

PEARL

KANDOLA

Our Beautiful Minds

An Introduction to Neurodiversity at Work

Today's session



Part 1: Building awareness

- What is neurodiversity?
- Strengths and challenges
- Barriers to success at work



Part 2: Taking action

- Making effective adjustments
- Building psychological safety
- Challenging exclusive behaviour



**How can we define
neurodiversity?**

What is neurodiversity?

The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population.



Key terms:

- Neuro-divergent / neurominority: A person is defined as one whose neurological development and state are atypical.
- Neuro-diverse / neurominorities: a group whose members are neurodivergent.
- Neuro-typical: A person who is "neurologically typical" - within the typical (average) range for human neurology.
- Neurotype: types of diagnosable neurodiverse conditions



**15-20% of the global
population is
neurodivergent**

The most common neurodivergent conditions

Autism spectrum disorder

A spectrum condition which impacts how people think and interact with the world.

Dyslexia

Characterised by difficulties with reading, writing and spelling.

ADHD

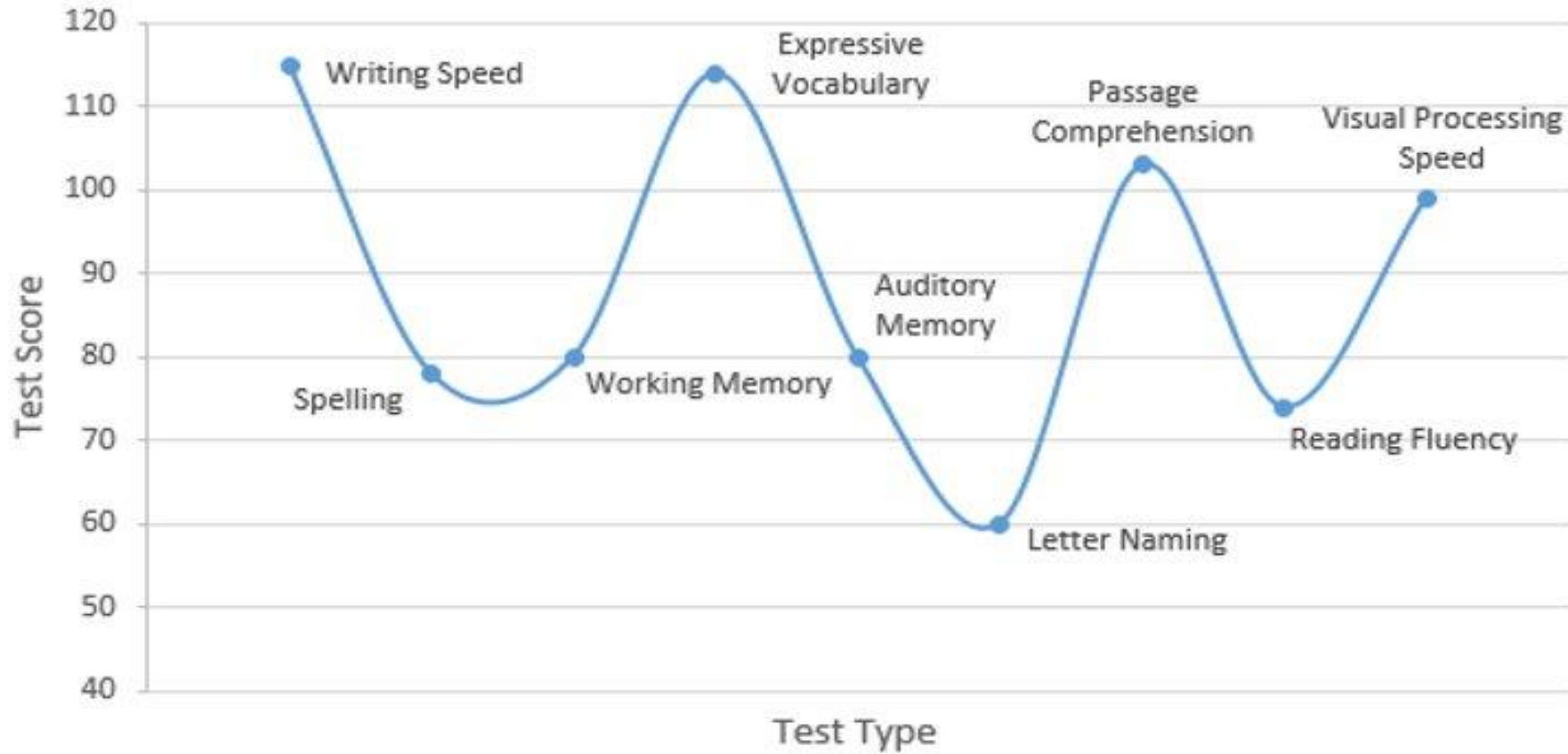
Often presents as inattentiveness, or hyperactivity and impulsiveness

Dyspraxia

Impacts on a person's movement and co-ordination.

