

# Neurodiversity

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# What we will cover today

## An overview

- **What is neurodiversity?**
- **The make up of neurodiversity**
- **Definitions of neurodiversity**
- **Features which might make you consider neurodiversity in your trainee**

## Considering screening

- **Is it important to come to a diagnosis?**
- **How neurodiversity can impact a trainee/ training**
- **Having the conversation with a trainee in whom you suspect undiagnosed neurodiversity**
- **Role of PSW**

## After screening and diagnosis

- **After a diagnosis what can you do to help as TPD or ES?**
- **Strategies for Supervisors**
- **TPDs/ARCP panels**
- **Reflecting on support that has been offered**
- **How to Support the Training and Work Environment**
- **Challenges**

# Clarifying the language

Neurodiversity refers to all of us – the natural variation in human brains

Neurodiverse refers to a group of people with different neurotypes

Neurodivergent is a person whose neurotype is significantly different to the majority of people's

Neurotypical is a person whose neurotype is like the majority of people's

EMBRACE  
NEURODIVERSITY

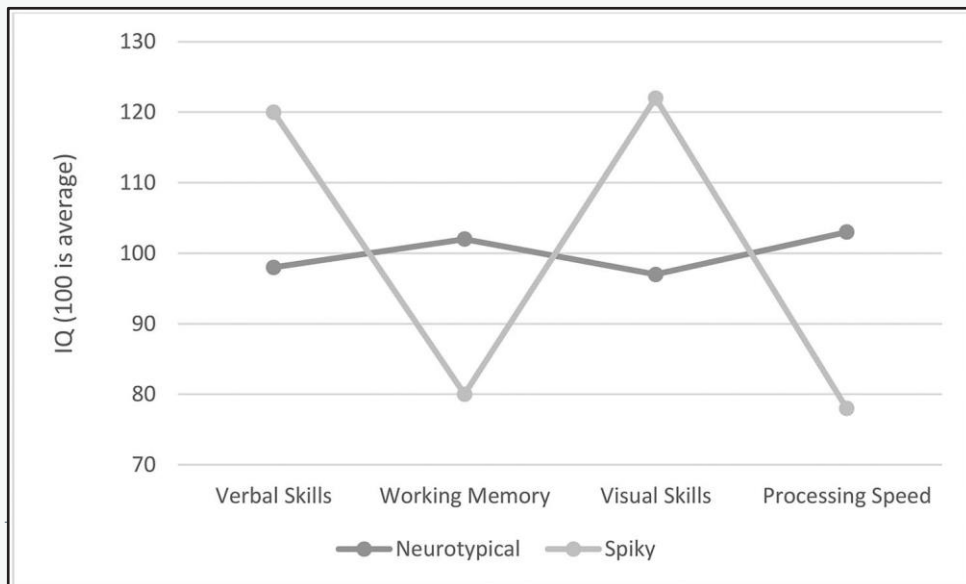


# What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to different cognitive strengths within an individual rather than between individuals.

The psychological definition refers to the diversity within an individual's cognitive ability, wherein there are large, statistically-significant disparities between peaks and troughs of the profile (known as a "spiky profile") <sup>1</sup>

Nomenclature: good to ask individuals how they prefer to identify – "neurodivergent", "neurodifferent", "neurodiverse". New umbrella term also proposed is "neurominorities" <sup>1</sup>



Four main neurominorities: ADHD, autism, Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD, previously referred to as dyspraxia), dyslexia

Underdiagnosis in females, who may present instead with anxiety, depression, eating disorders

Present in 15-20% of population



	Challenges	Strengths
AD(H)D Impulsive, temper outbursts, hyperactivity Low frustration threshold Easily distracted or over-focussed	Time management Concentration, attention and self-regulation Team working Insomnia, depression, injury and absence	Creative thinking Visual-spatial reasoning ability Hyper-focus, passion and courage
Autism Social and communication problems Obsessive interests Difference in imagination	Time management Concentration, and coping with more than one task Social and communication difficulties Need for routine	Memory ability, and other 'specialist individual skills' including reading, drawing, music and computation Innovative thinking and detail observation High verbal comprehension ability
Dyslexia Difficulty with words Reading, writing, spelling, speaking, listening	Literacy, memory, organisation, communication and self-esteem, Memory, organisational skills, time management, stress management, literacy Cognitive functioning and social self-esteem Workplace participation in terms of mental functions and social interactions	Entrepreneurialism Creativity and cognitive control Visual reasoning Practical skills, visual-spatial skills and storytelling ability

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Affecting around 4% of the population, ADHD can cause issues with impulse control, attention, and concentration.

