

Don't forget me! How to make staff-student collaboration accessible and inclusive for Neurodivergent and Disabled individuals

Corben Marrs, (They/Them)



Overview

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Overview of Disability and Neurodiversity

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An abstract graphic design on a light cream background. It features several thick, rounded lines in green, blue, and red. A green line enters from the left, curves down, and then continues horizontally. A blue line enters from the bottom, curves up, and then continues horizontally, overlapping the green line. A red line enters from the top right and curves down. There are two small black dots: one on the green line and one on the blue line. A large orange circle is positioned on the left side of the image.

Introduction



Me, here and now

President

D&NS



Student

Environmental Science

1872



Speaker

LGBT+ Educators Conference

LGBT+
Educators'
Conference



Corben

"A pleasure to teach"





Projects, past and present.

Autism Understood

Spectrum Gaming



Campus Accessibility Improvements

Aberystwyth University

Trans and GNC guidance

National Education Union

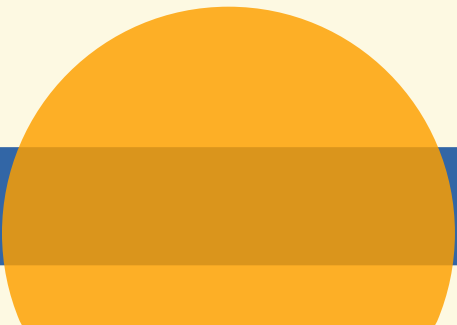


Models of Disability

Still learning and growing

**“I am no longer accepting
the things I cannot change. I
am changing the things I
cannot accept”**

Angela Davis – calling us to fight for social change





Previously

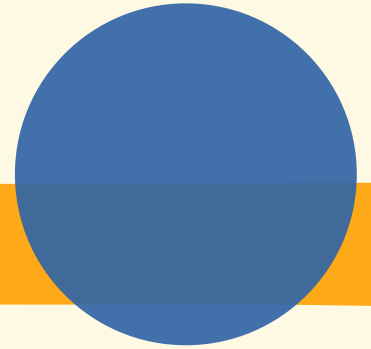
- **Lack of personal understanding led to increased difficulties**
- **My experience in education**
- **Lack of community understanding**
- **Other people's experiences prior to university**
- **A lot of us are coming in with negative prior experiences**





At University

- **Found my community, both in the university and locally**
- **Self education around neurodiversity and disability makes self accommodations easier**
- **Personally, university much easier for me as a learner than previous educational settings**
- **Other student's experiences**
 - **Some have loved it**
 - **Others have struggled quite a bit**
 - **Aberystwyth University is very supportive of its neurodivergent and disabled students on the whole.**





Things I thought I would never do

- **Get GCSE's and A levels**
- **Leave home**
- **Attend University**
- **Do Fieldwork**
- **Consistently Cook My Own Food**
- **Live independently**
- **Have meaningful friends**
- **So much more**

- **All possible because of accommodations, community and yes, I am privileged to be where I am today.**



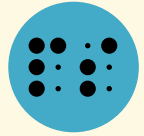
**“Coming to university
is the best thing that
has happened to me
thus far, it saved me”**

My personal view on my experience



The background is a solid cream color. On the left, a thick green line enters from the top, curves 90 degrees down, and then continues horizontally to the right. A small black dot is located on the green line just before it turns horizontal. Below the horizontal green line, a thick blue line enters from the bottom, curves 90 degrees up, and then continues horizontally to the right, overlapping the green line. A second small black dot is located on the blue line just before it turns horizontal. To the left of the green line, there is a large, solid orange circle. In the top right corner, a thick red line enters from the top, curves 90 degrees down, and then continues horizontally to the right.

Neurodiversity and Disability Overview



Defining Disability?

- **What do you think?**
- **Well, the 2010 equalities act states “You’re disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.”**
- **However...**



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Disability is Diverse!

When we say **Disability** is diverse, we mean:

Disabled
by
Society



Disability has no one appearance



There is no one experience



No two people are the same



Some Disabilities are visible



Some are non-visible



Disability can be permanent



Or it can be temporary



Disability is intersectional



It is one piece of our identity



Disability is human



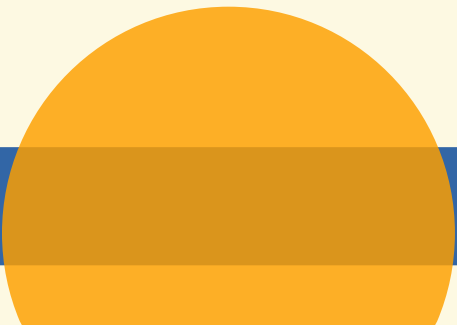
There is no right way to be Disabled



And no wrong way to be

Does being neurodivergent mean you're disabled?

