

INTRODUCTION TO AUTISM

COURSE OVERVIEW



Social Communication



Social Interaction



**Restrictive, repetitive patterns of
behavior (Rigidity)**



Sensory

TRUE OR FALSE

- All people with Autism prefer to spend time on their own

False: Some people with autism like to be alone, however some like to be with company. Everyone is different, what matters is if the person is happy with the way things are

- People with Autism cannot make friends

False: People with autism can make friends, however, there are a number of difficulties that are associated with autism that may make meeting new people or maintaining friendships a little more difficult

- Autism is a life-long condition, children with Autism become adults with autism

True: Autism is a life-long condition you are born with, however there are many strategies that can be learned to help manage the difficulties associated with autism

- You cannot see Autism

True: Autism is a difference in the way a person processes information rather than a physical thing we can literally see

- **People with Autism struggle to understand social rules, facial expressions and tone of voice**

True: These are all difficulties associated with autism, we will discuss these during the presentation along with strategies for how to manage these difficulties

- **Autism only affects males**

False: Autism affects both males and females although there tend to be more males diagnosed. There is evidence to suggest that males and females may present difficulties differently

- **Autism is usually developed at around 3 years of age**

False: Autism is a lifelong condition from birth, the difficulties associated with autism however may become more apparent as children have difficulty meeting social milestones at young ages

- **People with Autism cannot struggle with any mental health conditions; it is just their Autism**

False: People with autism can struggle with mental health difficulties or conditions just as much as people without autism

- **Behavior such as rocking and flapping can be calming for people with Autism when stressed**

True: People with autism may engage in sensory behavior as a means to keep themselves calm- we will go into this later in the presentation

what people think the autism spectrum looks like:



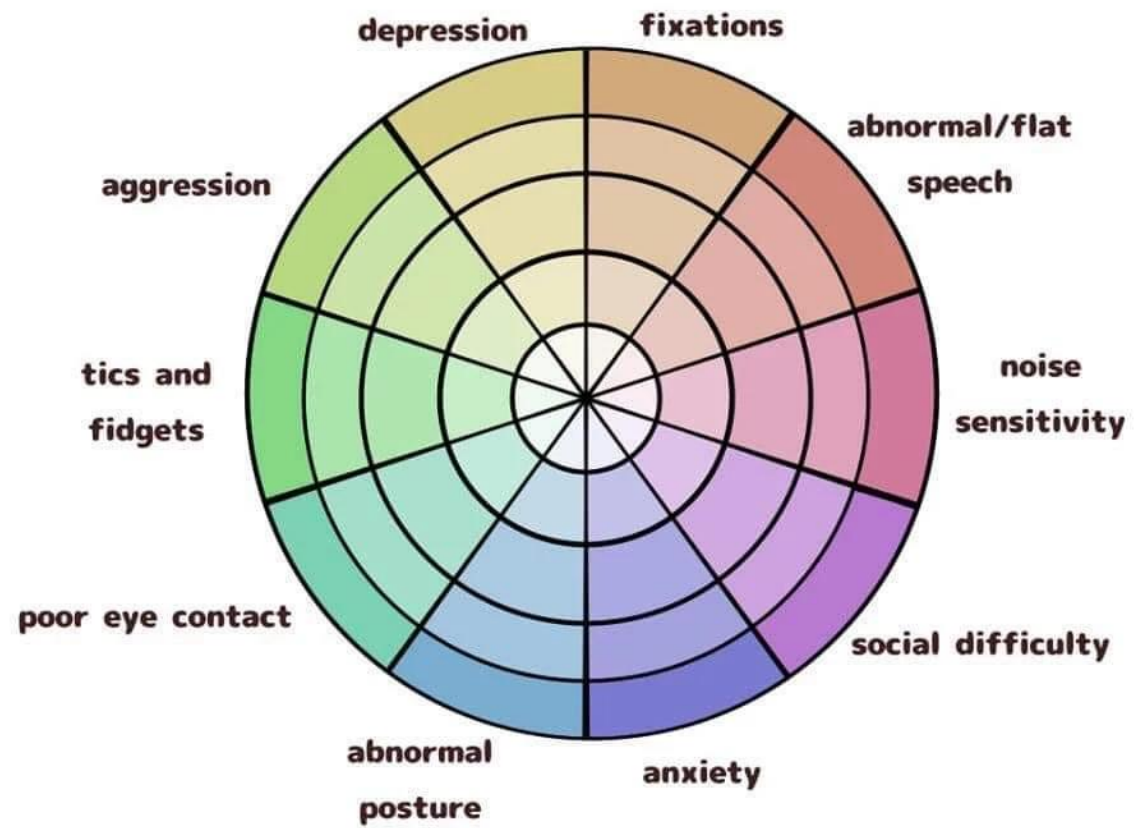
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"less autistic"