Spiky Profiles

Dyslexic Spiky Profile



Source: British Psychological Society



Strengths and challenges

Autism spectrum disorder

Strengths: Memory; Innovative thinking; Attention to detail; specialist skills

Challenges: Time management; need for routine; communication

Dyslexia

Strengths: Entrepreneurialism; Creativity; Visual reasoning; 3D thinking; seeing the big picture.

Challenges: Working memory, Processing speed; Time management

Challenges with mental health and self-esteem

ADHD

Strengths: Innovative thinking; Attention to detail; specialist skills

Challenges: Impaired executive functioning; Time management; prioritisation; concentration; volatility; impulsiveness; restlessness.

Dyspraxia

Strengths: Verbal comprehension, creativity; seeing the big picture.

Challenges: Motor difficulties; Working memory

What is working memory?

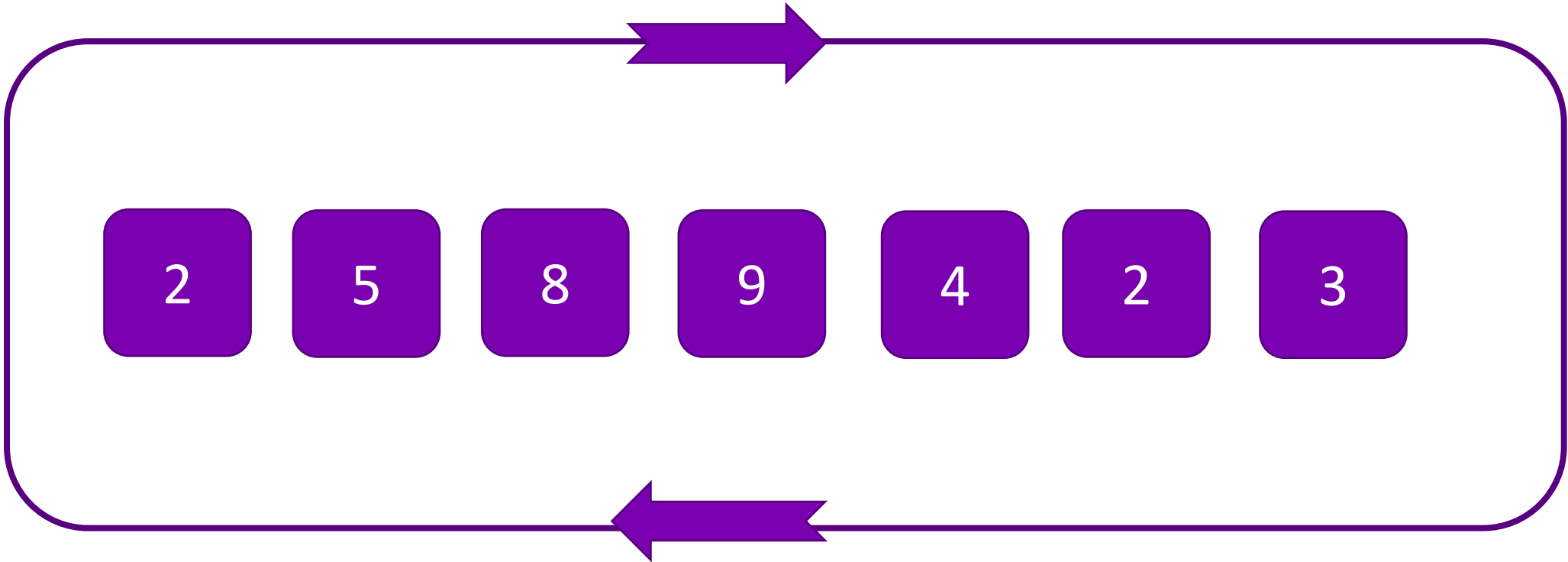
022 341 57 26



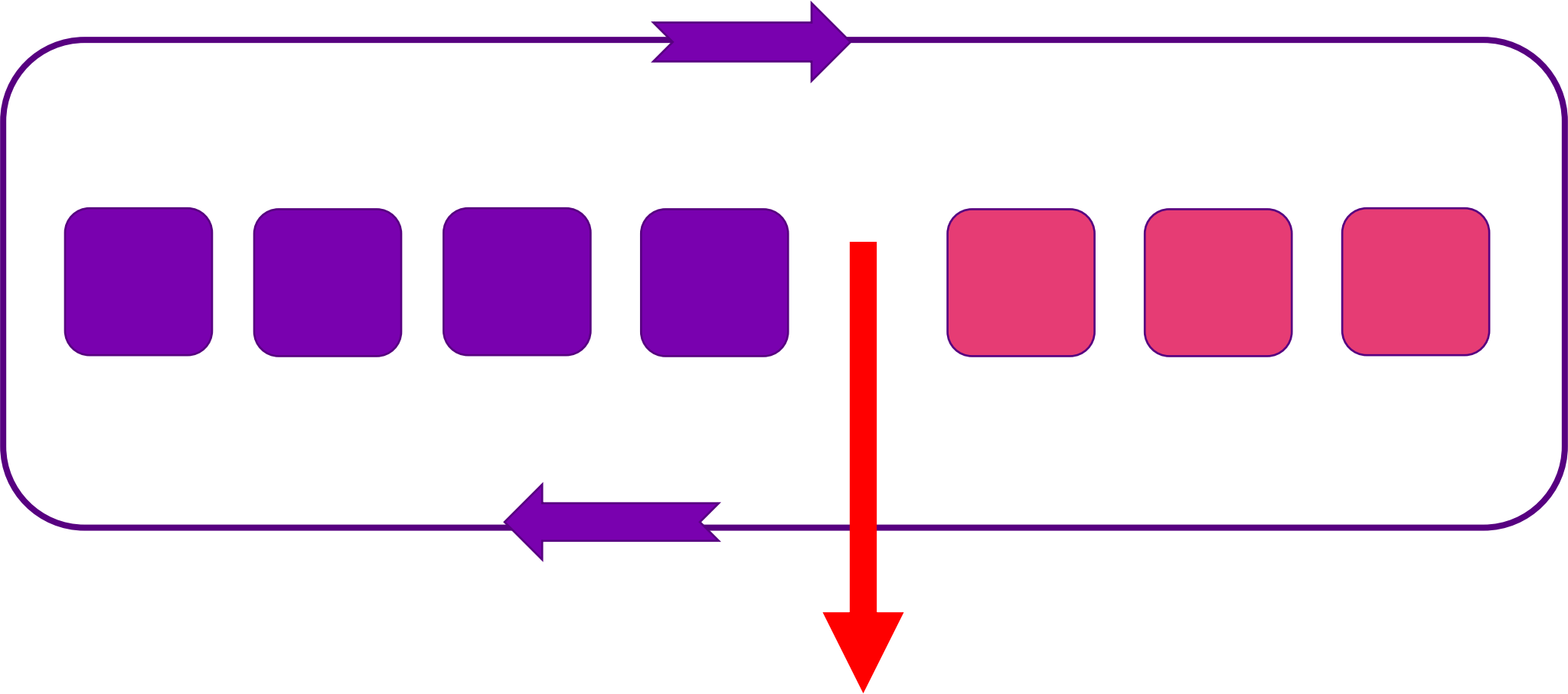
?



