WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS
AND WHAT DO THEY NEED

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President, WA Coalition for Gifted Education
Past President, NW Gifted Child Association

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AGENDA

- Core characteristics
- Turn & Talk
- Neuroscience of the high IQ brain
- SEL characteristics
- Turn & Talk
- Twice exceptional (2e)
- Getting flexible
- Turn & Talk
- The bright student dilemma
- Exercise: Takeaways

WHO ARE THESE KIDS?

What do we mean by the word "gifted"?

What does IQ have to do with it?

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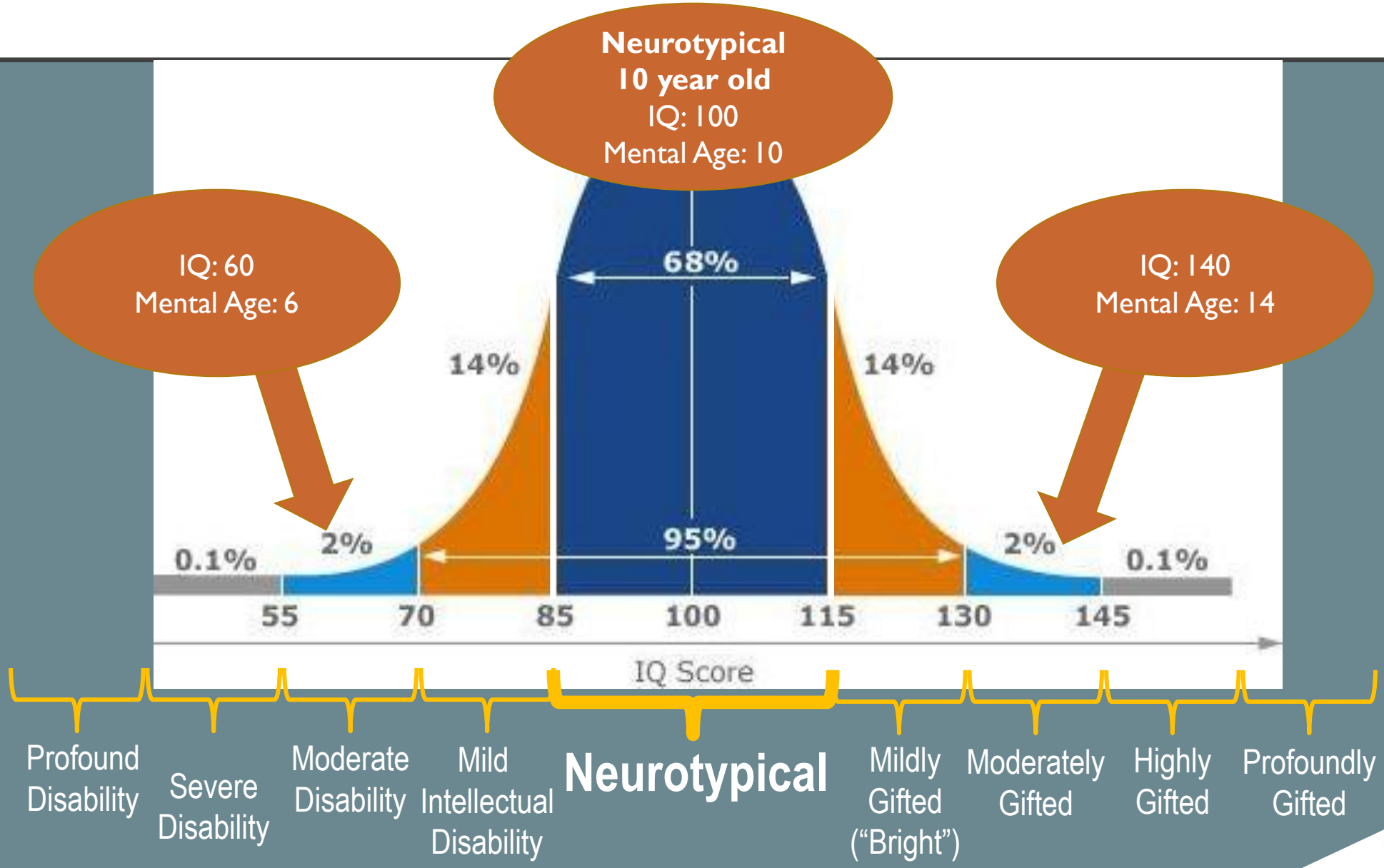
A NOTE

- I hate the word "gifted"
  - Poorly understood ("Every child is gifted")
  - Negative connotations
  - Many believe it is elitist
- But, it's the term used by researchers and most professional organizations
- Synonyms
  - Smart, very bright, high intelligence, high IQ, highly capable (HiCap), TAG
  - NOT (necessarily) high-achieving

