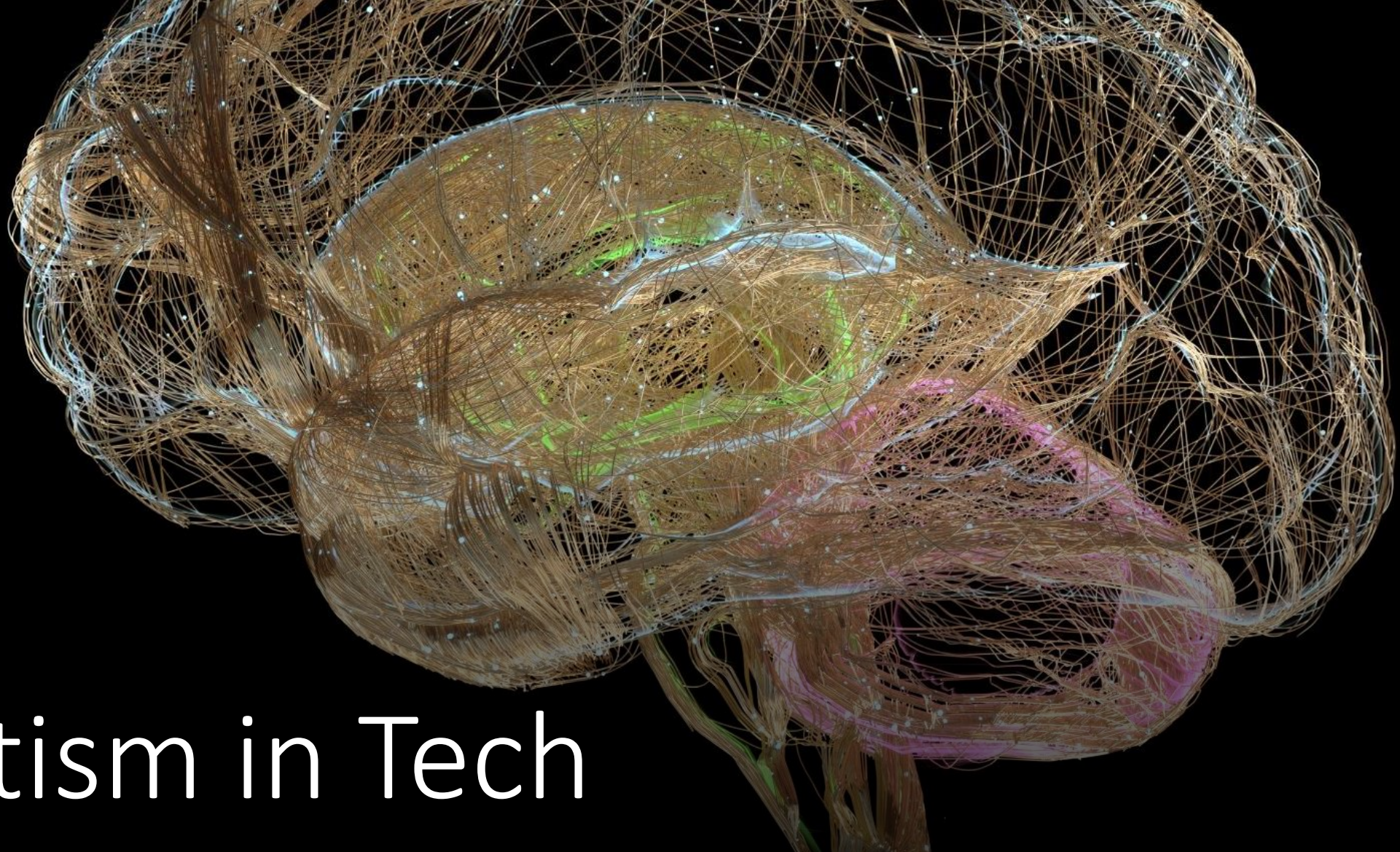


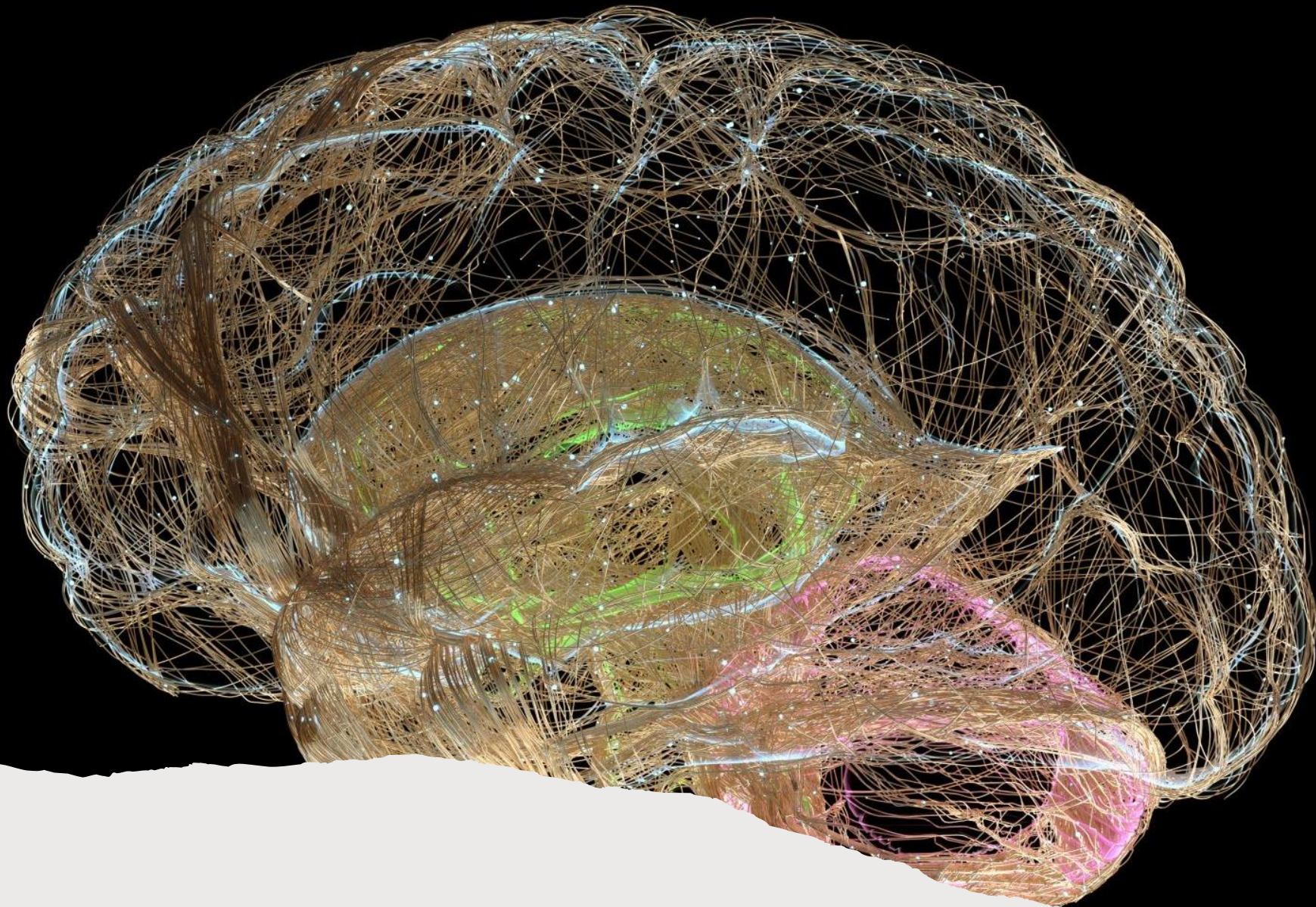
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#GOTOams