Not a simple yes or no



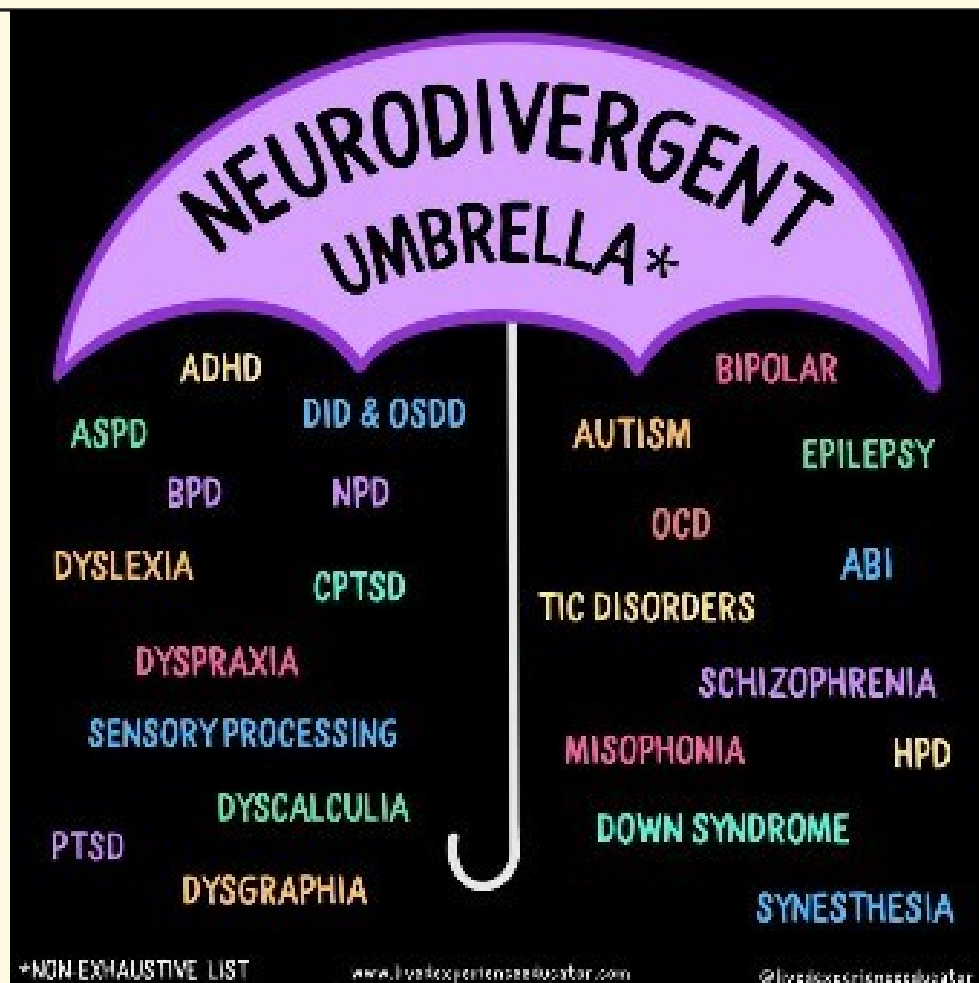


Defining Neurodiversity?

- **What do you think?**
- **All brains are different, so, are we all neurodivergent? Not quite.**
- **“some groups of people have significant shared differences in their experience and reactions compared to most people... the group is described as neurodivergent” (National Autistic Society)**



Some Neurodivergent Groups





Neurodiversity and me

AuDHD

**ASD/
ASC**

**ADHD
+ RSD**

Dyslexia

**(TW)
SPD**

Me!

