Beyond MU: Optimizing Workplace Support for Neurodivergent Employees

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Beyond MU
LIFELONG LEARNING

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY
BE THE DIFFERENCE.

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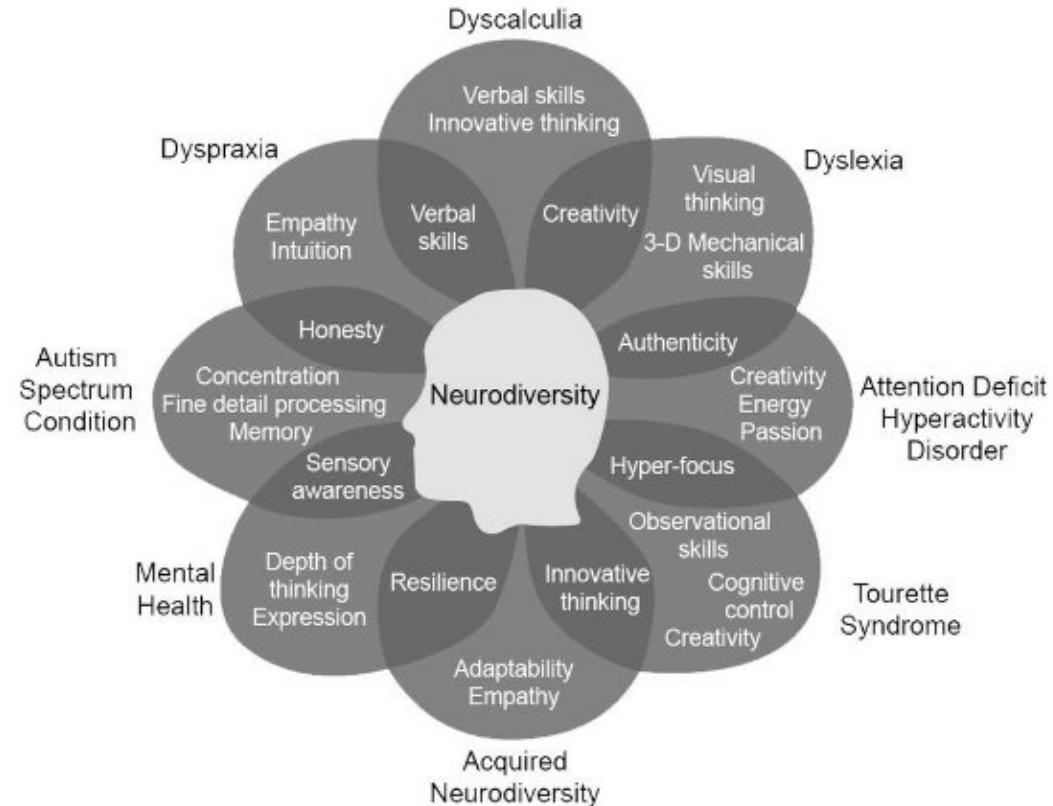Marquette University