THE NORMAL CURVE OF IQ



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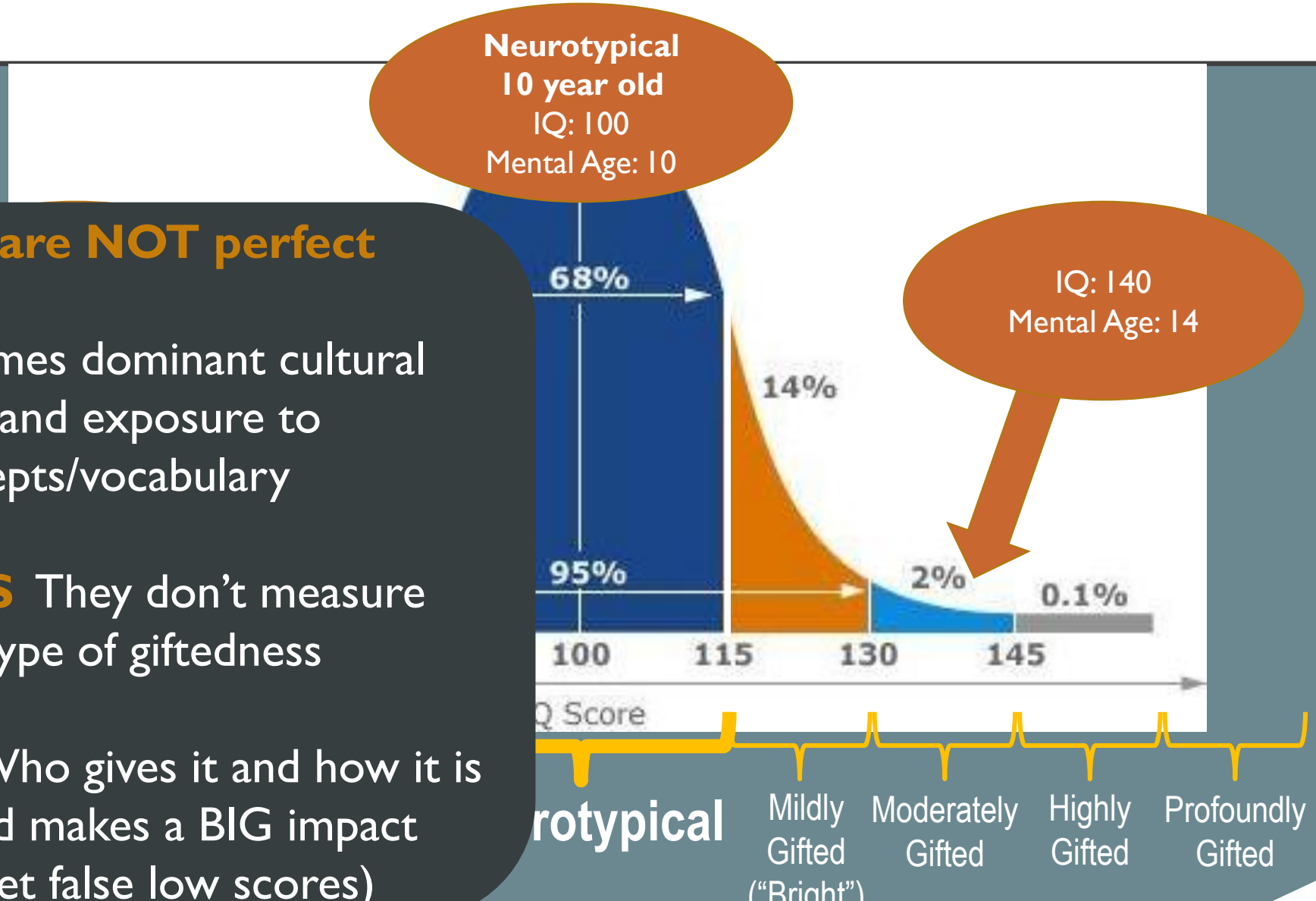
THE NORMAL CURVE OF IQ



IQ Tests are NOT perfect

BIAS Assumes dominant cultural norms and exposure to concepts/vocabulary

ONE LENS They don't measure every type of giftedness

VARIABLE Who gives it and how it is administered makes a BIG impact (Easy to get false low scores)

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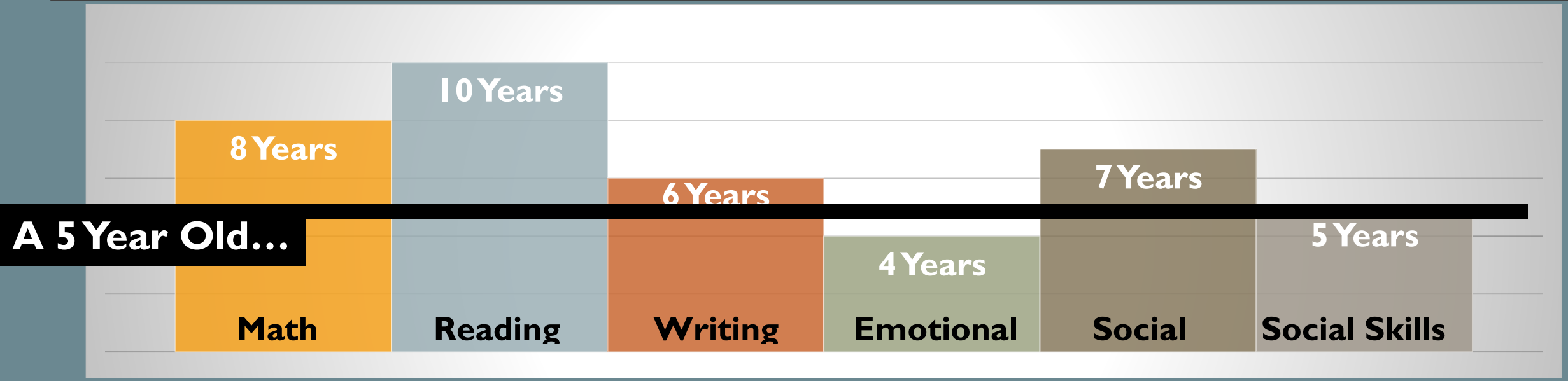
ASYNCHRONY



- Most gifted kids develop asynchronously
- Don't assume a higher level of maturity…
- MYTH: "If she can't do [XX] well, then she's not gifted"

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EQUALLY LIKELY TO BE GIFTED

- Girls vs. boys
  - But girls are less likely to be referred for testing
- Poor vs. rich

  But low-income families rely on public gifted programs, "**the rich have other options**" --Dr. Linda Silverman
- English-speaking vs. non-native speakers

