

AuDHD at University: From Literature Review to Lived Experience



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02 Literature Review

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05 Time for Questions

Introduction to Research

Noted increase in registrations with ADHD, whether as a secondary, primary, or sole disability.

Conducted an exploratory literature review into co-occurring autism and ADHD (or AuDHD).

Combined literature review with analysis from semi-structured interviews.

Literature Review

General Figures

Estimates of the co-occurrence rate range from 20-85%.

Despite this range, researchers maintain that ADHD and autism are “neurofunctionally distinct.”



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Literature Review

Diagnosis and Self-Identification

Co-occurring mental illnesses pose challenges to diagnosticians and individuals seeking self-identification.

Age and order of diagnosis contribute to difficulties receiving diagnoses and accessing supports.

Neuronormative and heteronormative pressures can influence self-acceptance and diagnosis/self-identification.

Post-diagnosis concerns may arise surrounding disclosure, the perspectives of others, and internalised ableism.

Literature Review

Bridging Traits

“Bridging Traits” Between Autism and ADHD

1. Heightened sensitivity to sensory input.
2. Ability to switch attention.
3. Difficulties with sustaining attention and task completion.
4. Forgetfulness and issues with working memory.
5. Feeling of constant activity and restlessness.

(Suen et al., 2024, p. 7)



Key Critique:
Language and
exclusivity of
current sources.



Much of the current literature is rooted in the medical model of disability.



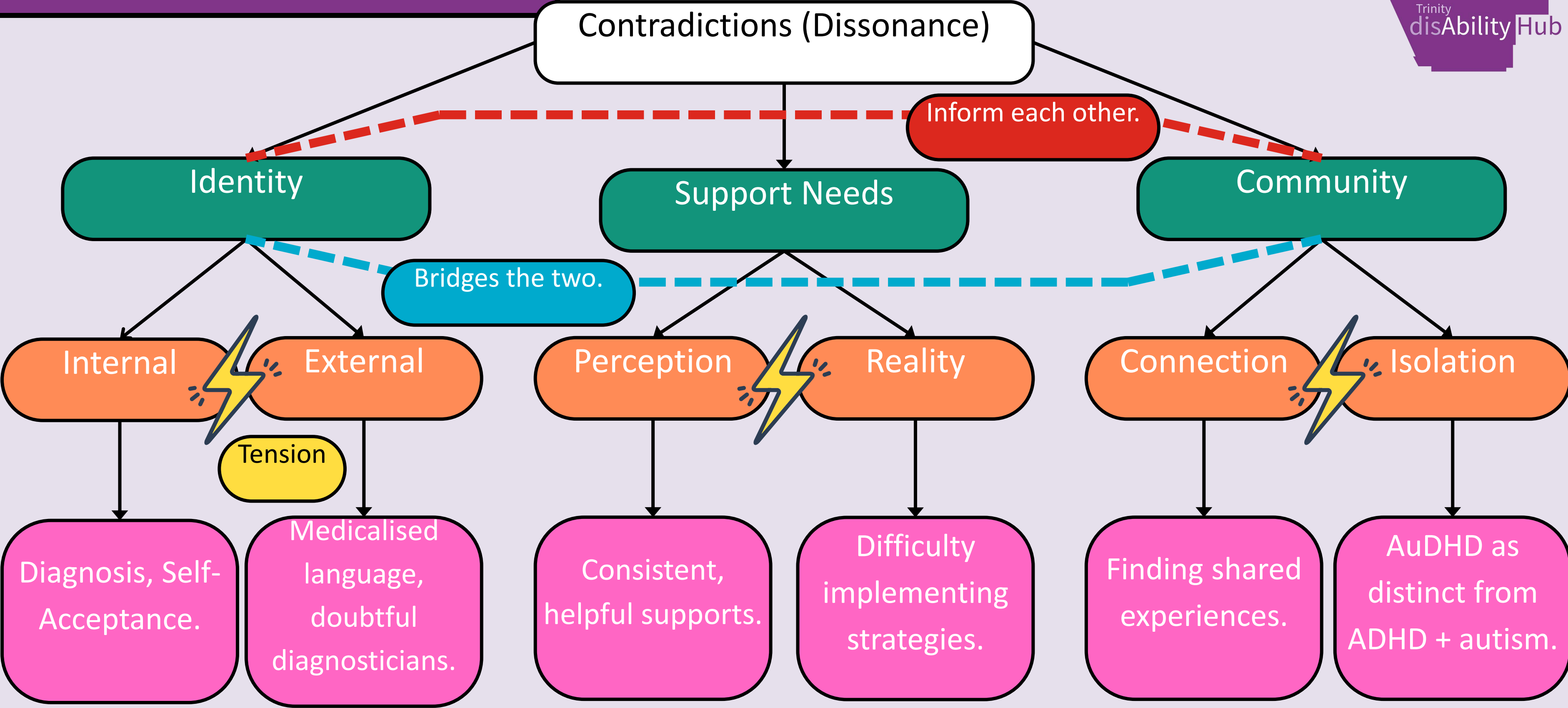
Need for caution around language use, particularly the term “co-morbidity.”



