

# Squirrel 2.0

How to be, and work with,  
Neurodivergent in IT.



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Presented By:  
Roger Herling @rogerH & Jason Stanford @jps3

# About Us

Roger Herling @rogerH



- Apple/Jamf Endpoint Engineer  
@McGraw Hill
- Over 20 years of IT experience
- More than 10 dedicated to macOS
- Diagnosed with ADHD at 19
- Fun fact: I love Lego!

# About Us *(the other guy)*

Jason Stanford @jps3



- Mac administrator since 1998 at Lehigh University
- Diagnosed with ADHD in my late thirties in the mid-2000's
- Sometime around 2021 came across mention of phrase “pills don’t equal skills” which led to my beginning to learn about ADHD. 😱
- One weird fact: Appeared in an episode of “Forensic Files” in 2004.  
(ADHD related because I drove that poor producer crazy by give detailed, technically accurate answers, not the TV-friendly ones he wanted.)

# Disclaimers

- We are ***not*** doctors or psychologists
- Personal experiences only
- No corporate affiliation
- What works for us may not work for everyone



We are touching on areas of psychology which are complex, nuanced, diverse, individually distinct, and more often than not highly subjective.

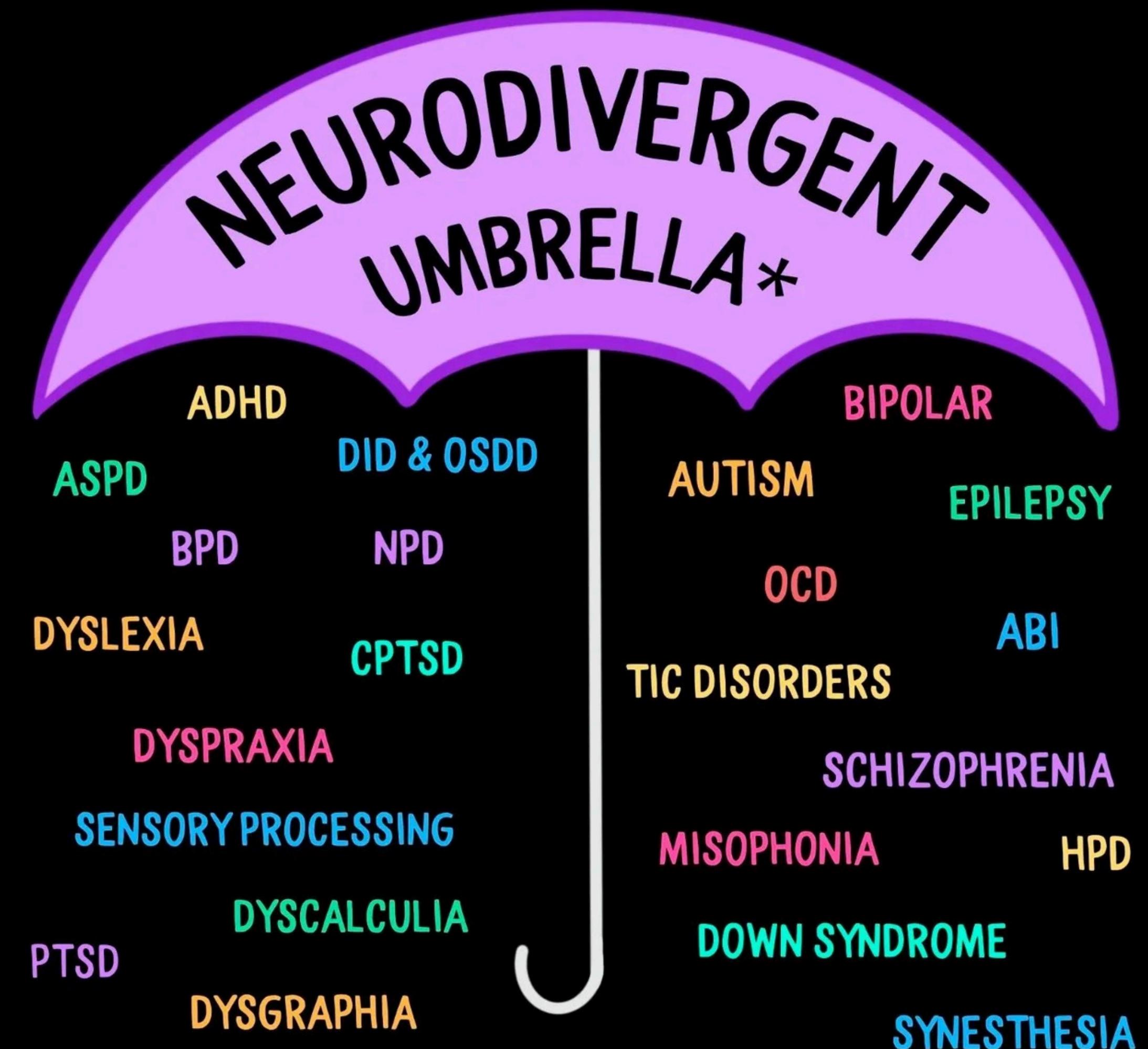
There are no silver bullets.