- Giftedness cuts across all socioeconomic groups, nations, ethnicities, races, cultures…

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IQ RUNS IN FAMILIES

- Out of 148 sets of siblings
  - Over 1/3 were within 5 IQ points of each other
  - Over 3/5 were within 10 points
  - Nearly 3/4 were within 13 points
- But **second-born** & **girls** less likely to be referred for testing
- Parents and grandparents too… ☺

(Silverman, 2009)

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THE EMPTY CHAIR

Picture a student who you are still working on "figuring out" sitting in this chair today

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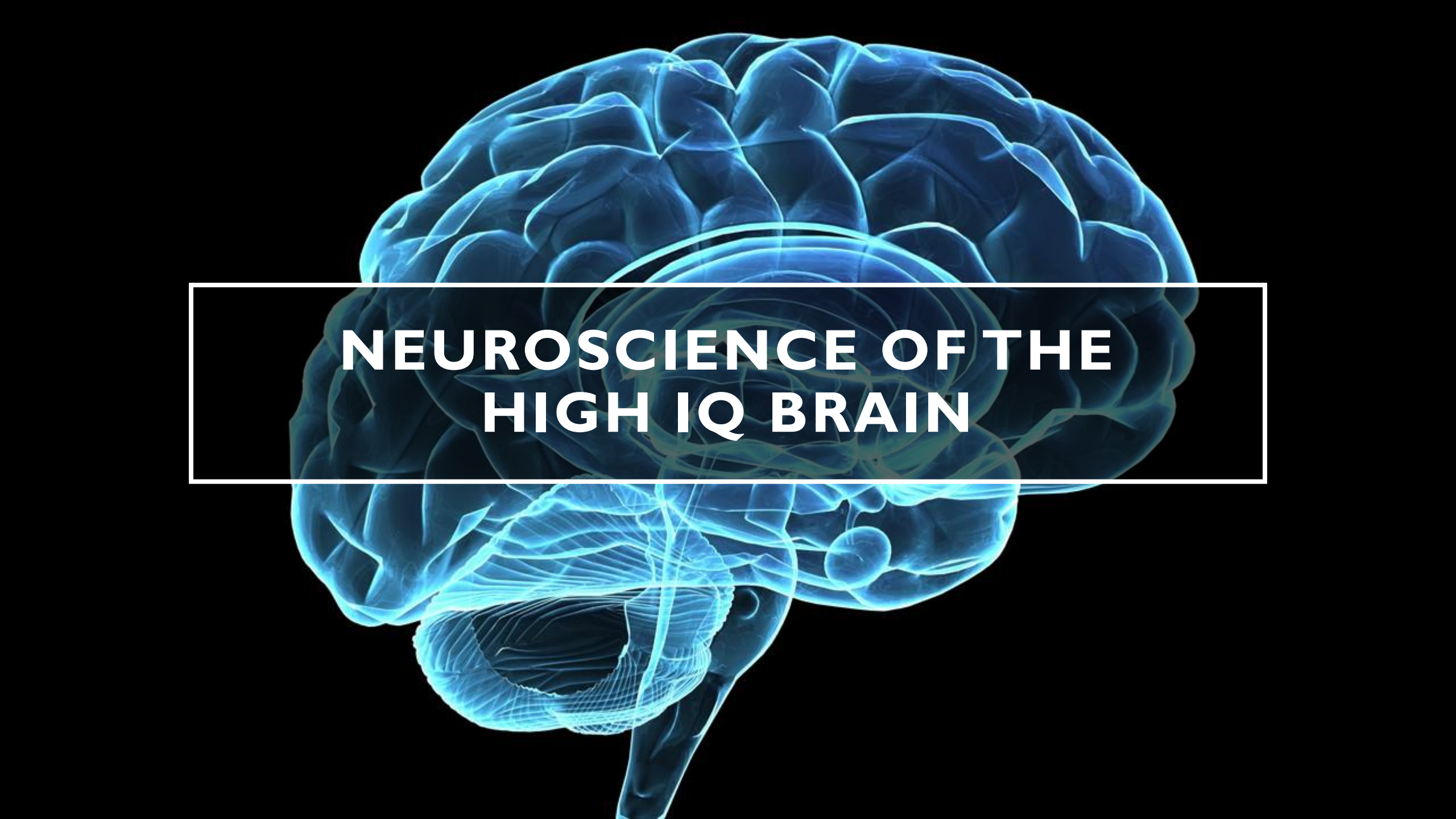
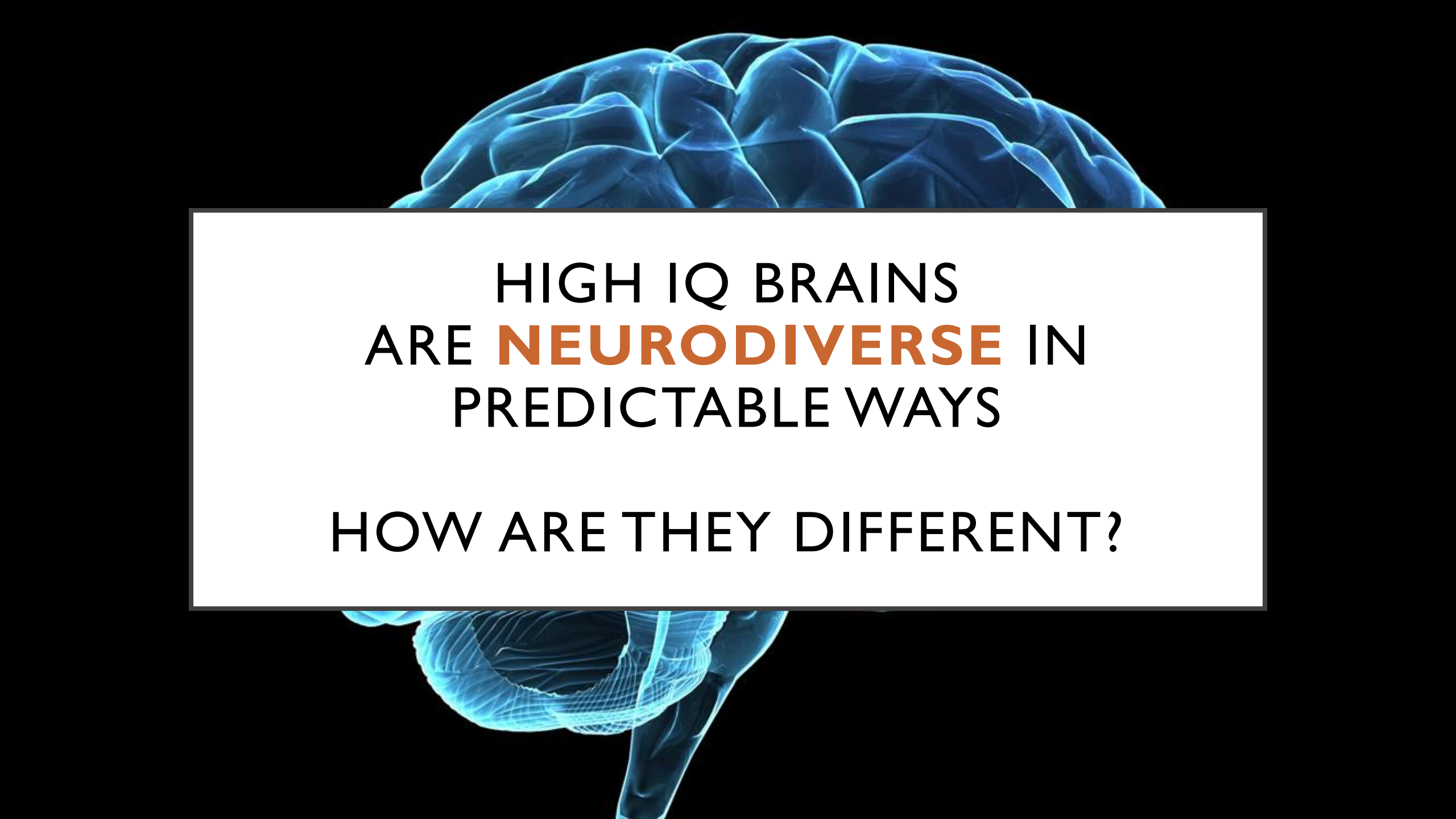