Lack of research into AuDHD adults.



Continued underrepresentation of racial and gender minorities.



Contextualising our Research: Some Tips and Takeaways



1

Recognise the impact of “invisible workload” on students or clients.

2

Resist a “one size fits all” approach to supports and problem solving.

3

Implement user-led testing or audits and gain insight from users’ experiences.

4

Reflect on the role of collaboration, innovation, and creativity in support services.



Questions to Consider

When engaging with research on AuDHD or disability more broadly...



Whose perspective is being “explained” and why?



Who is doing the “explaining” and how?



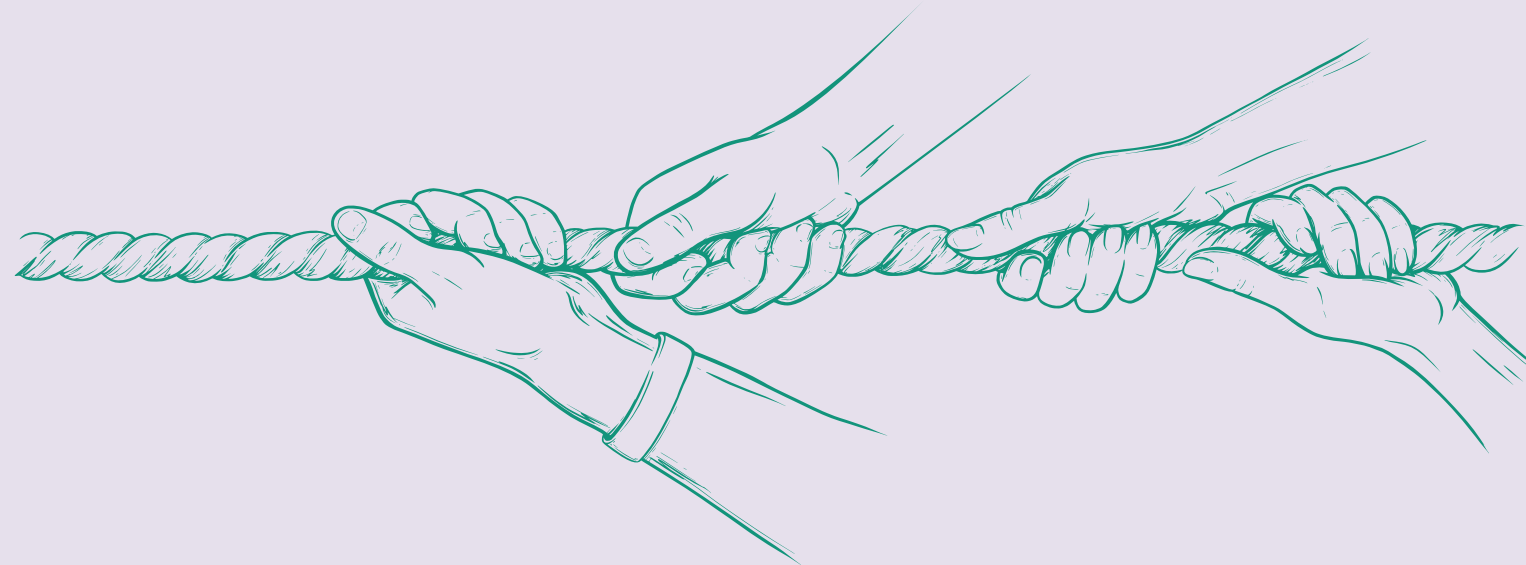
Is the explanation challenging the notion of simplicity?