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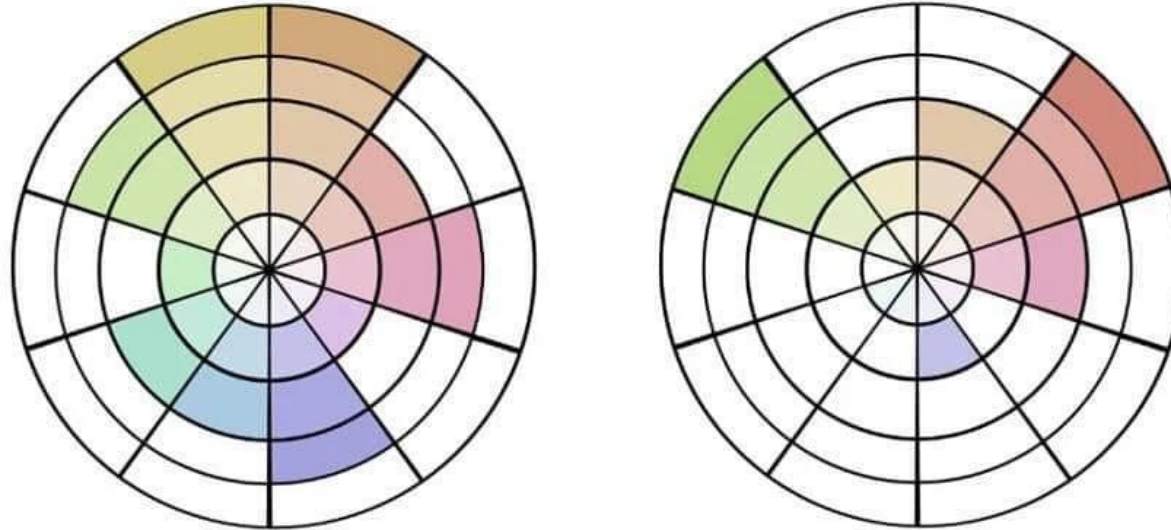
"more autistic"

what it can actually look like:



**no two autistic people are exactly alike, but we
shouldn't be reduced to "high functioning" and
"low functioning" stereotypes, either.**