# Agenda

- What is Neurodivergent
- ADHD
  - Types (DSM V)
  - Executive Function
- Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - What is it?
  - What protections does it provide?
  - When and how to disclose
- Tips for the Neurodivergent
- Tips for managers and co-workers
- Resources
- Open Discussion and Q & A

# What is Neurodivergent?



\*NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST

[www.livedexperienceeducator.com](http://www.livedexperienceeducator.com)

@livedexperienceeducator

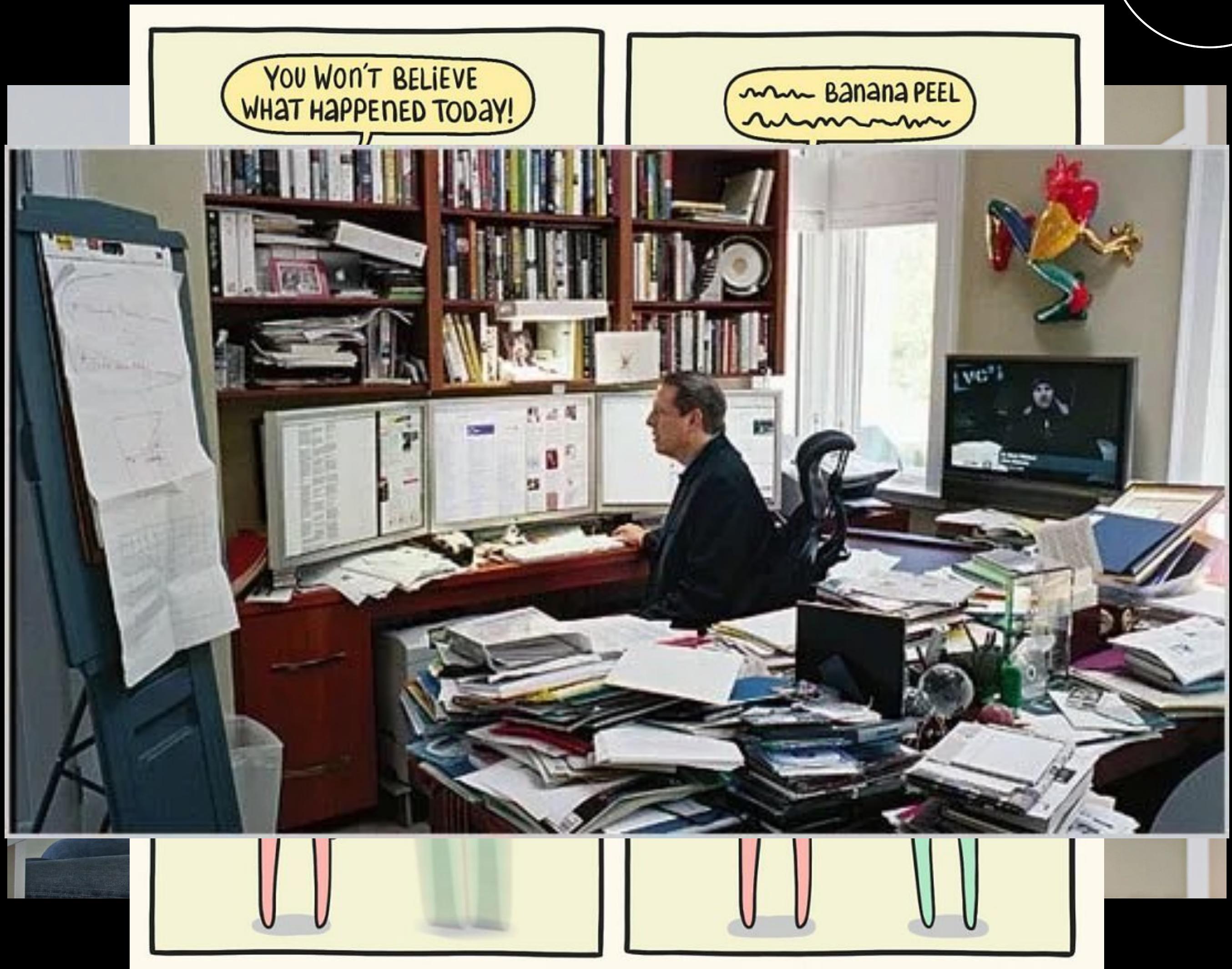
# ADHD Types

## “Official” Types/Presentations

- DSM-5 has 3 types:
  - Predominantly Inattentive
  - Predominantly Hyperactive
  - Combined

# ADHD Predominantly Inattentive Presentation

- Lacking attention to detail
- Difficulty focusing
- Trouble listening
- Failing to complete tasks
- Poor organizational skills
- Avoiding tasks requiring sustained focus
- Losing important items
- Distracted easily
- Forgetfulness



# ADHD Predominantly Hyperactive Impulsive Presentation



- Leaving their seat when expected to remain seated (e.g., during a meeting or lecture)
- Blurting out answers and completing other people's sentences
- Interrupting other people or intruding on their activities
- Struggling to stay quiet during activities
- Fidgeting and tapping hands or feet
- Often on the go and unable to sit still
- Trouble waiting their turn
- Talking excessively
- Feeling restless

# Combined Type

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# The Reality...

## ADHD is WAY more complicated

- DSM-5 was published in 2013
- Overemphasizes attention deficits
- Doesn't focus enough on executive function, self-regulation, and emotional dysregulation impairments
- Male-biased
- Does not address co-morbidities

# Executive Function

“Executive function describes a set of cognitive processes and mental skills that help an individual plan, monitor, and successfully execute their goals. The “executive functions,” as they’re known, include attentional control, working memory, inhibition, and problem-solving, many of which are thought to originate in the brain’s prefrontal cortex.” *Psychology Today*

Which skills are affected by executive functioning challenges?

## Impulse control

*Your ability to stop and think before acting.*

## Organisation

*Your ability to keep track of information and tasks.*

## Emotional control

*Your ability to manage your emotions to direct your behaviour.*