Student Narratives

A lifelong narrative of tension

The eternal game of tug of war

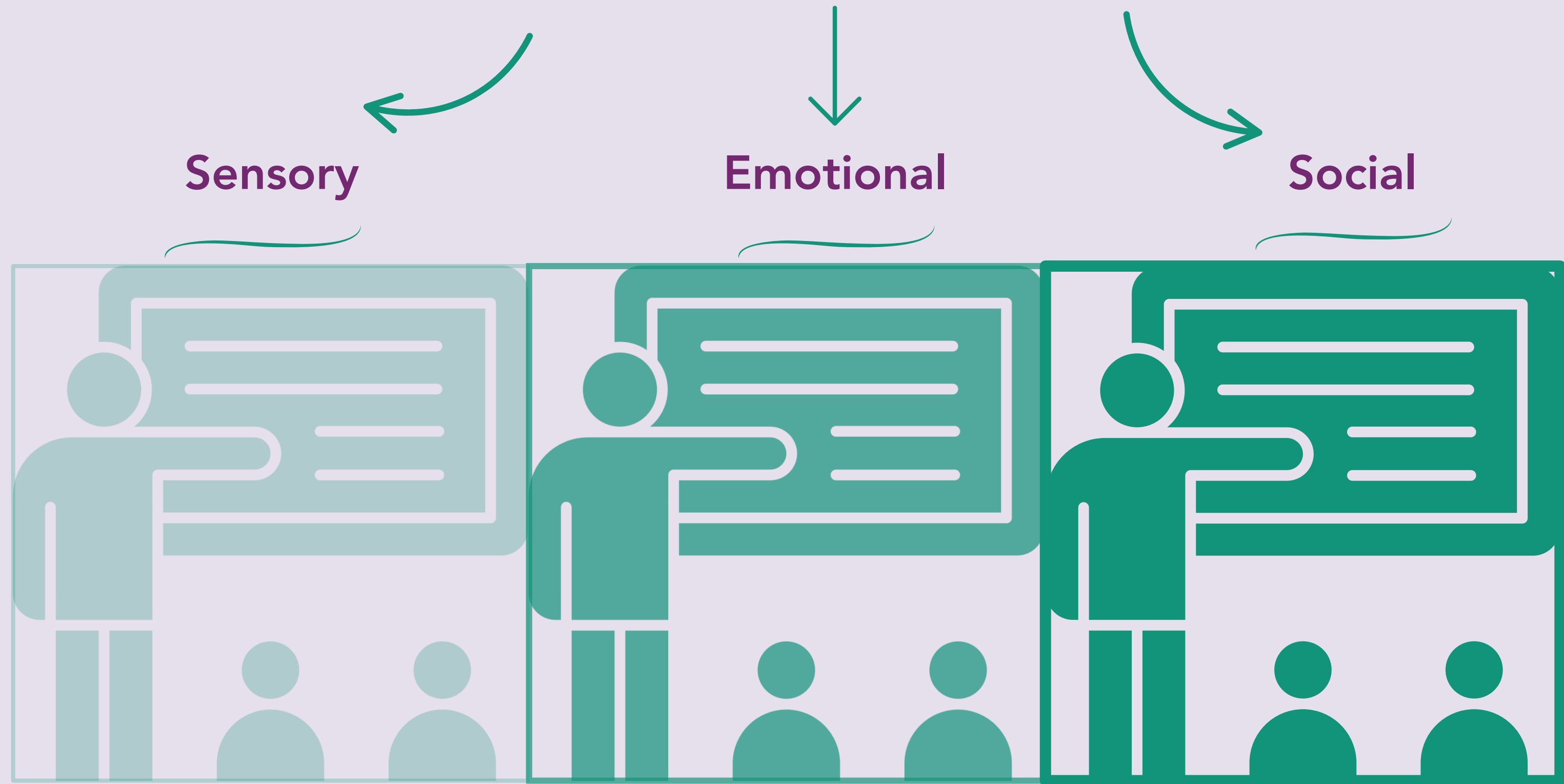


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Layers of Visibility & Considerations



Eoghan

Profile

Age: 19

Course: Undergraduate
Computer Science

- AuDHD
- Under sensitive to noise
- Needs to stim/move regularly