## Challenges

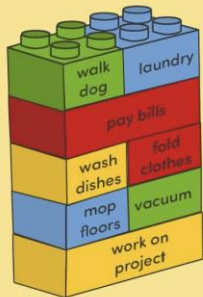
- Time management
- Concentration, attention and self-regulation
- Team working
- Insomnia, depression, injury and absence

## Strengths

- Creative thinking
- Visual-spatial reasoning ability
- Hyper-focus, passion and courage

### To-do lists

Non-ADHD

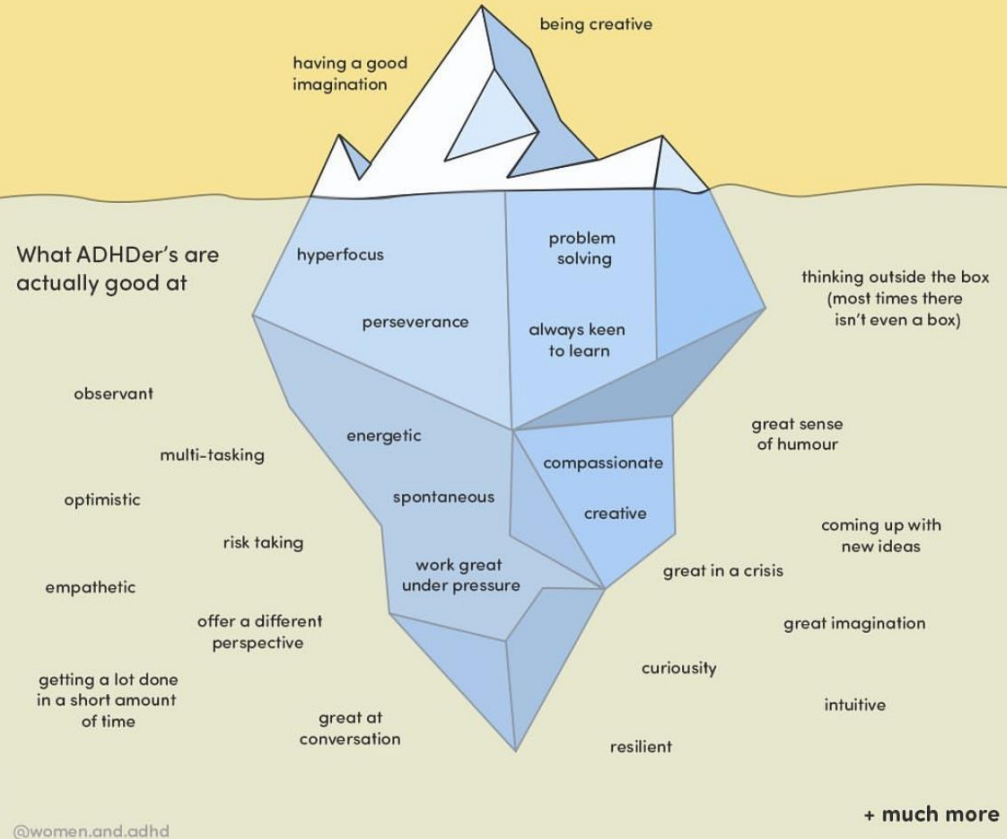


ADHD



### ADHD Strengths Iceberg

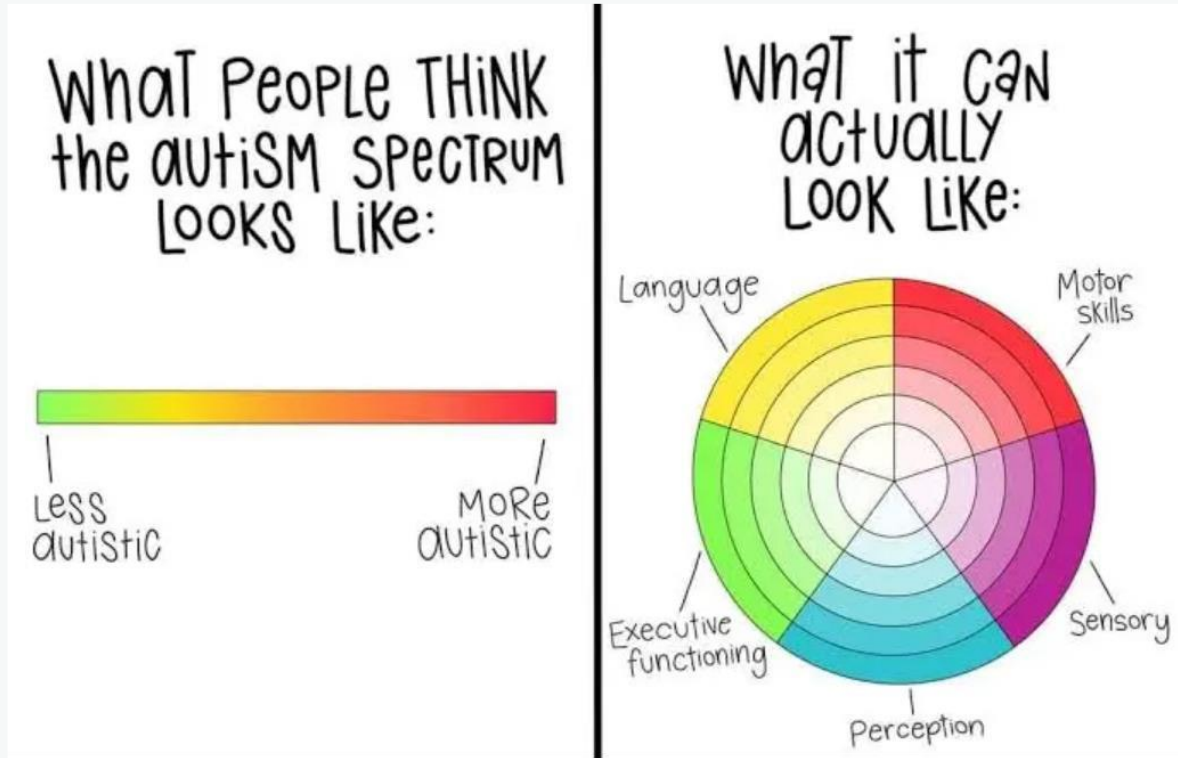
What people think ADHDer's are good at



@women.and.adhd

# Autism

Affecting 1-2% of the population, autism affects the way someone perceives the world. People with autism can find social interaction and change difficult and uncomfortable.



Challenges	Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Time management</li><li>• Concentration, and coping with more than one task</li><li>• Social and communication interaction</li><li>• Need for routine</li><li>• Sensory experiences</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Memory ability, and other 'specialist individual skills' including reading, drawing, music and computation</li><li>• Innovative thinking and detail observation</li><li>• High verbal comprehension ability</li></ul>

Autism is a 'spectrum' which means everyone be impacted in different ways. This does not mean some are mildly and some are severely autistic.

# Dyslexia

It is estimated up to 1 in every 10 people in the UK has some degree of dyslexia. Characterised as a genetic difference in an individuals' ability to learn and process information.

**WHAT IS Dyslexia?**

- Over half of the UK population has a very limited understanding of dyslexia and think it's just about getting letters back to front.
- 1% of corporate managers are dyslexic
- 35% of entrepreneurs are dyslexic
- 20% believe dyslexics would do better if they just worked HARDER
- This is not True
- Dyslexia is NOT tied to IQ
- Your overall IQ can be anywhere in the range. The key difference is the spikes in the profile
- Unlock your hidden genius by compensating for your weak points and learning to play to your strengths

**Dyslexia is about abilities being out of balance**

While dyslexics may struggle with:

- Organisational skills
- Planning and probleming
- Time keeping
- Background noise

They may be brilliant at:

- Connecting ideas
- Thinking outside the box
- 3D dimensional thinking
- Seeing the big picture