- **Sensory Avoidance**
- **Sensory Seeking**

- **Difficulty Focusing**
- **Social Difficulty**
- **Short time-period work**

- **Dysgraphic Traits**
- **Spelling Issues**

- **Skin Picking Disorder**
- **Increases with Anxiety**

- **All bundled together**
- **I am just me! (cheesy, I know)**



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Ableism

Ableism Is:



Ingrained In
Systems



Embedded In
Society



Tangled In
Language



Ever
Present



Normalised
In Culture



Hidden In
Plain Sight



A Daily
Struggle



A Barrier To
Equality



Shaped By
Ignorance



Constantly
Reinforced



Deeply
Rooted



Systemic
Oppression

Don't Say The Ableist Thing When We Self-Identify:



You Don't
Look It



You Are
Too Young



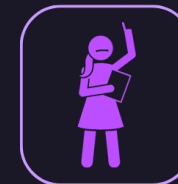
But You're
Verbal



But You
Can See



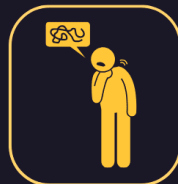
But You
Can Hear



You Can't
Be



You Don't
Act Like It



You Don't
Sound It



But You
Can Walk



But You Were
Fine Yesterday



Everyone Gets
Tired



You're Looking
For Attention



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Internalised Ableism

12 Things We Need to Know About **Internalised Ableism**

Disabled
By Society



It's learnt,
not innate



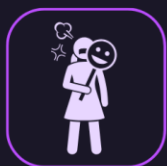
It makes us feel like
we're the problem



It tells us to
hide our needs



It is fueled
by ableism



It creates shame
and guilt



It pushes us to
'prove' ourselves



It can harm
relationships



It affects our
self worth



It can silence
disabled people



It can impact
mental health



It affects access
and advocacy



It can be
unlearned

12 ways your **internalised ableism** might be showing up:

Disabled
By Society



Burning out to
prove something



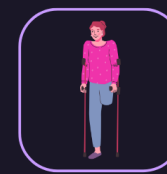
Downplaying
access needs



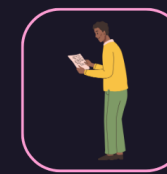
Feeling guilty
for resting



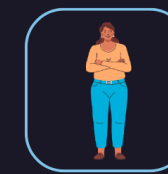
Over-apologising
for existing



Comparing
yourself to others



Rejecting support
or adjustments



Feeling ashamed
of your diagnosis



Believing you're 'not
Disabled enough'



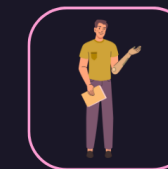
Masking pain or
fatigue to fit in



Seeing help as
a weakness



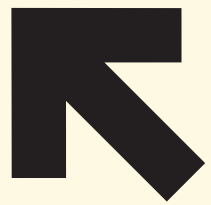
Silencing yourself
in conversations



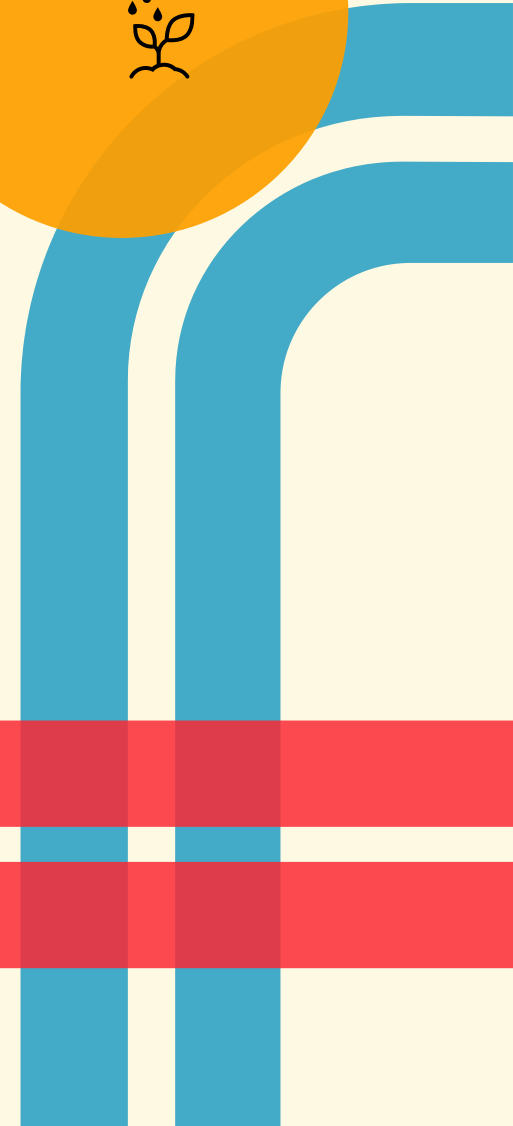
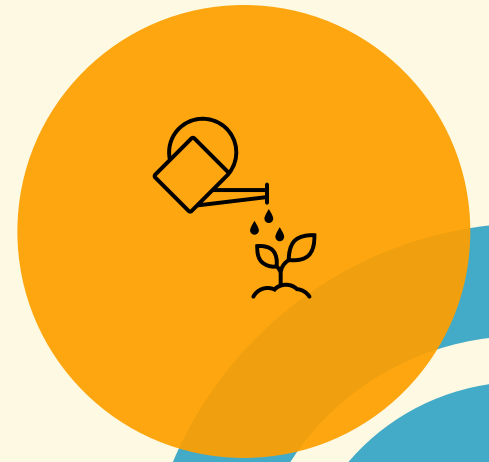
Equating productivity
with worth