NEUROSCIENCE OF THE HIGH IQ BRAIN

EVERY BRAIN IS UNIQUE - JUST LIKE A FINGERPRINT

(VALIZADEH ET AL., 2018)

NEURODIVERSITY



HIGH IQ BRAINS
ARE **NEURODIVERSE** IN
PREDICTABLE WAYS

HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

NEUROSCIENCE ABOUT HIGH IQ

- Regional brain volume is BIGGER in some areas (left hemisphere, bilateral frontal cortex, phonological loop, working memory, sensory, anxiety, **amygdala** ←emotional regulation)
  - And smaller in others (lateral-parietal junction)
- DENSER connectivity between some areas (arcuate fasciculus, corpus callosum - "information highways")
  - And sparser connectivity in others
- Development happens on a different timeline
- **High IQ brains are physically different - neurodiversity**

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- Development happe
- **High IQ brains ar**

(Schnack, 2014)
(Roman, 2018)
(Haier, 2017)
(Nusbaum, 2017)
(Ganjavi, 2011)
(Hilger, 2017)
(Koenis, 2015)
(Haier, 2004)
(Wilke, 2003)
(Frangou, 2004)
(Shaw, 2006)
(Lewis, 2018)
(Burgaleta, 2014)
(Roman, 2018)

GRO
GIFTED
RESEARCH & OUTREACH

gro-gifted.org

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF)