- Needs additional processing time
- Finds notetaking challenging



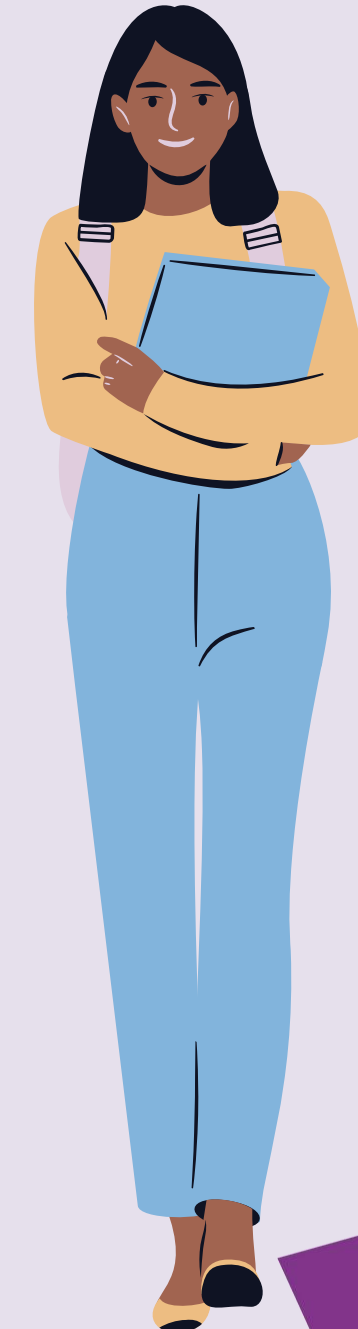
Rubi

Profile

Age: 23

Course: Postgraduate
Medicine

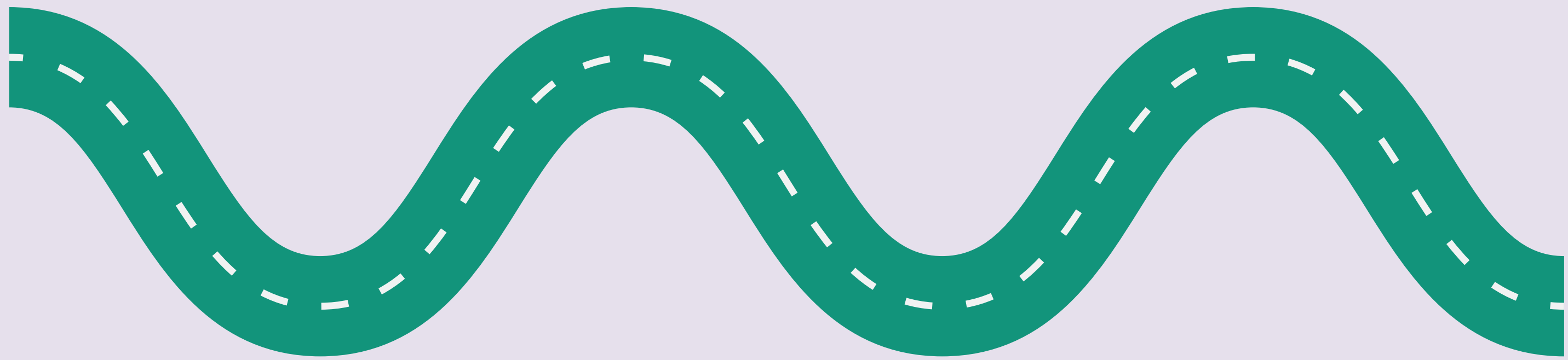
- AuDHD
- Struggles with shifting from one context to another
- Finds navigating large groups challenging
- Struggles to identify priorities