It is estimated that **1 IN 10** people have dyslexia

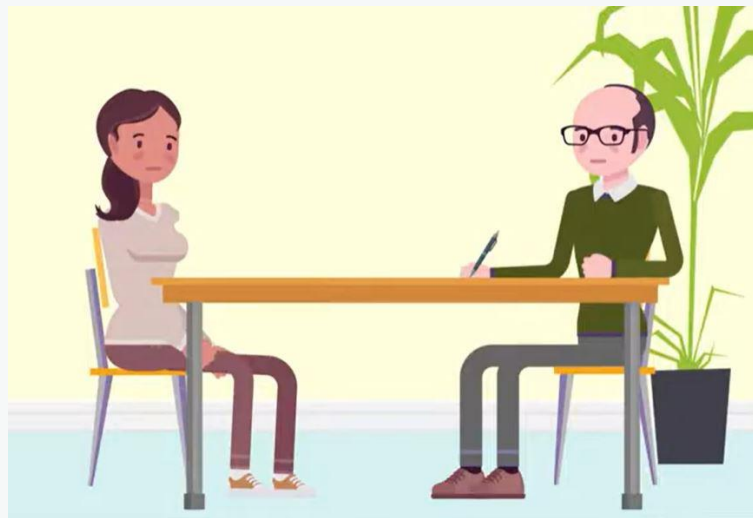
**Einstein was dyslexic**  
IQ = 160\*

Visit [geniuswithin.co.uk](http://geniuswithin.co.uk) to find out more about unlocking your inner genius

Challenges	Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy, memory, organisation, communication and self-esteem,</li> <li>Memory, organisational skills, time management, stress management, literacy</li> <li>Cognitive functioning and social self-esteem</li> <li>Workplace participation in terms of mental functions and social interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entrepreneurialism</li> <li>Creativity and cognitive control</li> <li>Visual reasoning</li> <li>Practical skills, visual-spatial skills and story-telling ability</li> <li>Critical thinkers</li> </ul>



# Features which might make you consider Neurodiversity in your trainee



Repeated exam failure

“Chaotic” trainee – not responding to e mails, eportfolio issues, not finishing tasks

“clunky” conversations – ones that don’t quite have the same flow in discussions

Difficult interpersonal relationships

Timekeeping issues

Hyperfocusing on some tasks

Adverse outcomes at ARCP

Mismatch in one area compared to another

Can manifest later when trainees start having to multitask work and home commitments

Sense of utter overwhelm

Hypersensitivity to noise/light manifesting as specific training difficulties in certain environments

# Stimming

- 'Stimming' refers to the repetitive and sometimes unusual movements or noises, which can help some neurodivergent people manage emotions and cope with overwhelming situations.
- This can include: repetitive body movements or sounds like finger flicking, rocking, eye movements, spinning, chewing, listening to specific songs, or creating noises with their mouth or body.



# Masking

- ‘Masking’, refers to the act of concealing or altering aspects of oneself to better blend in with the social environment.
- While it may on the surface, appear a necessary adaptation to “fit in” with neurotypical culture, the implications for mental health and wellbeing are significant and exhausting and can lead to burnout, poor mental health, and loss of identity
- Examples of masking include copying the tone of voice or body language, rehearsing responses to questions and scripting conversations.



# Masking in the workplace

## ADHD

- Hard to concentrate
- Works long hours
- Checking and rechecking their work

## Autism

- Noise cancelling headphones
- Appears disinterested
- Hiding stimming behaviours

## Dyslexia

- Regular spell checks
- Asks colleagues to proofread

## Outcome

Exhaustion

Unable to perform well

Workplace does not benefit from the positive of the neurodiverse employee

## How can we reduce trainees' need to mask at work

- Acknowledgement of the detrimental impact
- Foster more inclusive environment that supports mental health and neurodivergent staff
- Encourage authenticity
- Open conversations about neurodivergence and mental health

## Is it important to come to a diagnosis?



- A diagnosis can be empowering and validating for many trainees.
- Normalising and recognising **strengths** associated with different forms of neurodiversity can be helpful in discussing career choices
- “Masking” is exhausting and leads to higher burnout rates/mental ill health; enabling a diagnosis can help trainees to stop masking
- Can allow trainees and trainers to tailor training with reasonable adjustments
- 25% extra time in exams

# How neurodiversity can impact a trainee / training

Difficulties initiating spontaneous conversation

Difficulties understanding non verbal cues including facial expressions, bodily gestures, tone of voice etc

Difficulties in understanding complex (often implied) instructions

## Personal Characters

Social awkwardness - difficulties in building interpersonal relationships at work

Abruptly interrupting or terminating conversations

Inappropriate use of vocabulary

Difficulties in abiding by social norms of communication

## Sensory and Environmental

Strong sensory reactions to sights sounds or smells, may present and be perceived as challenging professional behaviours

Need for routines

## Executive Function Deficits, intersectionality and comorbidities

Depending on the core condition as well as intersectionality of neurodiverse conditions

Organisational skills, time management, focus and concentration, reading, writing, arithmetic and calculation, decision making, motor

skills

Psychological vulnerabilities and comorbidities

# How Neurodiversity can impact a trainee / training

## Problems with Colleagues

- a) Alienation of those they work with ('they're not a team player')
- b) A one-sided approach to issues that presents as vigorous persuasion rather than discussions or negotiation ('you can't tell them anything')
- c) Inaccessibility to monitoring/supervision

## Problems with Patients

- a) Giving inadvertent offense by unthinking comment.
- b) A failure to appreciate the patient's perspective and needs.