"If I'm so smart, why can't I find my keys?" – S. Wollum

Organization

Organizing things, time, or procedures

Multitasking

Keep track of more than one thing at a time

Planning, time management

Breaking down projects

Regulation

Impulse control, inhibition, self-control

Sustaining attention through distraction

Waiting to speak until it's your turn

Mental flexibility

Black & white thinking

Initiating, getting started

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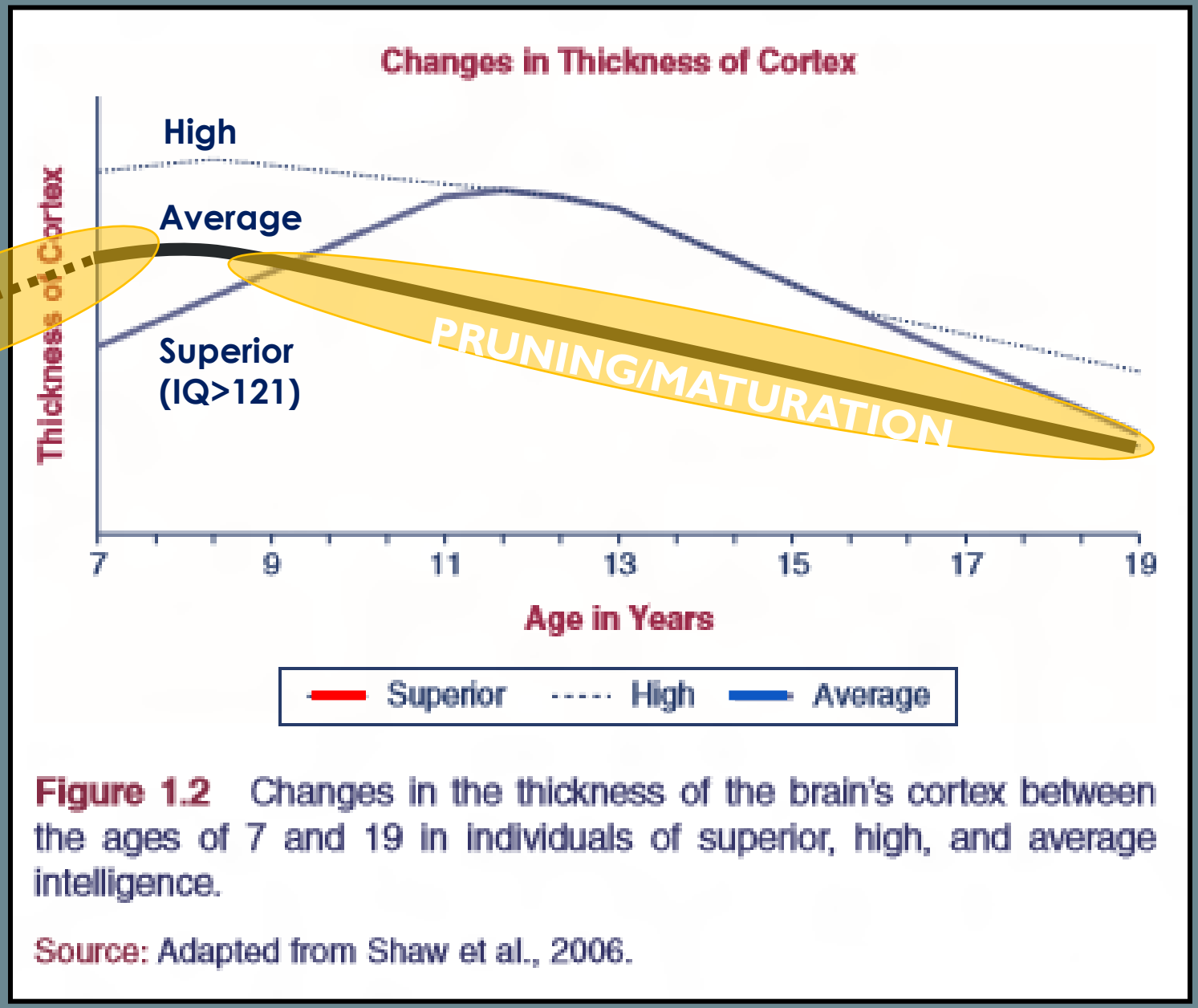

Figure 1.2 Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

(SHAW ET AL., 2006)

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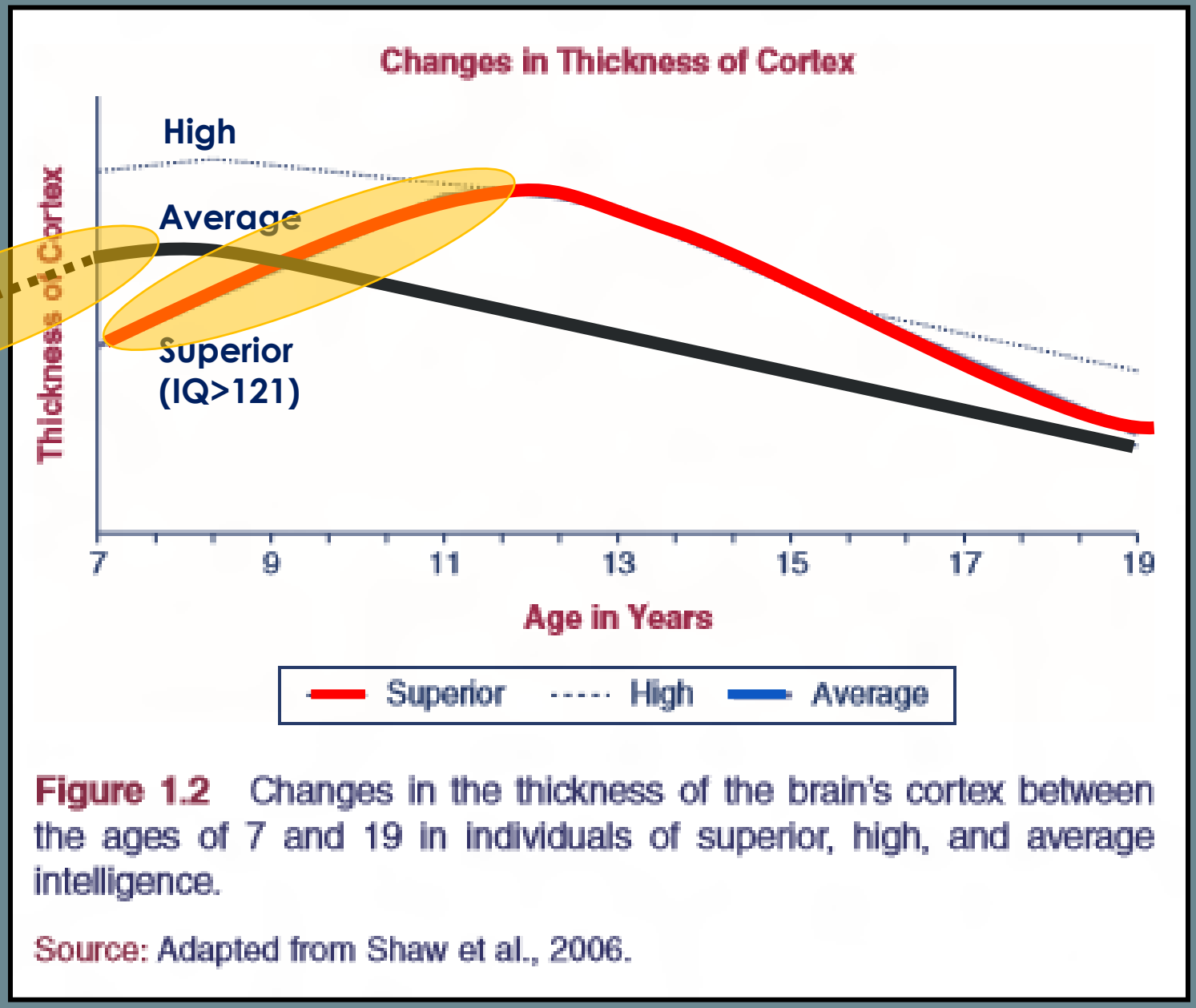

