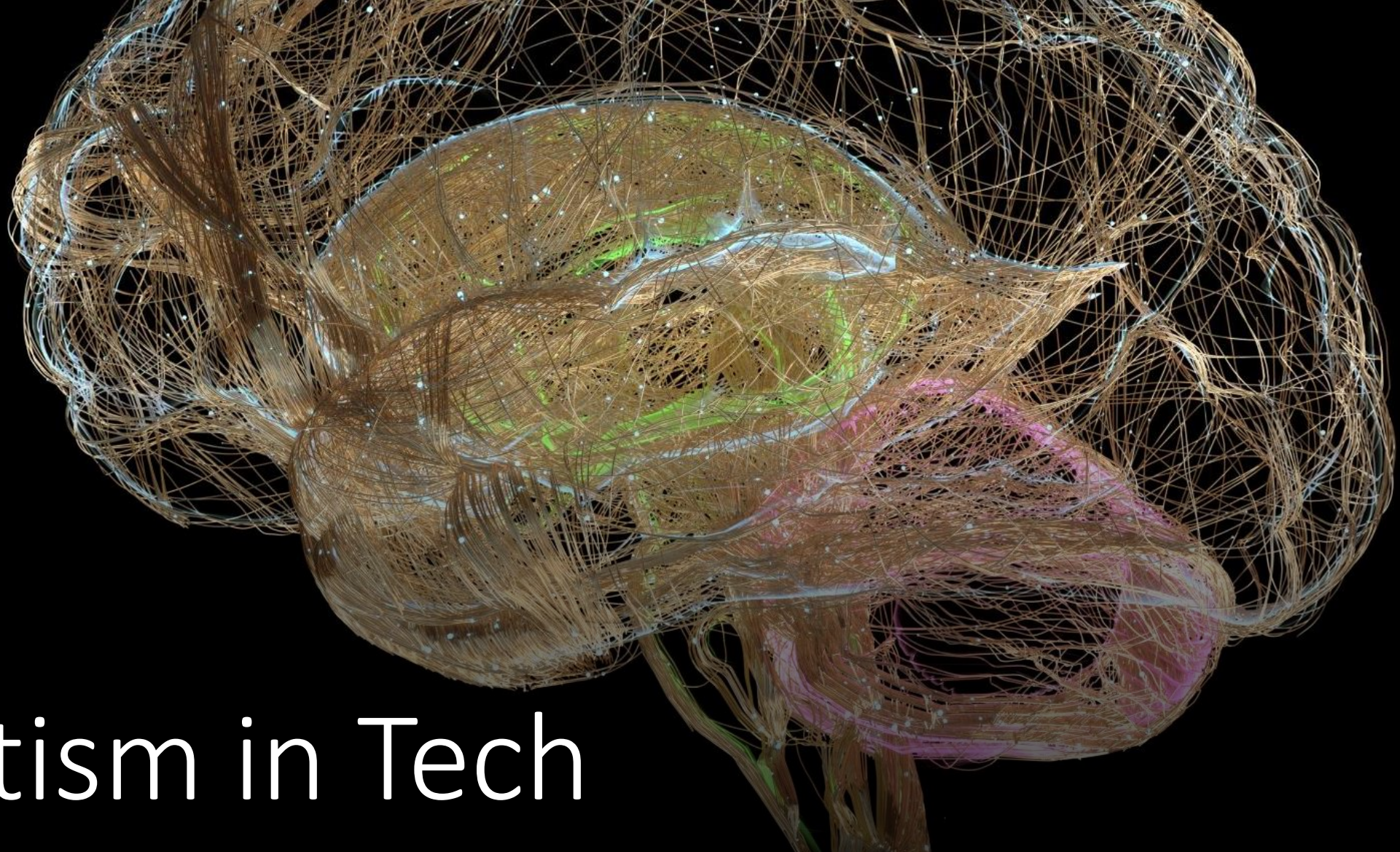


# GOTO **AMSTERDAM 2023**

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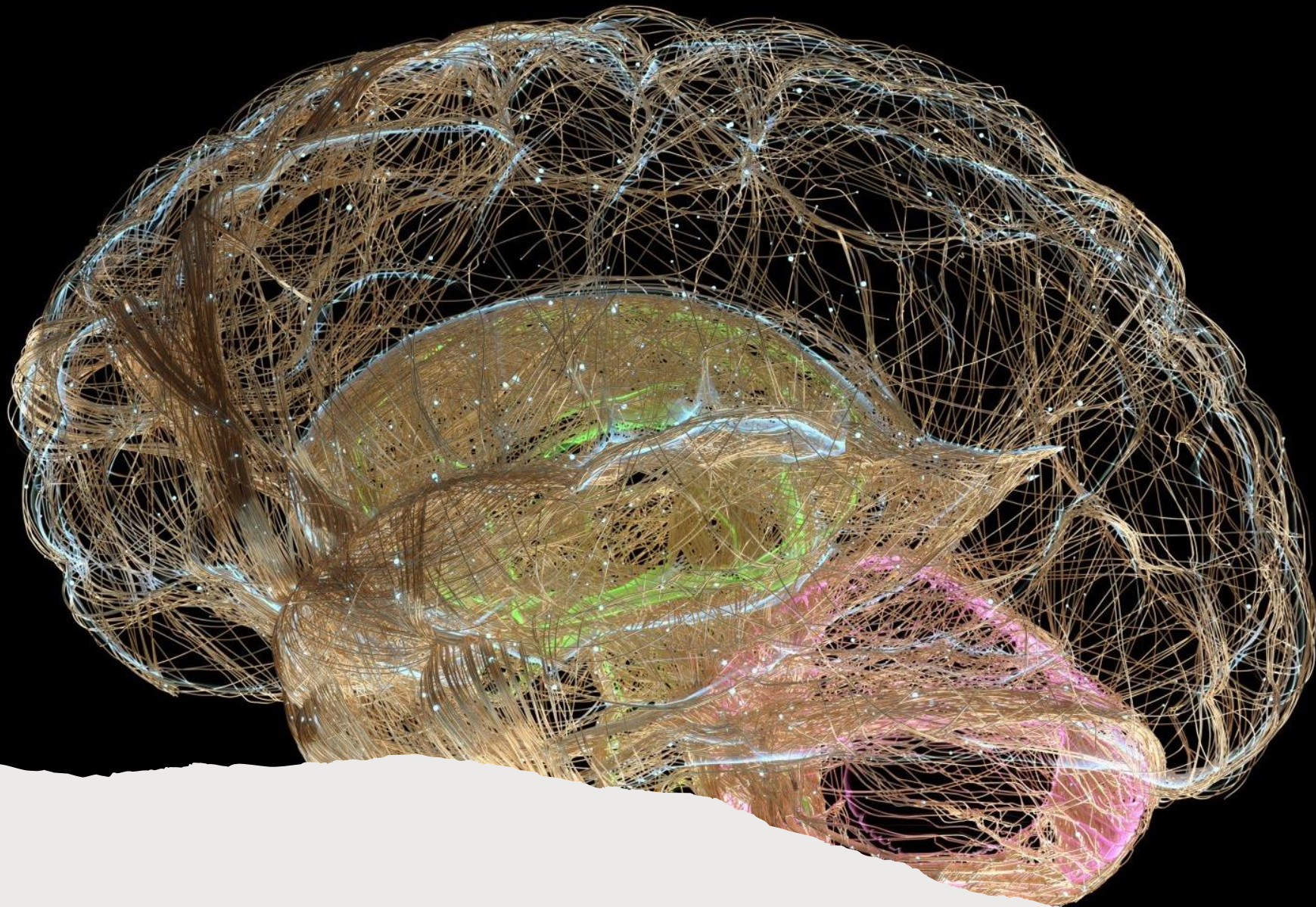




# Autism in Tech

@DennieDeclercq // 2023 // GOTO; Ams





Intro



# Dennie

- >Dennie Declercq
- >President & IT-Coach DDSOFT
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- >#DreamingIsBelieving