(Corben, drink water)



Mini Break



An abstract graphic design on a light cream background. It features several thick, rounded lines in green, blue, and red. A green line starts from the left, curves down, and then continues horizontally. A blue line starts from the bottom, curves up, and then continues horizontally, overlapping the green line. A red line starts from the top right and curves down. There are two small black dots: one on the green line and one on the blue line. A large orange circle is positioned on the left side of the image.

Concepts in Action



How it works



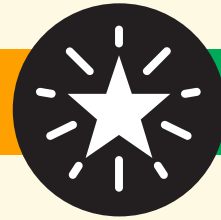
Concept



Information



Example



Action



Takeaway



1

Sensory Avoidance

- **Actions taken to reduce input stimuli due to overwhelming situation**
- **Can be persistent (e.g. wearing comfy clothes) or situational (e.g. ear defenders)**
- **Each person will have a unique sensory profile, that can change over time**



How it works



Concept

**Sensory
Avoidance**

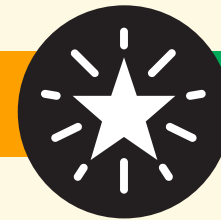


Information

**What is sensory
avoidance**



Example



Action



Takeaway



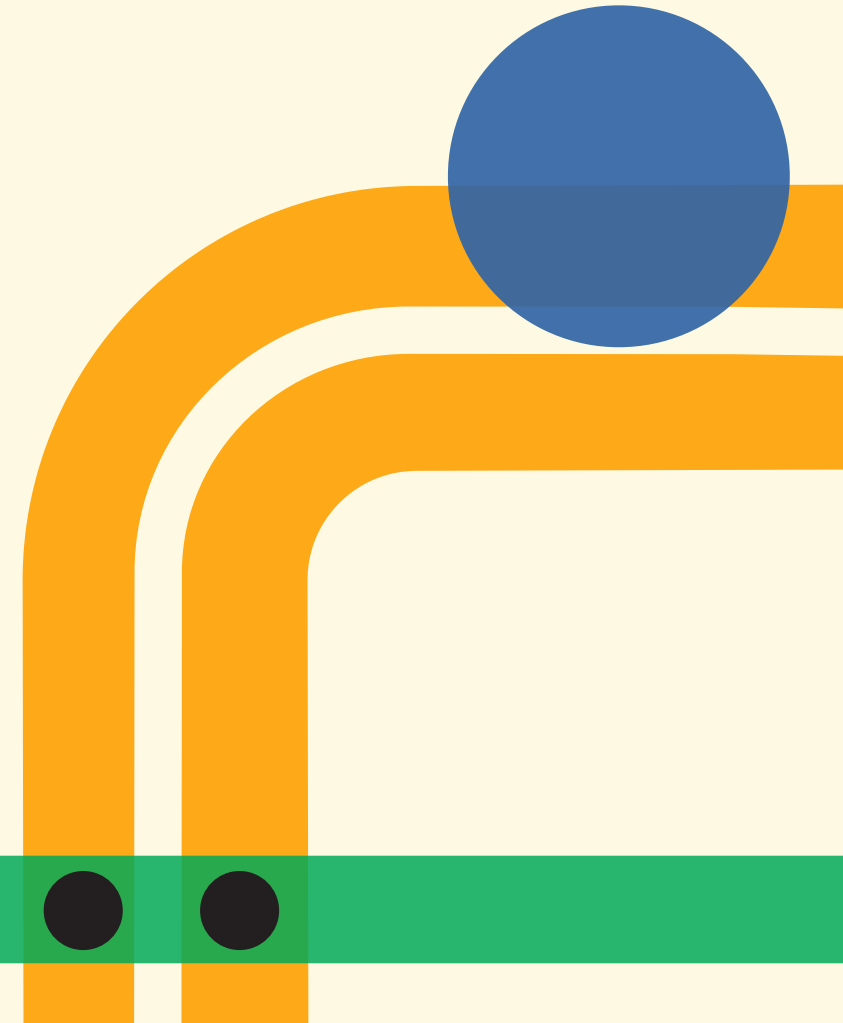
1

Sensory Avoidance

I am wearing my ear defenders in a lecture because its too noisy and I am irritated by the bright lights.