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PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

TIMELINE FOR BRAIN GROWTH & EXPANSION

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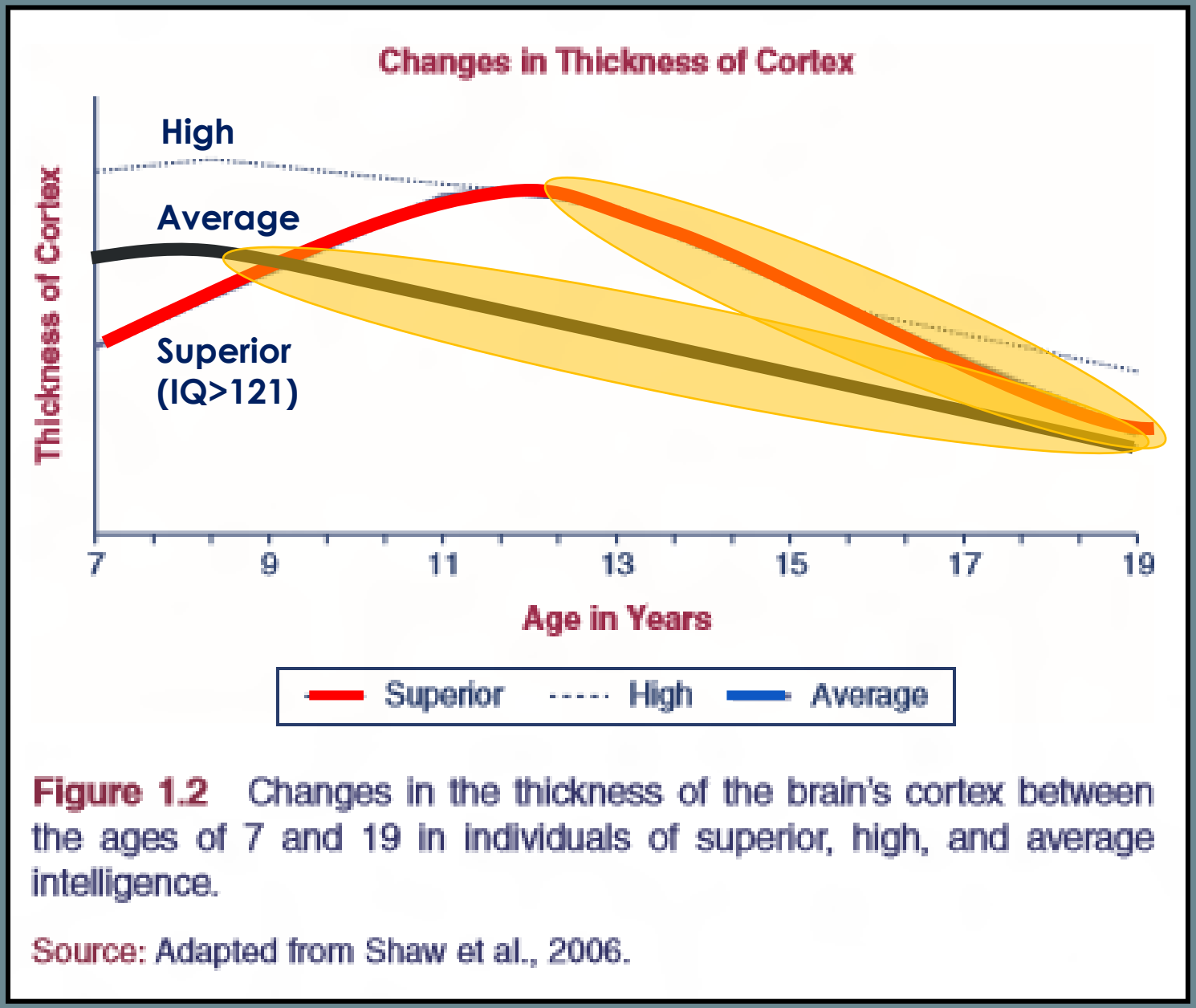

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PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

TIMELINE FOR PRUNING & MATURATION

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A DIFFERENT RESEARCHER SAYS:

"Kids who had higher IQs to begin with seemed to have an extended period in adolescence during which they retained the ability to learn at a rapid pace, just like much younger children."