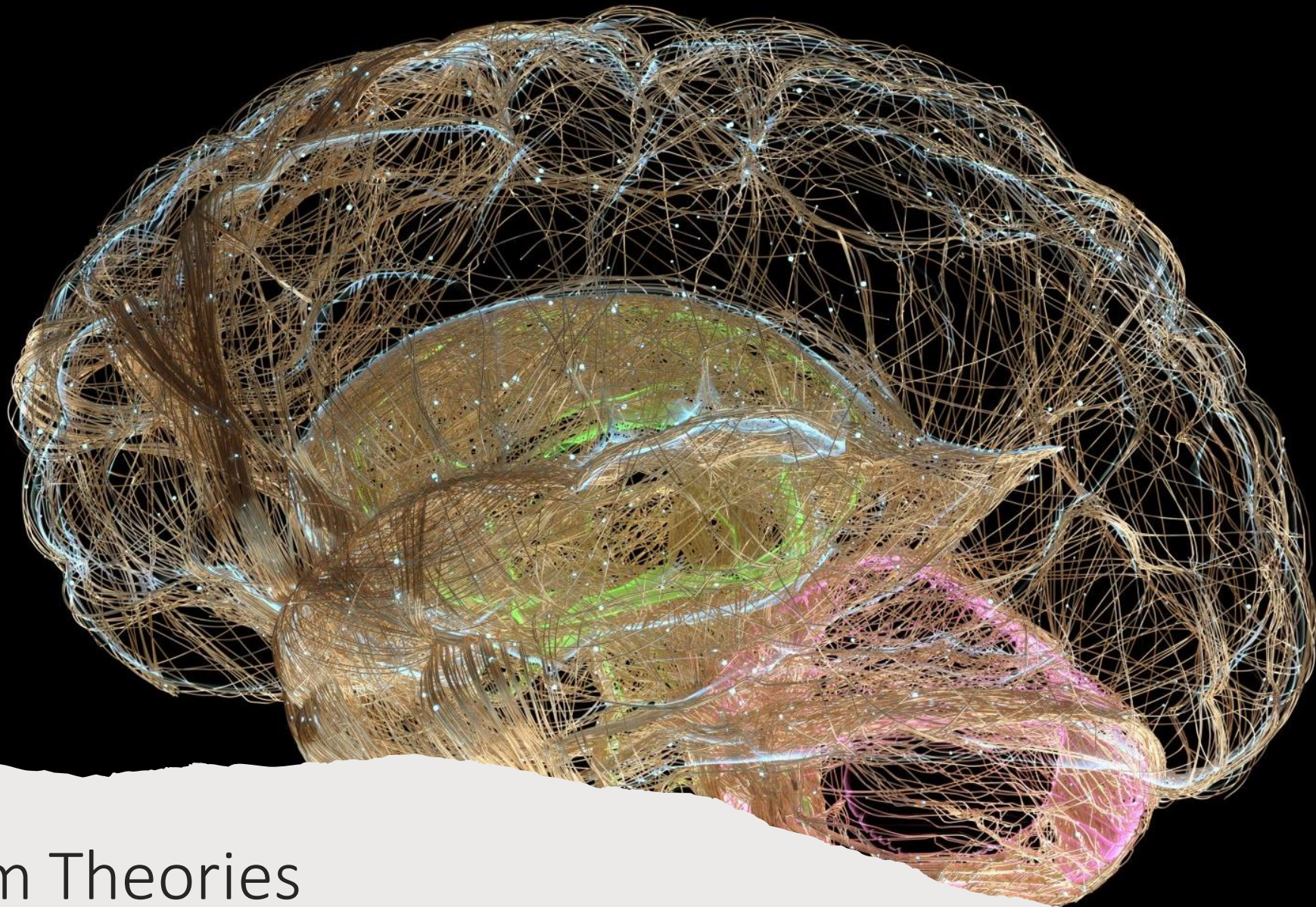


# Content

- > Intro
- > Autism Theories
- > Executive Functioning in Tech
- > Brain-Response Time in Tech
- > Stimuli-Response System in Tech
- > Communication in Tech
- > Outro







# Autism Theories

# Autism Theories & Cherry picking

> A lot of Autism Theories spread over:

- \_Countries
- \_Cultures
- \_Times
- \_Expertise Areas

> My choice:

- \_Not given before (with small exception)
- \_Resonating with

> This talk is NOT:

- \_A complete autism guide



# Executive Functioning

- > Daily living and working activities
- > (Public) transportation
- > Cooking
- > Doing Groceries
- > Your BFF's Birthday party and/ or gift
- > Laundry & Household





# Slower Brain – Response time

- > The time it takes to change thoughts or plans
- > Difficulties with “other” ideas
- > Handling positive and negative “surprises”



# Stimuli – Response system

- > Difficult functioning in case of disbalance
- > Overwhelmed by (external) stimuli
  - \_Hyper
- > Lack of (external) stimuli
  - \_Hypo





# Communication

- > Verbal and nonverbal communication
- > Spoken and written communication
- > Limits and borders of the other
- > Clarity and clearness

