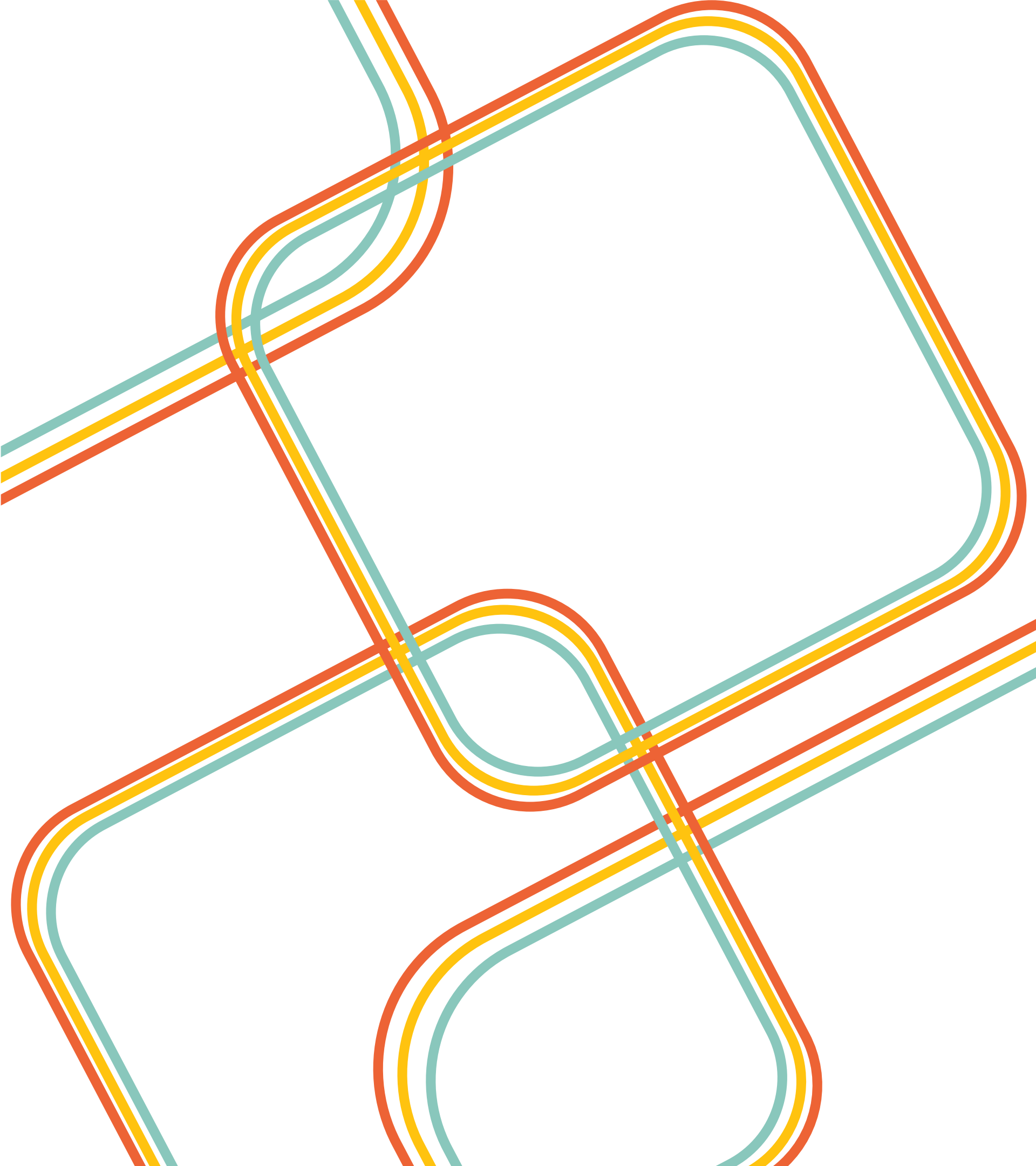




COACHING A NEURODIVERSE TEAM

A practical guide
for team coaches

Not a problem to fix
but a team to design for

WHAT WE'LL COVER:

Background: Many coaches do not feel they have the right knowledge about neurodiversity to work with teams with neurodivergent members.

In this workshop: What is neurodiversity? How it shows up. What to do and not to do. Panel talk with lived experience of these neurotypes.

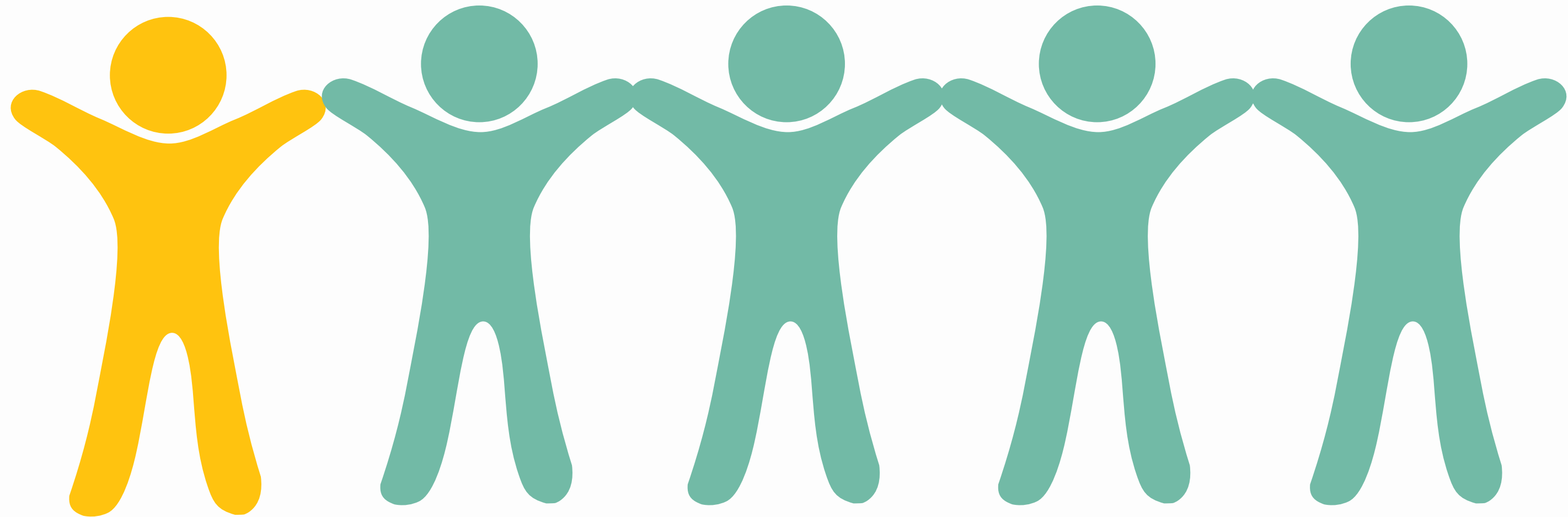
Takeaways: Basic understanding of neurodiversity and practical tips for coaches and others on how to work in ways that benefit all types of brains.