(Brant et al., 2013)

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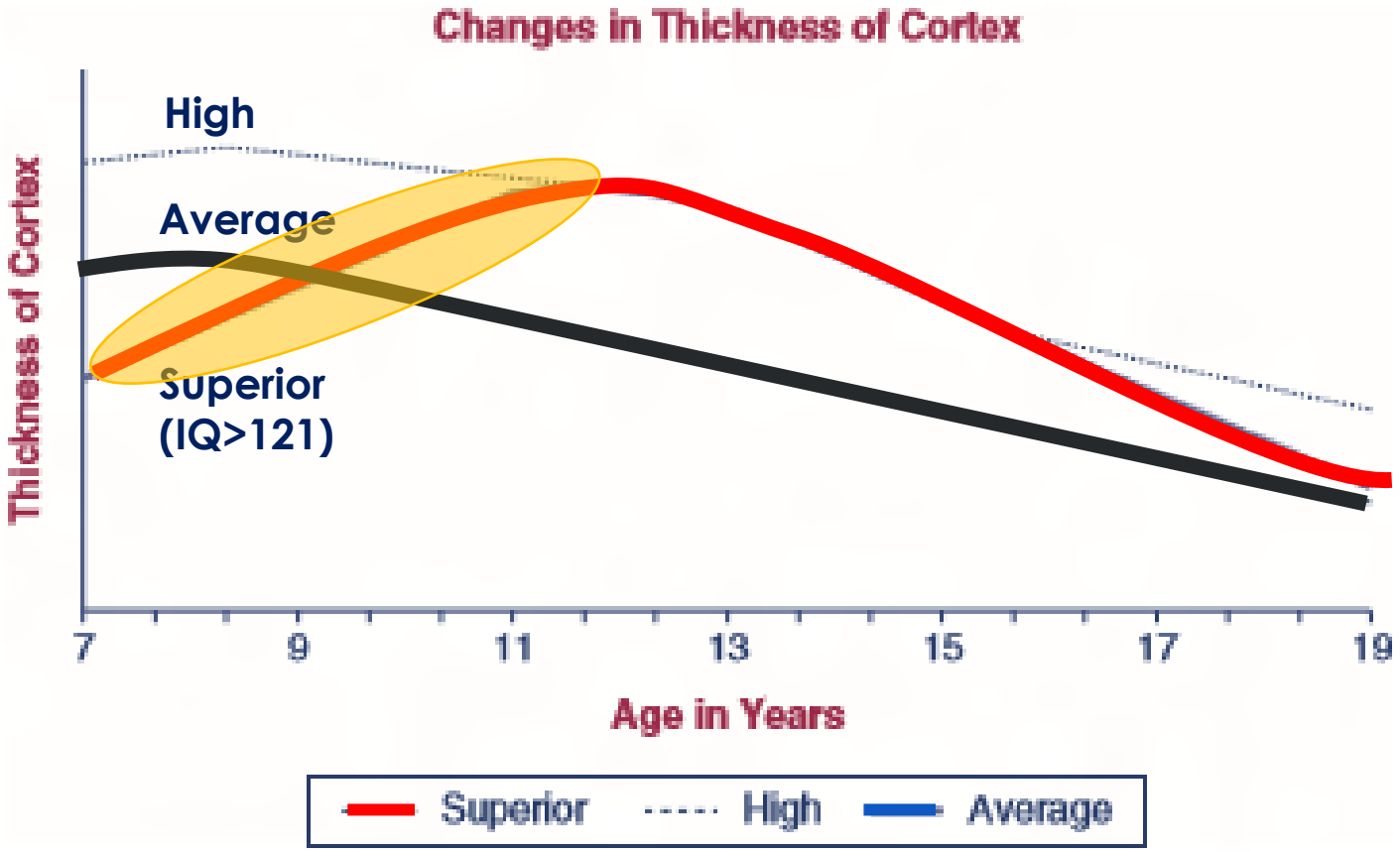

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PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

TIMELINE FOR BRAIN GROWTH & EXPANSION

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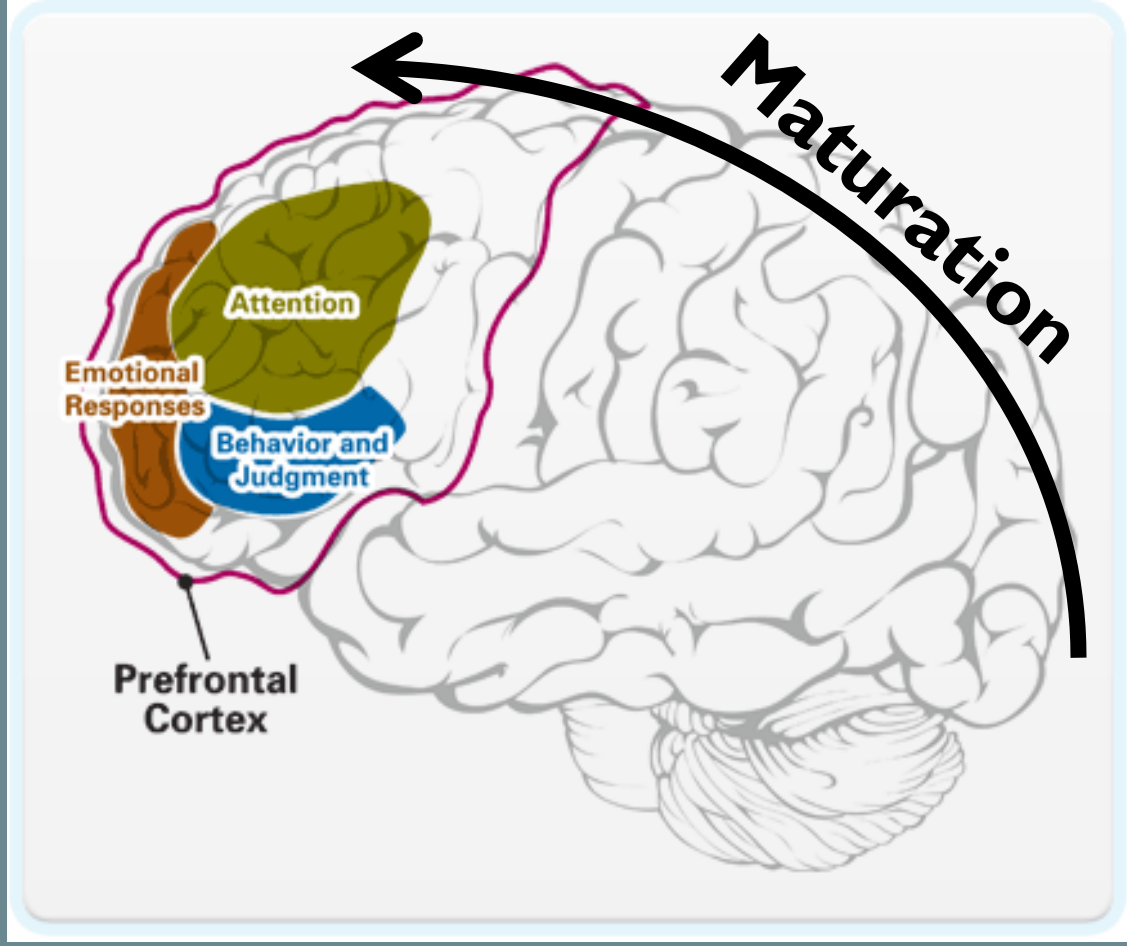
YOUR BRAIN MATURES BACK TO FRONT