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3 weeks away



2 weeks away



1 week away

Roadmap to Exams

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3 weeks until exams



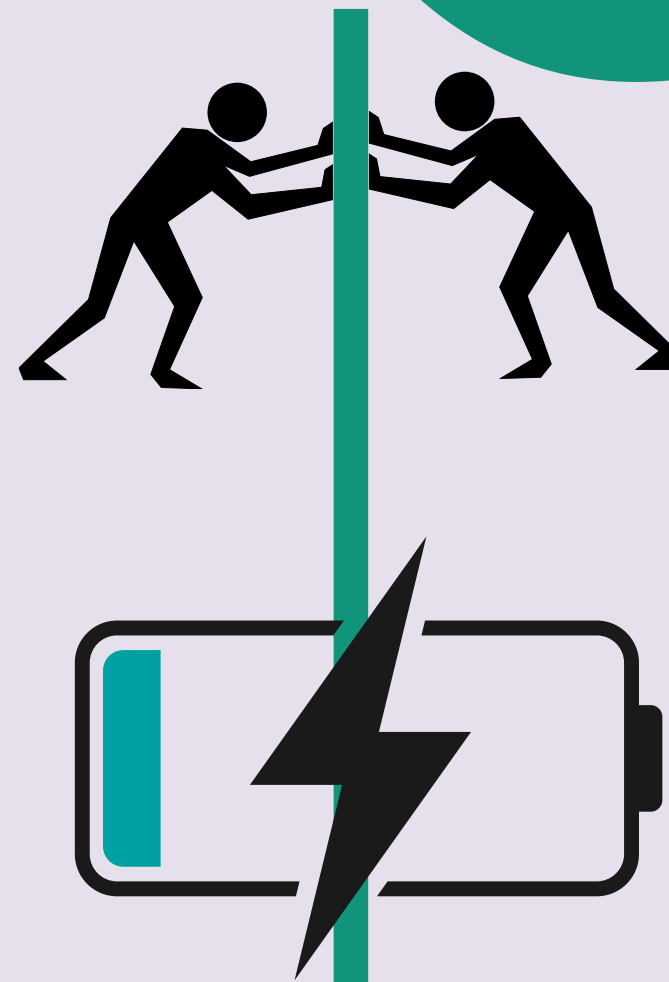
Eoghan

- Missing cues from peers to study.
- Routines begin to slip.
- Has not yet registered for the Disability Service.



Rubi

- Registered for Disability Service, skeptical about supports.
- Sleep routines are slipping, inattentive in class.

