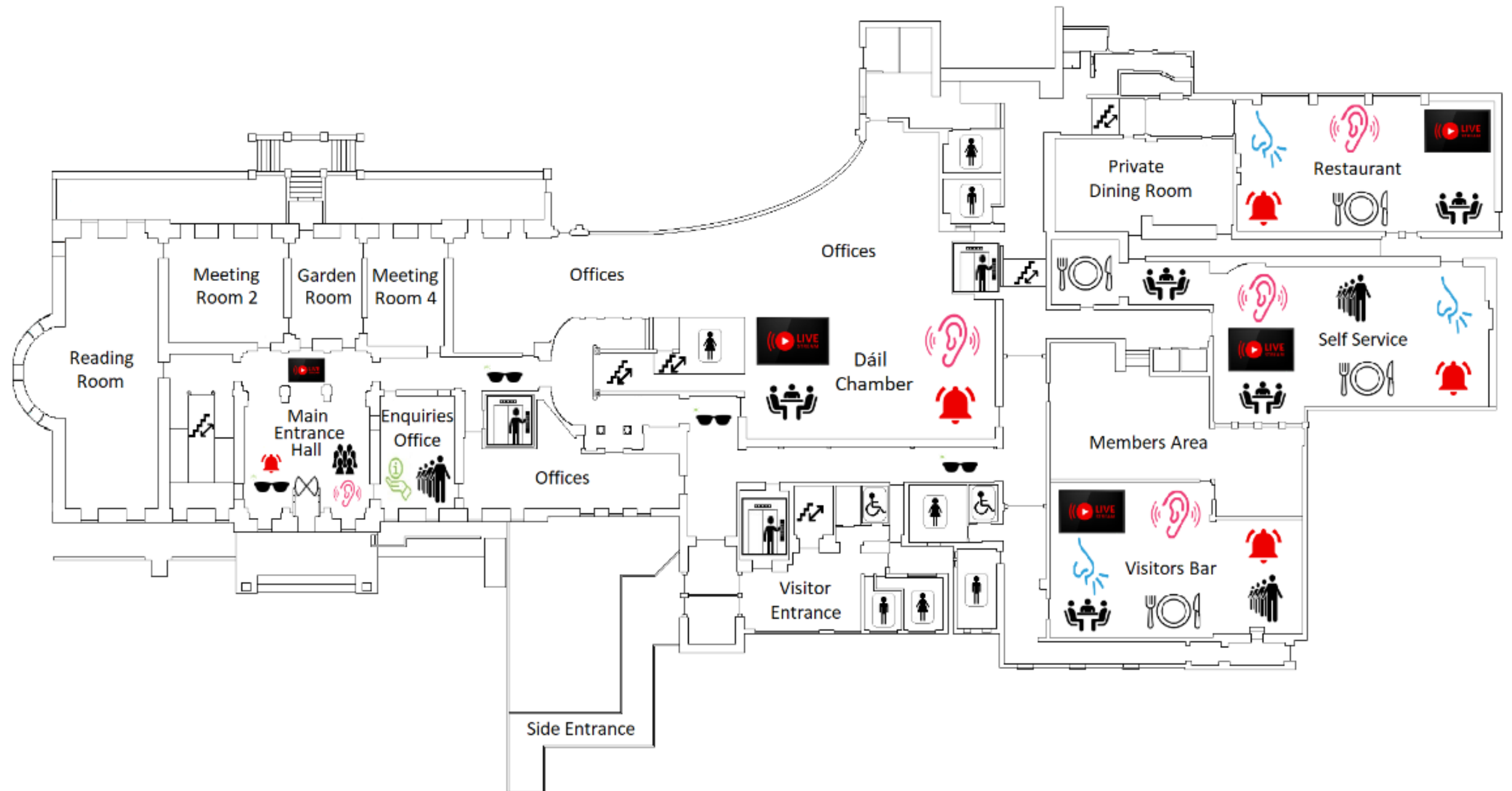
Rest and Recovery – Movement
Breaks, Quiet Spaces, Sensory
Tools



Sensory map example

Ground Floor, Leinster House


Symbol Description	
Sitting with others	
Queuing	
Group of People	
TV Live Stream	
Bells Sounding	
Stairs	
Lift	
Toilet	
Dining	
Information	
Bright Space	
Smell	
Sound	




Public Transport to Pfizer Grange Castle

Getting to Our Site

The map shows how to get here by train or bus. You can travel by:

 Dublin Bus - numbers W4, 13 or 151)


 Train - Kishoge Train Station



Site Entry: car barrier access

- * Arrive at Gate 1 and press the intercom. Once Security confirms your arrival, follow the road around to the left and take the second turn right to Visitor Parking.



-  You will use the intercom at the gate to inform Security of your name.

The Main Entrance

- * You will head to the Reception area via the main entrance of the building.
- * As you are walking in, the Reception desk is on the left.
- * Please note that Reception is open from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.



Reception & Waiting Area.....

- * You will check-in at the reception desk and your host will be informed of your arrival.
- * You will be collected by your host and escorted to Security to get a badge
- * Your host will endeavour to highlight a number of the areas covered subsequently in the rest of this guide when collecting you from reception.



Welcome To



Rowing Training

This document is a guide to what will happen
at **water sessions**

Where?

River Lee

James will be there to greet you.

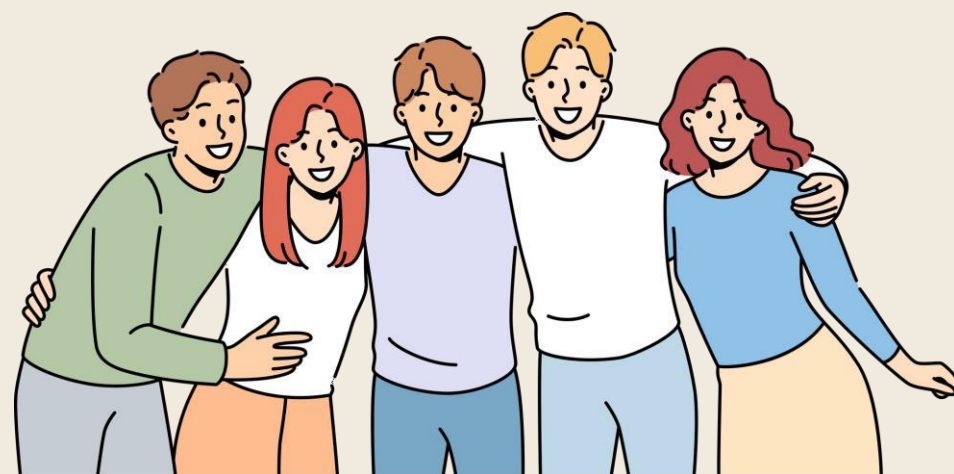


James is your Coach. He will be
looking after you for Rowing Training
at weekends, on the water. He is very
approachable and you can ask him
any questions that you might have
about Rowing.



You will also meet the other athletes who will be part of your group.

There will be 20 people in the group.



What will happen in the group?

First



James will welcome you to the club and show you around.