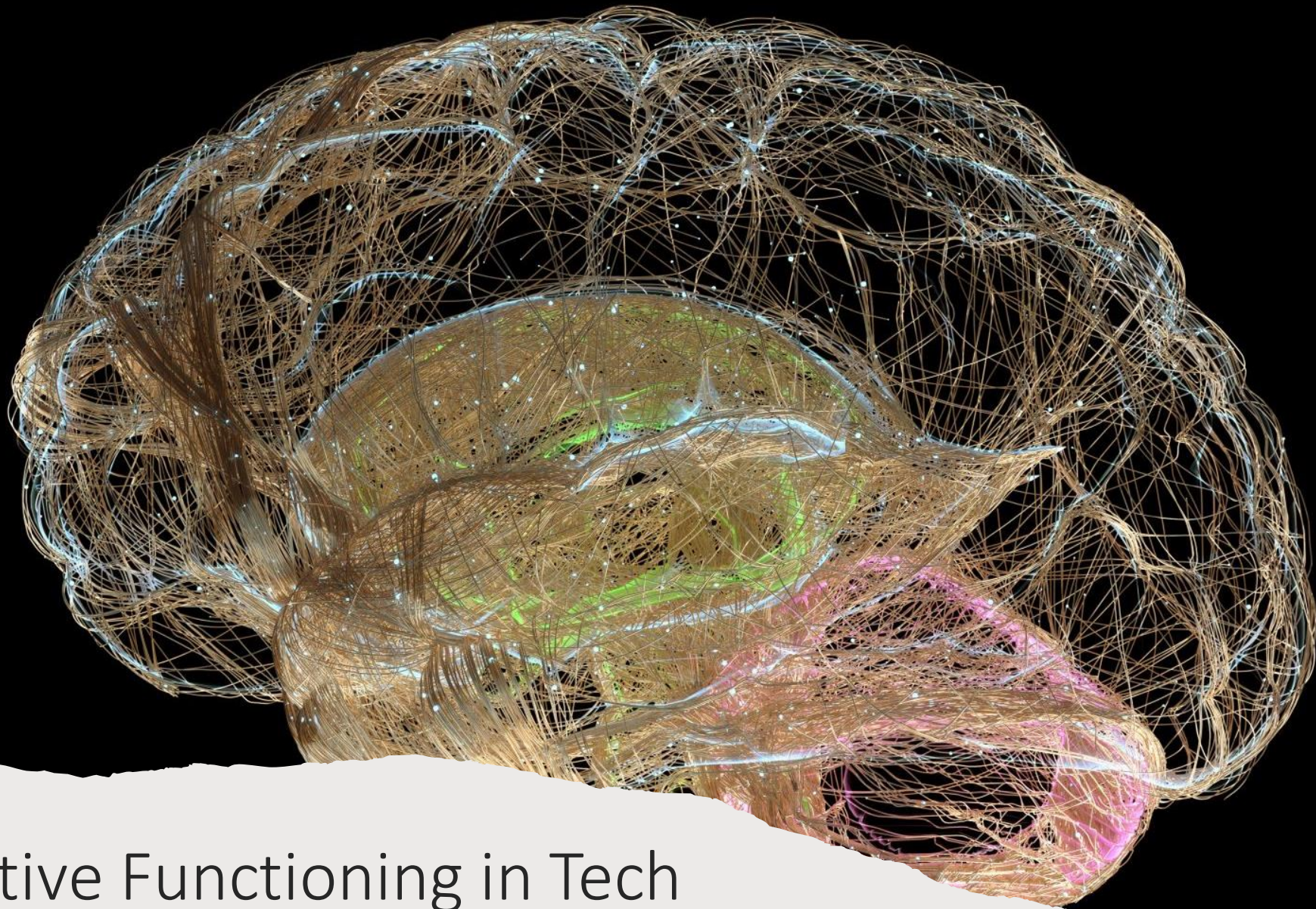


# Reminder: It's a spectrum after all

- > ASP: Autism Spectrum Profile (Shout out Miriam Perrone)
- > ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - > Is A difference a disorder?
  - > Disorder is stigma
  - > Disorder is linked to malfunctioning
- > If (environment == AutismFriendly)=>
  - \_ Autism = **Supertalent**
- > **AutismFriendly** == True If =>
  - (Listen, Adjust, Adapt, Empathy, Uniqueness) = True







Executive Functioning in Tech

# Toolstack

## > Different Tool brands

- > Microsoft
- > Open Genius
- > Google
- > ...

## > Different Tool types

- > Office Management
- > Software IDE
- > Code Editor
- > Software Management

## What can help?

- Listen to the needs
- More time to exercise
- Explanation
- Evaluate often





# Planning/ Structure

- > Which tools are needed?
- > Which resources are needed?
- > How many hours are needed?
- > Is there a sequential order?
  - > (By different teams/ co-workers)



## What can help?

- (Printed/ Digital)
  - Scheme's
  - Organigram
  - Availability scheme's
- Reports of previous projects
- Mentoring



# Estimating

- > How long will X take?
- > How much will this cost?
  - > For the business
  - > For myself
- > Are there consequences?
  - > How big?
- > Which technology?
  - > Clarify: “The right tool for the right job?”



## What can help?

- Mentoring
- Team Lead with autism knowledge
- Take time to play with different technologies
- “The proof of the pudding is in the eating”



# Cognitive Workload

## > Specific language concepts

- > Linq
- > Lambda
- > Regular operations vs Ternary operators
- > Code style

## > Architecture

- > POC vs Production
- > REST vs GraphQL vs gRPC
- > Distributing computing vs Monoliths