Language Use and Definitions

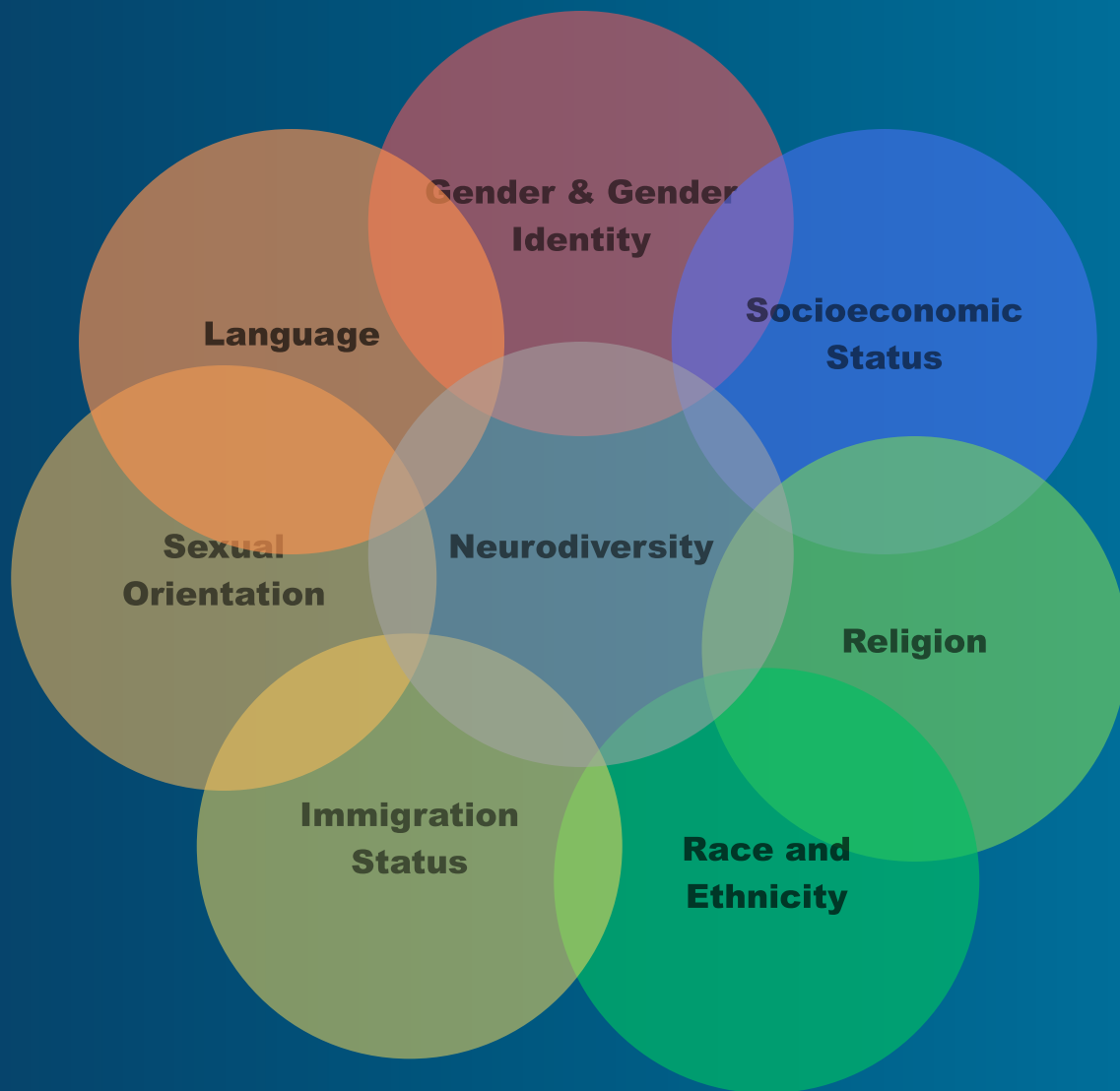| Identity First: "Disabled, Autistic"	Person first: "Person with …"
• Grammatically correct • Includes disability as part of a person • Embraces disability • Many autistic people prefer identity first language	• Awkward syntax • Separates disability from person • Shows a desire to be distant from distant from disability • Parents and professionals often prefer person first language

Listen or ask the person which they prefer if you need to use terminology

What is Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity	Neurotypical	Neurodivergent
Refers to the virtually infinite neuro-cognitive variability within Earth's human population. It points to the fact that every human has a unique nervous system with a unique combination of abilities and needs.	An individual who has a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards. (Or Neuromajority)	An individual who has a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards. (Or Neurominority)

Impacts of Neurodivergence

Gender & Gender Identity

Language

Socioeconomic Status

Sexual Orientation

Neurodiversity

Religion

Immigration Status

Race and Ethnicity

Neurodiversity and Intersectionality

Neurodiversity at Work

Employment Rates 2023- Ages 16-64

Characteristic	Disabled	Non-Disabled
Employed	6,196	143,961
Employed – Bachelor's or Higher	2,214 (31.3%)	60,538 (75%)

https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf   Numbers are in thousands