Next

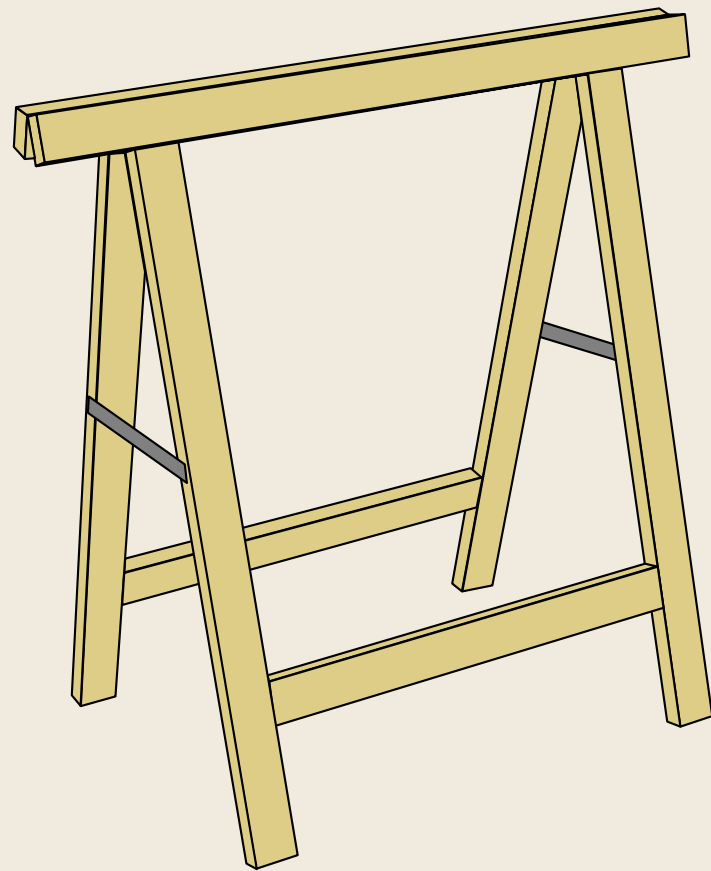
You will change for training



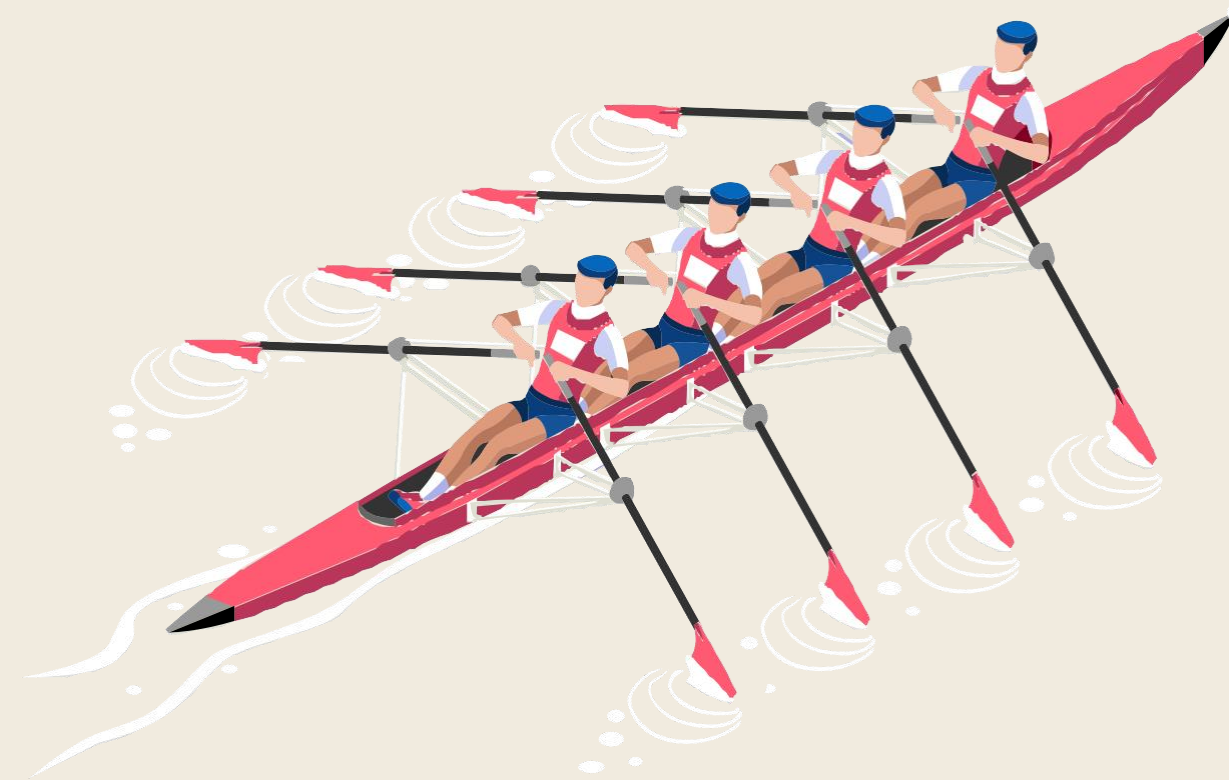
You will need warm clothes for training. We suggest shorts, body warmer, t-shirt, tight fitting jacket, leggings and runners

When you are changed

James will show you where the trestles are, you can help him put them out. We rest the boats on trestles.



James will assign you to a boat for 4 people. These are called Quads. He will show you which one is yours and you and your crew can then out the boat on trestles.



James will then explain to you all the parts of the boat and what they do. Don't worry if you forget some of the names, you will learn them over time.

What then?

James will help you and your crew to get on the water.

The session will take 60mins to complete.

Even though there are four of you in the boat, you will work in pairs for the session. Two of you will row while the other two rest and keep the boat balance. This will help to keep the boat stable for you first row.



What should I bring with me on the water?

You can bring some water and a light snack with you to help keep you hydrated and your imagery levels up.

We recommend 750mls of water and a banana.

If you don't like bananas, you can bring a bar of chocolate or cereal bar aswell.



Sensory PPE and Regulation Tools

- Ear defenders/buds/headphones
- Sunglasses, peaked cap, hood
- Sensory friendly clothing
- Cushions or choice of seating
- Fidget jewelery, toys and tools



Quiet Space

Lighting - Natural or adjustable lighting



Sound - Quiet space with headphones or optional calming, soothing sounds



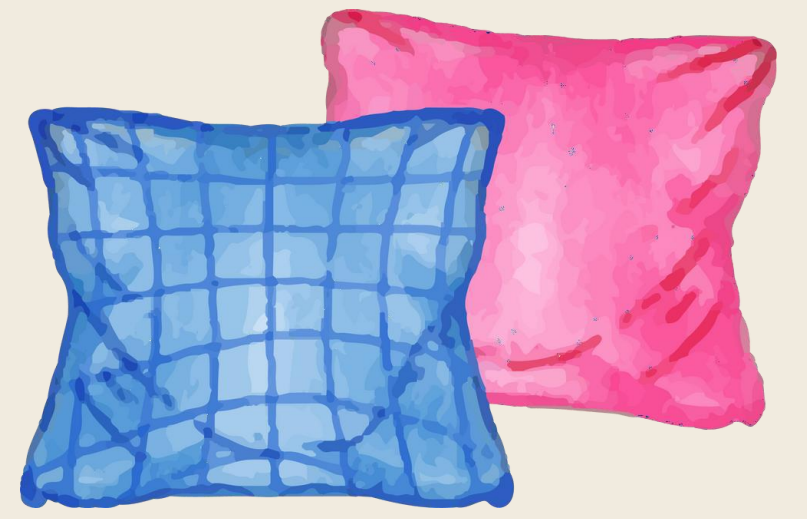
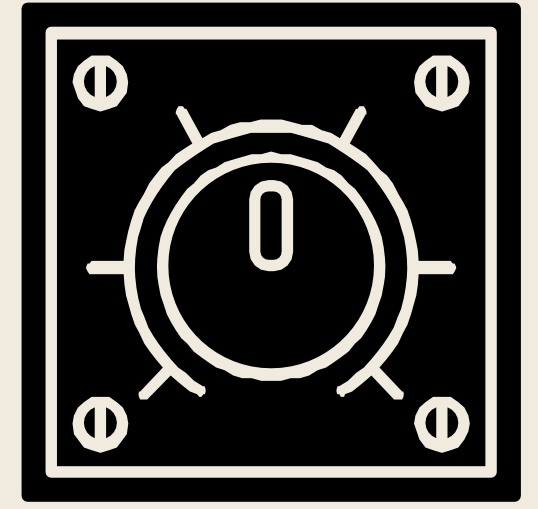
Movement - space for moving around, exercise balls, rocking/swing chairs



Tactile - Cushions, pillows, beanbags and making sensory gadgets/tools available.