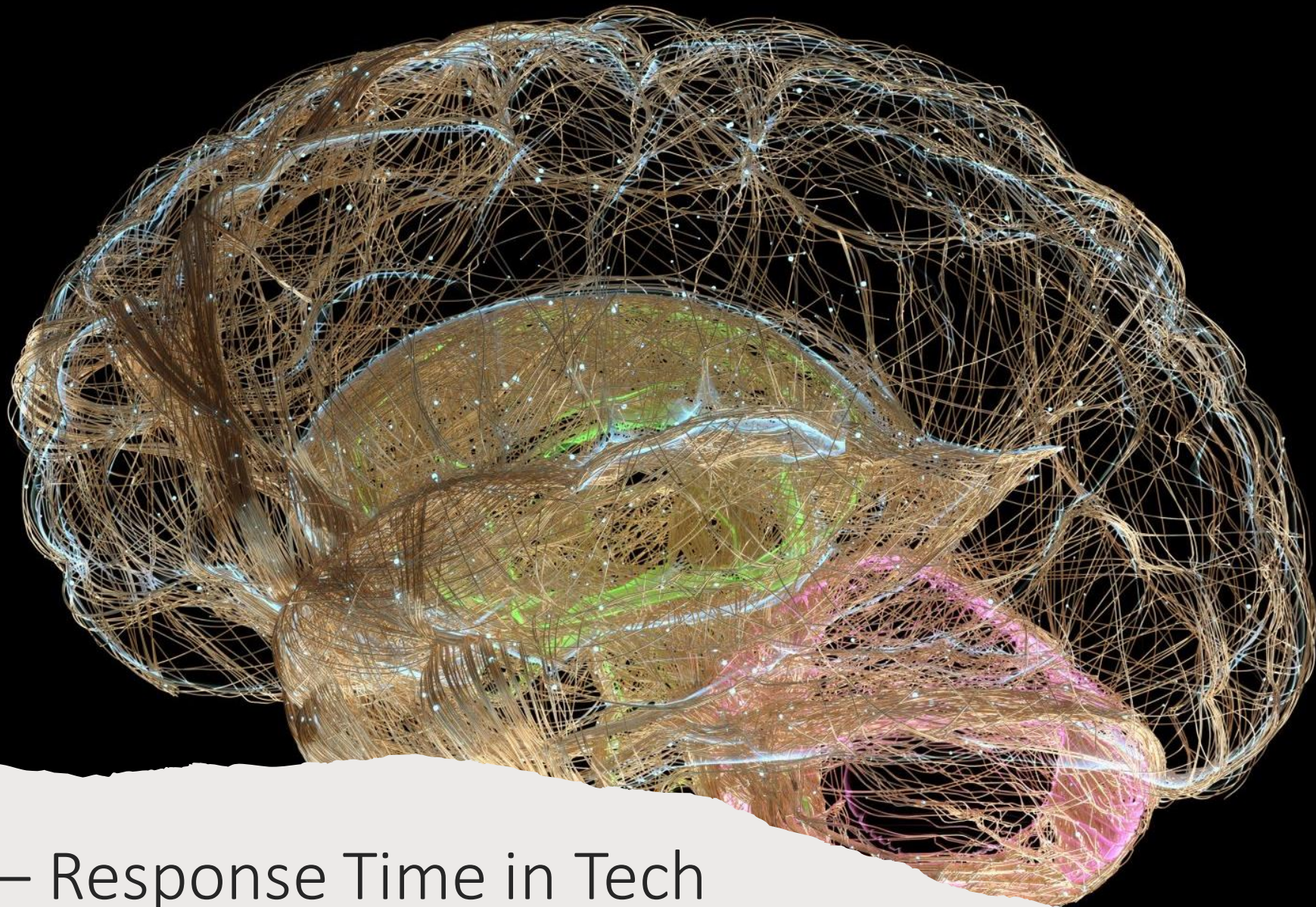


## What can help?

- Code style documentation
- Focusing on specific niche
- Talent Driven Development
  - Focusing on Talents
  - Passing “the rest” to colleagues







Brain – Response Time in Tech

# Thinking takes Time

- > Time to get into Focus Zone/ Flow State
- > Longer thinking, often deeper thinking
- > 10X Steps before on possible consequences



## What can help?

- Give time
- Try to limit interruptions
- Appreciate quality over quantity
- Use it!



# Unexpected questions and demands



- > Can lead to FREEZE
- > Can lead to absence
- > “Not knowing what to answer”
- > “Answers I’d better never gave”
- > Unexpected Q on prices and permissions are a shame

## What can help?

- Be patient
- Give more info than needed
- Protect against misuse without stigmatizing





# Misinterpretation

- > Building what wasn't expected
- > Using a tool for different use case
- > Customers demands can be misinterpret



## What can help?

- Get to know:
  - The customer
  - The big picture of project
- Help
  - The more info, the better
  - Share resources