Nearly 42% of young adults on the autism spectrum never worked for pay during their early 20s. *

Years after High School	Employment
0-2	32%
2-4	46%
4-6	76%
6-8	93%

https://drexel.edu/~/media/Files/autismoutcomes/publications/LCO%20Fact%20Sheet%20Employment.ashx

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46% of employed autistic adults are over-educated or overqualified for their roles

Employment Activities and Experiences of Adults with High-Functioning Autism and Asperger's Disorder | Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders (springer.com) (Baldwin et. Al, 'Employment Activities and Experiences of Adults with High Functioning Autism and Asperger's Disorder' 2014)

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ADHDers are 18 times more likely to be disciplined at work for perceived behavior problems, such as reduced attention span, hyperfocus and organizational difficulties. They are also 60% more likely to lose their jobs

Neurodiversity: the little-known superpower (kornferry.com)
(Korn Ferry, 'Neurodiversity: the little-known superpower', 2022)

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Only 14% of dyslexics feel that their organization understands the value of dyslexic thinking

randstad-enterprise-made-by-dyslexia-dyslexic-thinkers-research.pdf (madebydyslexia.org) (Made by Dyslexia, 'dyslexic thinkers: recruiting the unique talent your company needs', 2023)
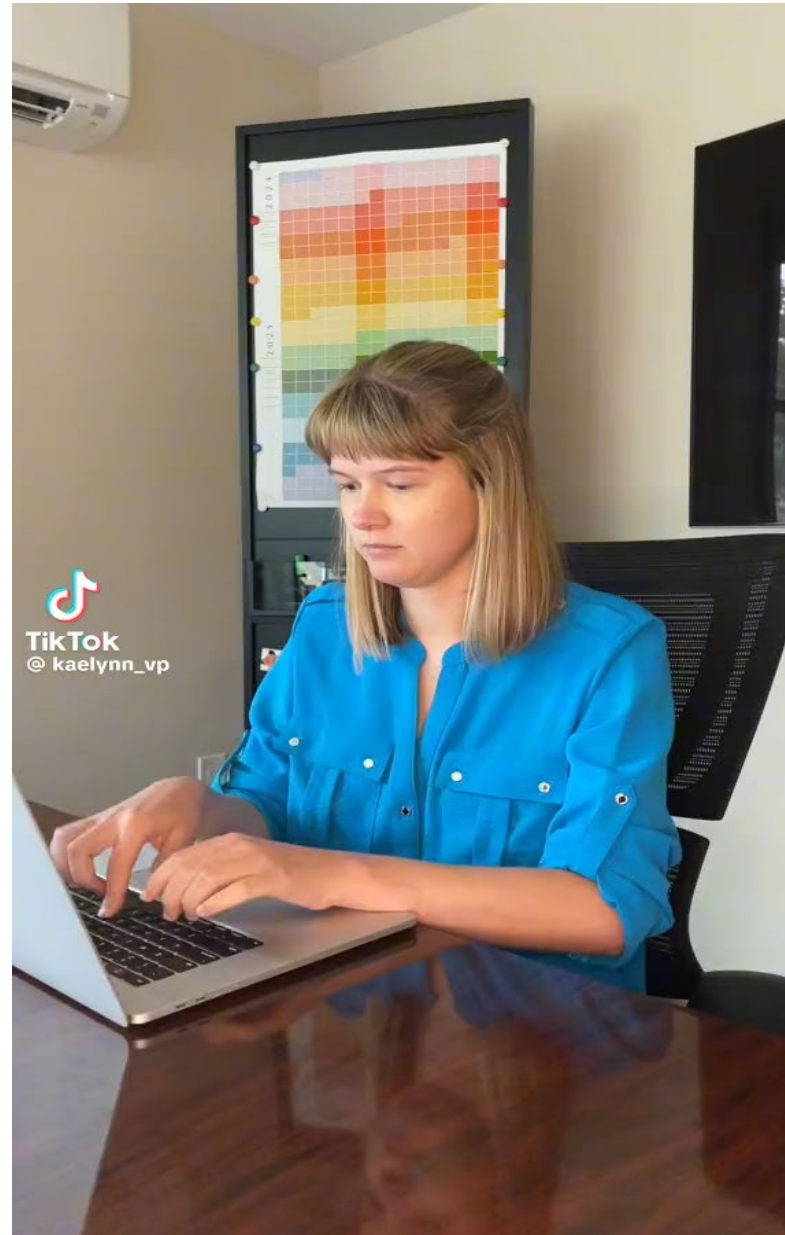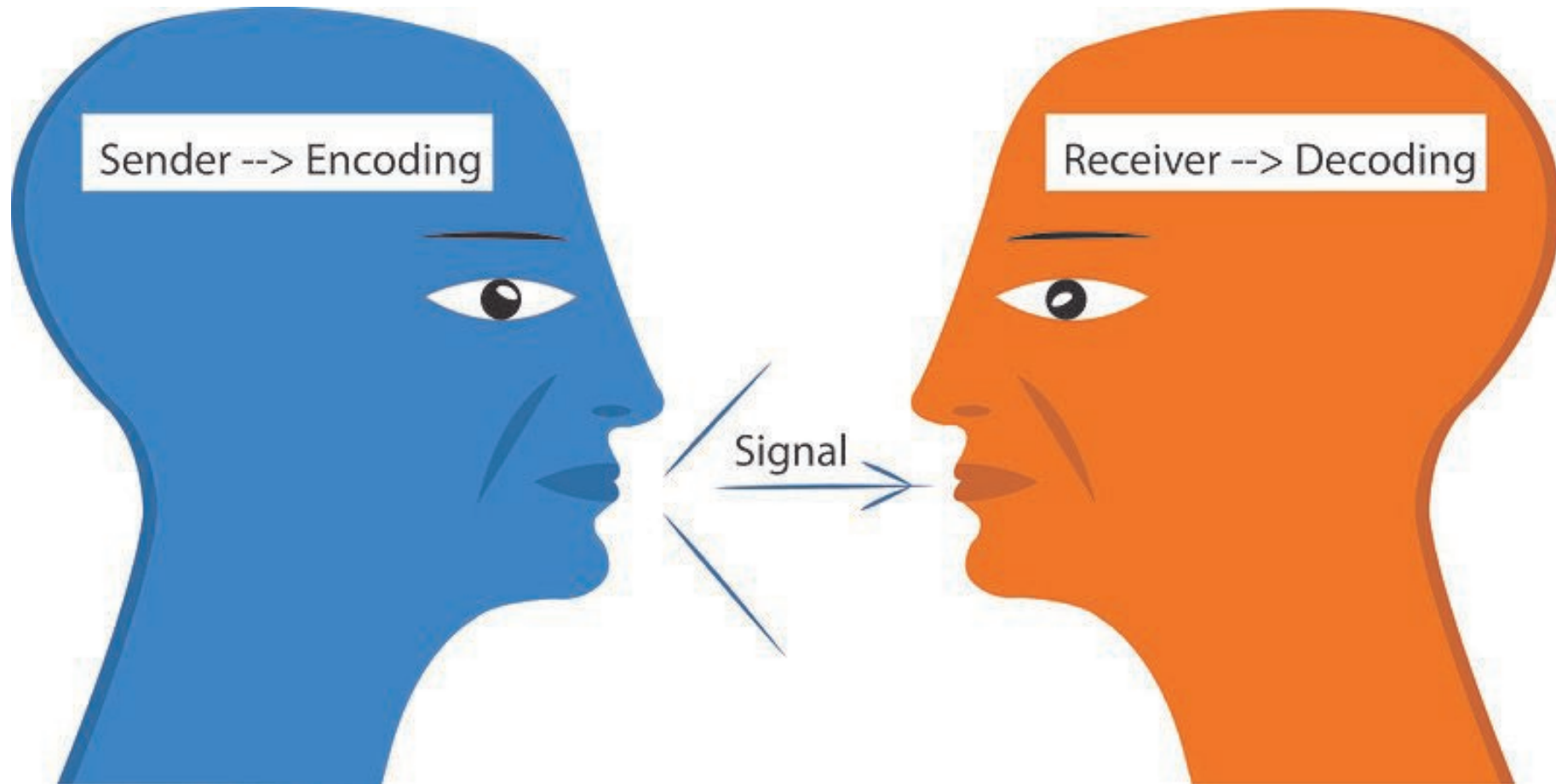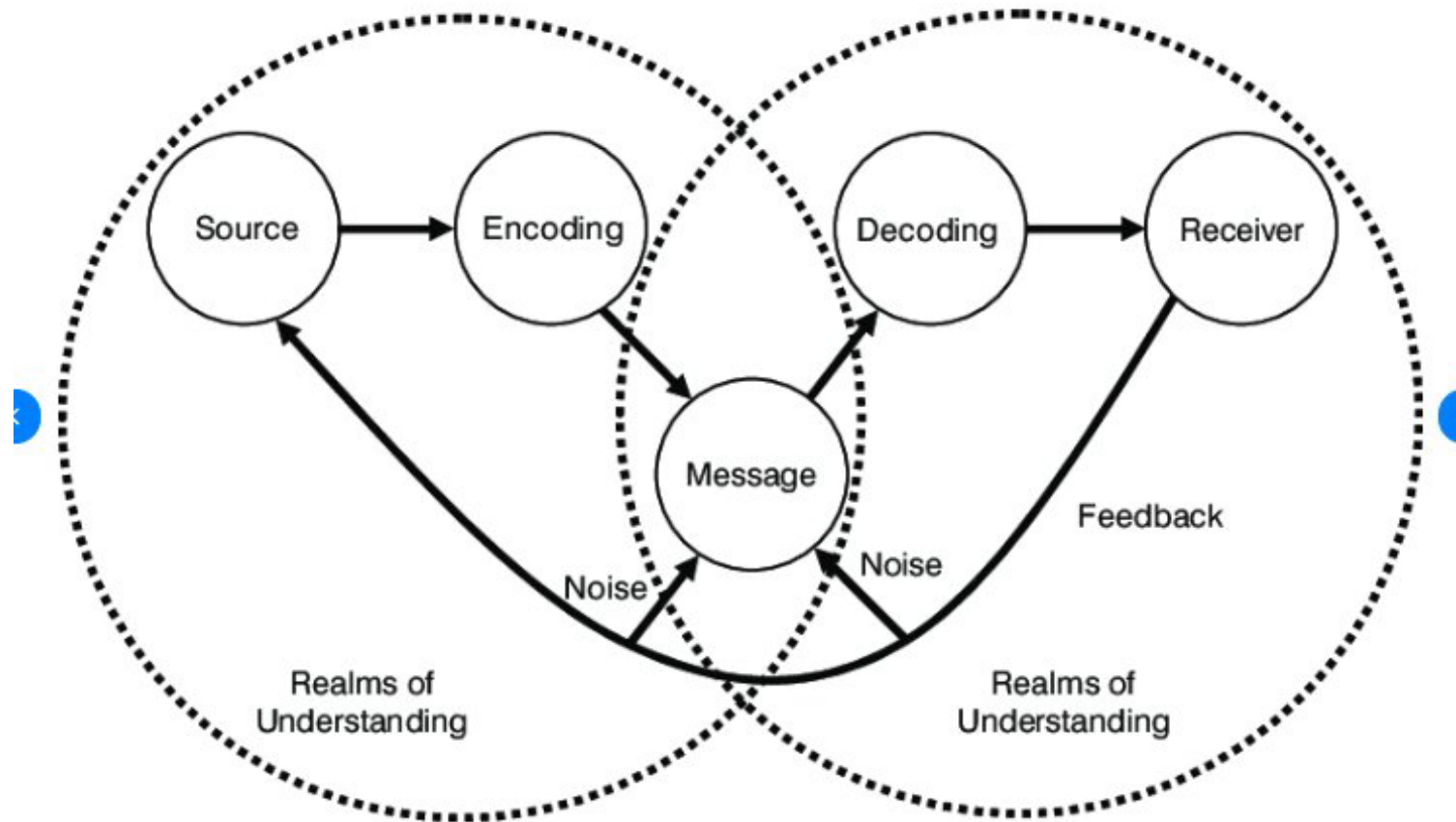
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Why is this?