Visual - a visually low stimulating environment, limit patterns, lights, brochures etc.



Sensory/Movement Breaks

Time out to either increase or decrease sensory input

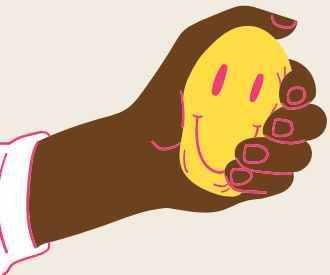


Stimming

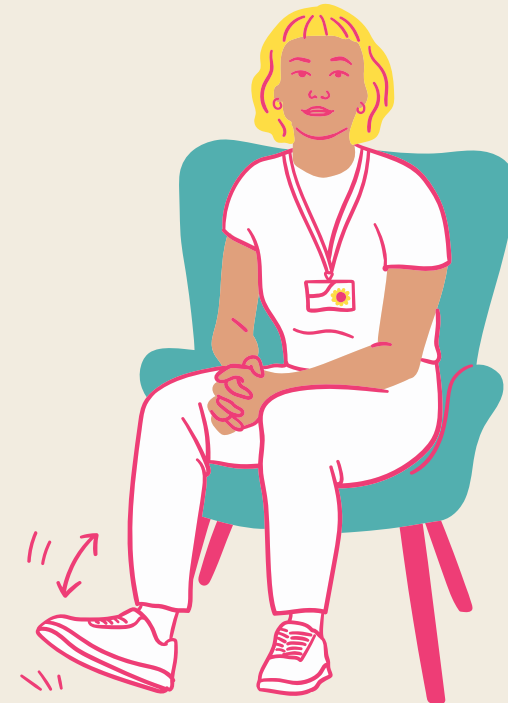
Repetitive behaviours or noises to help emotional regulation



Swinging



Arm / Leg / Body movement / rocking

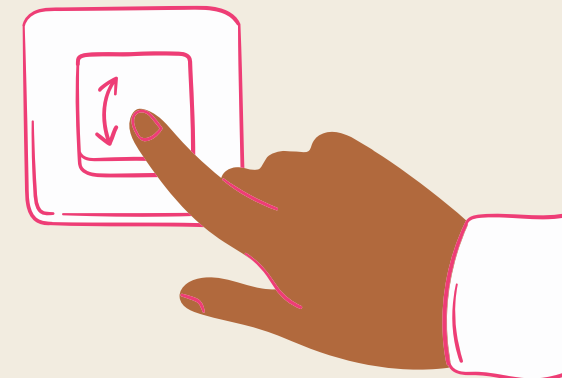


Spinning / tapping



Hand flapping

clicking, clapping, scratching



Meltdown and shutdown

Caused by sensory overwhelm, emotional distress, anxiety, unexpected changes, suppressing stims, masking for too long, feeling trapped.

Involuntary, “fight” or “flight” response



IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY

Supporting people through distress

Stay Calm

Remove Triggers

Reduce Demands

Provide a safe
space

Offer Sensory Tools

Give Time to
Recover



Online Interviews

Simple background

One person onscreen at a time

Mic off when not speaking

Make sure your environment has low input



In-Person Interviews

Quiet environment

Different chairs to suit needs

Free from smells

Natural Light

Muted colours and decorations



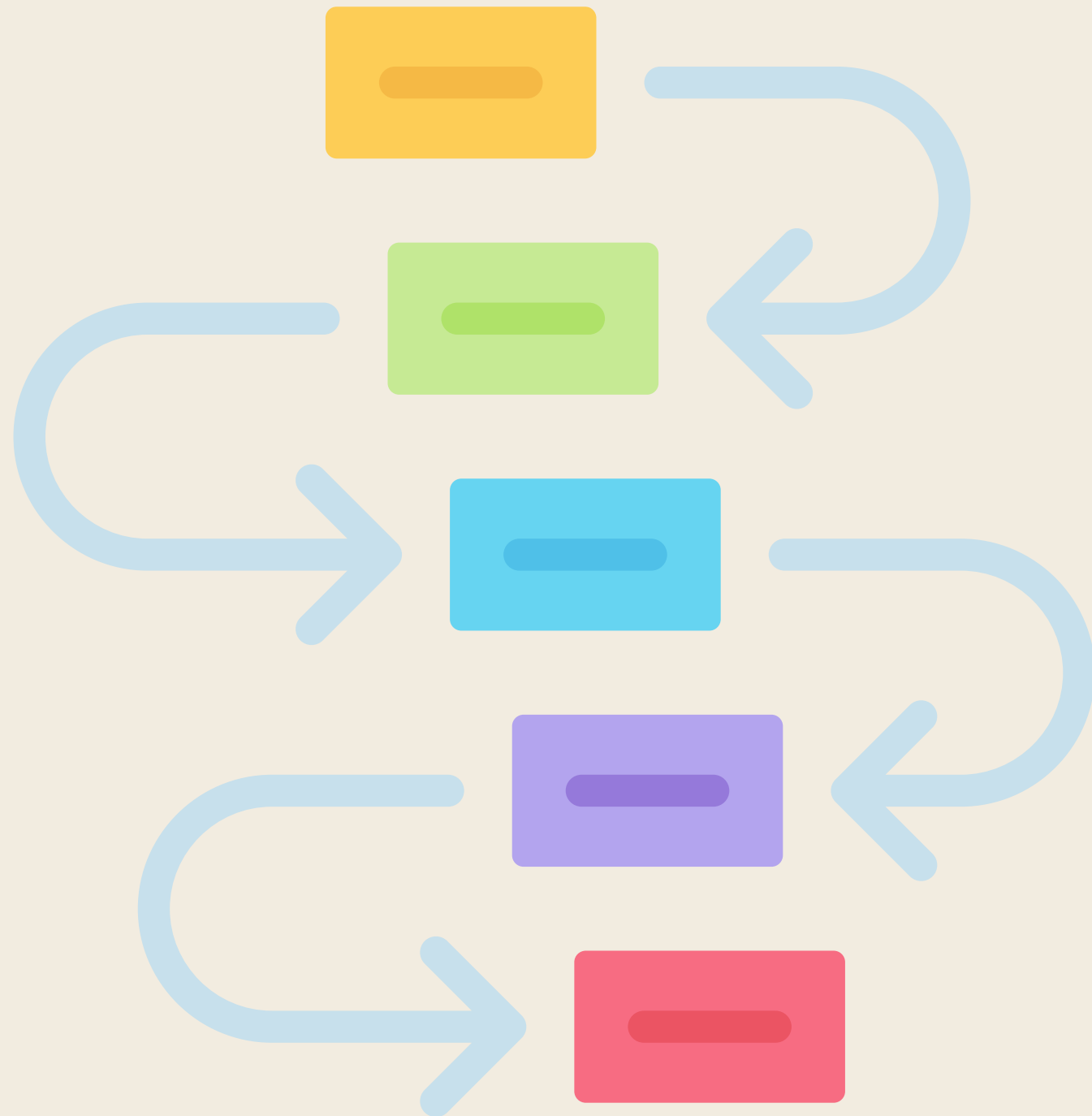


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Social Imagination and New Experiences



Predictability & Routine



Many autistic people have preference for routine and structure.