**my autism looks like this. my brother's probably looks
like this.**

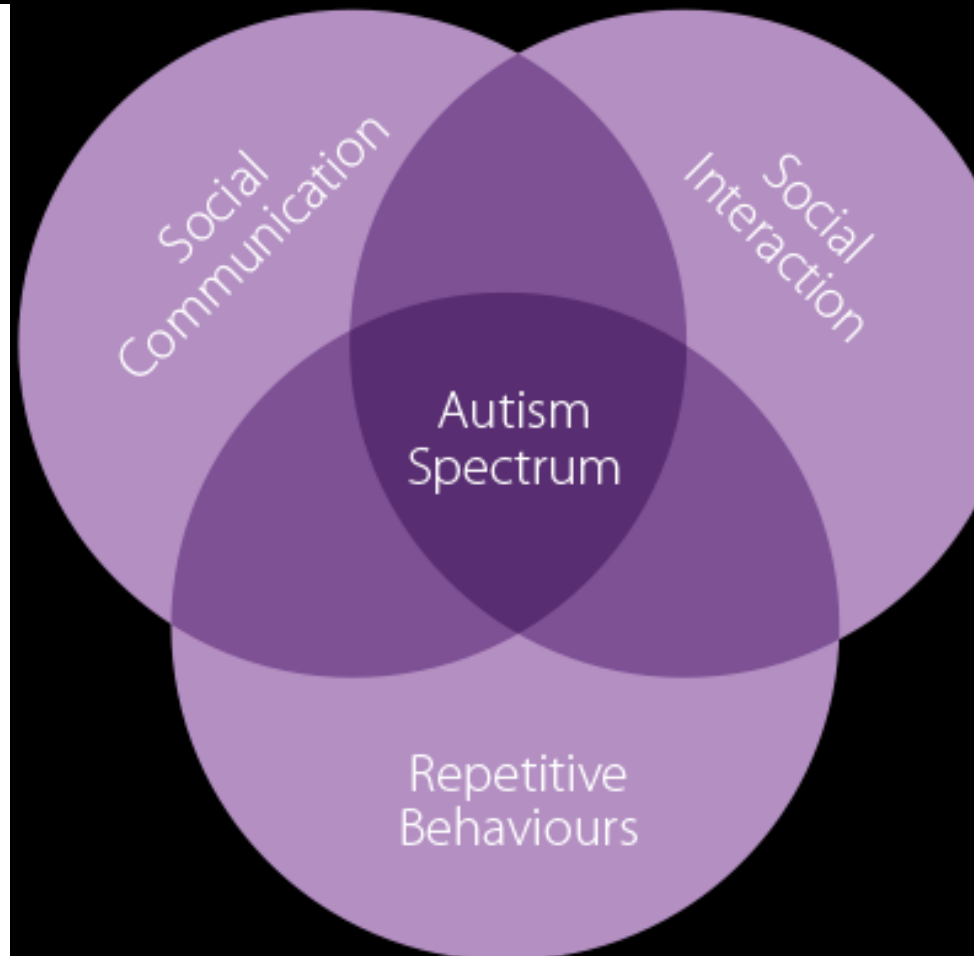


**we have the same "amount" of autism, just different
symptoms.**



EVERYONE IS UNIQUE!!

TRIAD OF IMPAIRMENTS



DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA (DSM 5)

A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by the following, currently or by history

- Deficits in social- emotional reciprocity
- Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction
- Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships

B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities, as manifested by at least two of the following, currently or by history

- Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech
- Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change
- Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
- Hyper-or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment

C. Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period

D. Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning

COMMUNICATION

Verbal



Non-verbal



COMMON DIFFICULTIES

- Starting an ending a conversation
- Knowing when to talk
- Knowing what to say
- Knowing that we talk to different people in different ways
- Understanding sarcasm
- Understanding facial expressions and tone of voice
- Knowing that non-verbal communication can change the meaning if our verbal communication

WORD IDIOMS

Bite the bullet

To get an unfavorable situation or chore over with now because it will need to get finished eventually

Speak of the devil

When the person you have just been talking about arrives

Costs an arm and a leg

Something that is overpriced or very expensive

On the ball

Doing a good job, being prompt, or being responsible

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?



Start with the
person's name



Use simple language
and instruction



Do not insist eye
contact- use one
thing at a time



Allow time to
process instruction



Use closed questions



If you need to repeat
something, say it the
exact same way



Allow time to talk
about things from
their perspective



RULES

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Social Avoidance

- I don't want to see people, I am happier on my own

Social Awkwardness

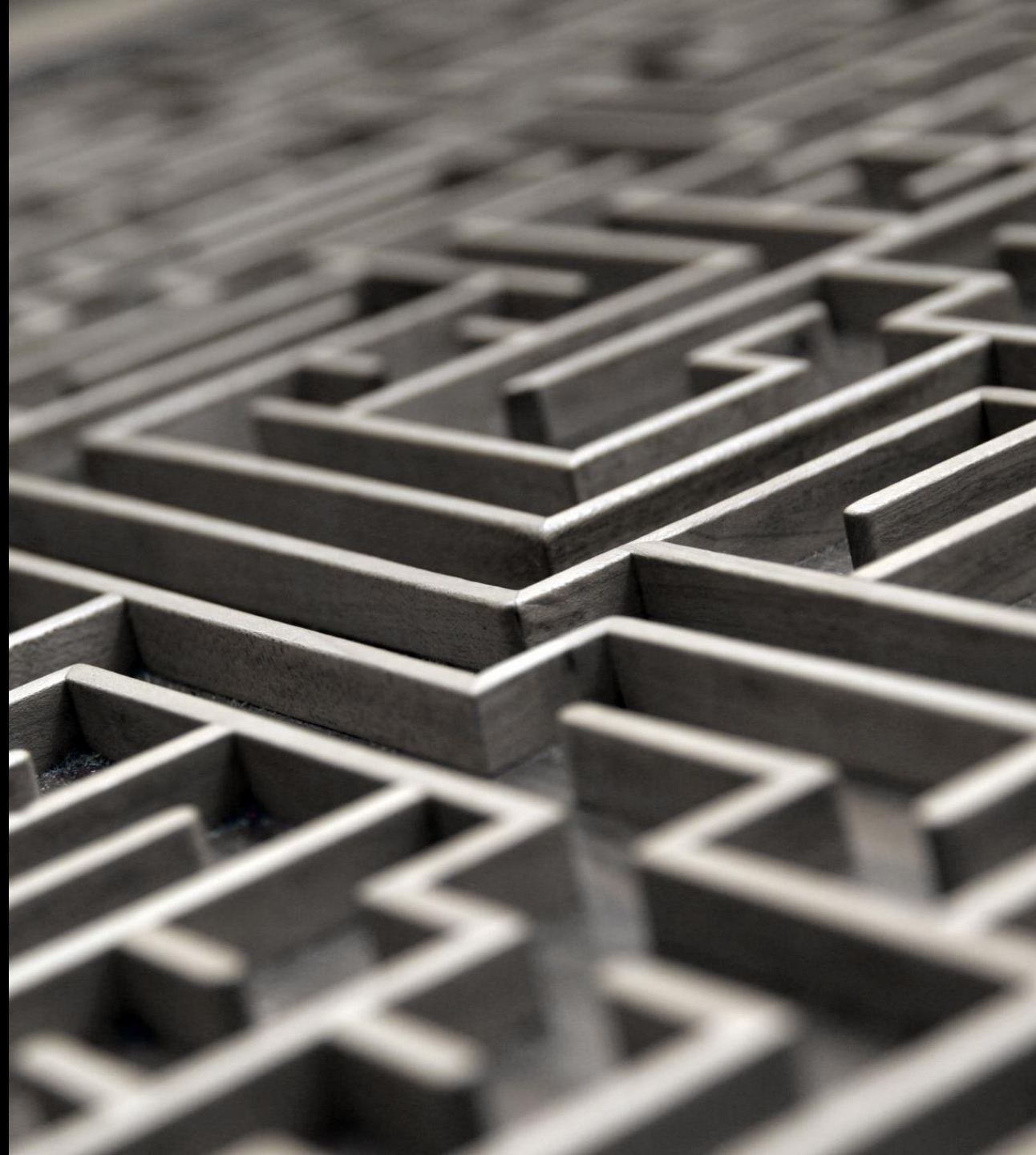
- I want to make friends but I don't really know how