WHY THIS MATTERS

Over 20% or **1 in 5 of the population is neurodivergent.**

Statistically, that means in team or group coaching,
one or more participants has a neurodiversity.



Coaching and facilitation programs rarely teach how to
support neurodiversity in team or group settings.



TWO FRAMING NOTES BEFORE WE START

You do not have a “problem.”

You have a team with different
nervous systems.

That is a strength. It is also
work.

TWO FRAMING NOTES BEFORE WE START

**These are patterns, not
diagnoses.**

None of this applies to every
person.

Think of this as a road map —
not a label.



WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

People's brains work in different ways. Just as we all look different on the outside, our brains process, learn, and respond differently on the inside.

Neurodiversity is NOT about being

- ✗ Broken
- ✗ Less capable
- ✗ Something to fix

It IS about

- ✓ Different strengths and challenges
- ✓ Different ways of processing the world
- ✓ Valuable diversity of thinking

The Shift in Thinking: Neurotypical vs Neurodivergent

“Neurotypical” means people with brains that function the way that society expects.

With neurodivergent team members, instead of asking "What's wrong with this person?" we ask

"What strengths do they bring? & How can we set them up for success?"

THE HIDDEN RISK: MASKING & BURNOUT

Masking is the effort neurodivergent people make to appear neurotypical:

- monitoring behaviour
- suppressing instincts
- performing social scripts

It is exhausting and unsustainable.





THE HIDDEN RISK: MASKING & BURNOUT

What it looks like

- High performer who suddenly crashes.
- A team that looks fine, until it doesn't.
- Consistent over-delivery followed by absence or sharp withdrawal.

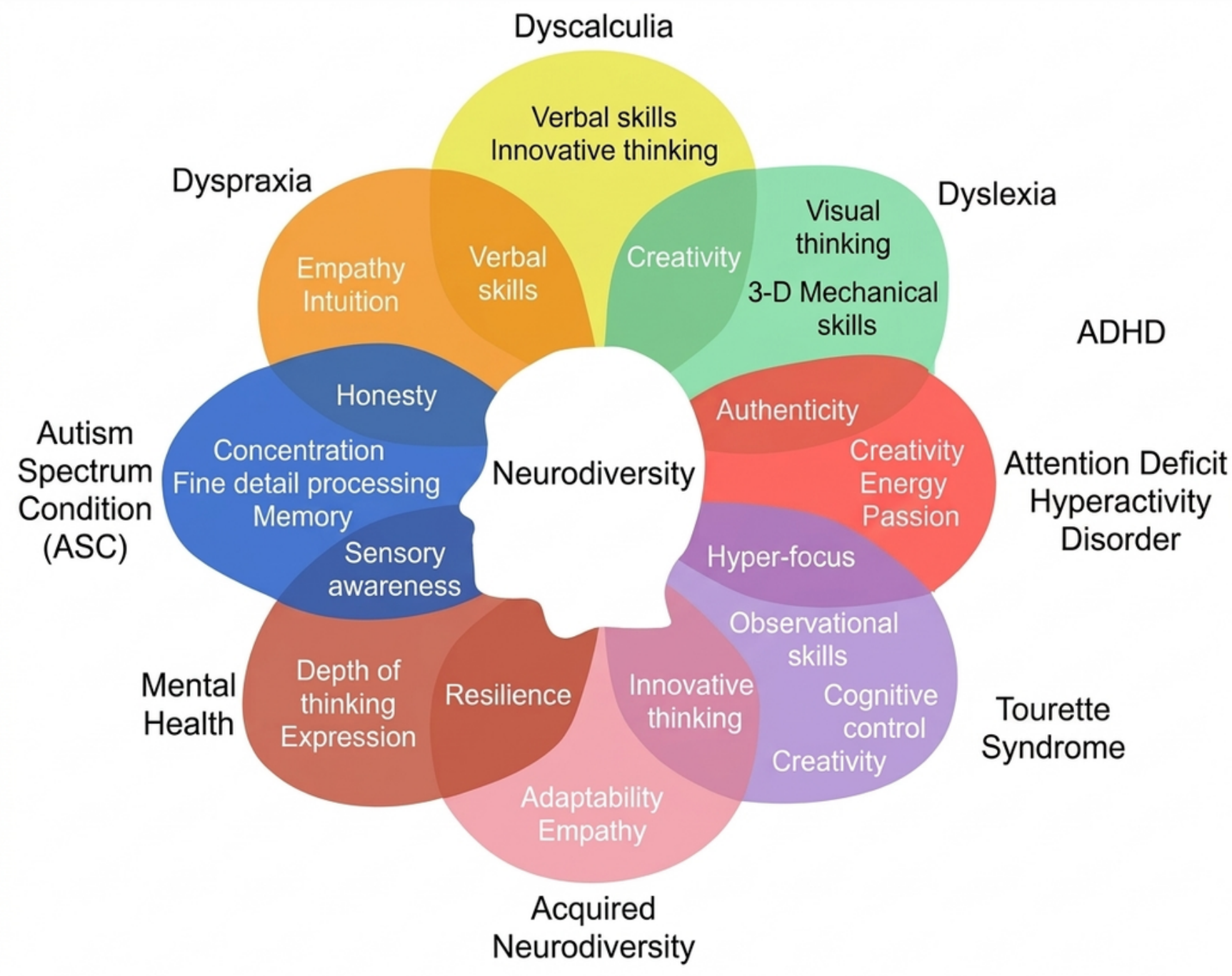
Why it happens

- No psychological safety to be direct.
- Fear of judgement for 'different' needs.
- A culture that rewards conformity over contribution.

What coaches can do

- Build recovery cycles into workload planning.
- Hold quarterly workload reset conversations.
- Encourage naming overwhelm before crisis hits.

UNPACKING THE NEURODIVERGENT LABEL



- Believe everyone is okay
- Most conditions exist along a spectrum and many overlap.
- Effects of these conditions can vary from person to person.
- However, it's helpful to know the general characteristics of common neurotypes so we can be equipped as team coaches to meet many types of needs.