## Planning & prioritisation

*Your ability to plan steps to reach your goals.*



## Self monitoring

*Your ability to self evaluate your own behaviour.*

## Attentional control

*Your ability to regulate and direct your attention.*

## Working memory

*Your ability to hold information in your mind to complete tasks.*



[www.connectionsinmind.co.uk](http://www.connectionsinmind.co.uk)

# Emotional Dysregulation



- Responses that may seem excessive compared to the situation
- Difficulty calming down
- Avoiding difficult feelings or situations
- Focusing on the negative
- Is a core trait of ADHD but is not reflected in official diagnostic criteria <sup>1</sup>

# Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria

## RSD

- Sudden Emotional Outbursts Caused by Real or Perceived Criticism or Rejection
- Withdrawn Socially
- Low Self Esteem
- Negative Self Talk
- Rumination (Over Thinking, Unable to Let Things Go)
- Again not mentioned in the DSM-V

# The American's With Disabilities Act of 1990

## ADA

- Prohibits discrimination based on disability
  - Firing or refusing to hire based on real or perceived disability
  - Segregation
  - Harassment
- Requires covered entities to provide reasonable accommodations
  - Covered entity = Any employer with more than 15 employees
- Requires accessibility for public accommodations

# Covered Conditions

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- Amputation
- ADHD
- Autism
- Bipolar Disorder
- Blindness
- Cancer
- Cerebral Palsy
- Deafness,
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- HIV/AIDS
- Intellectual Disability
- Depression
- Mobility Impairments
- MS
- Muscular Dystrophy
- OCD
- PTSD
- Schizophrenia

# Reasonable Accommodations



**“Change or adjustment to a job or work environment that permits a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the job application process, to perform the essential functions of a job, or to enjoy benefits and privileges of employment equal to those enjoyed by employees without disabilities.”**

eeoc.gov

# Accommodations Continued...

## What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

- Acquiring or Modifying Equipment or Devices
- Job Restructuring
- Part-Time or Modified Work Schedules
- Reassignment to a Vacant Position
- Adjusting or Modifying Examinations, Training Materials or Policies
- Providing Readers and Interpreters
- Making the Workplace Readily Accessible to and Usable by People With Disabilities.