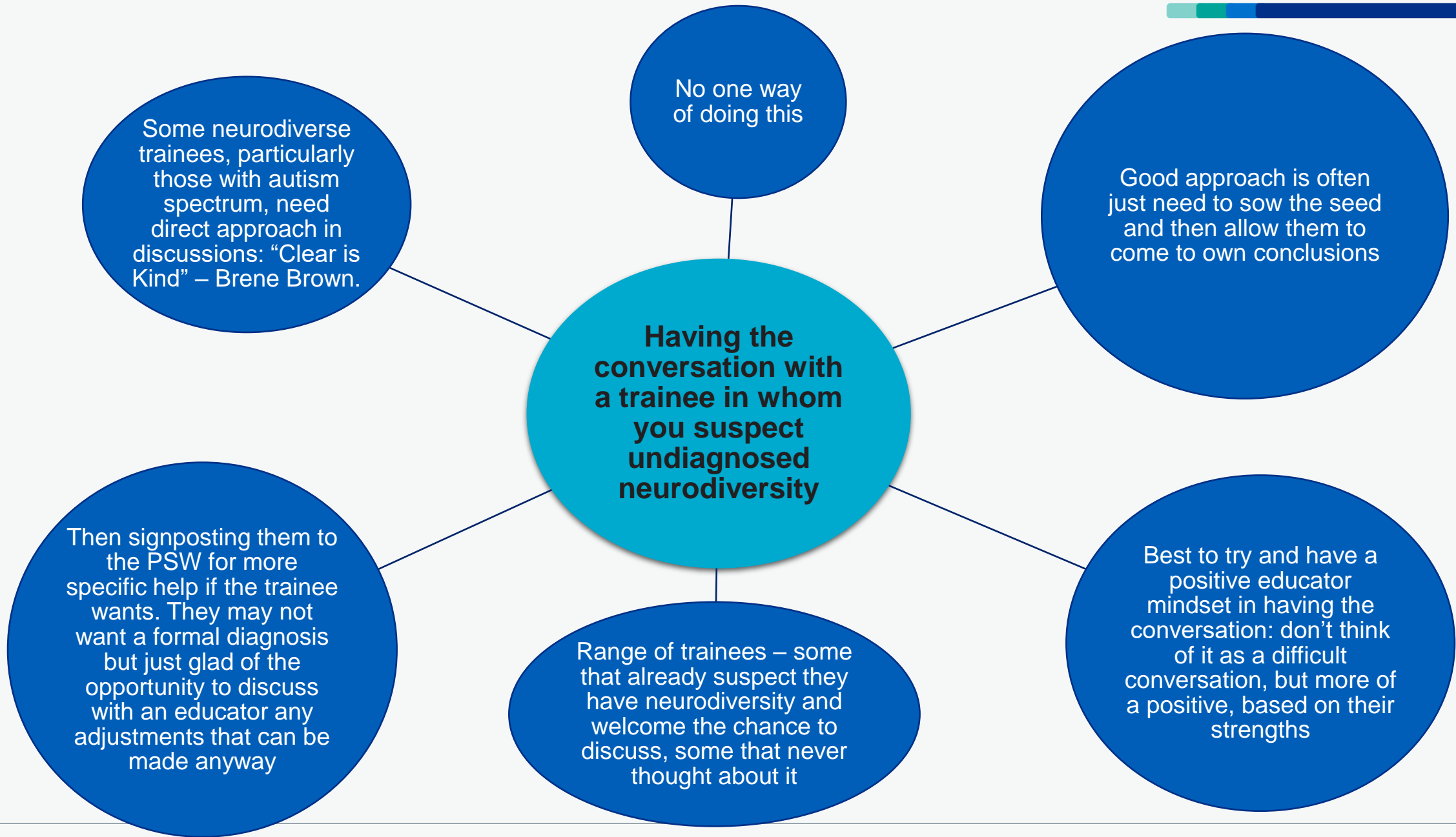
## Idiosyncratic Practice

- a) The single-minded pursuit of a topic which, no matter how unproductive may turn into a feud or quest.
- b) An inflexible adherence to rules/guidelines or, a rigid, over-methodical approach that ignores individual circumstances
- c) A difficulty in organising themselves efficiently