You could

- **Turn the speakers down**
- **Use the microphone as to not need to shout**
- **Put the lighting into lecture mode**
- **Report any speaker or projector issues to relevant team e.g. humming speakers**





How it works



Concept
**Sensory
Avoidance**



Information
**What is sensory
avoidance**



Example
Me in a lecture



Action
**Think about
noise and light
levels**



Takeaway

. Consider potential triggers before starting to lecture (checklist?)

. Report any issues ASAP, even if they seem minor

If you want to go the extra mile + be a super star, talk to the individual quickly at the end and see if you can do anything to make the sessions more accessible.





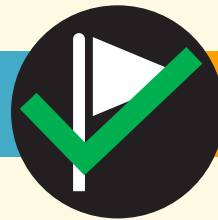
How it works



Concept
**Sensory
Avoidance**



Information
**What is sensory
avoidance**



Example
Me in a lecture



Action
**Think about
noise and light
levels**



Takeaway
**Report issues
and make a
checklist**



2

Processing verbal instructions

- **Some people struggle to process verbal instructions, I personally do**
- **Can lead to frustration as well as falling behind on a task**



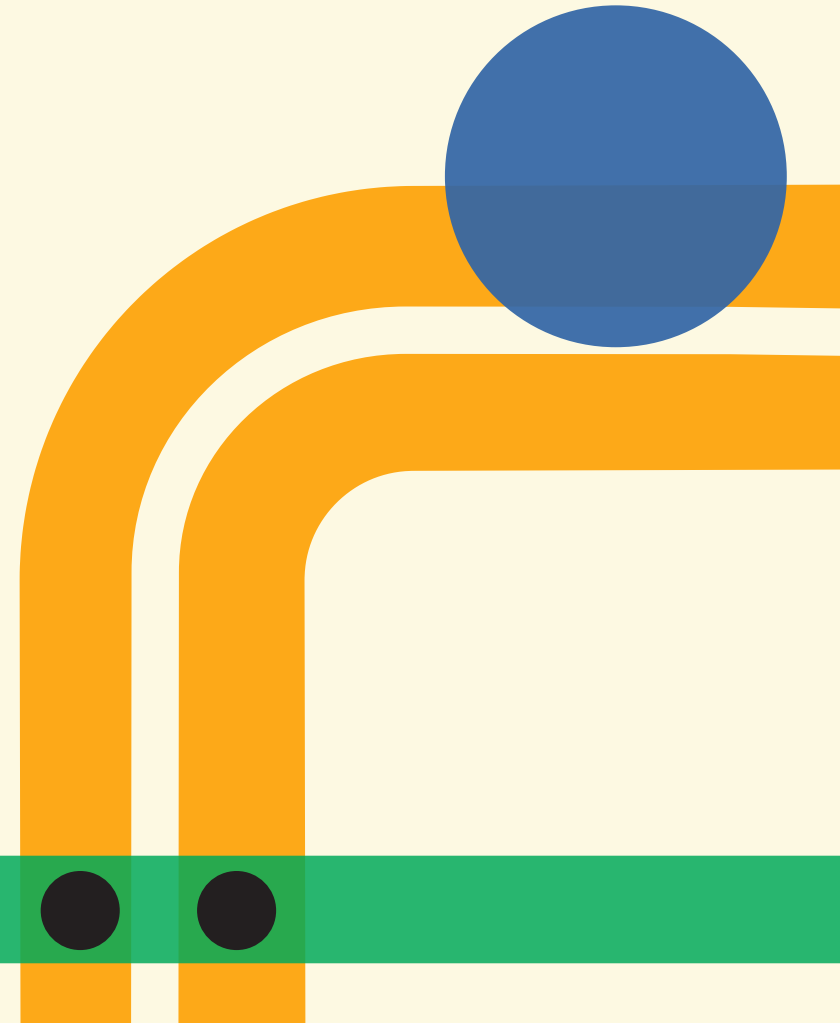
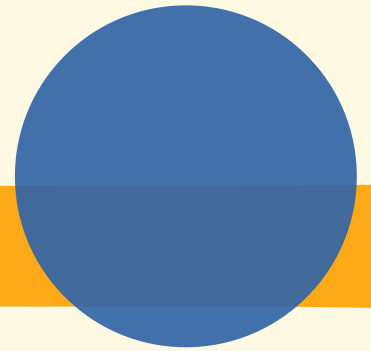
2

Processing verbal instructions

I am in a workshop being told how to use a new piece of software, I cannot keep up with the verbal instructions being given.