# Accommodations Cont...

## Flexible Work Options

- Work hours: flexible, where possible. Hard disconnects may be required for employees who will overwork (e.g. no access to work resources during specified "off hours")
- Remote option as-needed, part-time, or full-time: sleep, "social battery", and sensory issues can reduce productivity or increase absenteeism
- Sensory considerations: fluorescent lighting, noise, seat, desk orientation
  - Employees may need noise-cancelling headphones, alternative seating choices, may need to face toward/away from passers-by, other personalizations to workspace

# Accommodations Cont...

## Structured Work Environment

- Consistent routines reduce uncertainty
  - Examples: Standard meeting times, agendas sent ahead of time, standard communication tools (e.g. avoid mixture of text, IM, email)
- Use task management or visual schedules to organize work
  - Example: Standardized task assignment methodology (e.g. until there is a ticket, it's just a conversation)

# Story Time...



# To Disclose, or Not to Disclose?

## The W's

- Why?
- What?
- When?
- Who?



# To Disclose, or Not to Disclose? Cont...

## The Official Disclosure to HR

- Formal diagnoses
  - Must be from a psychiatrist or psychologist (no social workers)
- Provide diagnoses to HR
- Meeting/s with and without your supervisor
  - Discuss accommodations and expectations
- Regular follow up meetings

# To Disclose, or Not to Disclose?

## The off the Record Disclosure

- Does not require a formal diagnoses
- More private
- Less threatening
- Can be used to decide if a formal disclosure is needed