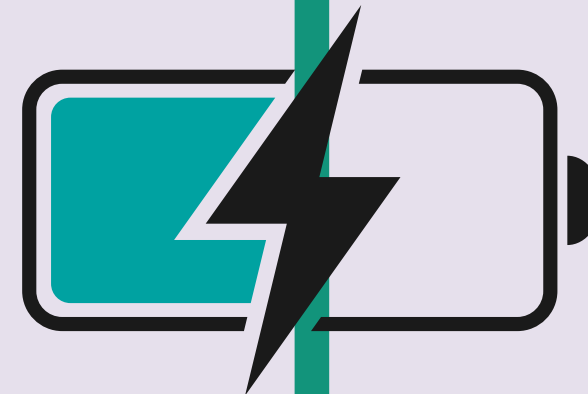
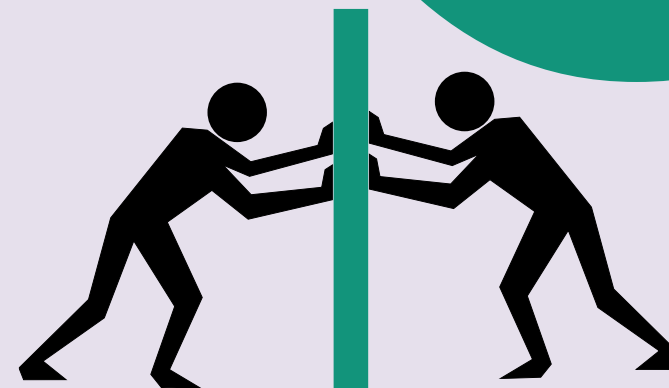


2 weeks until exams



Eoghan

- Skin-picking behaviours have increased.
- Registered for Disability Service but has not booked in a Needs Assessment.
- Finding it harder to resist dopamine-seeking activities.



Rubi

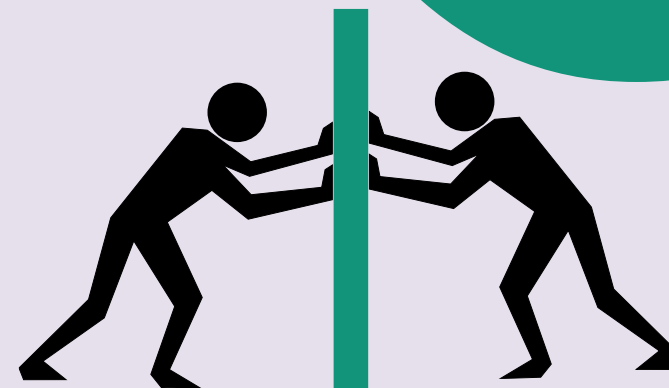
- Food variety slipping, tolerance window for sensory challenges limited.
- Beginning to spend elongated hours in the 24-Hour library.

1 week until exams



Eoghan

- Increased caffeine intake.
- Focus on post-exam activity: Computer Science Ball.
- Avoidant of exams as a topic.
- Reading and re-reading.



Rubi

- Avoidant of post-exam activity: Medicine Night Out.
- Focus on study as a priority, what previously mattered fades to background.
- Writing and rewriting.

What would ideally happen for Rubi and Eoghan?



- Late-registration with the Disability Service, access to exam accommodations.
- Begin a road to broader self-awareness through acceptance of supports; assistive technology, occupational therapy, etc.
- An improved experience in semester two exams.
- Advocating for the benefits of seeking support to peers.



Gerard



Professor in Statistical Analysis

Profile



- Unaware of AuDHD identity/neurotype
- Barriers to acceptance and disclosure

Core strategies to minimise dysregulation:

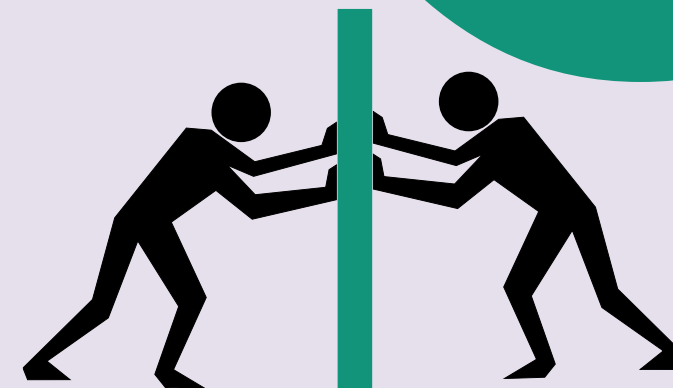
- Routine
- Predictability
- Select moments of novelty
- Sole area of confidence is his unique area of interest; statistical analysis which has become his career.