Autism in Tech

@DennieDeclercq // 2023 // GOTO; Ams



Intro

Dennie

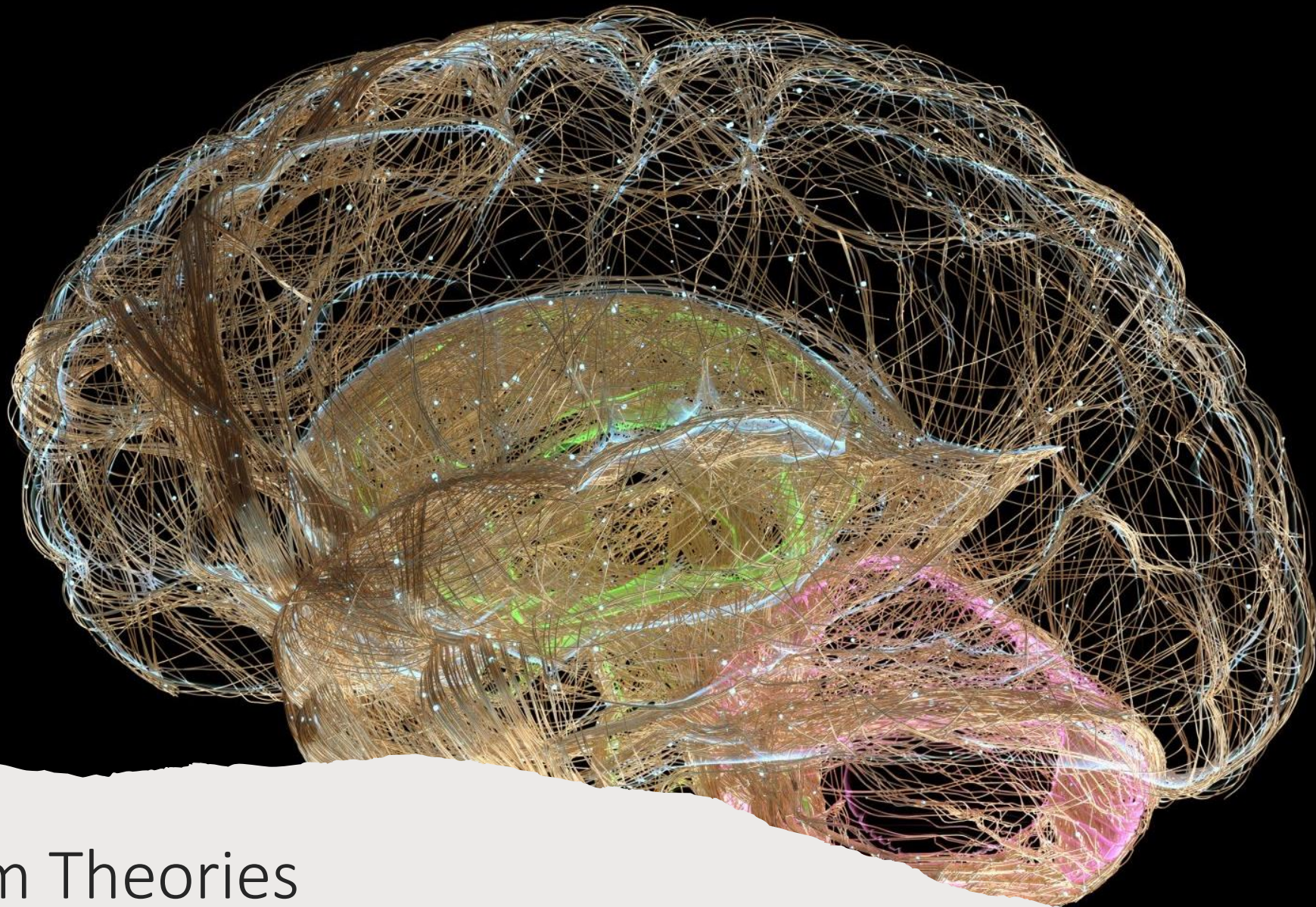
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Content