A neuro-typical phonological loop



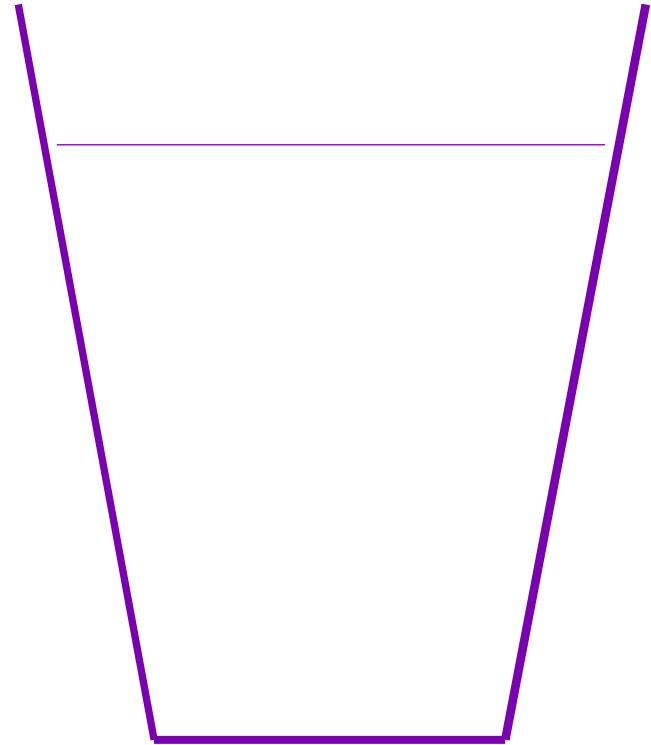
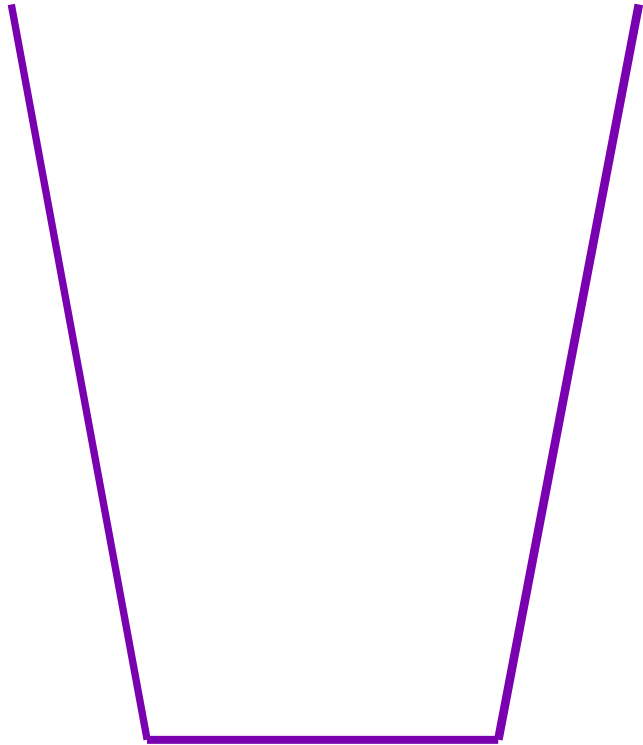
A neurodivergent phonological loop



Common characteristics: The Cocktail party effect



Brain saturation



Degrees of distraction in open-plan offices





How does being neurodivergent impact on an employee in the workplace?

A lack of

UNDERSTANDING

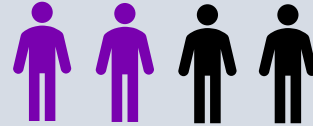


Stigma

- **65%** of neurodivergent employees were worried about stigma and discrimination from management¹



- **55%** of neurodivergent employees were worried about stigma and discrimination from staff¹



- **61%** of neurodivergent employees have experienced stigma at work²



Sources:

¹ - McDowall, A., Doyle, N., & Kiseleva, M. (2023). Neurodiversity at work: demand, supply and a gap analysis. Birkbeck, University of London.

² - McKay, M., & Houghton, J. (2022). Workplace inclusion: Building the case for neurodiversity and creating inclusive experiences for all.

Common barriers within the workplace



Recruitment process



Work environment



Communication

The catch 22



The Neurology of Exclusion

Exclusion

- Activates dACC
- Social withdrawal
- Less discretionary effort

Inclusion

- Sense of belonging
- More creativity with implementation
- Safe to innovate



What is “masking”?

Neurodivergent masking refers to the practice of concealing or suppressing aspects of one's neurodivergent traits or conditions, in order to fit in with the norms of the workplace or society.





Why does disclosure matter?

Employees were **6.1 times** more likely to receive their Reasonable Adjustments if they disclosed their condition.

Source: Pearn Kandola



**What can we do to
support our
neurodivergent
colleagues?**

Ways to support neurodivergent colleagues



Making effective adjustments to ways of working



Creating psychological safety



Challenging exclusive behaviour



1. Making effective adjustments

What are Reasonable Adjustments?

Changes the Organization may put in place to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to:

- A Member of the Personnel's disability when doing their job
- A candidate's disability when applying for a job"



Common types of reasonable adjustment

Flexibility

E.g. Having a flexible schedule and being able to work from home.

Software

E.g. mind-mapping, speech-to-text, coloured overlays.

Work environment

E.g. Lighting adjustments, access to private space, noise-cancelling headphones.

Coaching

E.g. support with communication, wellbeing, time management.

Sources:

¹ - McDowall, A., Doyle, N., & Kiseleva, M. (2023). Neurodiversity at work: demand, supply and a gap analysis.