You could

- **Over to you!**



- . Have a typed copy of instructions**
- . Work through the workshop step by step**
- . Ask before continuing to see where the class is up to**

Everyone will have a different preference on how to receive instruction, but these are some good general guidelines





3

Group Work

- **Many potential challenges with group work**
- **Let's do this as a worked example together**



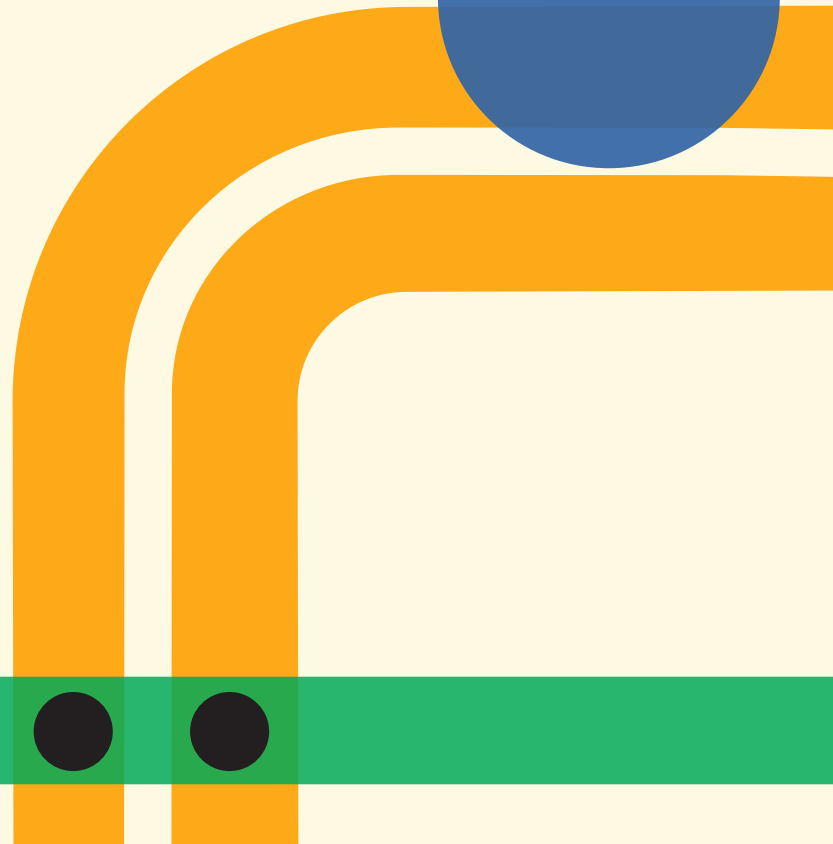
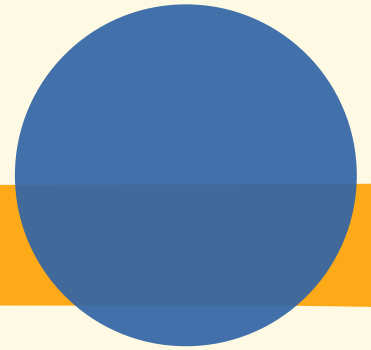
3

Group Work

First, what are some issues an individual might face with group work

Secondly, what do you think might help reduce, redirect or remove these issues.