- > 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

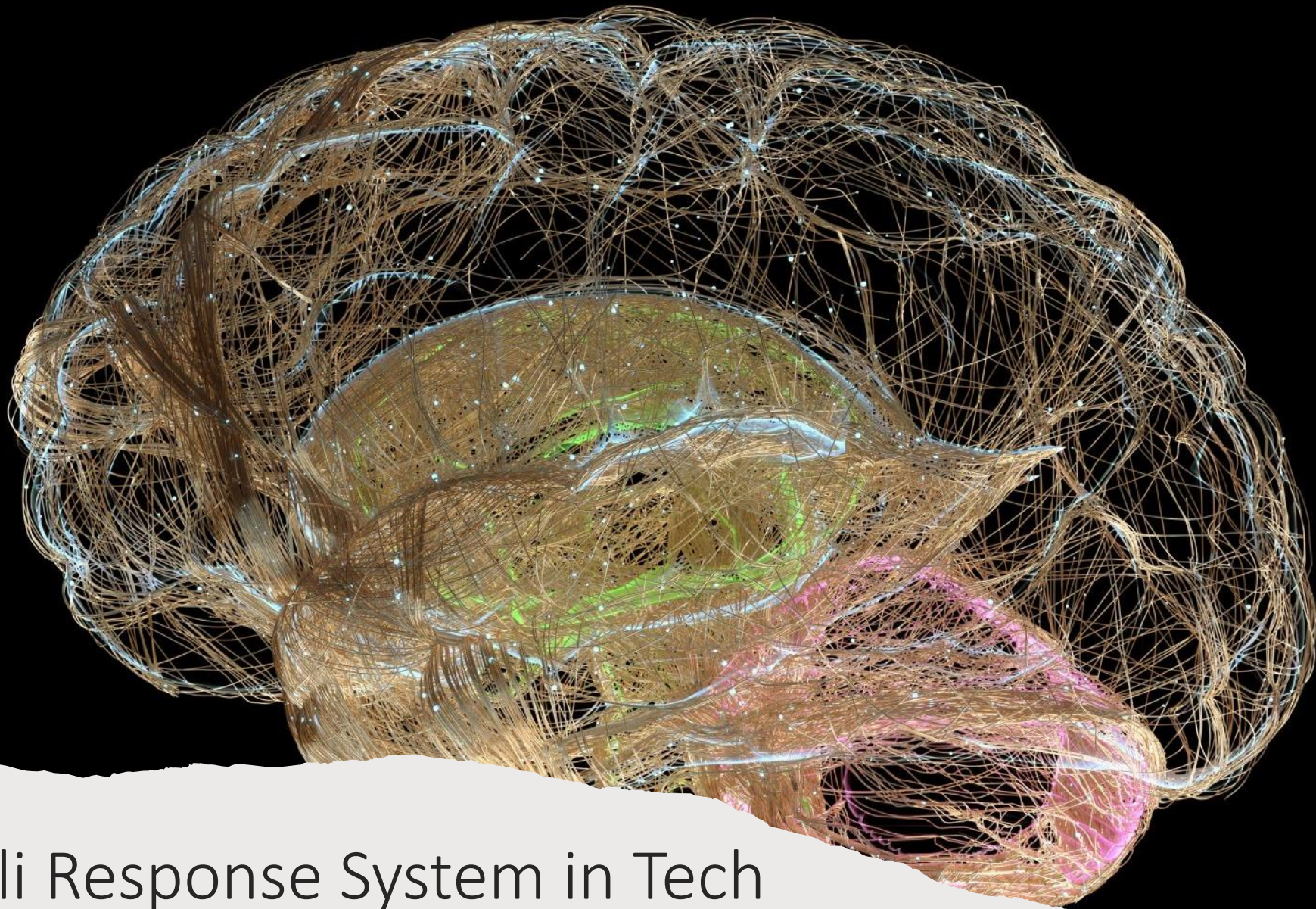


- > Multiple languages can trigger stress
- > 'Small' differences can look like 'big' differences