# Learning new Tools and Languages

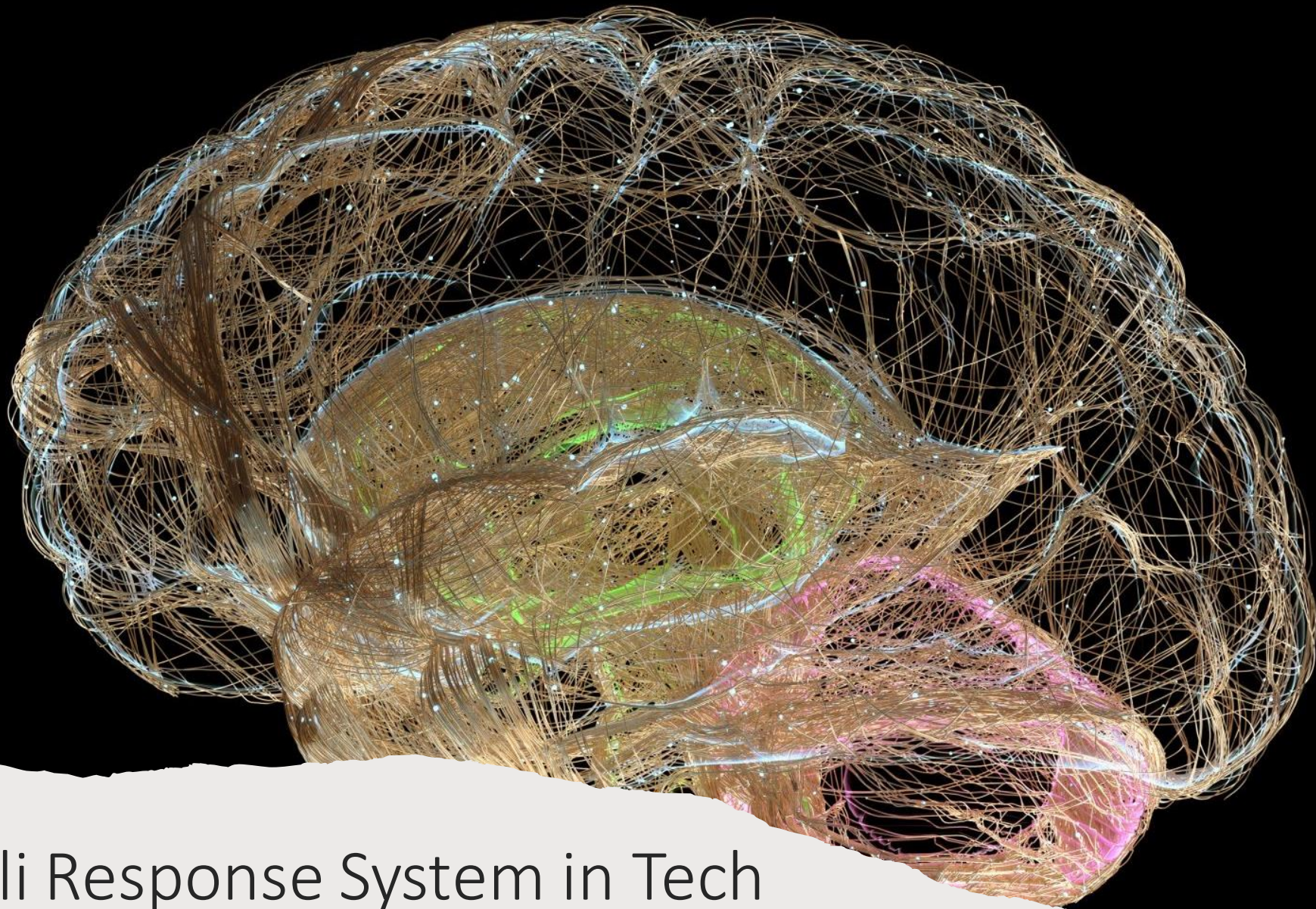


- > Multiple languages can trigger stress
- > 'Small' differences can look like 'big' differences

## What can help?

- Take/give time to learn
- Are multiple languages always needed?
- GitHub CoPilot or other CoPilots





Stimuli Response System in Tech



# Voice & Noise

## Hyper

- > Solo-work on projects is a WIN
- > Most of the time speaks silent
- > Less conversations
- > Hard to ask questions



## Hypo

- > Meetings and 1-MANY projects are WIN
- > Most of the time speaks loud
- > Talks a lot
- > Asks questions (mostly) often



# Movement & Distraction

## Hyper

- > Better focus being alone in office
- > Working from home is a WIN
- > Distractions causes stress



## Hypo

- > Landscape offices are a WIN
- > Working alone can trigger boredom
- > Distractions causes 'too much talking'



# Food & Taste

## Hyper

- > Get overwhelmed by food smells
- > Get overwhelmed quick by 'smells'
- > Overwhelming triggers inability to focus



## Hypo

- > A risk to eat too much => more breaks, toilet visits,...
- > More possibilities to 'socialize'