# How would you start a conversation with a trainee you think may be neurodiverse?







# Having the conversation with a trainee in whom you suspect undiagnosed neurodiversity (pt 2)

- Match their language and allow them to dictate the pace and direction of conversation
- Focus on what you have observed in a non-judgemental way and try to lead them into the conversation safely

*How would you think about taking this forward?"*

*Have you ever considered...?*

*One of my roles is to think about all different reasons about why (X) may be difficult for you and what strategies we can put in place*

*Do you think this is something we should discuss in your case?*

*What I've noticed is you are very good at (X), but seem to be struggling with (Y), could I let you know some sources of support that other trainees have found useful.*

# How the PSW can help

- The PSW can provide more specific help if the trainee wants. They may not want a formal diagnosis but just glad of the opportunity to discuss with an educator any adjustments that can be made anyway
- PSW can screen for neurodiversity. We can **diagnose dyslexia** and suggest other conditions - diagnosis need to be made in secondary care.
- PSW can offer coaching to trainees with diagnosed or suspected neurodiversity
- Specialist careers advice



The PSW provider can screen and diagnose:

Dyscalculia

Dyspraxia

Dysgraphia

Dyslexia

Dysnomia

The PSW provider can screen for but would need a further assessment for:

Autism

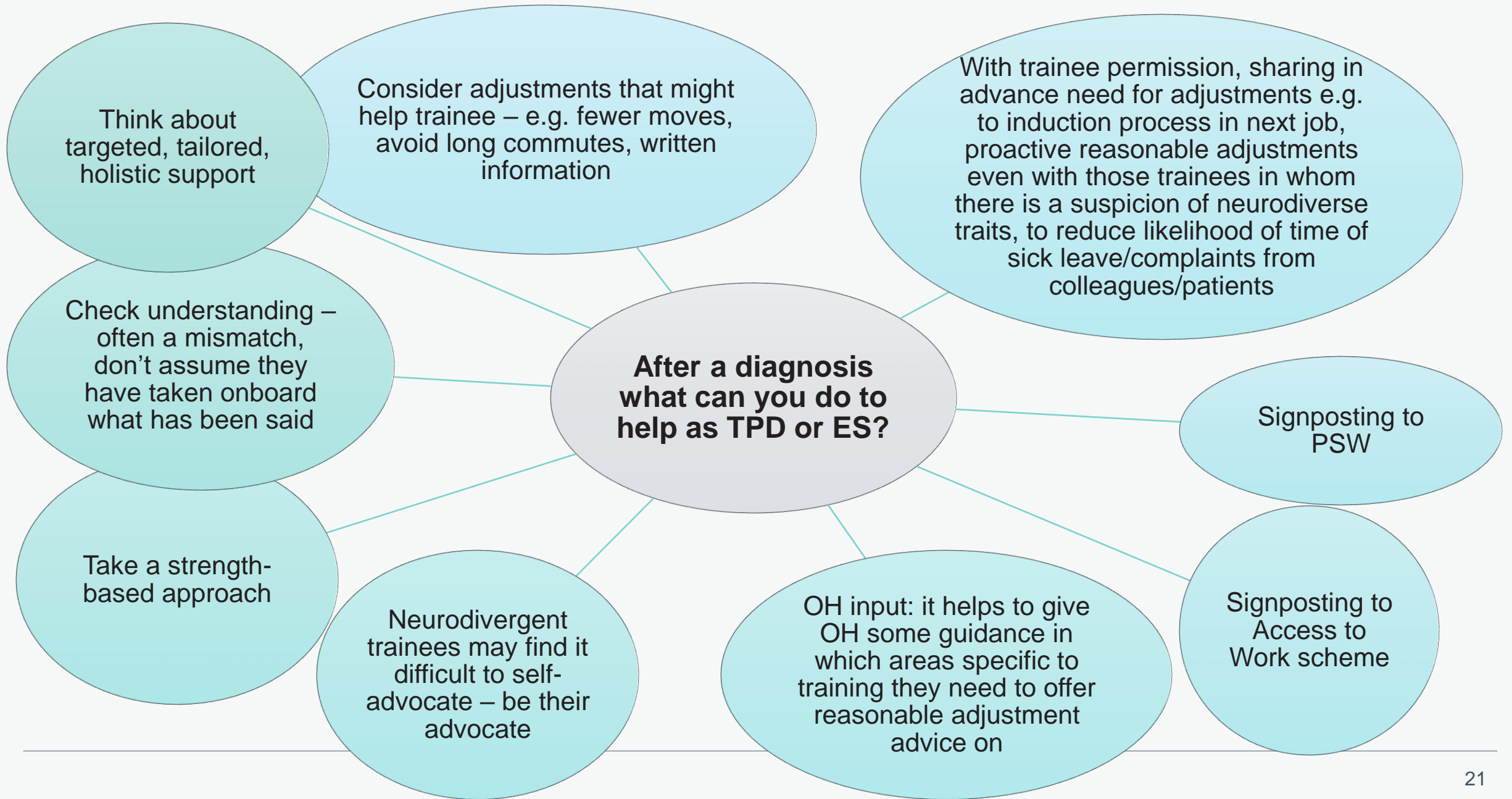
ADHD

PSW Referral forms

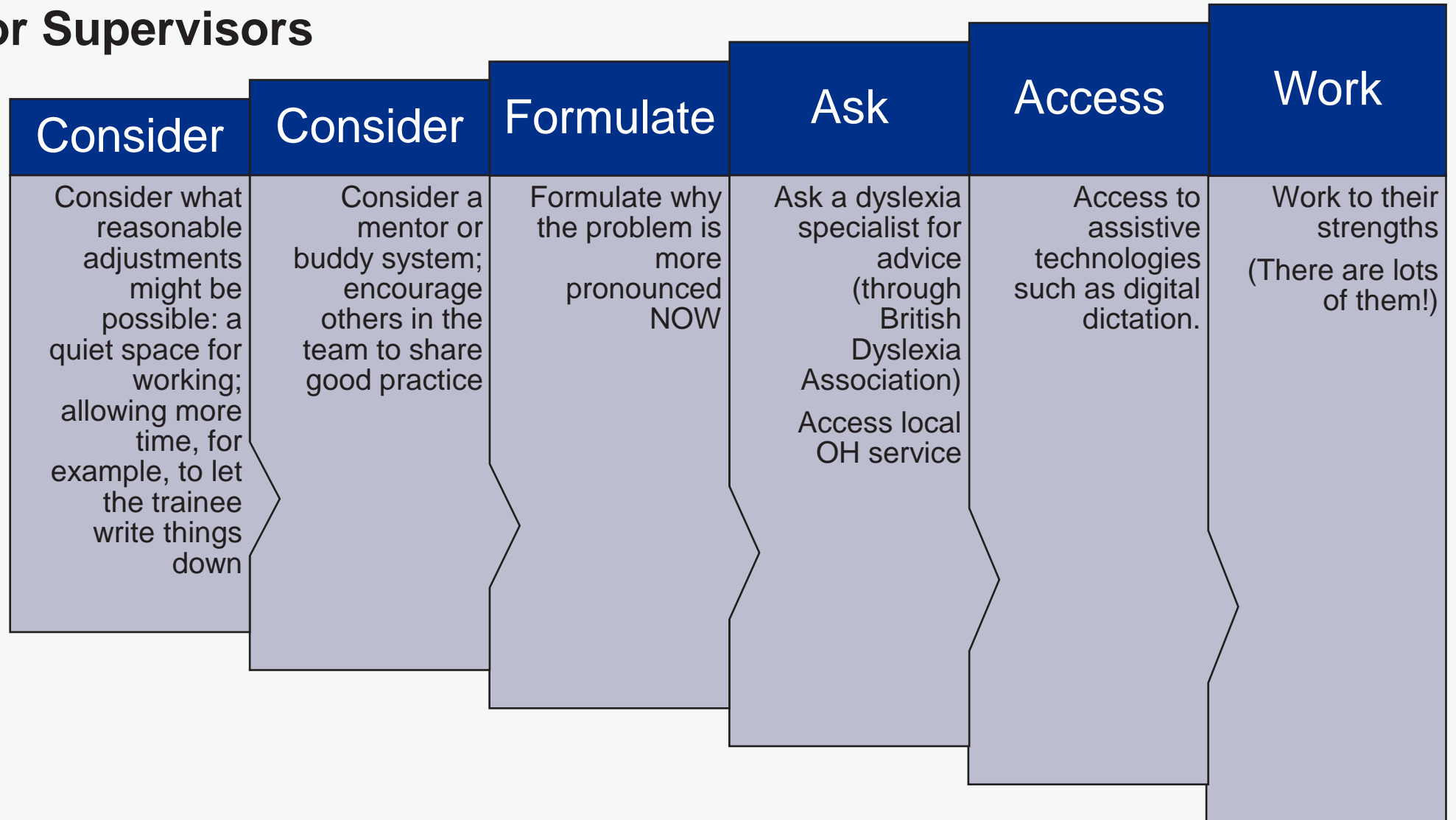


# After a diagnosis what can you do to help as educators?





# Strategies for Supervisors



# Support at work

Consider:

What can you do to each of these to support the ND individual AND everyone else?



The environment



The individual



The risk

# Tips from one of our trainees:



Suggest ND trainees buddy up with someone for presentations



Empower them to be able to say 'no' to additional tasks



Try to help them to set boundaries