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

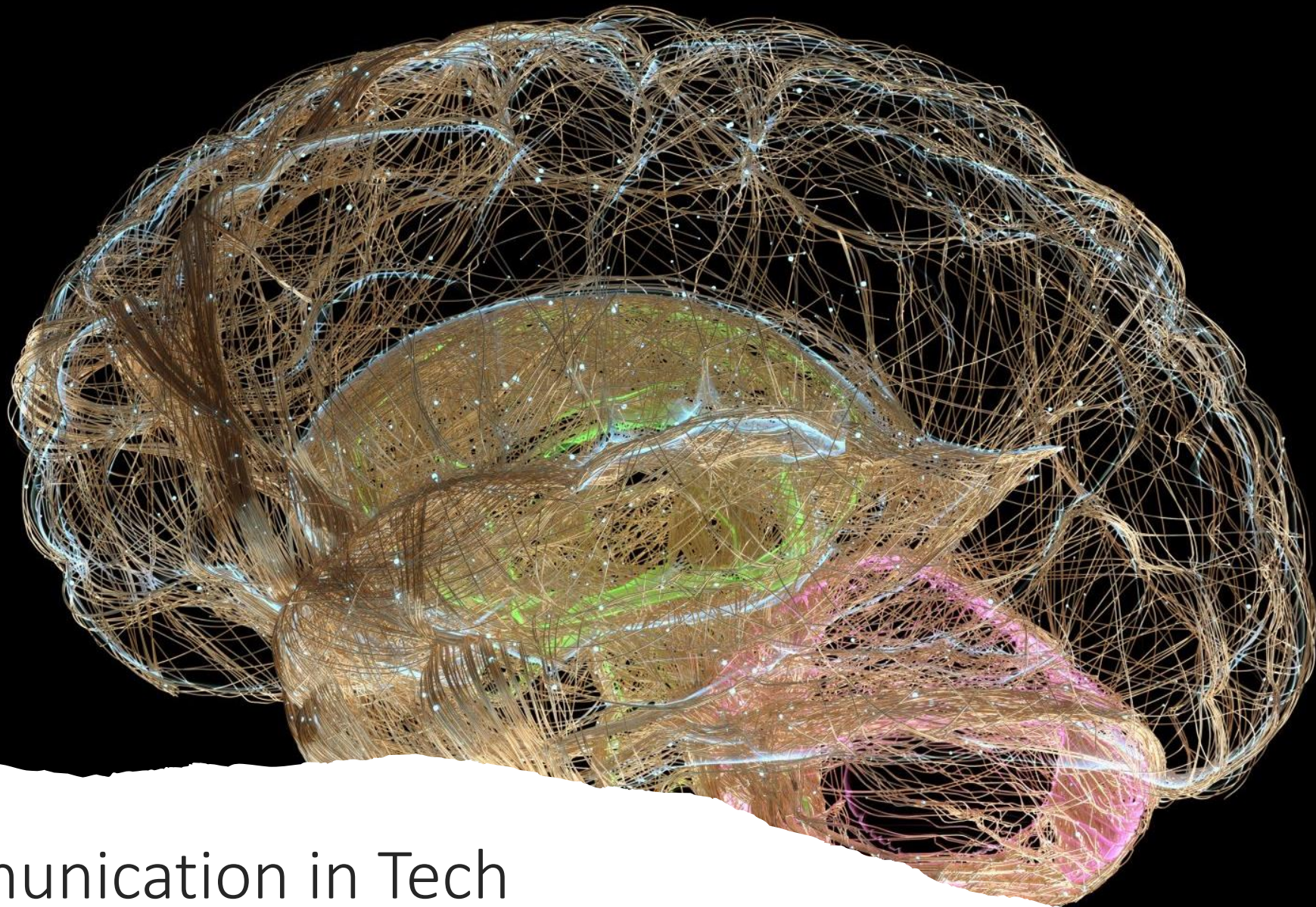
- > Less commute time is a WIN
- > When strict deadline stress =>
 - > Relax at nights, reading, TV,...
- > 1 Monitor is enough



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?