# Relax & Stress

## Hyper

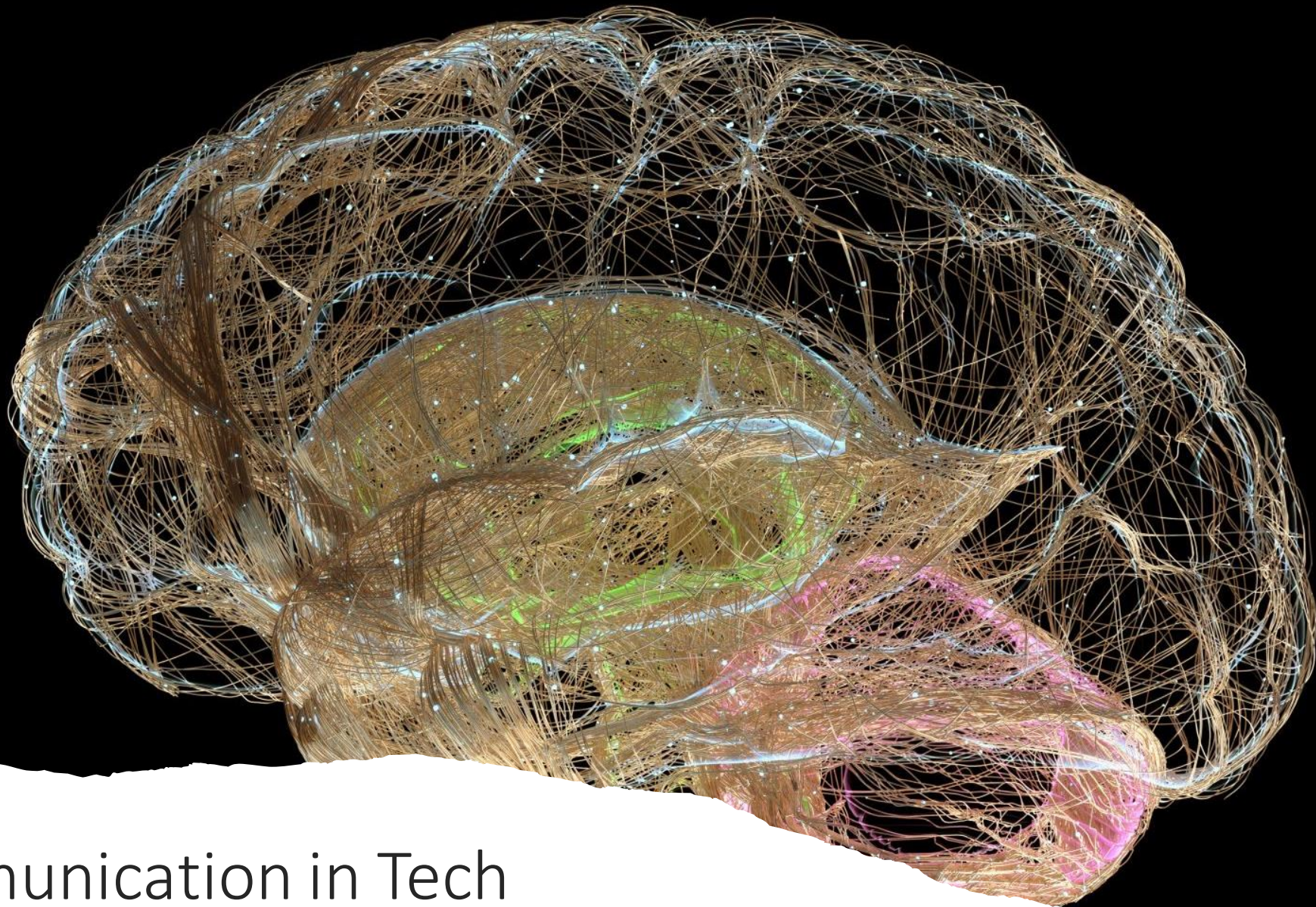
- > Less commute time is a WIN
- > When strict deadline stress =>
  - > Relax at nights, reading, TV,...
- > 1 Monitor is enough



## Hypo

- > Likes to commute more
- > When strict deadline stress =>
  - > Go to Café, city center at night
- > Multiple monitor setup is a WIN





Communication in Tech



# WFH, Hybrid or In Person

- > In person:
  - > can be a reason to wake up
  - > Easier to ask question/ help
- > WFH
  - > Can be more comfortable
- > Hybrid
  - > Is the structure office/home clear?
  - > Are there (a lot of) exceptions
- > What about pair-programming?
- > Connectedness



## What can help?

- Individual approach
- Ask for reasoning about preferred situation
- When virtual: follow up if there are more/ less questions
- 1-on-1's (nearly) always helps
- Be aware of nonverbal communication.





# Mail, Phone or Videocall

- > Written text (mail, app-services) can come “hard”
- > Phone calls can feel uncomfortable
- > Who talks to who?
- > Which is the conversation starter?



## What can help?

- Plan phone calls
  - (ex. Dennie's dad)
- Text before calling
- Listen if conversation start with a “word storm”
- Video calls can be a win.
  - But focus on nonverbal comm.