Unpredictable change can be a source of stress and anxiety.

When predictability is maximised, access can be facilitated.

Context Blindness

Reduced spontaneous use of context
when giving meaning to a stimulus

Experiencing the world in an absolute
way

Without context we must guess, and
guesswork is never 100% accurate







Make the uncertain, certain



Routine



Information

Visual Introduction



SOCIAL MEDIA



VISUAL GUIDES



STAFF BIOS



VIDEOS

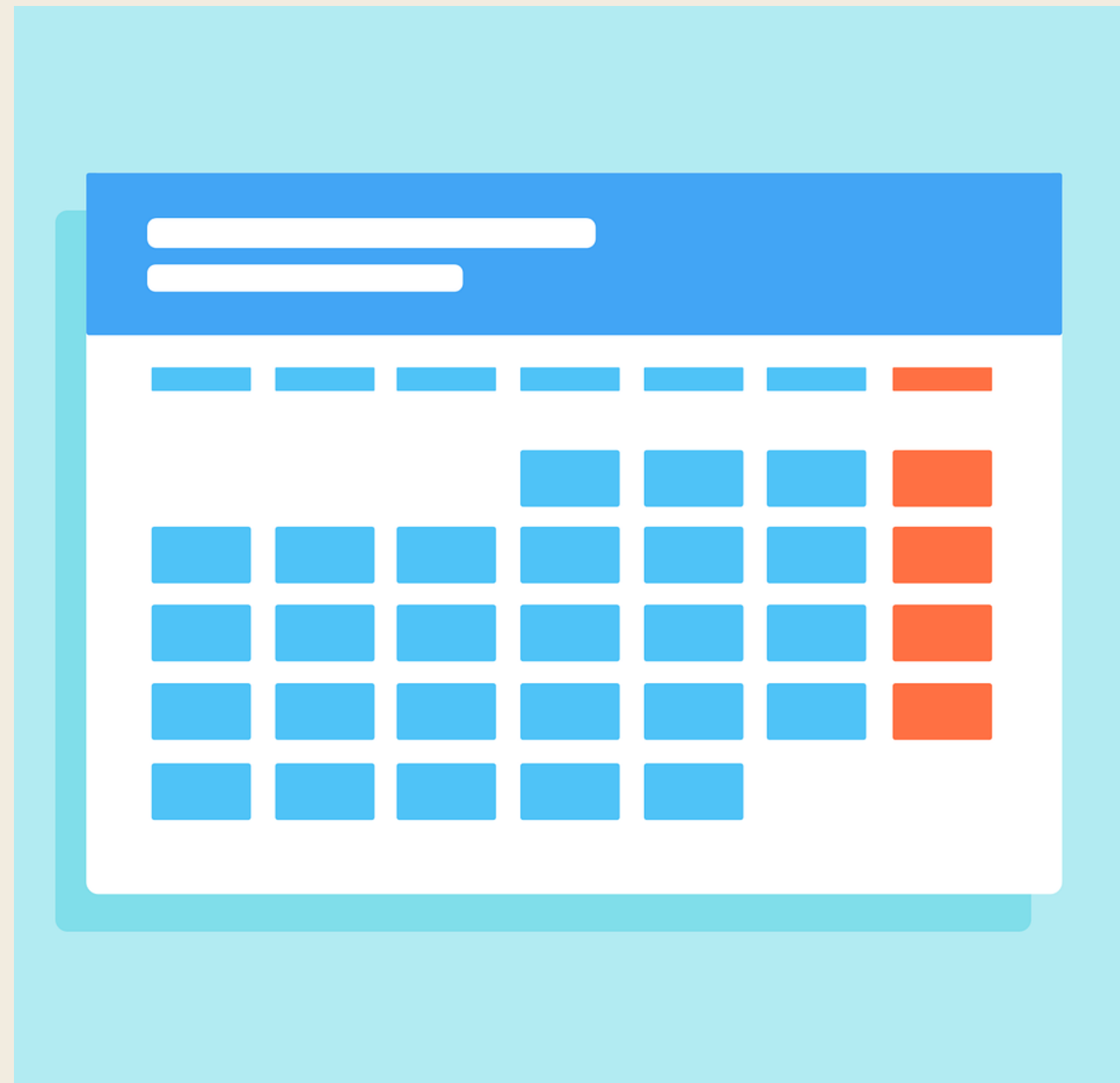
Stick to the Schedule

Use visual timetables that everyone can see and follow

Try to keep on time, but give notice if you are behind.

If you must change the schedule, do so in advance and explain why

Count down to transitions



Provide information in advance

(A week before if possible)



Checklist

- Venue info (eircode)
- Contact info
- Parking,
- Toileting, changing facilities
- Catering
- Sensory space
- Visual guide
- What they need to bring
- Agenda - what can they do
- Create a space online with all the information needed.

(use QR codes if necessary)



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Interview Preparation

Step by step

Send questions in advance

Schedule of the day

How to get there

Visuals and sensory information

Highlight supports



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<u>Time</u>	<u>Task</u>
09:00	Arrive
09:05	John will meet you at reception and take you to the interview
09:10	Introduction with the interview panel
09:15	Skill Based Assessment – Sally will conduct this part
09:30	Questions on qualifications - Mary will conduct this part
09:45	Questions on experience - Henry will conduct this part
10:00	Opportunity for you to ask questions
10:10	Thank You and End of interview - John will guide you out



James Moroney

Training Officer

James joined the AsIAm team at the start of 2021. He has taken up the role of Training Officer and will be involved in delivering the various training programmes that AsIAm run. He was awarded a BA in Applied Psychology from University College Cork in 2011 and has since been working as a trainer in various different roles. In the past he has worked with Aware, delivering mental health workshops to secondary school students. He has also worked with Zeeko, delivering internet safety workshops to primary and secondary school students, as well as their teachers and parents. Since 2010, he has been involved in coaching rowing in his spare time, and has worked with rowers at all levels, with Lee Rowing Club, UCC Rowing Club and Rowing Ireland. He hopes to use all the experience he has gained in these roles to help bring a greater awareness of Autism to everyone on the island of Ireland, and to some of the smaller island's surrounding it too.

