

# Creating Inclusivity for Autistic & Neurodivergent Individuals

*6 Key Principles to Inform Action*

Presented by Amy Tatterton



Family  
Resource  
Centres



**Sinneave**  
FAMILY FOUNDATION



# A little bit about me



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The Sinneave Family Foundation (Sinneave) is an operating foundation based in Calgary, Alberta that aims to improve education, employment and housing outcomes for Autistic youth and adults.



**We work with individuals, communities, and organizations to:**

- Plan for the future and identify goals
- Develop innovative approaches tailored to needs
- Facilitate learning opportunities that support goal achievement
- Cultivate autism-informed and knowledgeable communities
- Enhance access to system supports



**Thriving in Adulthood**  
both independently and within the community

**To help achieve life goals related to:**



**Autistic Youth**  
facing major life transitions



# A Note About Language

- **Avoid terms such as, “living with autism”.**  
→ Autism is not a roommate, but part of one’s identity.
- **Avoid phrases such as: “suffers from” or “is a victim of autism”.**
- **Avoid positioning autism as a burden.**  
→ Autism comes with challenges, as well as strengths.
- **“High-functioning” is not accurate or appropriate.**  
→ Rather, focus on high or low “support needs”
- **“Autistic person” is the preferred term by most Autistic Canadians.**



# What is Neurodiversity?



**Neuro** = neurology,  
the brain, and  
how it works

**Diversity** =  
difference



# Examples of neurodiversity

Hyperlexia	Synesthesia and Aphantasia	Intellectual/Cognitive Differences
Tourette Syndrome	Sensory Processing Differences	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)	Meares-Irlen Syndrome	Autism
Epilepsy	Giftedness	Dys-lexia, -praxia, -calculia, -graphia