# Too strict, too vague or just good



- > How much info is needed?
  - > About a project
  - > About a customer
  - > About your own (mental) state?
  - > About the software stack - choices
- > How much info you share?
- > As a ASP person:
  - > Do you dare to ask help, assistance clarity

## What can help?

- Be clear and consistent
- Reasoning is very important
- If ASP person asks 'strange details' => don't be surprised



# Your borders, limits and the others



## > ASP Person to colleagues:

- > Are the borders clear?
- > Is there consistency in behavior

## > To Customers

- > Do customers ask too much?
- > Is there out-of-office communication
- > Do you have app that you prefer?

## > To Leadership

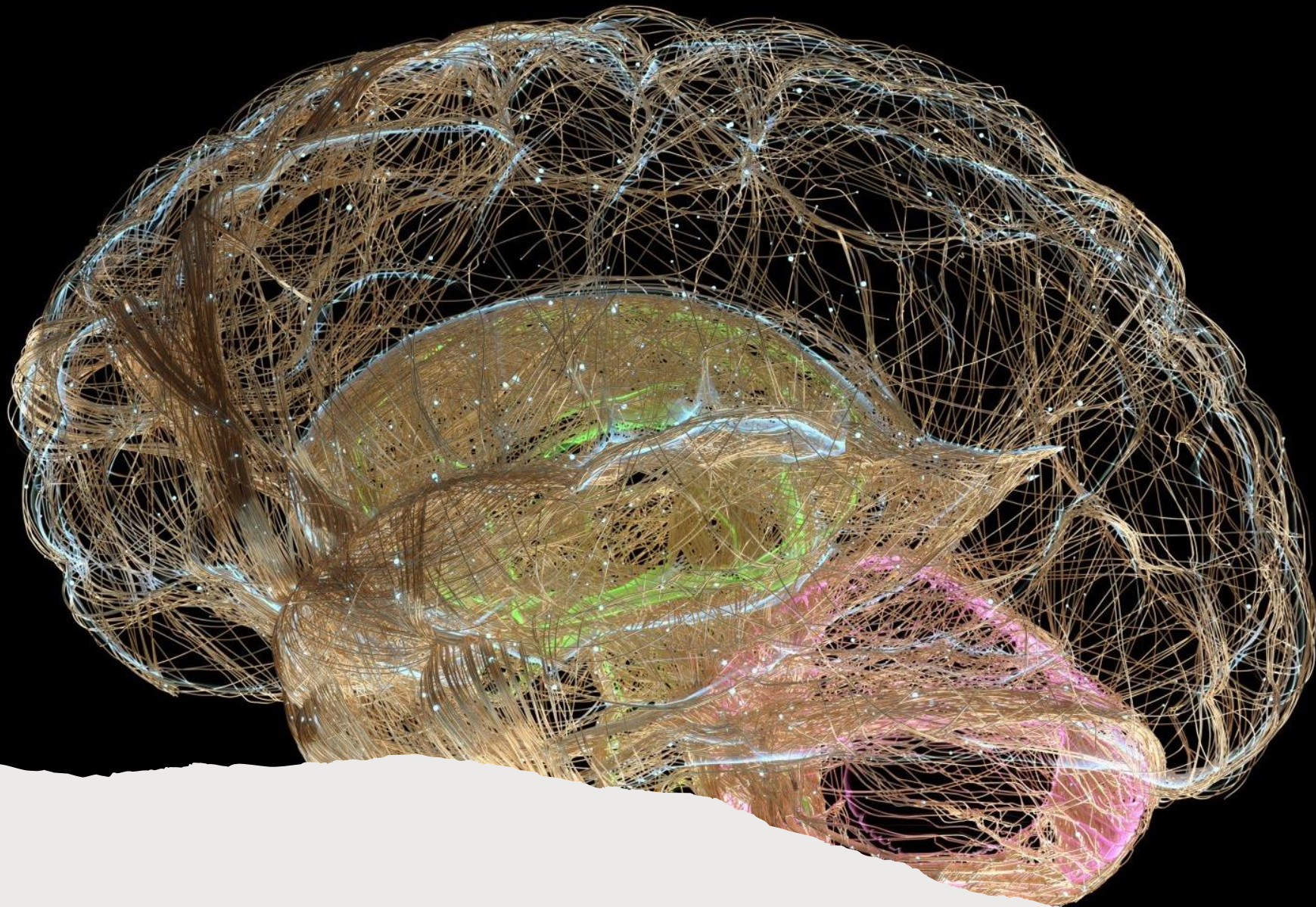
- > Are deadlines above limits?
- > Is everything achievable?
- > Do you understand decisions?

## What can help?

- Structured (and written) appointments
- Take time
- The intentions are (mostly) really good







Outro

# Recap

- > I explained theory about autism
- > We talked about autism in Tech (roles)
  - > Executive Functioning
  - > Stimuli-response system
  - > Brain-response time
  - > Communication
- > Explanation, individual approach, taking time, indicating borders – limits – and choices have a big impact





# Thanks // Q&A

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