Before Work Begins

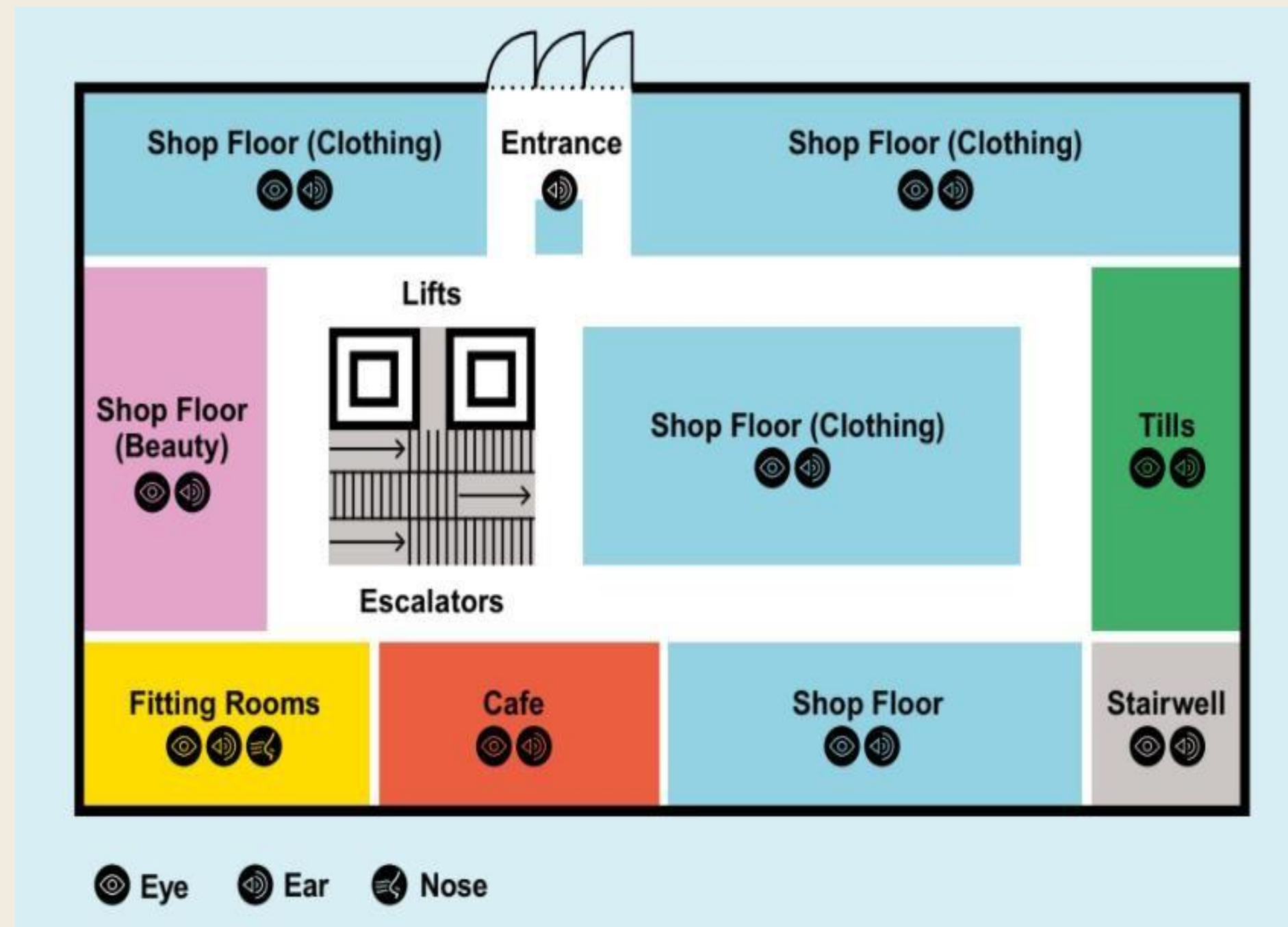
Workplace Map and Sensory Map

Visual Introduction

Schedule for the first day

Staff handbook, policies, and rules

Ask about supports



The Unwritten Rules

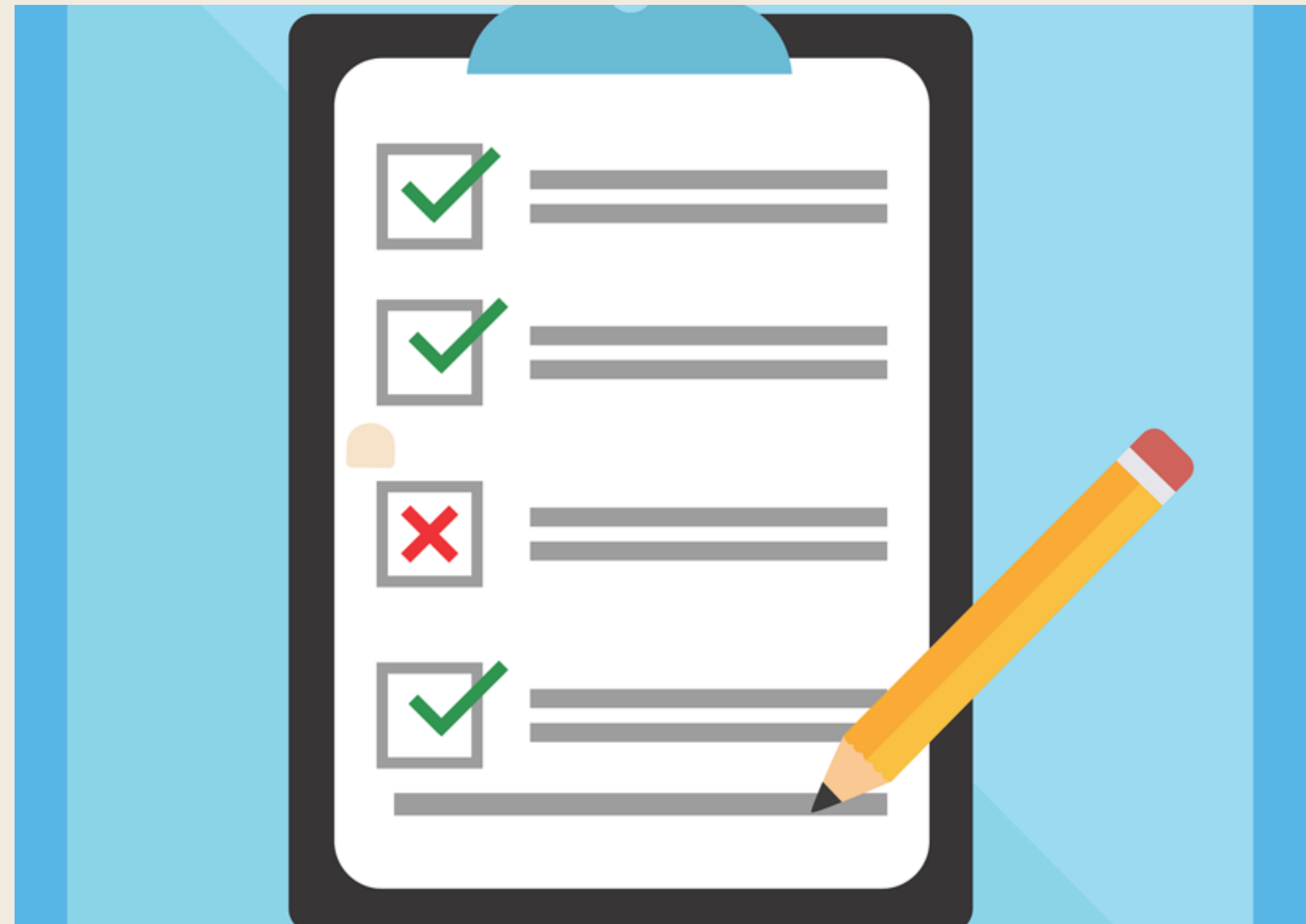
What can they wear?

Any topics of conversation off limits?

Can they curse?

Are they expected to attend staff socials?

How flexible are the written rules?