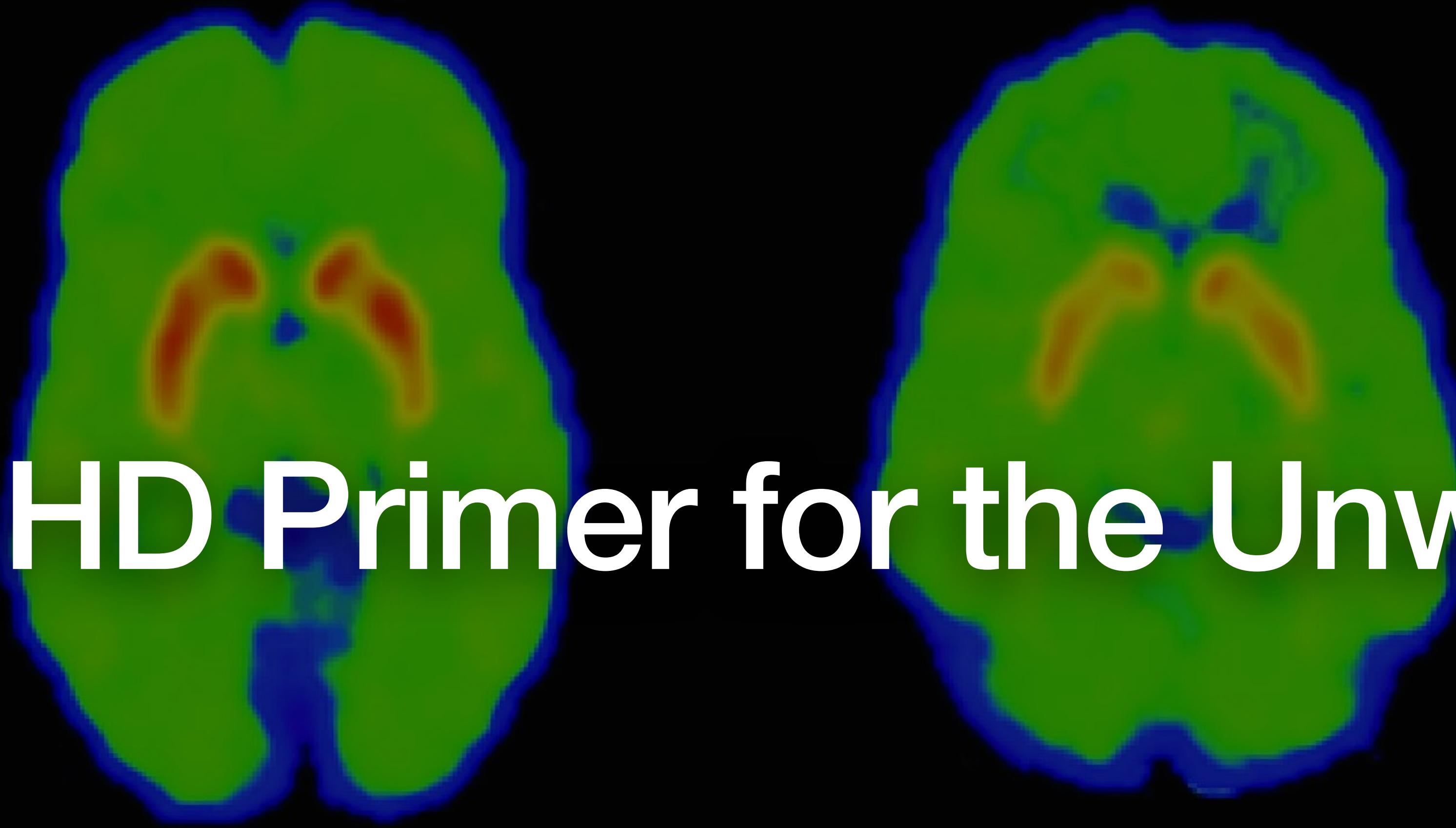
# ADHD Primer for the Unwary

Control Subject

*Dopayoun*

ADHD Subject

*Dopamine* 🏆



# ADHD Primer

## Myths (*par exemple*)

- ADHD is a farce created by copywriters, marketing co's, and big pharma for . [Barkley rebuttal]
- ADHD medications are dangerous, addictive, change your brain, or «*insert other nonsense here*».
- ADHD accommodations are an unfair advantage, or «*insert other nonsense here*».
- ADHD is just an excuse, you're being lazy, or «*insert other nonsense here*».
- Adults can't have that, it only affects young (male) children.  
\*
- People with a high IQ can't have ADHD.
- It's not always a challenge, you can choose not to act like that.
- Emotional dysregulation has nothing to do with it.
- ~~It was renamed by private equity after buyout of ADD to force relicensing and make more~~ .

\* anyone else getting tired of “dys-”?

# ADHD Primer

## Executive Challenges (*par exemple*)

- “Intention Deficit Disorder” – knowing what you need to do, but struggling to put intention into action.
- “[Y]our brain’s GPS” – an essential system for guiding and directing actions.
- “[M]yopia to impending future events,” time blindness, “Five minutes,” ...
- Prioritization, getting started, “Giant Blank Page,” etc.

# ADHD Strengths

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- Creativity and Ingenious Thinking
- Drive, Hyperfocus, and Persistence
- Resilience and Adaptability
- “Multitasking” Ability
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Strong Intuition
- Enthusiasm for Technology
- Empathy, Compassion, and Advocacy
- Strong Sense of Fairness
- Sense of Humility
- Spontaneity
- Humor!
- Contagious Motivation
- Punctuality 😜

# Suggestions + Strategies for Supervisors

# Support Communication 1/2

- Provide clear problem descriptions, instructions, expectations, and known deadlines.
  - Bullet Points > Blocks of Text. Forwarded Email Chains == 
  - Visual aids, such as diagrams, can be very effective additions.
- Provide regular, positively-reinforcing feedback.
- Assist with visualizing rewards and positive outcomes.
- Encourage, and be open to, discussing impediments and challenges.
- Keep meetings brief, and provide concise, clear follow-up notes.

# Support Communication 2/2

- Avoid “should” statements.
- Encourage asking for clarification.
- Use active (a.k.a. reflective) listening skills.
- Interruptions—even trivial—can completely derail us for a significant time.
- Breaks are a part of work, let them happen as needed. “Use the , Luke.”
- “Permission,” and coverage to allow trust for taking vacation time to relax.

# Communication: Final Thoughts

**“My direct reports should adapt to me. I'm the boss.”**

## People Leave the Boss, Not the Company!

- Good supervisors seek ways to get the *best* work from their staff, not just “more work.”
- A supervisor can improve effectiveness by:
  1. Improve clarity of communication.
  2. Give *thoughtful* feedback in routine communications, not just periodic reviews, and solicit feedback in return.
  3. Make time for periodic, brief check-ins and practice your active listening skills.
  4. It's not about bossing, it's about facilitating.
  5. What's that? Talk about the Yerkes-Dodson Law? No time, [\*\*watch this video.\*\*](#)



**EVERYBODY IS A GENIUS. BUT  
IF YOU JUDGE A FISH BY ITS  
ABILITY TO CLIMB A TREE, IT  
WILL LIVE ITS WHOLE LIFE  
BELIEVING THAT IT IS STUPID.**

**-ALBERT EINSTEIN**

# Q & A and Discussion

# References and Resources



# Feedback

## Thanks for Attending!

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