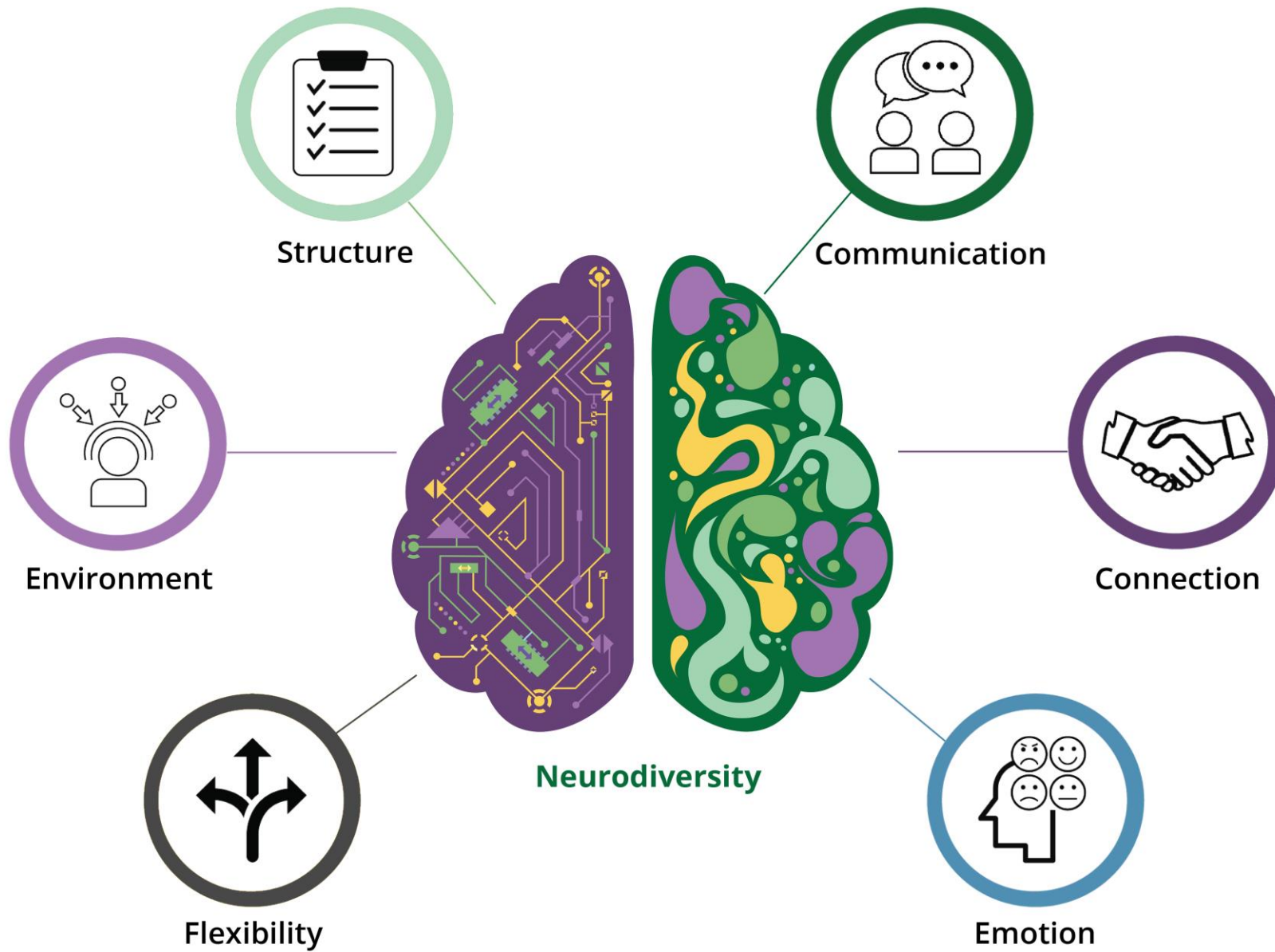


1 in 5 people identify as neurodivergent 

1 in 50 are autistic   





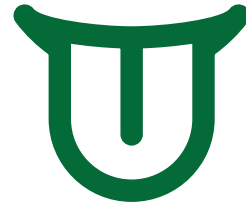





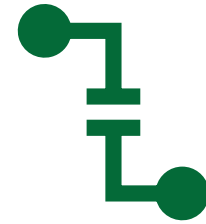
# Communication



Communication  
changes based on the  
people communicating



Much of our  
communication is  
based on non-verbals  
(context, tone, gestures)



As a result,  
communication  
breakdowns happen  
easily





## Communication

### Takeaways

Be clear and specific; say what you mean and mean what you say

Ask about how people want to communicate (verbal, written, etc.)

Don't assume people understand you

Give time

<p><b>“Let’s meet again in-person in two weeks. At that time, we will finish this task and send it to our boss to review.</b></p> <p><b>I will send you an email that summarizes our meeting today, what the next steps are, and who is responsible for doing which tasks.”</b></p>	<p><b>“You can come to my office and ask questions if my door is open.</b></p> <p><b>If my door is closed, it means I am in a meeting and not available.</b></p> <p><b>Please come at a different time, or send an email, and I can answer your question”</b></p>	<p><b>“I want to make sure this is clear, what questions I can answer right now?</b></p> <p><b>If you have questions later, send me an email.”</b></p>	<p><b>“Your tone and body language makes me think that you are upset, is that true? Can I help you with something?”</b></p>
<p>“Let’s circle back later and tie a bow on this.”</p>	<p>“I have an open-door policy, stop by whenever”</p>	<p>“Got it?”</p>	<p>“Are you ok?”</p>



# Structure



Structured environments help create success



They make expectations clear



Structure helps people to adapt to change



## Structure


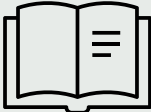


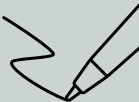


### Takeaways

Provide instructions in writing, as well as verbal

Use plain language

Ask people how much structure works for them

Plan together how to add needed structure

Lack of Structure	Structure	
Every day, class starts with writing in our agendas.	Arrive to school	
.....	Bring agenda into classroom	
	10 minutes	
	Agenda prompt written on board	
	Copy prompt	
	Write your own 1-3 sentences, or draw a picture	
	Questions? Ask a friend	





# Emotion



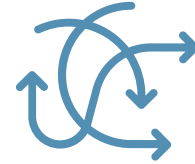
There can be a difference between emotion/situation.