Mentor or Buddy System

Experienced Staff guides new Staff through the experience

Help with social interaction and new experiences

Gives an opportunity to ask the questions people may be afraid or embarrassed to ask

Anything you know now that people should be told first day should be shared





IRELAND'S
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Communication and Social Interaction



Autistic Communication

Autistic people have a “mixed profile of abilities”

- 20-30% of the Autistic population are non-speaking

- Remainder have either:



- Delayed in developing speech & language



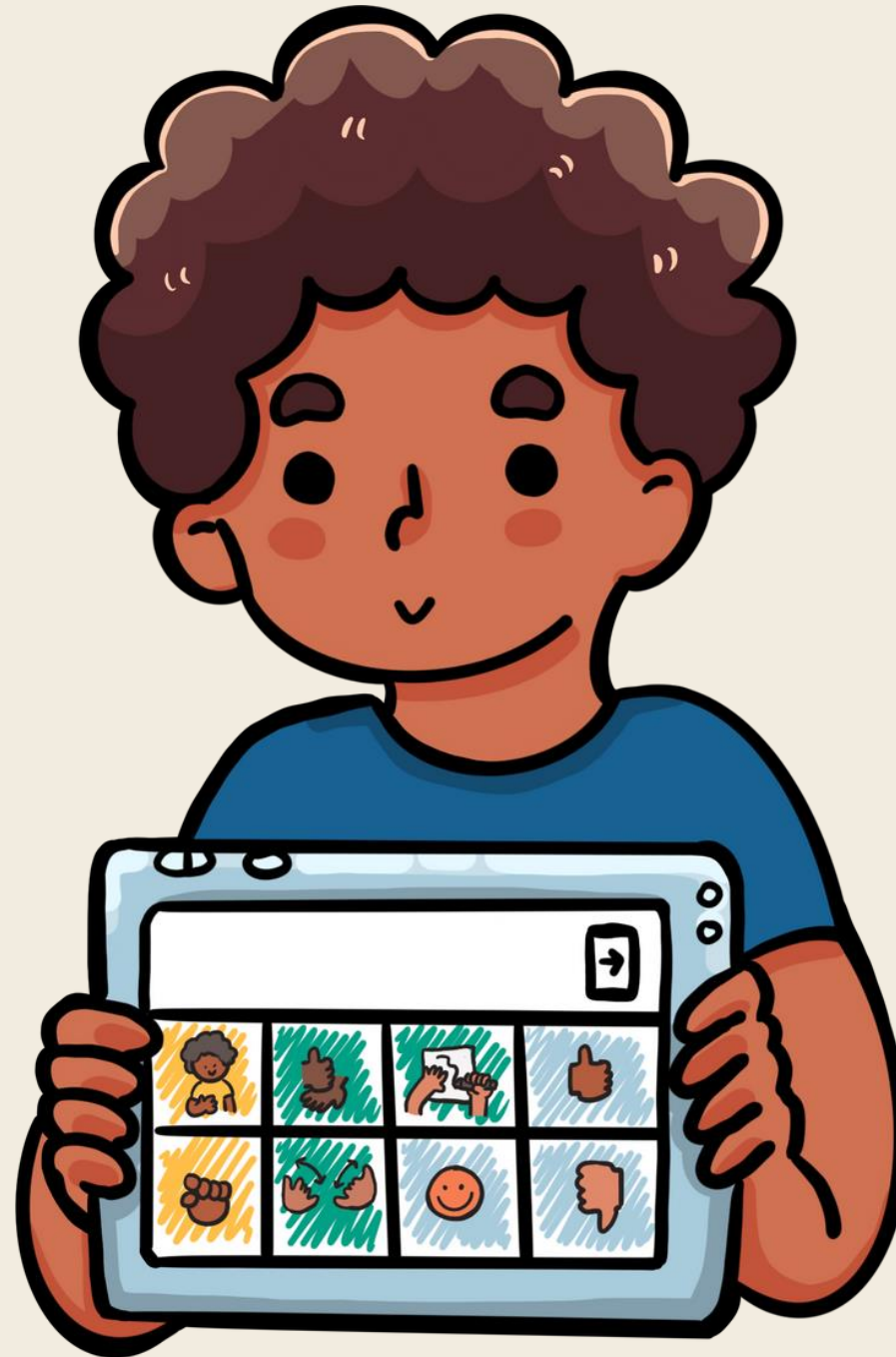
- Average or above average verbal ability



Augmentative Alternative Communication AAC

Non or Low-tech

Gestures & facial expressions
Writing
Drawing
Spelling by pointing to letters
Pointing to photos/pictures or words