DIAGNOSIS & SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Understanding the difference — and why it matters for coaches

Formal Diagnosis

A medical or psychological assessment that confirms a neurodivergent condition.

In some countries, provides access to formal workplace accommodations and legal protections.

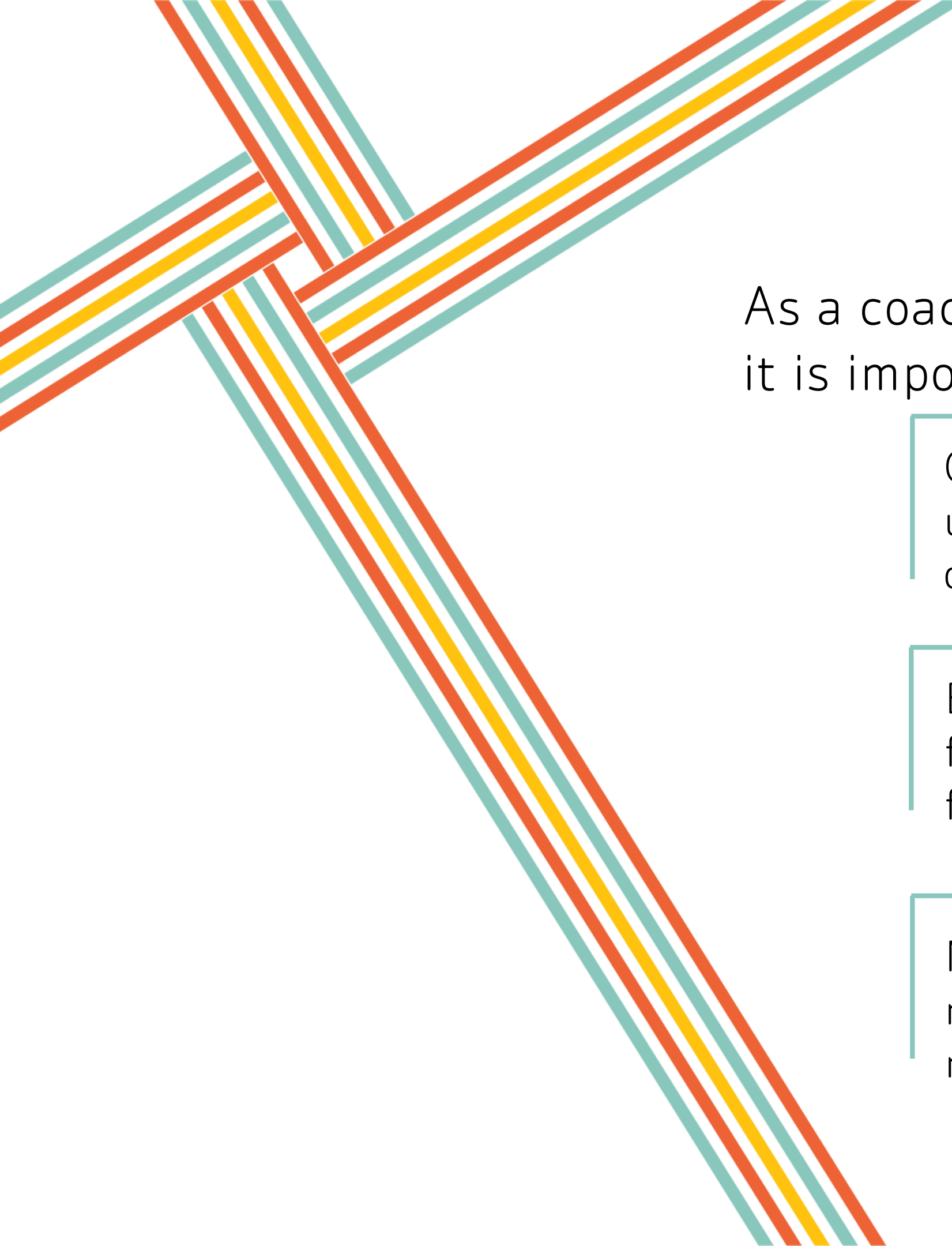
However, many adults never receive one due to cost, wait times, or late recognition.

Self-Identification

When a person recognizes patterns in themselves that fit a neurodivergent experience.

This is increasingly common among adults who were missed as children.

Self-identification is meaningful and valid for self-understanding.



DIAGNOSIS & SELF-IDENTIFICATION

As a coach working with a neurodivergent team member, it is important to remember:

Coaches do not diagnose. Your role is to understand how someone works, not to verify or question their neurotype.

Both diagnosed and self-identified people benefit from the same coaching approach: clarity, flexibility, and psychological safety.

Many people experience more than one form of neurodivergence. Avoid assuming someone fits neatly into one category.

SAFE WAY FOR COACHES

How to talk about neurodivergence ethically and effectively

Do

- ✓ Focus on how people work, not labels
- ✓ Design practices for different processing styles
- ✓ Normalize difference without requiring disclosure
- ✓ Ask what helps someone do their best work
- ✓ Create environments where people feel safe

Don't

- ✗ Ask about diagnosis or encourage labels
- ✗ Speculate about someone's neurotype
- ✗ Treat adjustments as special treatment
- ✗ Assume same condition means same needs
- ✗ Wait for disclosure to design inclusive practices

Anchor Principle

You do not need to know who is neurodivergent to coach effectively. Clear expectations, flexible communication, and predictable rhythms help everyone on the team. Neuro-inclusion is good coaching, not special accommodation.

AT A GLANCE: FOUR COMMON NEUROTYPES

Autism

A difference in how the brain processes information, communicates, and experiences the world. Often involves literal thinking, preference for structure, and different sensory experiences.

ADHD

A difference in how the brain regulates attention, energy, and self-control. Motivation is driven by interest, urgency, novelty, and challenge — not effort or discipline.

AuDHD

A unique neurotype combining autism and ADHD — not simply both added together. Often involves paradoxes: craving structure yet seeking novelty, social yet drained.

Dyslexia & Dyscalculia

Brain-based differences in processing written language and numbers. Not a reflection of intelligence. Strong visual-spatial reasoning and creative problem-solving.

AT A GLANCE: FOUR COMMON NEUROTYPES

Autism

~ 1 in 45 adults

Up to 80% of women undiagnosed

Diagnoses rose 175% since 2000

ADHD

~ 6% of adults (~15.5M in U.S.)