Social Indifference

- People are there if I need something, I am happy with that I am doing

COMMON DIFFICULTIES

- Difficulty seeing things from other people's perspective
- Knowing what to do in difficult situations
- Problem solving
- Knowing how others are thinking and feeling
- Making and maintaining friendships
- Knowing what the unwritten social rules are
- These rules can change depending on the context
- Personal space and eye contact



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?



Modeling



Break situations down



Social Stories



Using media as examples



Talk out loud



Turn taking exercises



**RESTRICTED REPETITIVE PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR
'RIGIDITY'**

COMMON DIFFICULTIES

- Predicting what is going to happen
- Accepting other people's opinions
- Having very specific interests
- Repetitive behavior and speech
- Frequent questioning
- Reassurance seeking
- Difficulty trying new things

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT



Establish a predicable environment



Plan! Especially if going to a new place, holiday etc.



Visual resources such as picture schedules, social stories and pictures



Modeling



Follow through with what you say to build trust



Small steps at a time to build confidence

SENSORY





Vestibular

BALANCE



Proprioception

BODY AWARENESS

How do senses work?

Hypersensitivity
OVER sensitive

COMFORT ZONE

Hyposensitivity
UNDER sensitive

Sound



Hypersensitivity *OVER* sensitive

- Covering ears
- Making repetitive sounds
- Easily distracted

Hyposensitivity *UNDER* sensitive

- Covering ears
- Making repetitive sounds
- Easily distracted

Touch



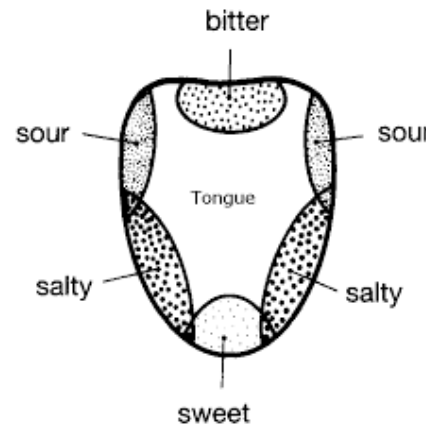
Hypersensitivity **OVER** sensitive

- Irritated by some textures
- May *not like* messy play
- Touch may be painful

Hyposensitivity **UNDER** sensitive

- Run hands over some textures
- May *like* messy play
- May seek tight touch / clothing

Taste and Smell



Hypersensitivity

OVER sensitive

- *Avoid* strong smells / tastes
- Notice changes in perfume, detergents
- Prefer bland diets
- Don't like food touching

Hyposensitivity

UNDER sensitive

- Seek strong smells / tastes
- May explore environment with senses
- Pica

Sight



Hypersensitivity **OVER** sensitive

- *Prefer* dark environments
- Prefer dull colors
- Distracted by busy environments