Miscommunication

Communication – Perception

Sender --> Encoding

Receiver --> Decoding

Signal

Communication- Reality

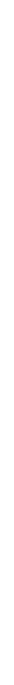# Miscommunication

Eye Contact Bias

Small Talk Bias

Non-verbal
Communication Bias

Time pressure

What would work better?

Addressing Miscommunication

MOST RESPECTFUL
INTERPRETATION

MANAGE YOUR STORIES

MANAGE YOUR
BOUNDARIES

Keeping It Clean: Giving Feedback That Works

What is Clean Feedback

Honest

Specific

Focused on Impact

Why it Matters

Build Trust

Reduces Miscommunication

Creates a culture of growth and accountability

The Formula

What I noticed

The impact it had

A curiosity or next step

Example

I noticed…(Describe the behavior. Be objective and specific.)
"I noticed you didn't attend the project check-in meeting yesterday."

The impact was…(Explain how the behavior affected you, the team, or the outcome.)
"The team had to make decisions without your input, which delayed the timeline."

I'm wondering… / Could we…(Invite collaboration or offer a path forward.) "Could we create a calendar reminder so this doesn't happen again?"
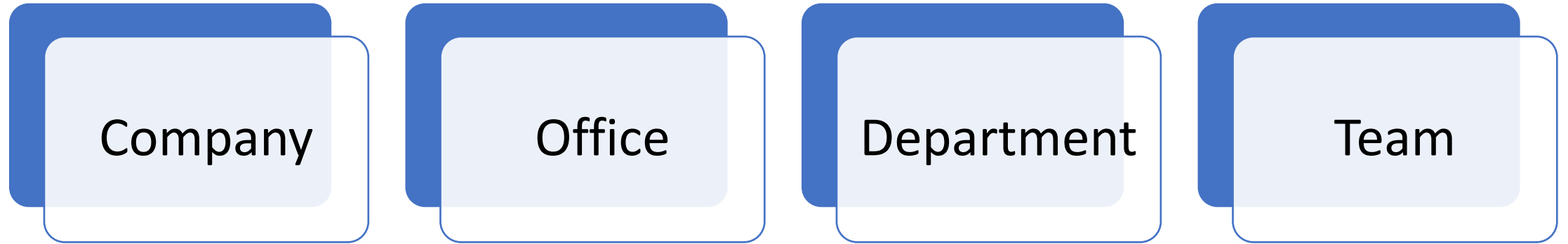
Next Steps

Review the feedback... What does this tell you about your own values?

Consider your Values... How do your values provide insight into your cultural assumptions?

Reflect... On the unwritten rules of your organization. How can they be more clearly defined?

Multiple Layers, Multiple Expectations

Company

Office

Department

Team

COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

Accommodation	YES	NO	Notes
Have you clearly communicated the nature of work/job roles?	◉	○	
Do you have a user guide on communication style preferences?	◉	○	
Do you ask your employees how they prefer to communicate?	◉	○	
Do you have an option of communication preferences available for meetings/performance reviews, etc?	◉	○	
Do you offer employees the chance to turn video off on video calls or allow use of the chat the function?	◉	○	

YES score out of 5:

1= Serious work needs to be done 2= Much more improvement is needed
3= Doing okay but could be better 4= Almost there but not quite yet 5= Excellent job

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GIVING INSTRUCTIONS CHECKLIST