Only 11% receive treatment

Diagnoses nearly doubled in 20 years

AuDHD

50–70% of autistic people also have ADHD

Only 16% of children with both are formally identified

Dual diagnosis available only since 2013

Dyslexia & Dyscalculia

Dyslexia affects ~ 1 in 5 people

Dyscalculia ~ 5%

~ 50% overlap between the two



AUTISTIC TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Strengths for the team

- Extraordinary attention to detail
- Innovative pattern thinking
- Deep focus and expertise
- Integrity and honesty
- Reliability and consistency
- Systems thinking





AUTISTIC TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Common Friction

- Literal interpretation - hints and sarcasm may land wrong
- Sensory overload in noisy environments
- Difficulty with sudden priority shifts
- Direct style read as blunt or critical
- Deep focus makes task-switching hard
- Social fatigue after long interaction





AUTISTIC TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Where Tension Shows Up

- Meetings with no clear agenda
- Last-minute pivots
- 'Read the room' expectations
- Unwritten social rules
- Vague or shifting goals

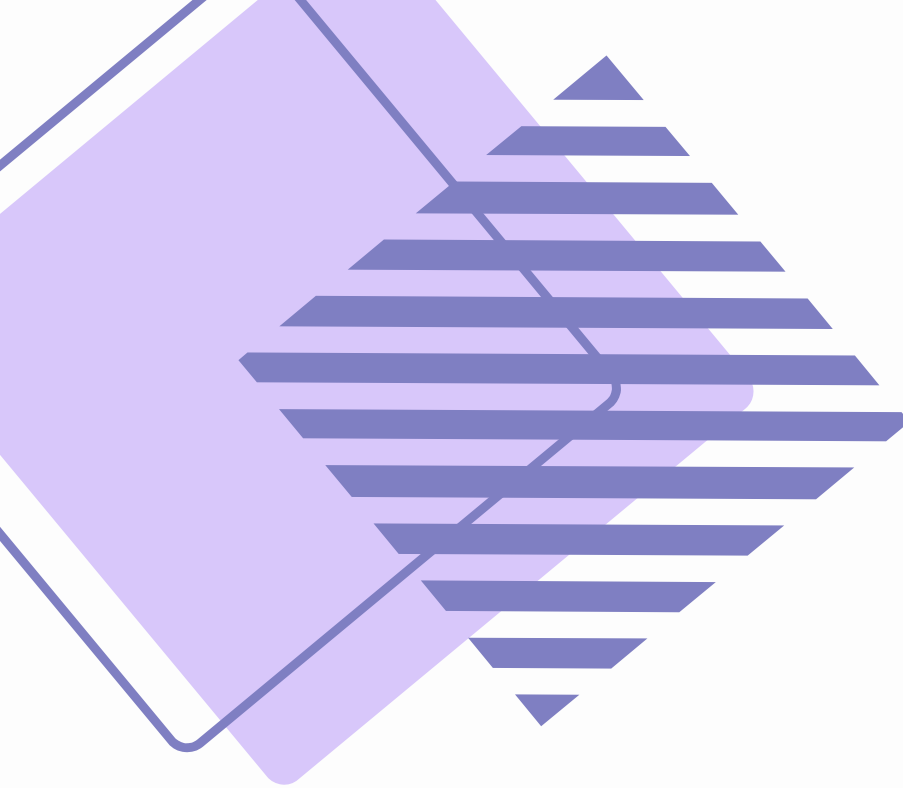




AUTISTIC TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

What Helps Immediately

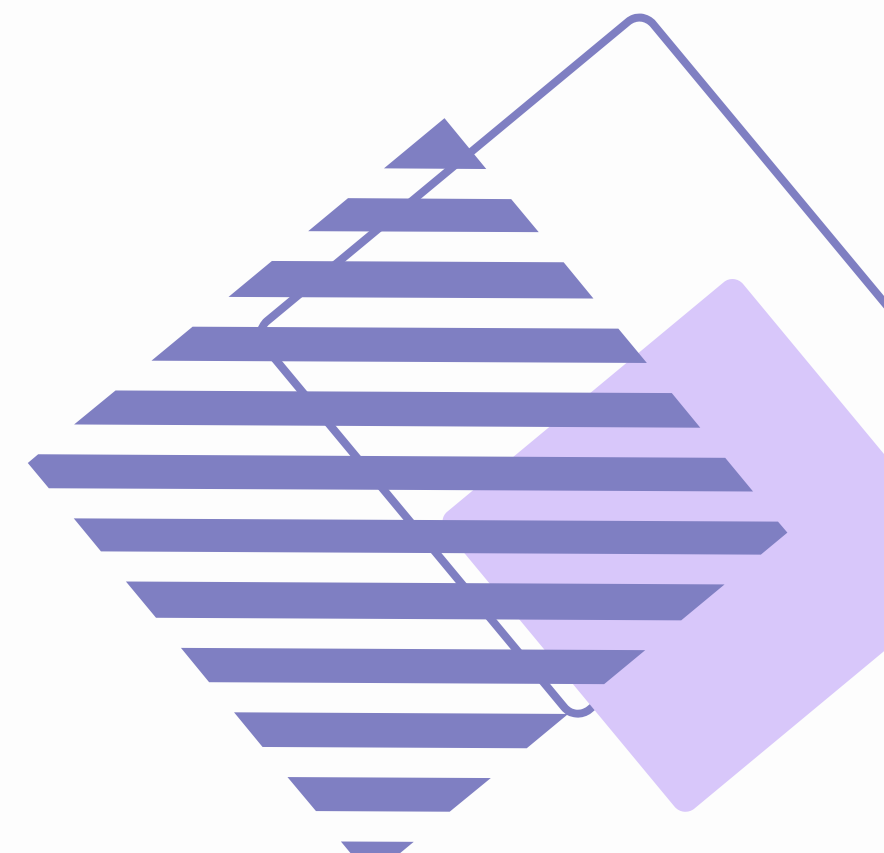
- State structure and purpose explicitly at the start
 - Replace open-ended prompts with concrete questions
 - Define metaphors and analogies literally prior to use
 - Build in silent processing time before group responses
 - Replace 1–10 scales with labeled anchors
- 