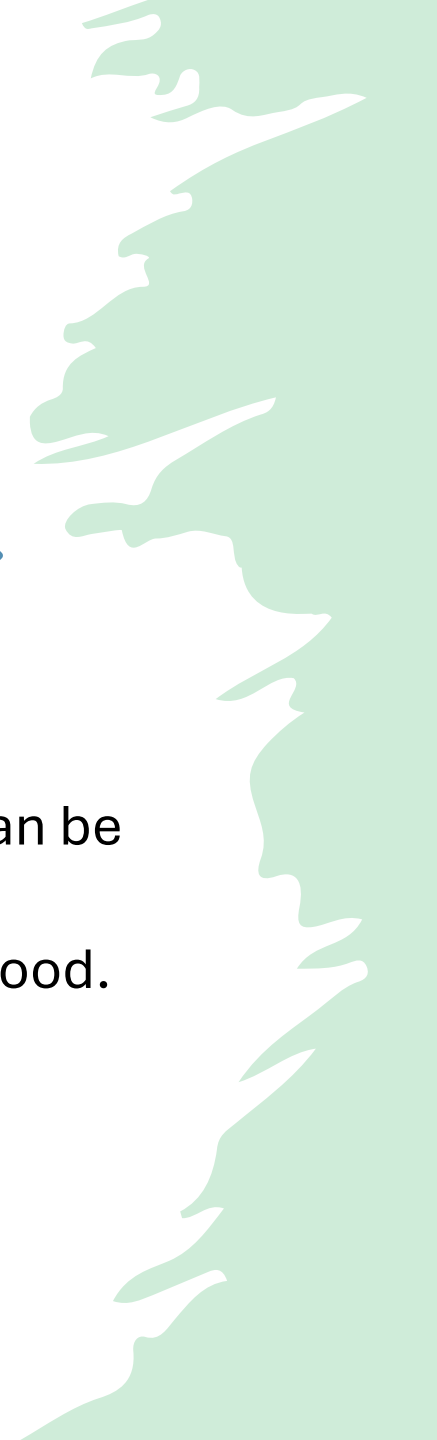
Many differences in emotional expression (culture, norms).



Often, we see emotions we were not expecting.



Emotions can be easily misunderstood.







## Emotion

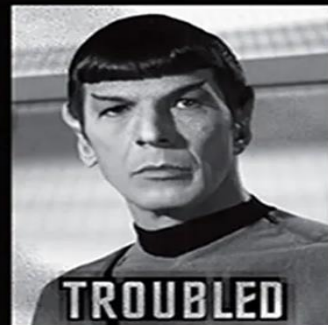
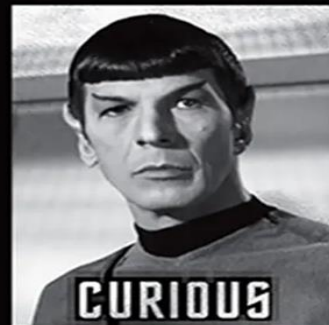
### Takeaways

Don't take it personally.

Be curious.

Provide time and space.

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**STAR TREK**



# Takeaways from 6 Principles



## Communication

- **Ask** about preferred methods of communication
- Check-In to ensure the message is understood
- Be specific and concrete
- Provide **time** to think



## Connection

- Be **curious**; **ask** people what they are thinking
- Don't judge; assume good intent
- Continue to include everyone
- Don't take it **personally**



## Emotion

- Be **curious**
- Don't take it **personally**
- Provide **time** and space



## Environment

- **Ask** about sensory sensitivities
- Take concerns seriously
- Develop a plan together
- Provide information & encourage planning



## Structure

- Use of different formats to promote structure
- **Ask** about types of structure that work for the person
- Plan together how to add needed structure



## Flexibility

- Provide advanced warning of change
- Offer clear explanations for the change
- Adapting to change takes **time**
- Brainstorm together different ways of adapting



# Questions & Discussion



[www.sinneavefoundation.org](http://www.sinneavefoundation.org)

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