No wrong answers and judgement free zone 😊





Educate and Initiate

Educate

- **Learn more about Neurodiversity and Disability**
 - **Potential triggers and barriers (noise, lack of power sockets)**
 - **Difficulty accessing teaching (verbal instructions, physical barriers)**
 - **More detailed e.g. stimming, echolalia, hyperphantasia, PMDD.**
 - **The more the merrier**

Initiate

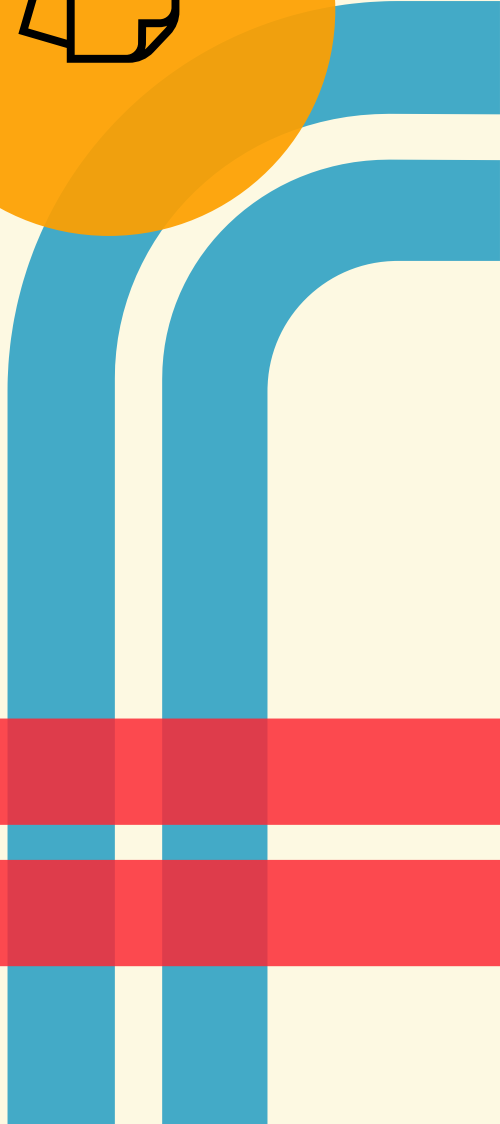
- **Using your knowledge, identify potential issues**
- **Fix issues or report them to be fixed**
- **It's a learning process, don't be too hard on yourself if it doesn't work first time**
- **Not everything can be fixed immediately, and that's okay (this is when community is key).**



The proof is in the pudding

- **This is my method!**
- **I use the same process to deal with the challenges I experience day to day**
- **Its works well for me and has made a positive impact on my life**





Quick Notes



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Accessibility and Accommodations

Accessibility is:

Disabled
By Society



Designed for everyone
from the start



Everyone's responsibility
not just one individual



Proactively removes
barriers



Focused on preventing
and removing barriers



Built into environments,
products, and services



Examples: Accessible
websites, ramps, captions

Adjustments / Accommodations are:



Tailored to
individual needs



Made after identifying
specific barriers



Tools and support to
help day to day



Temporary or situational
changes



Equitable, recognises
individual circumstances



Examples: Extra time,
interpreters, screen reader



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Student and STAFF collaboration

- **May sounds obvious, but its not just students who we need to consider.**
- **Collaborative work needs to be accessible for all involved, including end user (for example, remember alt-text or large print options).**
- **Where possible, be open to new ways of working and thinking about collaboration. (e.g. walking and talking)**