1 week until exams

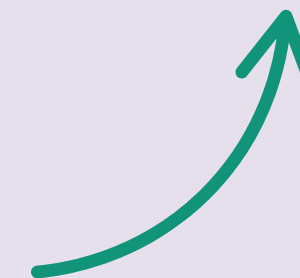


Gerard

- Struggles to answer student questions on the spot.
- Poorly executed last minute exam prep class (technology issues, faculty expectations).
- Feeling of inferiority next to faculty members.

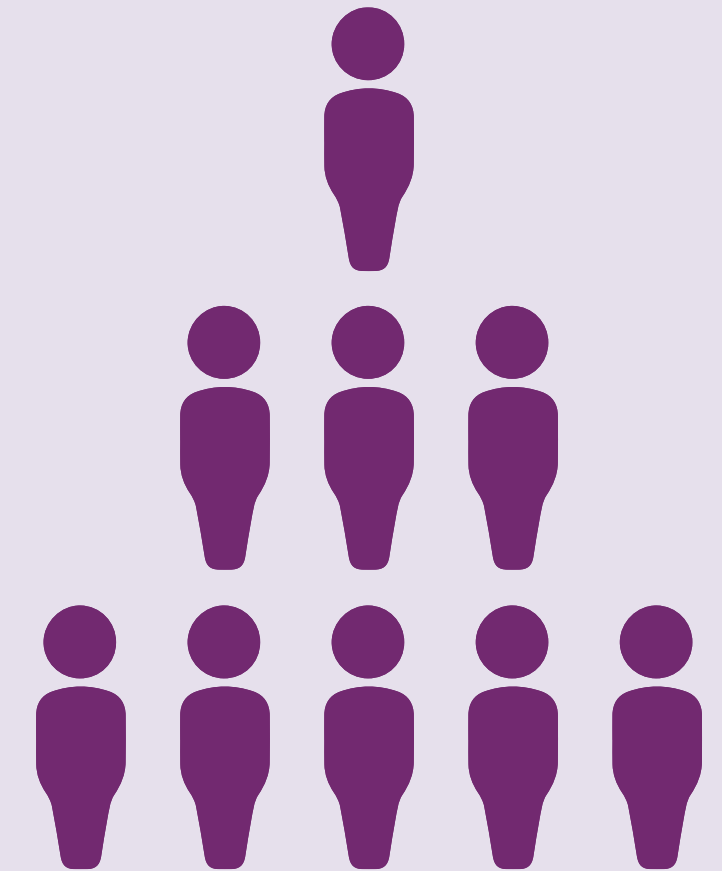
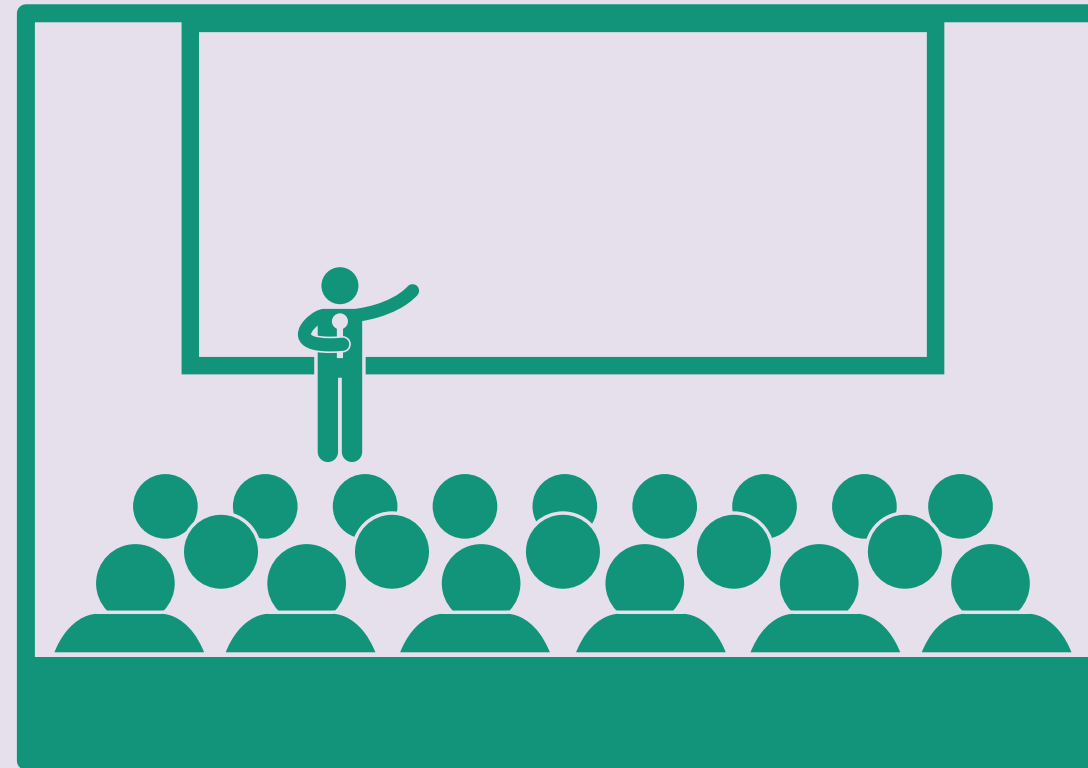


