

*ELT well*

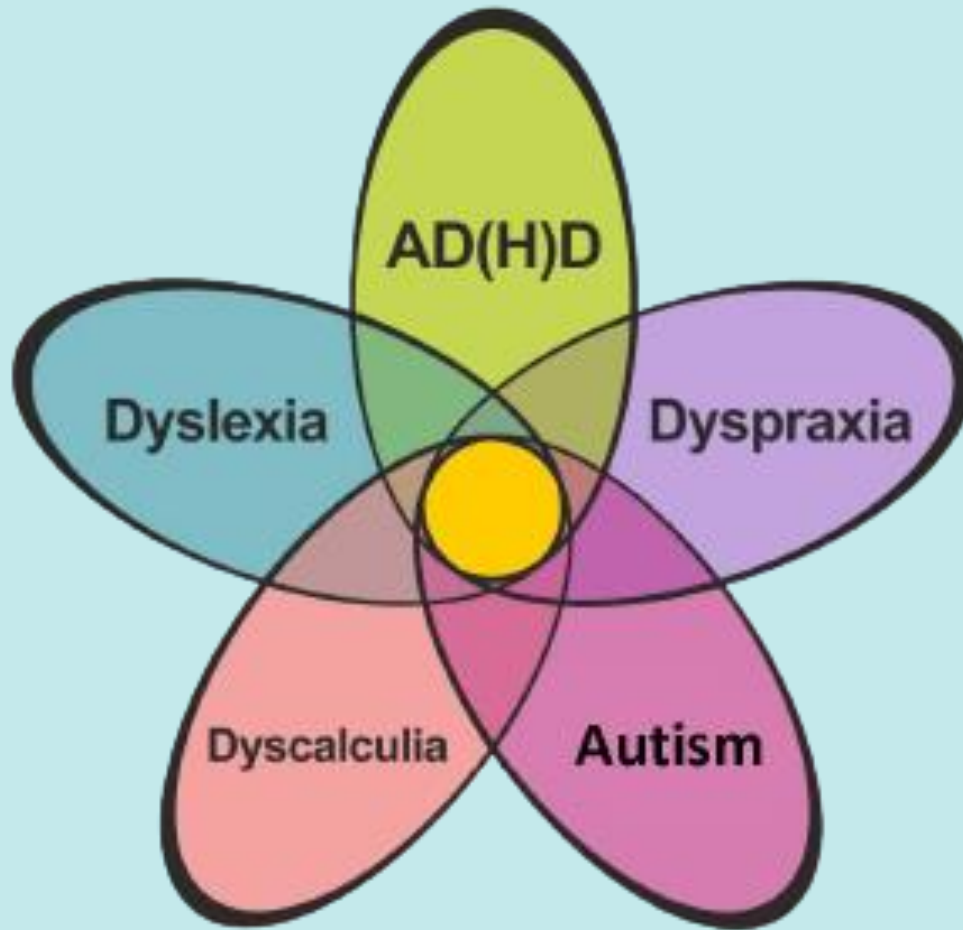
# Hosting neurodivergent learners

Dr. Anne Margaret Smith

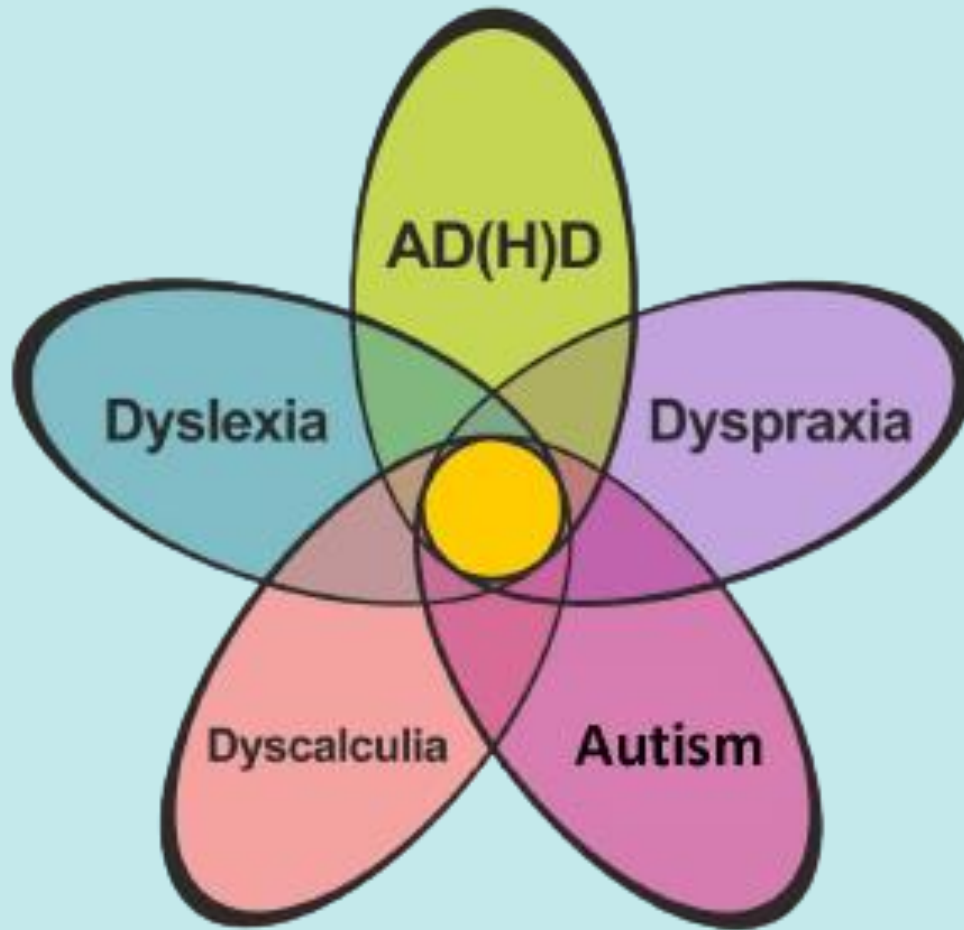
# specific learning differences

Different ways of  
perceiving the world,  
processing information  
and interpreting sensory  
input.