Accommodation	YES	NO	Notes
Do you provide lengthy instructions in bullet point form?	●	○	
Do you give written instructions or allow time for employees to take their own notes?	●	○	
Is there room for the employee to clarify instructions if need be?	●	○	
Are your instructions clear and concise?	●	○	
Do you allow enough time to process and understand the instructions?	●	○	

YES score out of 5:

1= Serious work needs to be done 2= Much more improvement is needed
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MEETINGS CHECKLIST

Accommodation	YES	NO	Notes
Is there a calendar available or are reminders sent out for meetings?	●	○	
Is there room for different communication styles within the meeting?	●	○	
Is there enough space in the meeting for all voices to be heard?	●	○	
Does the environment allow enough time for people to participate or speak up?	●	○	
Is there prolonged feedback periods for making big decisions?	●	○	

YES score out of 5:

1= Serious work needs to be done 2= Much more improvement is needed

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PROVIDING FEEDBACK CHECKLIST

Accommodation	YES	NO	Notes
Is the feedback you are providing honest, constructive and consistent?	⦿	○	
If someone is incorrect, do you check the employee has understood, and do you set out exactly what should be done instead?	⦿	○	
Do you give positive feedback wherever appropriate?	⦿	○	
Do you provide reassurance in stressful situations and give concrete solutions?	⦿	○	
Is your feedback accompanied by actionable suggestions for improvement?	⦿	○	

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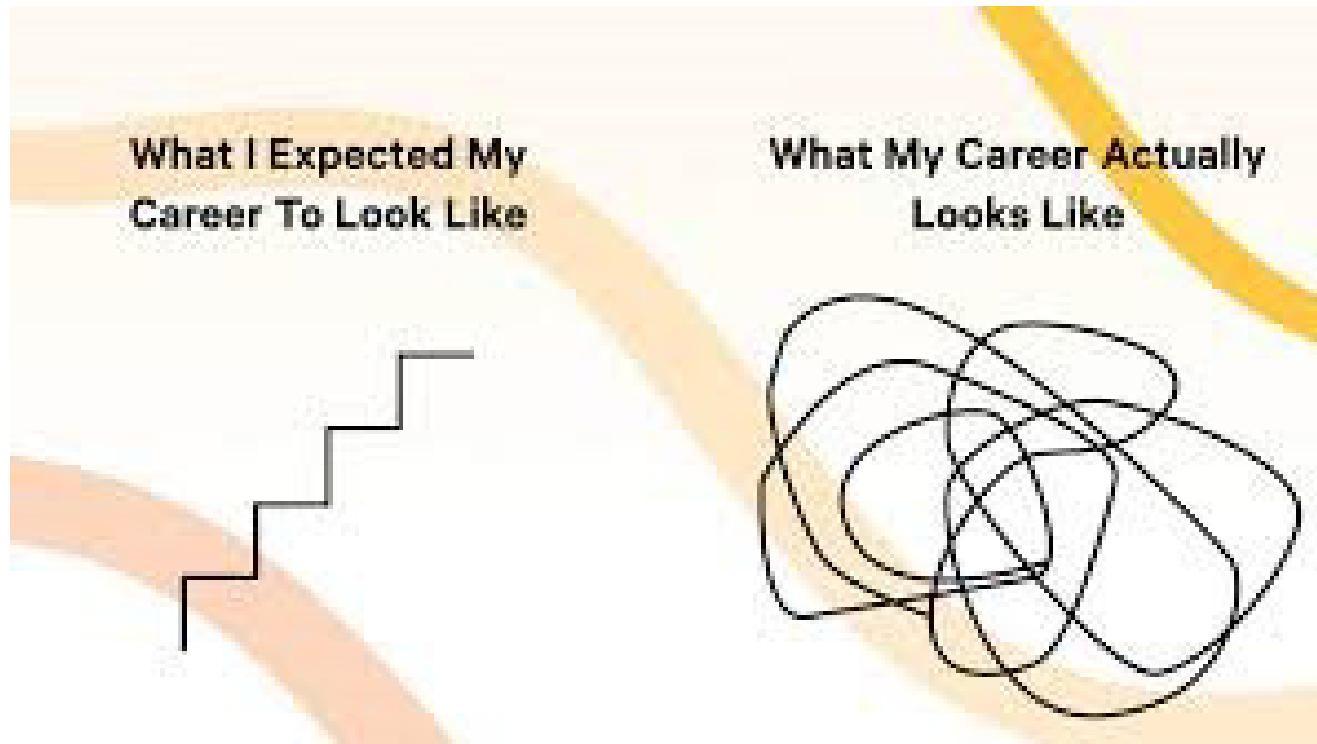# Navigating Career Progression