Recognise the impact of masking on stress



# TPDs/ARCP panels

Not uncommon for a neurodiverse trainee to get an adverse outcome including outcome 4

Neurodiversity is considered a disability legally, so need to be sure that all reasonable adjustments have been offered. If a neurodiverse diagnosis is made late on, consider whether pausing training to enable adjustments/coaching strategy implementation would be helpful

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/welcome-and-valued>



Consider whether delays to next attempt at professional exams is needed whilst adjustments/coaching put in place

Have 'standard' reasonable adjustments been offered (LTFT, Adjustment to work pattern, OH, Access to Work, PSW referral)?

# Access to Work

- Funded by the Department of Work and Pensions
- <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>
- Access to Work could give you a grant to help pay for things like:
  - specialist equipment and assistive software
  - support workers, like a BSL interpreter, a job coach or a travel buddy
  - costs of travelling to work, if you cannot use public transport
  - adaptations to your vehicle so you can get to work
  - physical changes to your workplace
  - Coaching for ND individual and sessions for their team around ND
- **Trainee has to self-refer**
- **(More info on PSW website)**



# Resources

- ‘Welcomed and Valued’ provides GMC guidance on how medical schools and post-graduate educators can support disabled trainees: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/welcomed-and-valued>
- Autistic Doctors International <https://autisticdoctorsinternational.com/>
- Examples of reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent conditions [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/sites/careers/files/neurodiversity\\_-\\_reasonable\\_adjustments\\_.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/sites/careers/files/neurodiversity_-_reasonable_adjustments_.pdf)