# SpLDs



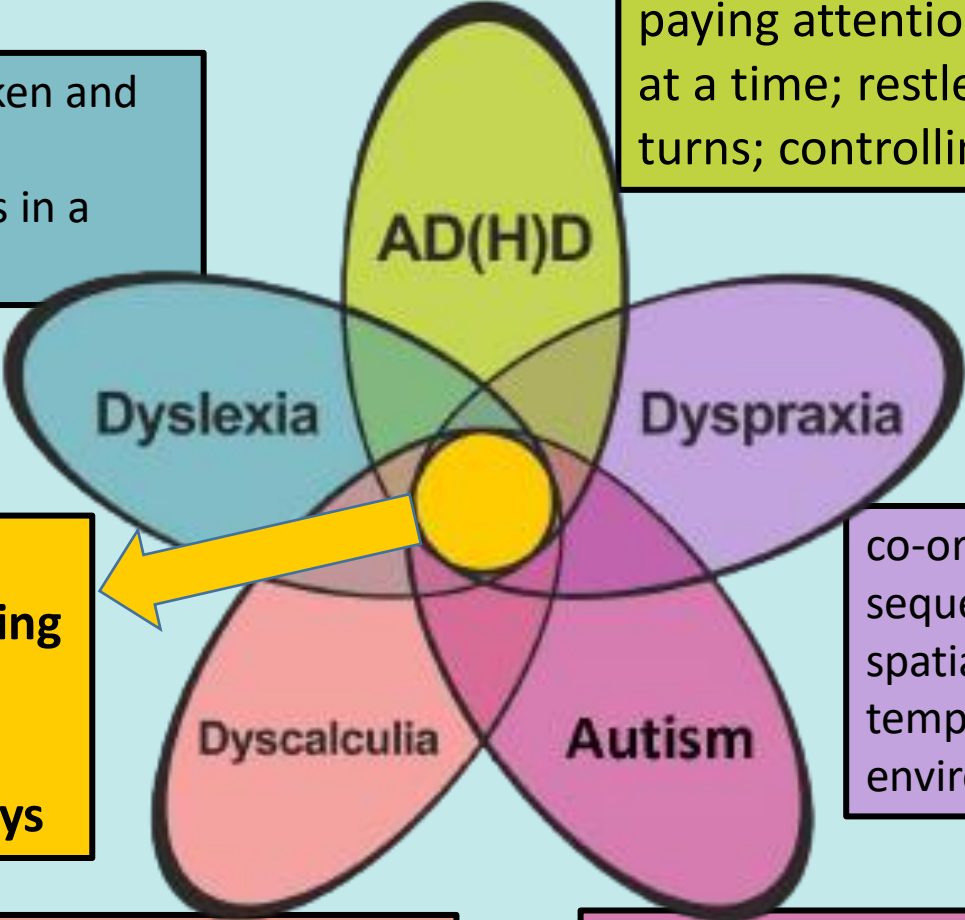
# Neurodiversity



# Neurodiversity – impact on learning

processing spoken and written text;  
explaining ideas in a coherent order.

paying attention to just one thing at a time; restlessness; taking turns; controlling emotions



**Memory**  
**Speed of processing**  
**Organisation**  
**Self esteem**  
**Good and bad days**

co-ordination / articulation;  
sequencing;  
spatial awareness;  
temporal awareness;  
environmental sensitivity

numerical /temporal concepts;  
sequencing; tenses; time expressions

social interaction (especially pragmatics);  
intolerance of changes in routine;  
understanding metaphorical language

# Group task:

What are the main barriers that you have experienced when working with neurodivergent learners?

# Barriers to learning

memory  
issues

sequencing

interpreting  
the world

slower  
speed of  
processing

attention /  
concentration