Further Reading



Autism Understood



National Autistic Society



Life On The Bridge



**Disabled by Society
(Book Ordered!)**



Tourettes Action



The British Dyslexic Association



ADHD UK



Accessibility and Inclusion Team



YouTubers I like

candycourn

Advocacy



Blair Imani

Smarter in Seconds web show

Kaelynn Partlow

Amazing Explainer

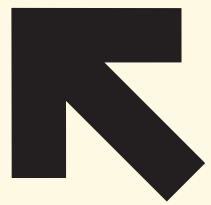


Pixi-Gags

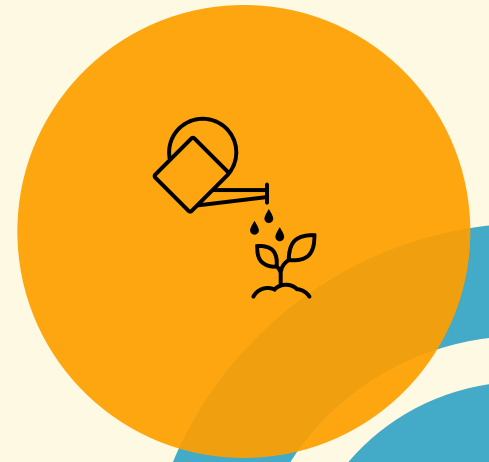
Cute Animations

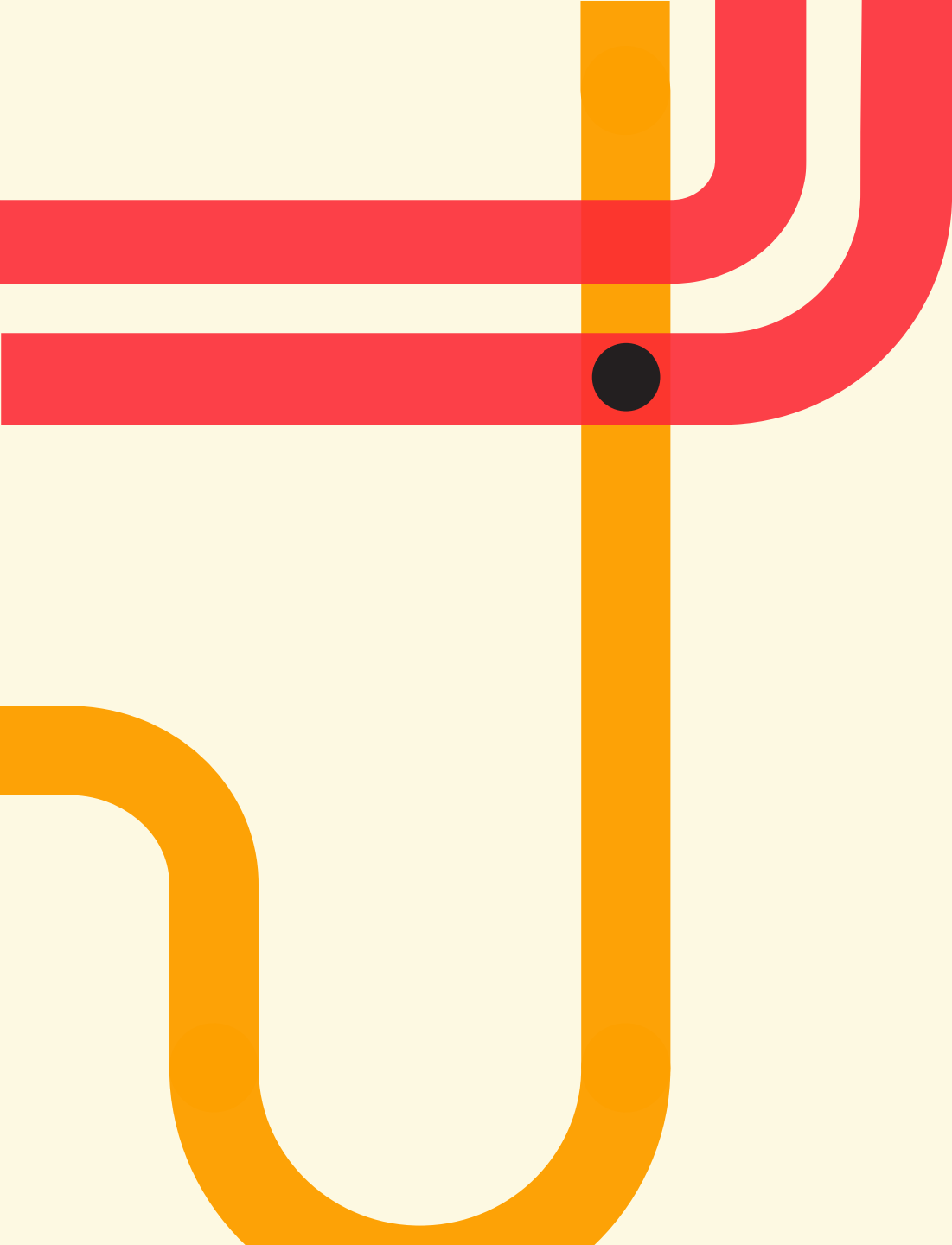


(Corben, drink water)



Mini Break



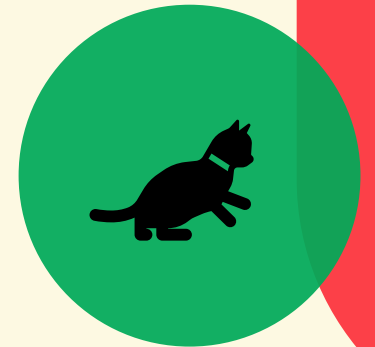


Thank you!

Corben Marrs

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A decorative graphic on a light cream background. It features a red line in the top right corner, a green line on the left and bottom, and a blue line on the bottom right. A yellow circle with a black question mark is on the left. Two black dots are on the green line.

Don't be shy, you can ask anything!

Q and A