High Tech

Involves use of tech
Using an app on a tablet
Speech generating devices



Information processing

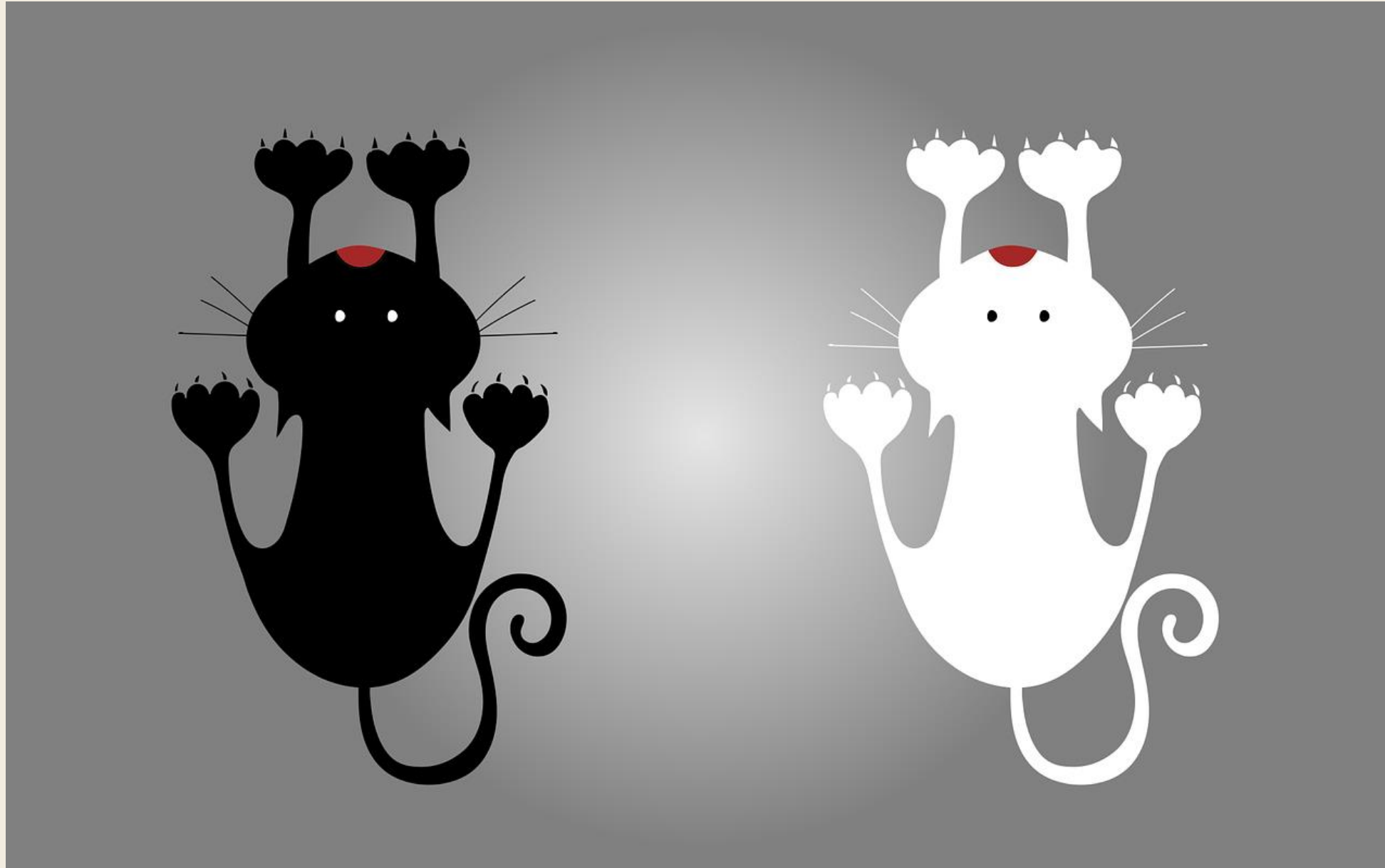


Differences in Visual, Written or
Auditory Processing

Delayed response time

Can appear inattentive

Literal Mind



Taking the world at face value

Language, rules, behaviour, feelings, etc., are black and white

Be careful with figurative language such as idiom or metaphors



Neurotypical communication

Small talk topics, short time on each topic

Use frequent eye contact

indirect, sugar coat opinions

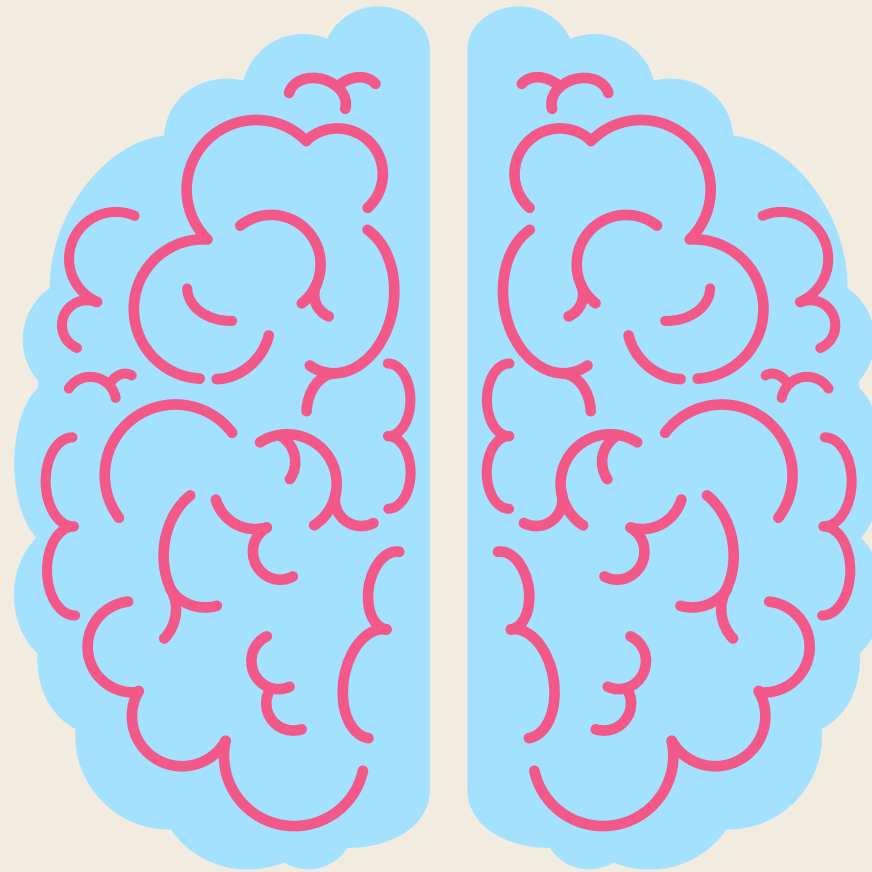
Uses tone to convey and change the meaning of the words.

Show empathy through sympathy

May speak louder when stressed



IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY



Autistic communication

Deep conversations about interests, long time on one topic

Lack of eye contact / forced eye contact

Speak honestly and directly

Can't interpret / hear tone of words, interpret words literally

Show empathy by telling a personal story that's similar

May struggle to speak when stressed

Tips for Better Communication



- Take a breath and take your time
- Just because it makes sense to you, doesn't mean it makes sense to others - be clear, concise, literal and specific
- Break instructions down into individual steps and go one at a time
- Show rather than tell - it's a thousand times easier to understand
- Use a medium they prefer - not everyone is great at talking - write it down, text it, etc.

Social Interaction Differences



IRELAND'S **AUTISM** CHARITY

May find turn taking
difficult



May not understand
boundaries/personal space




May only talk about
topics that interest
them



May not initiate questions
or respond appropriately

May find it difficult to
maintain friendships

May need recovery time
from overwhelming
social situations

A man with short dark hair, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt over a dark t-shirt, is sitting on a blue tufted sofa. He is gesturing with both hands, palms facing each other, as if explaining something. He is wearing dark wristbands on both wrists. The background shows a modern office environment with white shelving units, a desk, and a coat rack.

I've been using my hands
for the past few minutes.

Supporting Communication

Focus on interests

Clear and Concise

Reduce Body
Language Demands

Be Literal

Avoid judgements

Respect space

Use Preferred
Mediums

Support turn taking

Vary social events

Be Specific

People Mask

Take your time

Tips for Social Interaction



- Don't force it - not everyone is a chatterbox - some just want to talk to one or two people
- Understand that some people use their phone to socialise, even with people in the same room.
- People Mask - they appear very sociable, but they may be faking it and still need support
- People can say things that seem inappropriate or out of place to you - don't be too harsh on them it can be out of their control