Birkbeck, University of London.

Informal adjustments to ways of working

Minimising stress

- Let people tell you how they would like to work
- Give advance notice of tasks
- Think about the degrees of distraction
- Don't overload with verbal instructions

Written communications

- Use 'sans serif' font such as Arial and Tahoma
- Include diagrams, flow charts or pictures
- Prioritise important tasks first, with bullet points
- Print or copy text on coloured paper or provide a plastic overlay.

Everyone has their own unique set of strengths and weaknesses.



So tailor adjustments to the individual.



2. Building psychological safety



Psychological safety:

A shared belief held by members of a team that it is safe to put oneself at risk.

Psychological Safety

A shared belief held by members of a team that it is safe to put oneself at risk.

How?

- Encourage ideas, debate and challenge
- Apply curiosity and compassion
- Avoid blame
- Convey trust in others
- Show care and concern for individuals

How to build psychological safety

Develop understanding

- Celebrate neuro-difference
- Run inclusion workshops
- Improve your own understanding

Encourage openness

- Encourage neurodivergent colleagues to express their needs
- When people speak up, listen and respond appropriately

Focus on growth

- Make it clear that you value learning and growth over perfection
- Avoid shaming people for mistakes
- Focus on strengths

Commit to action

- Measure psychological safety, review regularly, take appropriate action
- Follow through with adjustments



3. Challenging exclusive behaviour

'I'm being dyslexic, I can't spell that'

Eye rolls

'They just don't fit in with the rest of us'

Sniggering

'How do you cope?!'

Avoidance

'How rude...they must be on the spectrum'

Micro-incivilities

'We've not got all day'

'I get so OCD about my filing'

'The kinds of daily, commonplace behaviours which signal, consciously or unconsciously, to members of out-groups that they do not belong and are not welcome.'

'Why do you never listen?'

'My friend has that too so I know how you feel'

'I'll speak for you'

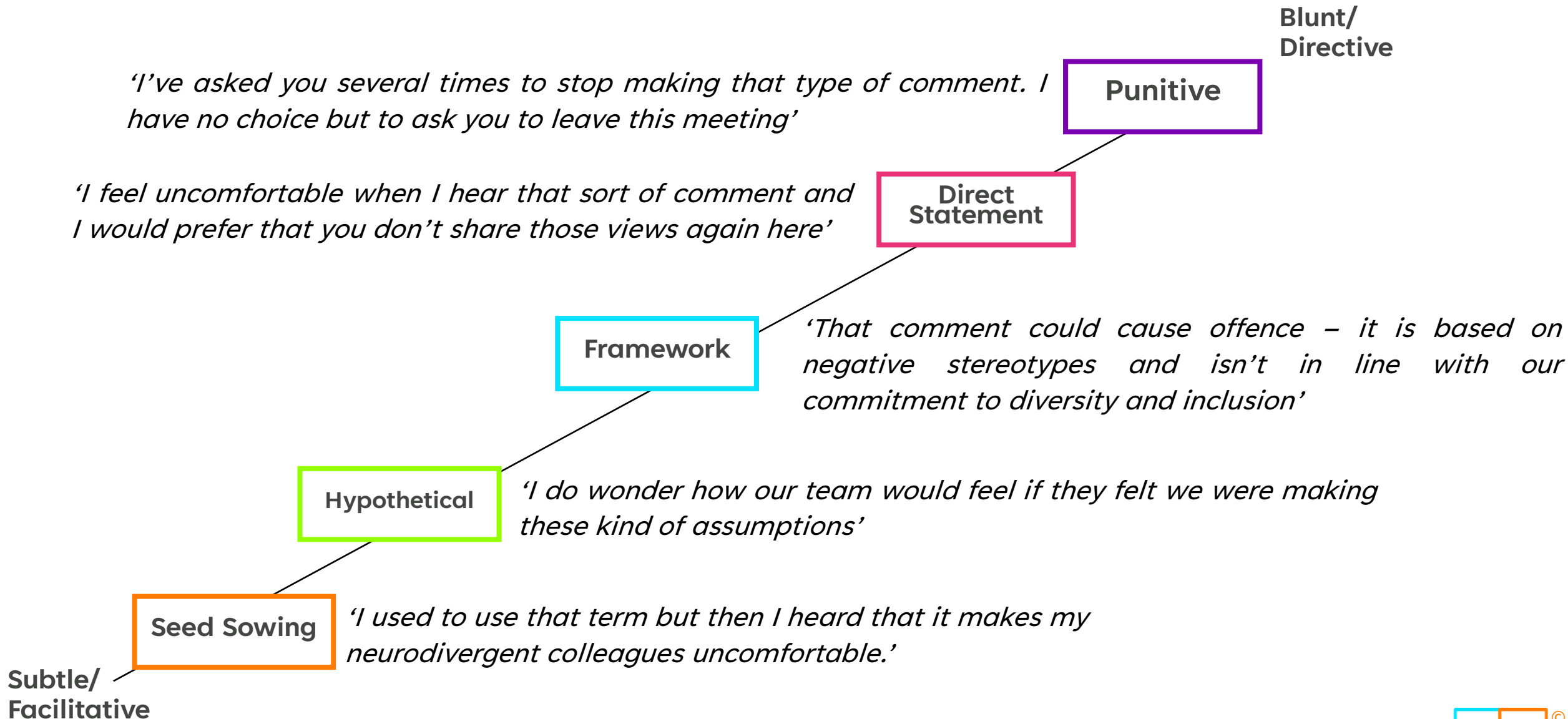
'You don't look autistic'