What I Expected My Career To Look Like

What My Career Actually Looks Like

Retention before Progression

| Limited support after onboarding | Sense of belonging | Burnout |

Breaking the Neurodivergent Ceiling

Involve neurodivergent people in the hiring process

Look at your application processes

Consider what's essential to success in the role

Strengths with Neurodiversity in the Workplace

5 Easiest Activities for Each Domain

Five Easiest Activities for Each Domain

		EASIEST ⟶				LESS EASY
Executing	neurodiverse	Understanding and following written instructions	Working from home or working remotely	Understanding and following verbal instructions	Understanding the emotions of others	Working closely with others to get something done
	neurotypical	Understanding and following written instructions	Understanding and following verbal instructions	Working from home or working remotely	Staying focused when working on basic tasks	Working closely with others to get something done
Influencing	neurodiverse	Understanding and following written instructions	Socializing with coworkers	Building relationships with coworkers	Working from home or working remotely	Being with other people for an extended period of time
	neurotypical	Understanding and following written instructions	Understanding and following verbal instructions	Socializing with coworkers	Building relationships with coworkers	Working from home or working remotely
Relationship Building	neurodiverse	Understanding and following written instructions	Understanding the emotions of others	Working from home or working remotely	Building relationships with coworkers	Working closely with others to get something done
	neurotypical	Understanding and following written instructions	Understanding and following verbal instructions	Working from home or working remotely	Understanding the emotions of others	Working closely with others to get something done
Strategic Thinking	neurodiverse	Understanding and following written instructions	Working from home or working remotely	Understanding and following verbal instructions	Understanding the emotions of others	Working closely with others to get something done
	neurotypical	Understanding and following written instructions	Understanding and following verbal instructions	Working from home or working remotely	Working closely with others to get something done	Knowing when to seek help on work-related tasks

5 Most Difficult Activities for Each Domain

Five Most Difficult Activities for Each Domain

		MOST DIFFICULT				→ LESS DIFFICULT
Executing	neurodiverse	Having little control or oversight over your work	Being productive in a noisy setting	Working in a shared or open office space	Navigating office politics	Working on tasks or projects without clear direction
	neurotypical	Having little control or oversight over your work	Being productive in a noisy setting	Navigating office politics	Working on tasks or projects without clear direction	Working in a shared or open office space
Influencing	neurodiverse	Having little control or oversight over your work	Being productive in a noisy setting	Working in a shared or open office space	Staying focused in meetings	Working on tasks or projects without clear direction
	neurotypical	Having little control or oversight over your work	Being productive in a noisy setting	Working on tasks or projects without clear direction	Navigating office politics	Working in a shared or open office space
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Strategic Thinking	neurodiverse	Being productive in a noisy setting	Having little control or oversight over your work	Working in a shared or open office space	Navigating office politics	Working on tasks or projects without clear direction
	neurotypical	Having little control or oversight over your work	Being productive in a noisy setting	Working in a shared or open office space	Navigating office politics	Working on tasks or projects without clear direction

Resources

Complete Checklists

Handout on Clean Feedback

Clean Feedback Worksheet (download a copy)

Link to DisabilityIn's Neurodiversity in the Workplace Playbook

Gallup Report on Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Questions?

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Inspired to support?

- Strengthen support for neurodivergent Marquette students by giving directly to **On Your Marq**

- Support Autism Research at Marquette through the **Arts & Sciences Autism Research Fund**