Interviews - Non-Verbal Communication

Avoid using body language as judgment criteria

Eye contact, facial expressions, vocal tone

They may miss cues of when to stop or when to keep going

May mimic each interviewer's body language, accents and tone



Interviews - Verbal Communication

Closed ended questions

Avoid hypotheticals and vague questions

Use literal language and be direct

Be concise and break it down

Give time to process and respond

Provide visuals if possible

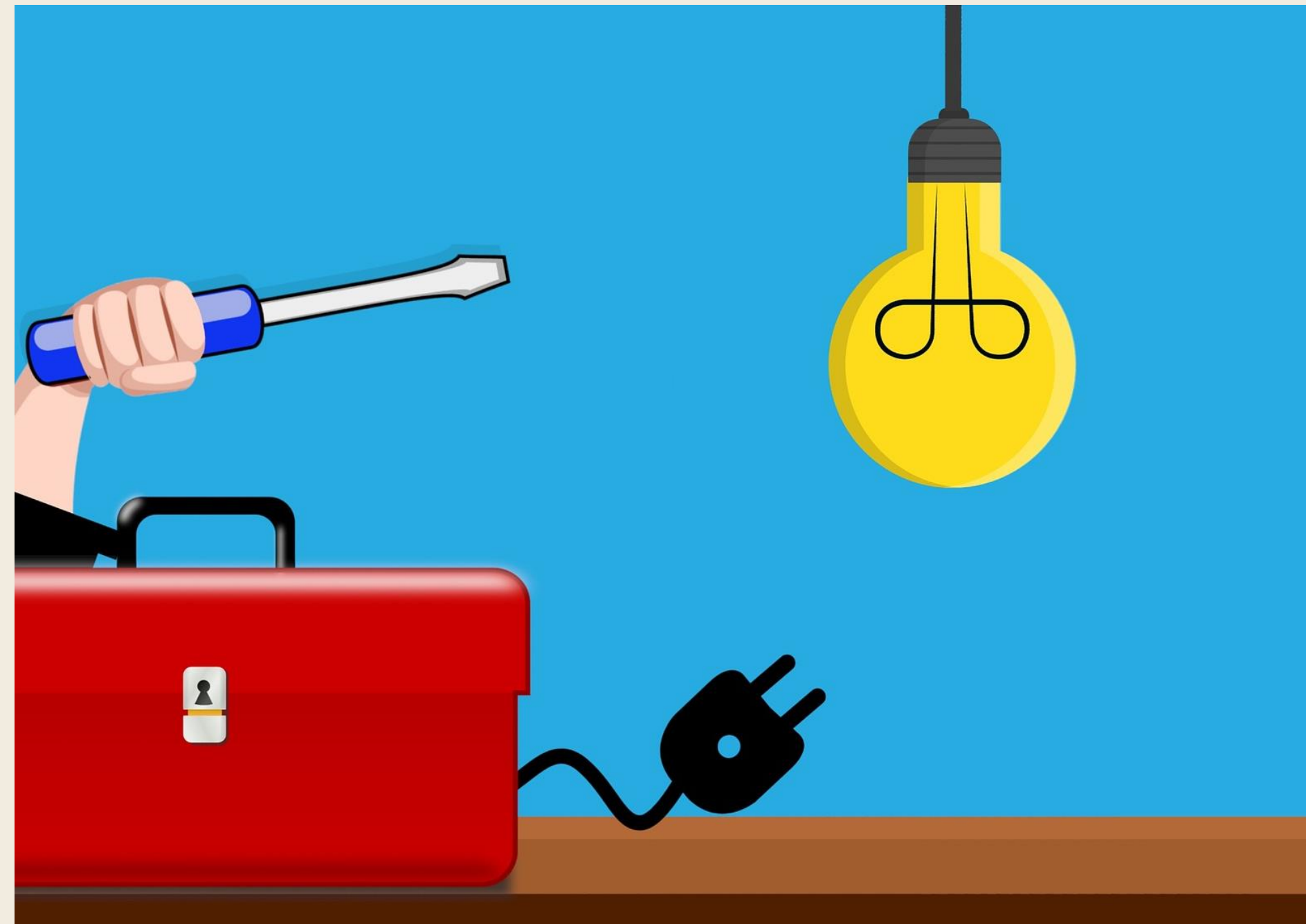


Skill Based Interview

Some people prefer to show rather than tell

Harder for people to waffle their way through a skills-based interview

Give them a task in advance then ask to demonstrate on the day



Job Spec



Concise and Clear

Plain English

Bullet Points

Avoid Culture or
Personality Traits

D&I Policy Clear

Avoid Culture,
Personality, Jargon

Culture and Personality Traits to Avoid

- Good communication skills
- The successful candidate will be self-motivated
- Enthusiastic and able to represent the company in a professional manner
- Drive for results
- Problem solving and decision making
- Team working and cross functional collaboration
- Able to work on their own

Meetings



Ask the attendees what their preference for meetings is (online/in person)

Prepare a list of questions and information to discuss and encourage the attendees to do the same

Be clear and explicit around feedback

Quiet space for meetings

Provide written directions and follow up on tasks where possible

Sit side by side

Autistic people can be very direct in their communication style, please don't perceive this as being rude

Include time for breaks

The First Day

Introduce staff and allow time to socialise

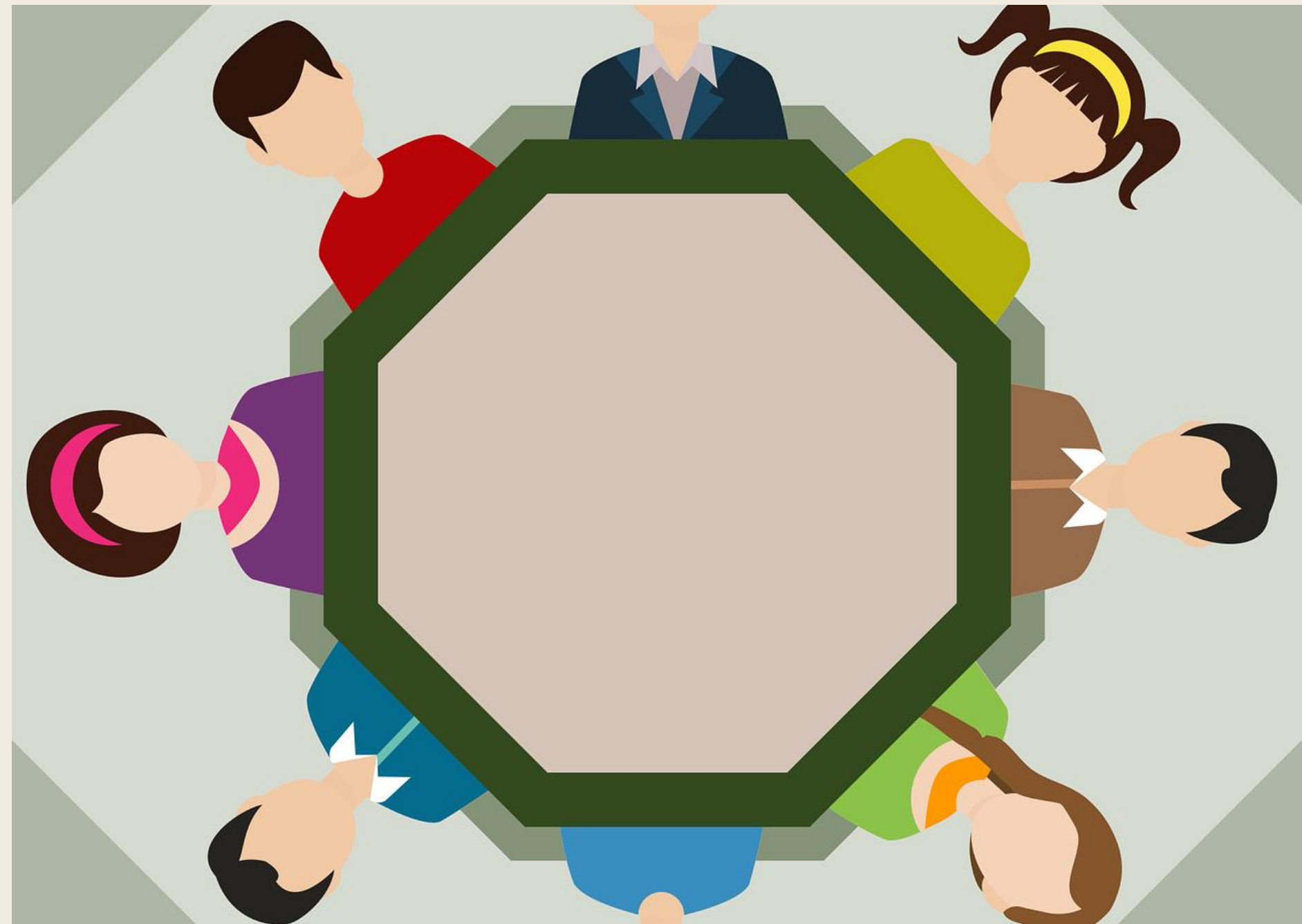
Walk the environment

Introduce the work

Clear up an uncertainty and assist with any paperwork

Let them have at it

Review and gather feedback at the end of the day



One Final Tip – Review and Make Small Improvements

- Gather feedback and chat to the staff – Reviews, Surveys, Suggestion Boxes, etc.
- It may reveal reasons why people find certain aspects of the workplace difficult
- Make changes where you can
- Do it regularly





IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY

Thanks for listening!