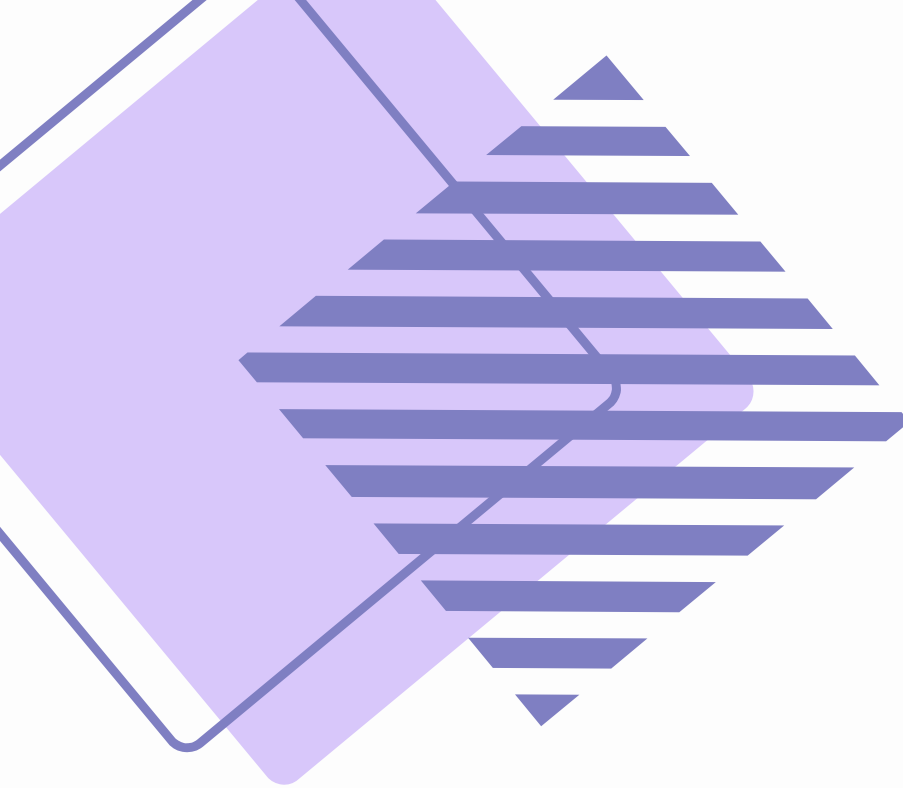


ADHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Strengths for the team

- High energy and creativity
- Hyperfocus superpower
- Quick thinking and problem-solving
- Outside-the-box thinking
- Resilience and adaptability
- Entrepreneurial drive



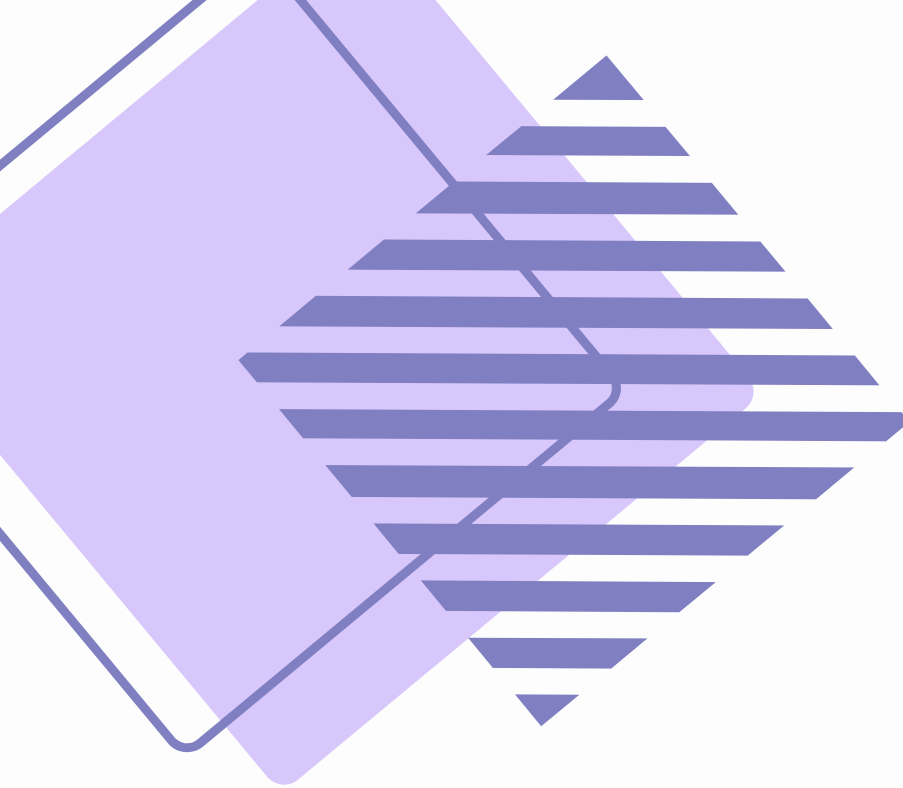


ADHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Common Friction

- Sustained attention on low-stimulation tasks
- Time blindness — underestimating duration
- Interrupting from enthusiasm, not rudeness
- Starting more than they finish
- Forgetting verbal instructions
- Emotional reactivity under pressure
- Procrastination until urgency creates focus