Hyposensitivity **UNDER** sensitive

- May seek bright lights
- May have “stimming” behaviors

Vestibular *BALANCE*



Hypersensitivity *OVER* sensitive

- Be calm or still
- Lie down
- Feeling dizzy

Hyposensitivity *UNDER* sensitive

- Rocking / Spinning
- Hanging upside down
- Risky behaviors

Proprioception

BODY AWARENESS



Hypersensitivity

OVER sensitive

- Feeling closed in
- Loose clothes

Hyposensitivity

UNDER sensitive

- Walking into things
- Tight clothing
- Fidgety
- Toe Walking

STRENGTHS

Honesty

Sense of humor

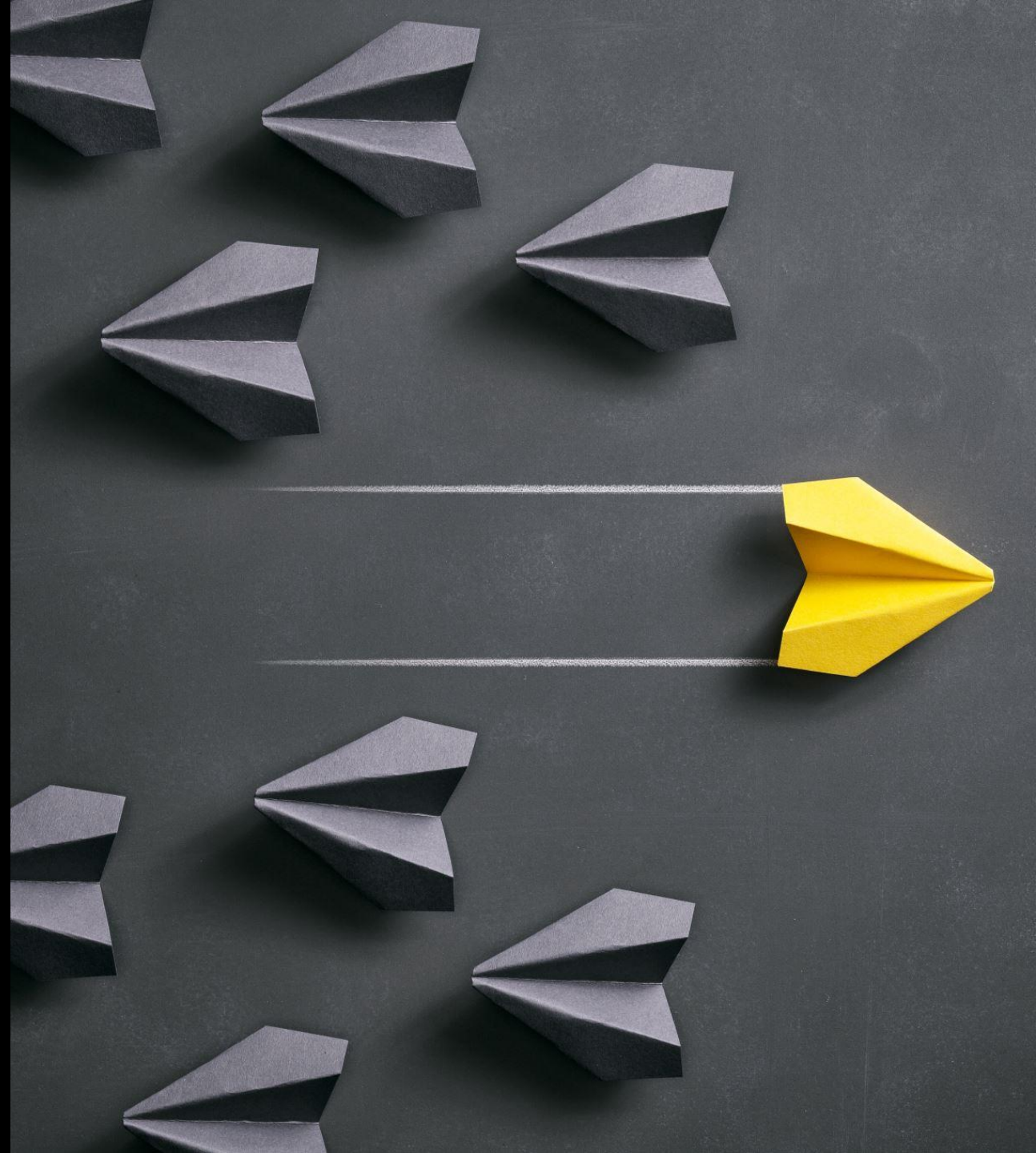
Knowledgeable

Organized

Punctual

Good memory

Eye for detail



Everyone is unique:



**If you have met one person with autism...
you have met one person with autism.**