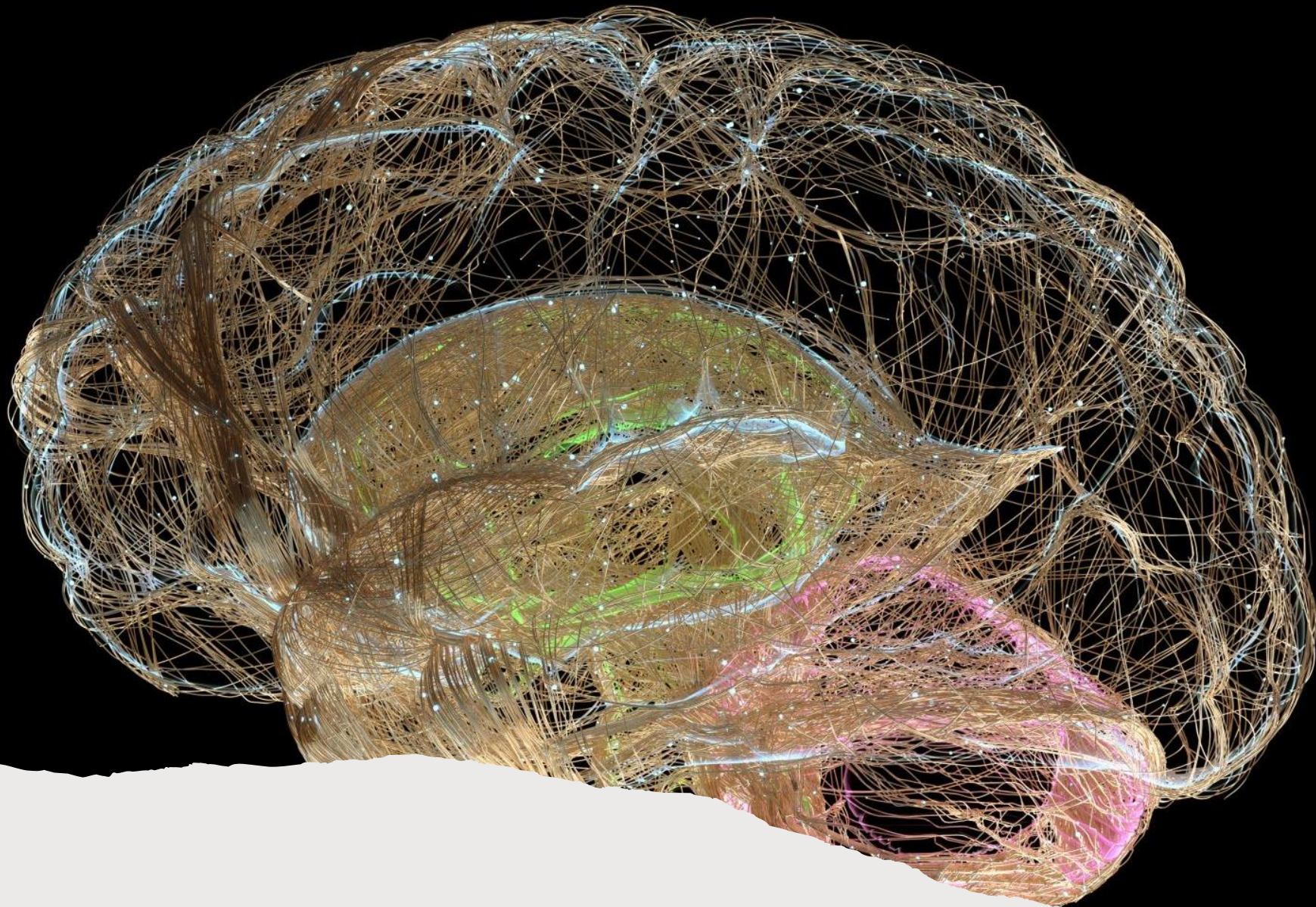
> To Leadership

- > 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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>@DennieDeclercq





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