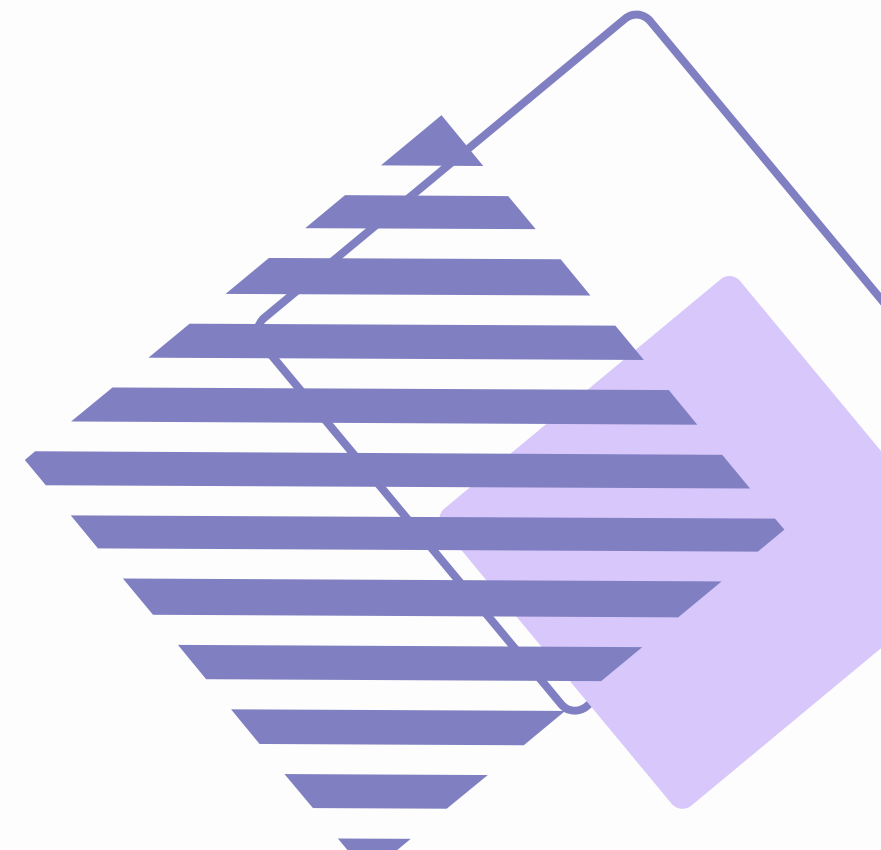


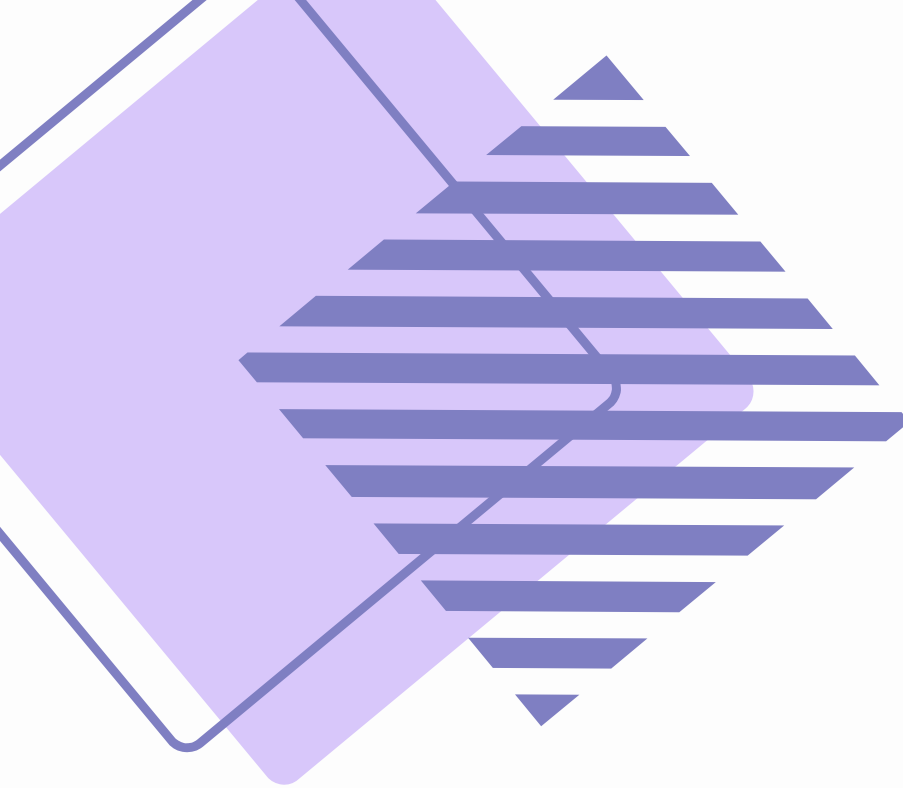


ADHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Where Tension Shows Up

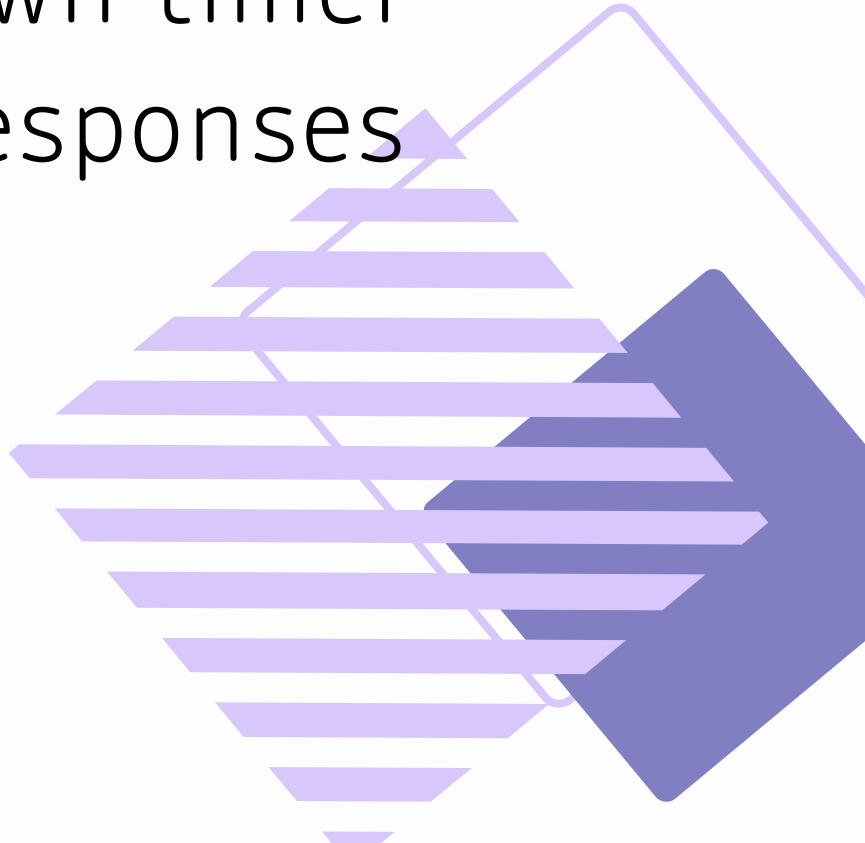
- Deadlines — especially single big ones
- Administrative detail work
- Long meetings with passive listening
- Inconsistent follow-through
- Being labelled as 'unreliable'





ADHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

What Helps Immediately

- Break sessions into clearly named segments
 - Use movement, visuals, and interaction
 - Break big reflections into small steps
 - Keep timed activities visible with a countdown timer
 - Replace 1–10 scales with active, physical responses
- 



AUDHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Strengths for the team

- Big picture + fine details
- Deep fairness advocate
- Creative challenger
- Dynamic problem-solver
- Remarkable resilience
- Authentic communicator





AUDHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Common Friction

- Hyperfocus followed by crash
 - Overwhelm from too much input but boredom without stimulation
 - Difficulty regulating energy
 - Strong justice sensitivity
 - Tendency to remove self from the situation when it becomes too much.
- 



AUDHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Where Tension Shows Up In a Group Setting

- Workload management
 - Emotional processing in conflict
 - Inconsistent performance patterns
 - Self-criticism and shame loops
- 



AUDHD TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

What Helps Immediately In Group Setting

- Avoid surprise hot-seats or cold-calling
 - Normalize “Pass” or “Still processing”
 - Set explicit fairness rules before any feedback exercise
 - Park “tangents” visibly to stay on track
 - Avoid shame-based feedback
 - Psychological safety to name overwhelm early
- 



DYSLEXIA TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Strengths for the team

- Visual and spatial thinking
- Strong verbal and interpersonal skills
- Creative problem-solving
- Resilience and resourcefulness
- Big-picture and strategic thinking
- Intuitive decision-making





DYSLEXIA TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Common Friction

- Slow reading speed under pressure
 - Fatigue from text-heavy materials
 - Spelling errors despite strong ideas
 - Avoidance of long written communication
 - Difficulty with dense email threads
 - Rapid note-taking in meetings
- 



DYSLEXIA TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Where Tension Shows Up In Group Session

- Report and document writing
 - Reading complex policies quickly
 - Being perceived as careless
 - High-stakes written output
 - Have to explain intuitive decision-making
- 



DYSLEXIA TEAM MEMBER WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

What Helps Immediately In Group Setting

- Provide verbal and visual instructions instead of dense docs
 - Voice-to-text tools encouraged
 - Offer alternatives to written capture - voice, drawing
 - Invite volunteers to read aloud, never require
 - Extra time for review when accuracy matters
 - Do not over complicate - simplify where possible
- 

SUMMARY:

COACHING FOR TEAMS WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES

Design for clarity, not assumptions

Explicit expectations, written instructions, and defined outcomes prevent most misunderstandings before they start. Conceptual or abstract instructions may not produce desired effect.

Normalize different ways of contributing

Some people think out loud, others need processing time. Some write brilliantly, others speak brilliantly. Value all of it.

Build rhythm and structure with flexibility

Predictable routines create safety. Built-in flexibility within those routines allows people to work in ways that suit them.

Coach for psychological safety, not comfort

Safety means people can speak up, ask questions, and make mistakes. It doesn't mean avoiding challenge or accountability.

Focus on strengths and teach teams to talk about how they work

When teams discuss working styles openly, differences become assets instead of friction points.



THE BLUNT TRUTH

If the coach is not comfortable with difference — the team will struggle.

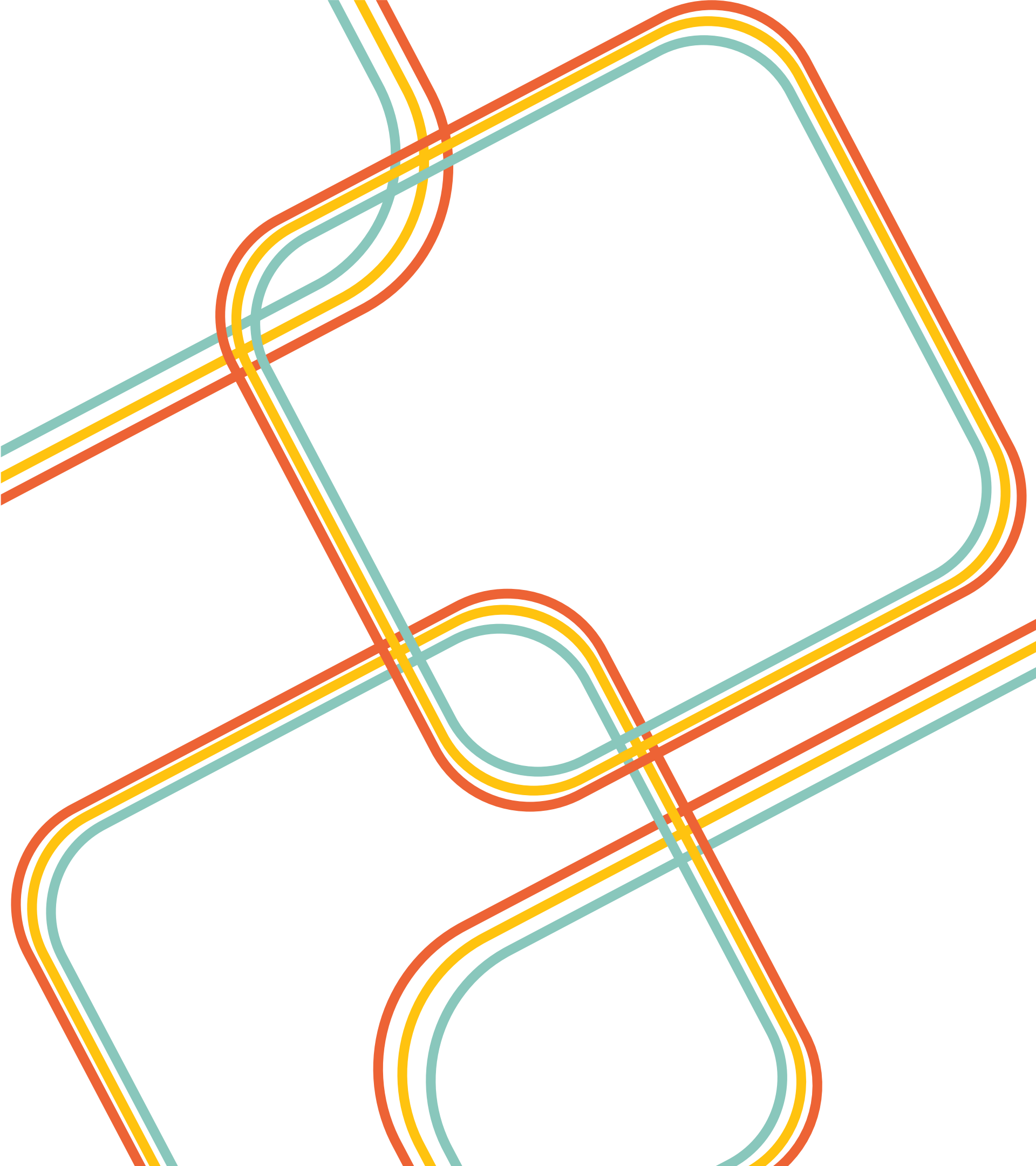
If the coach builds clarity, psychological safety, and predictable structure — the team will thrive.