- Examples of reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent conditions [https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/Disability%20TG/Reasonable\\_Adjustments\\_-\\_Neurodiversity.pdf](https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/Disability%20TG/Reasonable_Adjustments_-_Neurodiversity.pdf)
- Guidance on applying for access to work <https://diversityandability.com/nhs-toolkit/health-professionals-atw/>
- AxsPassport a place to create a profile of reasonable adjustments <https://axs-passport.co/>

# Resources : videos and interesting links

- Jessica McCabe: What is ADHD <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMWtGozn5jU>
- Jessica McCabe website: “How to ADHD” <https://howtoadhd.com/>
- ADHD Foundation: <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>
- Autism Central - new centralised support for parents and carers of autistic adults and children, with information about autism and regional hubs that can provide courses and 1:1 support to families and carers: <https://www.autismcentral.org.uk/>
- See Dyslexia Differently <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11r7CFIK2sc>
- British Dyslexia Association (also useful information about dyscalculia): <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>
- Loren Snow: Reasonable Adjustments for autistic people (the importance of regular breaks): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Xv4HnFQDx4>
- Purple Ella - an autistic vlogger with excellent videos about all aspects of autism: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzske-KMAJYQn84rz6oD\\_yA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzske-KMAJYQn84rz6oD_yA)
- Can you make it to the end (video representing what sensory overload can feel like for some autistic people): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM>
- Inside our autistic minds - excellent programme by Chris Packham, with videos by 4 autistic people helping those around them to understand their experiences: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0f2cxgn>

# Thank you and any questions?

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