'They wouldn't understand'

'That's beyond their capabilities'

'It's kinder not to invite them...they'd just feel uncomfortable'

How to Challenge: The Continuum of Intervention



Recap: Ways to support neurodivergent colleagues



Making effective adjustments to ways of working



Creating psychological safety



Challenging exclusive behaviour

“Innovation is most likely to come from parts of us that we don’t all share.”

Anka Wittenberg, (Chief D&I Officer, SAP)

Further training and resources

CERN Learning Catalogue (all available in English et en français):

Sign up for the following learnings in the CERN Learning Hub:

[Active Bystander](#) : aims to empower staff to challenge poor behaviours, and bring about cultural change through the reinforcement of messages defining the boundaries of unacceptable behaviour

["Coffee Machine" responding discrimination at work](#) : an original approach to addressing inappropriate behaviour at work is performed as a short theatre piece

[Blind Spots and Unconscious Bias](#) : This workshop provides a framework and tools to help you change your behaviours and practices in order to improve team dynamics and organisational performance by being more inclusive.

Read more here:

["What is Neurodivergent Masking & Why Do Professionals Do It?"](#) – Inclusion Hub, 13 Apr 2023

[e-resources on respect in the workplace](#)

CERN Diversity & Inclusion homepage: <https://diversity-and-inclusion.web.cern.ch/>

Support Services for CERN Personnel

1. Contact the CERN Medical Services psychologists: <https://hse.cern/content/mental-health-support> or directly by email: psychologist.medical.service@cern.ch

CERN Psychologists offer to the CERN Personnel (employed and associated) primary care psychological consultations in English or French in complete confidentiality. Their mandate covers:

- **guidance**
- **advice**
- **provide tools to better manage a given situation,**
- **refer you to a suitable practitioner, if necessary.**

1. Send a mail to the Supporting Neurodiversity at CERN (“SNAC”) informal network, if you would like to join and share your experiences, give suggestions, or be an ally to colleagues who are neurodivergent: neurodiversity.contact@cern.ch (emails received and handled confidentially by SNAC co-chairs Louise Carvalho and Rob Heaton Mills), or to diversity.inclusion@cern.ch

Local Resources for CERN Personnel

In and around Geneva:

- a. La Fondation Pole Autisme: <http://www.pole-autisme.ch/fr>
- b. Autism Info Service: <https://www.autismeinfoservice.fr/informer/obtenir-diagnostic>
- c. University of Geneva courses, such as “Troubles du spectre de l’autisme: biologie et neurosciences » here: <https://moocs.unige.ch/offre/cours-ouverts/troubles-du-spectre-de-lautisme-biologie-et-neurosciences>
- d. 1/ List of certified Psychiatrists – psychotherapists in Geneva: [Chercher un psychiatre-psychothérapeute - Groupe des Psychiatres-Psychothérapeutes Genevois \(psychiatres-amge.ch\)](#).
- e. List of certified Psychologists in Geneva (multi-language) : [AGPsy: Association Genevoise des Psychologues: Members](#).
- f. <https://askearn.org/page/neurodiversity-resources>.

Clare Reynolds

 [linkedin.com/company/pearn-kandola](https://www.linkedin.com/company/pearn-kandola)

 [@pearnkandola](https://twitter.com/pearnkandola)