- Redirects his shame and frustration with himself, externalises issue.



TRICKLE DOWN IMPACTS TO AVALANCHE SUPPORTS

- What does an environment that encourages self-advocacy and disclosure look like?
- How do **we** achieve this environment?



Awareness and acceptance of the many creates a smoother road for the few.



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Building An Alternative Reality

Trust another's
motives



Trust another's
experiences



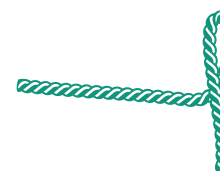
Work to become a
safe space for
disclosure



Willingness to
learn



Creative
alternatives



Learn and embody
the difference
between equality
and equity

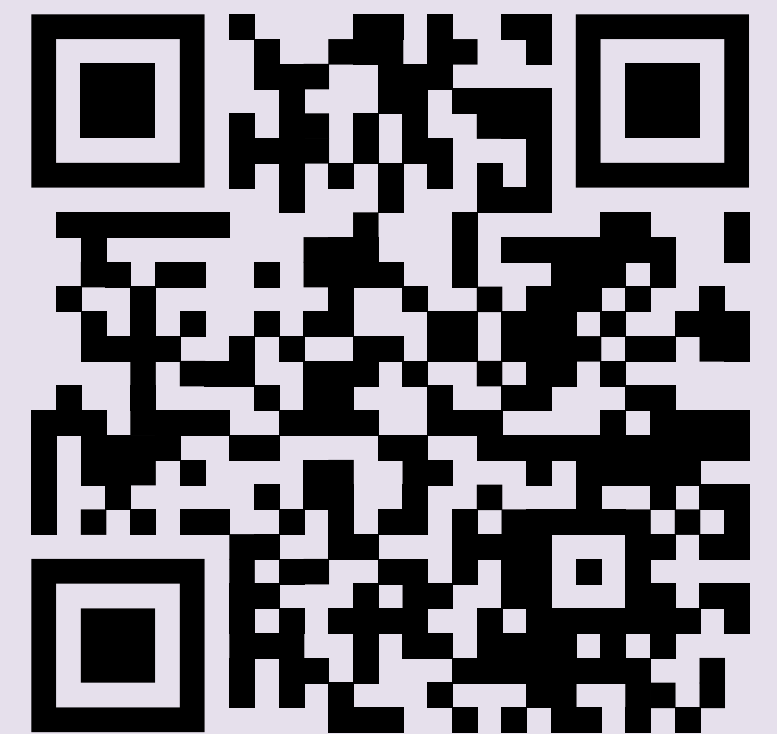


Thank You

Do you have any questions?



askds@tcd.ie



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