low self-esteem

disorganisation

environmental  
sensitivity

motor  
co-ordination

# Barriers to learning

1. Memory
2. Organisation
3. Attention / concentration
4. Self-esteem



# Supporting neurodivergent learners

# **Group task:**

You will be allocated one potential barrier to learning.

Discuss what you could do, and what your learner could do, to break down / get around this barrier.

# 1. Memory



notice

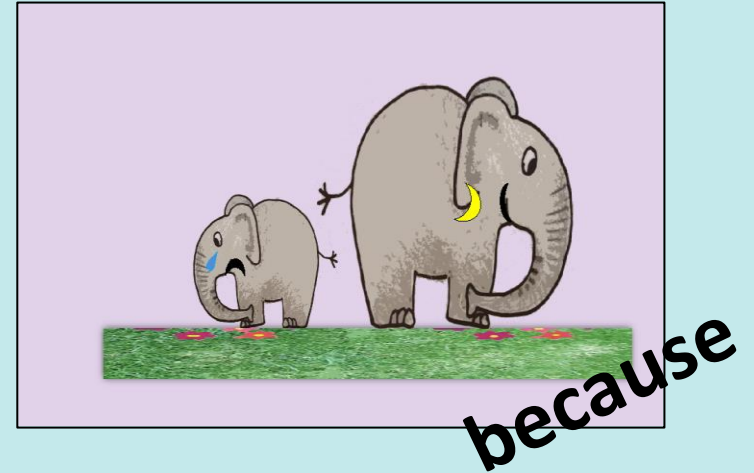
understand

connect

repeat

# 1. Memory strategies

- Silly stories  
(mnemonics)



- Memory pictures
- Rhythms and melodies

# 1. Memory strategies

## Rhythms and melodies

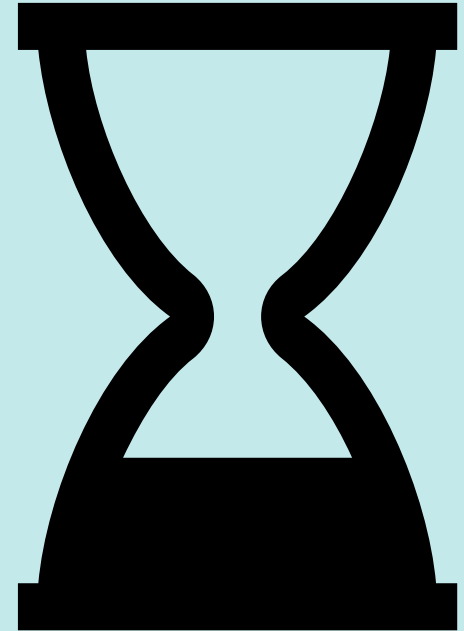
- New words to a familiar tune
  - e.g. 'Happy Birthday'
- Using rhythm to secure a sequence

# 2. Organisation

- cultural elements of organization  
/ time management
- expectations around punctuality  
/ deadlines
- linear or circular explanations?