Remember

You are not managing personalities.

You are designing an environment.





PANEL

DISCUSSION

Your Questions
Our Lived Experience

WANT TO BOOK THIS WORKSHOP?

Would this workshop be relevant for your workplace, community, or ICF chapter?

Email us: **3dk.coaching@gmail.com**

And we'll be in touch!





TIPS

Written material

- Use dyslexia font - OpenDyslexic, Dyslexie or Lexend
- Do not mix numbers formats - e.g. use either % or x out y for all numbers
- Colour code numbers for easy decoding
- Is it required reading or optional reading
- Do not use abbreviation

TIPS

Meetings

- Send agendas before the meeting, if possible
- State the purpose and desired outcome upfront
- Summarise decisions in writing afterward
- Define whether input is expected or advisory
- Allow asynchronous contribution for those who process slower





TIPS

Task Clarity

- Define what 'done' looks like — explicitly
- Break projects into visible milestones
- One clear owner per task — no ambiguity
- Use visual tracking tools (boards, shared lists)
- Separate thinking time from delivery time

TIPS

Communication Agreements

- Clarify whether feedback is direct or indirect
- Normalise asking for clarification — no penalty
- Remove sarcasm from important discussions
- Written follow-up after any key conversation





TIPS

Work Design

- Balance deep-focus time with collaborative time
- Allow noise control — headphones, quiet spaces
- Encourage calendar blocking for concentration
- Protect makers (people doing deep, focused work) from fragmented schedules

TIPS

Conflict Management

- Slow down reactive conversations — pause first
- Focus on observable behaviour, not assumed intent
- Use written summaries to close disagreements
- Separate the heat of the moment from resolution
- Give time to sort thoughts

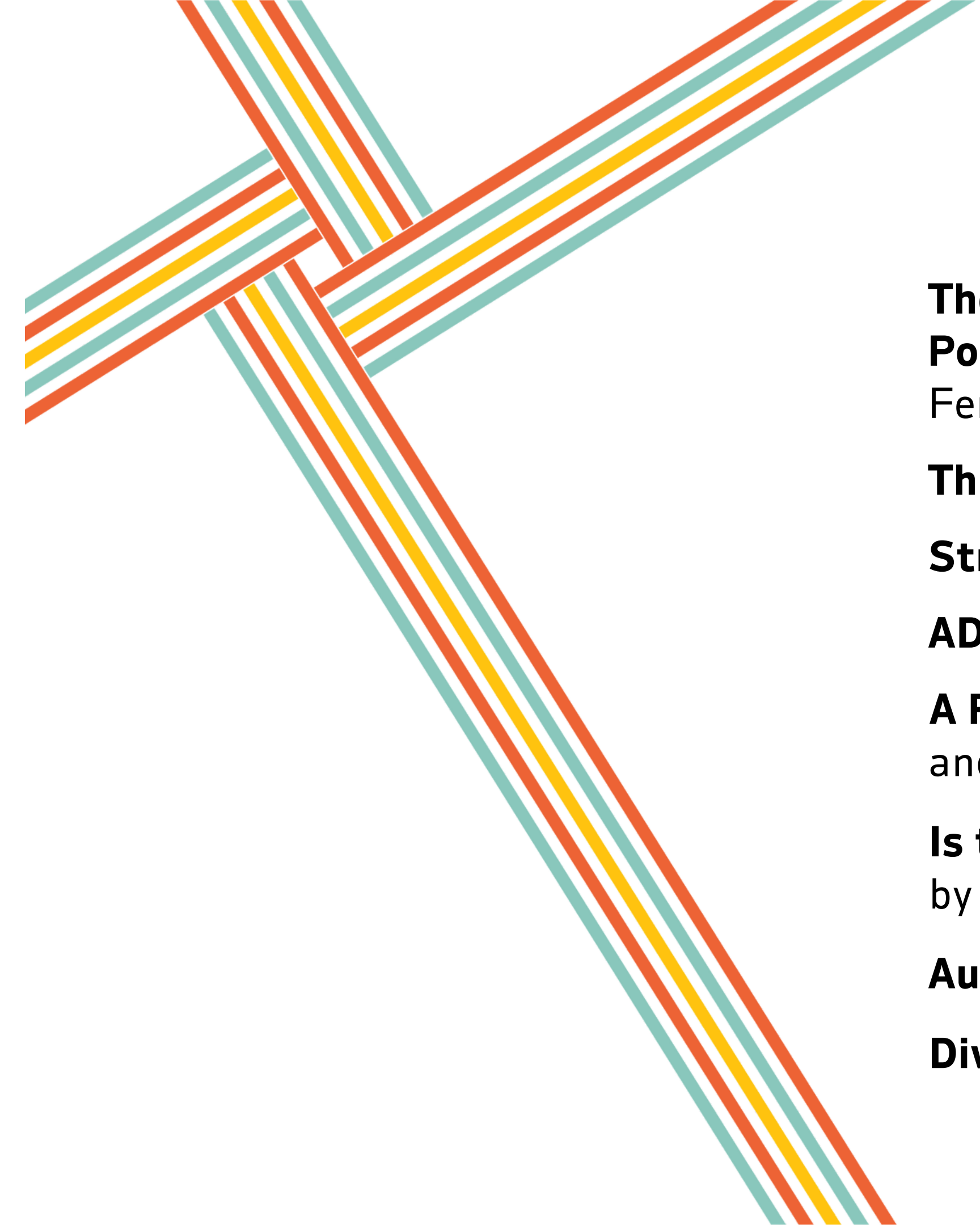




TIPS

Burnout Prevention

- Build recovery time into busy cycles
- Hold quarterly workload reset conversations
- Create safety to name overload - before crisis
- Watch for masking as a performance signal



RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The Dyslexic Advantage: Unlocking the Hidden Potential of the Dyslexic Brain by Brock L. Eide and Fernette F. Eide M.D.

This is Dyslexia by Kate Griggs

Strengths of Dyscalculia by Ashleigh D'Aunoy

ADHD for Smart Ass Women by Tracy Otsuka

A Radical Guide for Women with ADHD by Sari Solden, MS and Michelle Frank, PsyD

Is this Autism? A Guide for Clinicians and Everyone Else by Donna Henderson and Sarah Wayland with Jamell White

AuDHD - Blooming Differently by Leanne Maskell

Divergent Mind by Jenara Nerenberg