# Perception of time going by

Let me know when  
**five minutes**  
have gone by.



# 2. Organisation

## Organisation of ideas

- capturing ideas and *then* ordering them
- text frames  
(showing linear progression)
- explicitly explore a range of options for organising the ideas – what works best?





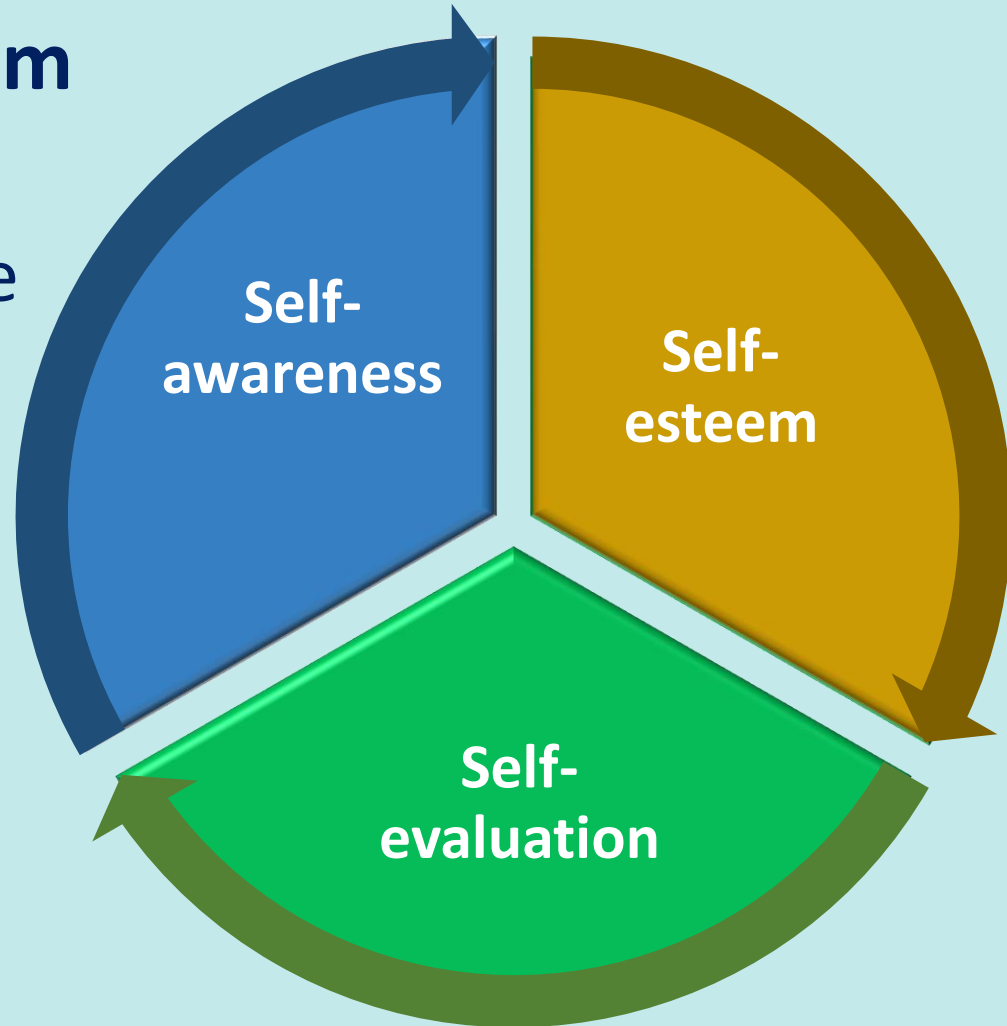
# 3. Attention / concentration

- check the environment
- don't give out things that you don't want them to look at!
- allow fiddling
- short tasks, small steps

# 4. Self-esteem

## Good self esteem

May be one of the most valuable elements in the learning cycle.



# 4. Self-esteem

- talking about emotions
  - offer vocabulary
- reflection on every lesson
  - even beginner learners can ask themselves simple questions:
    - ‘How did I feel in that lesson’?
    - ‘What was hard?’
    - ‘What helped me to do the task?’

# Good days / bad days

- recognise the signs
- make the most of the good days
- accept the bad days ...



... just do something else!



Different routes  
to the same  
destination.

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Any questions?

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