"Grey matter thickens in childhood but then thins in a wave that **begins at the back of the brain** and reaches the front by early adulthood"
(Powell, 2006)

"The **prefrontal cortex** is the decision-making part of the brain, responsible for [the] ability to plan and think about the consequences of actions, solve problems and control impulses."

"Executive Function"

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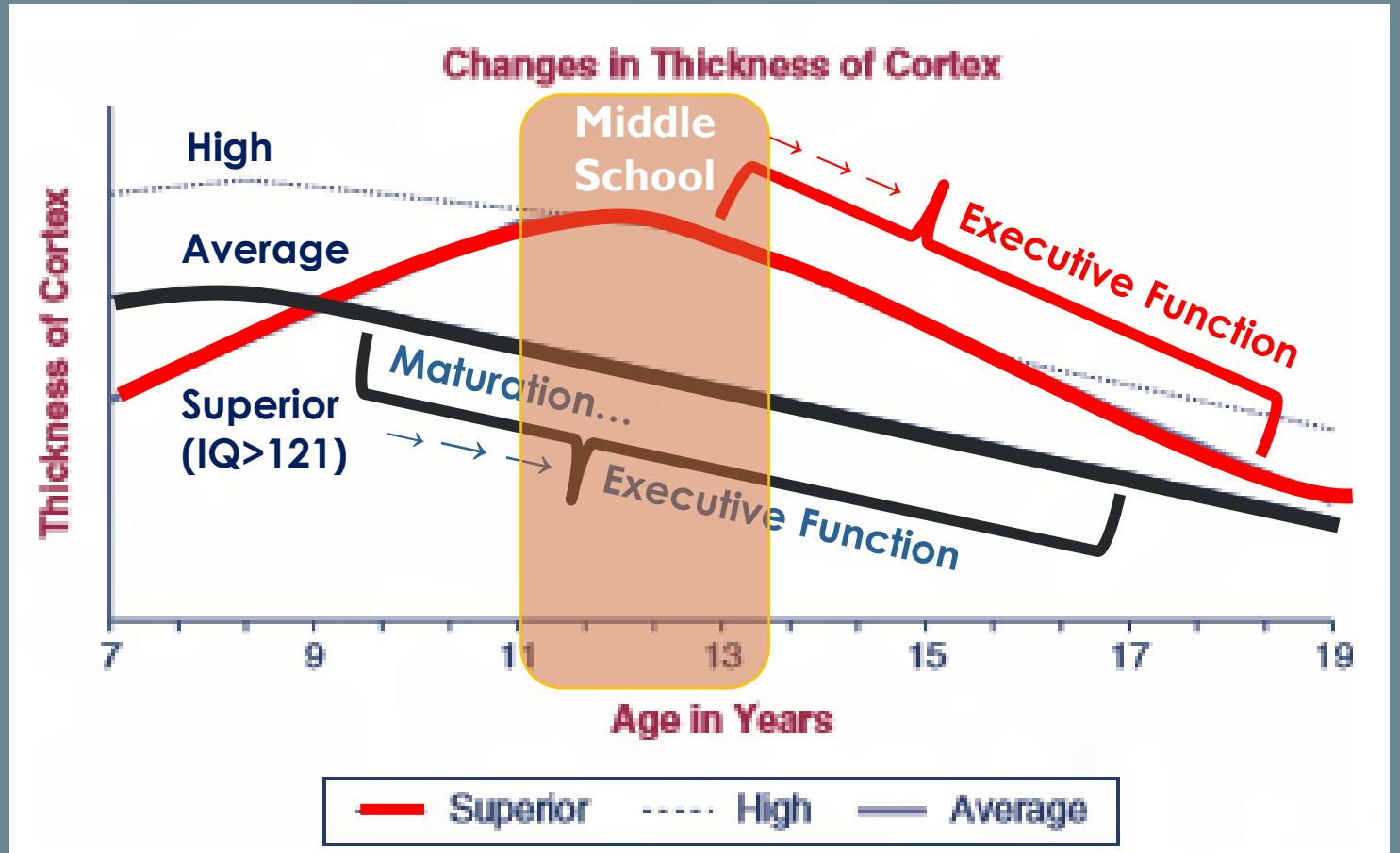

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PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION DEVELOPS LATER?

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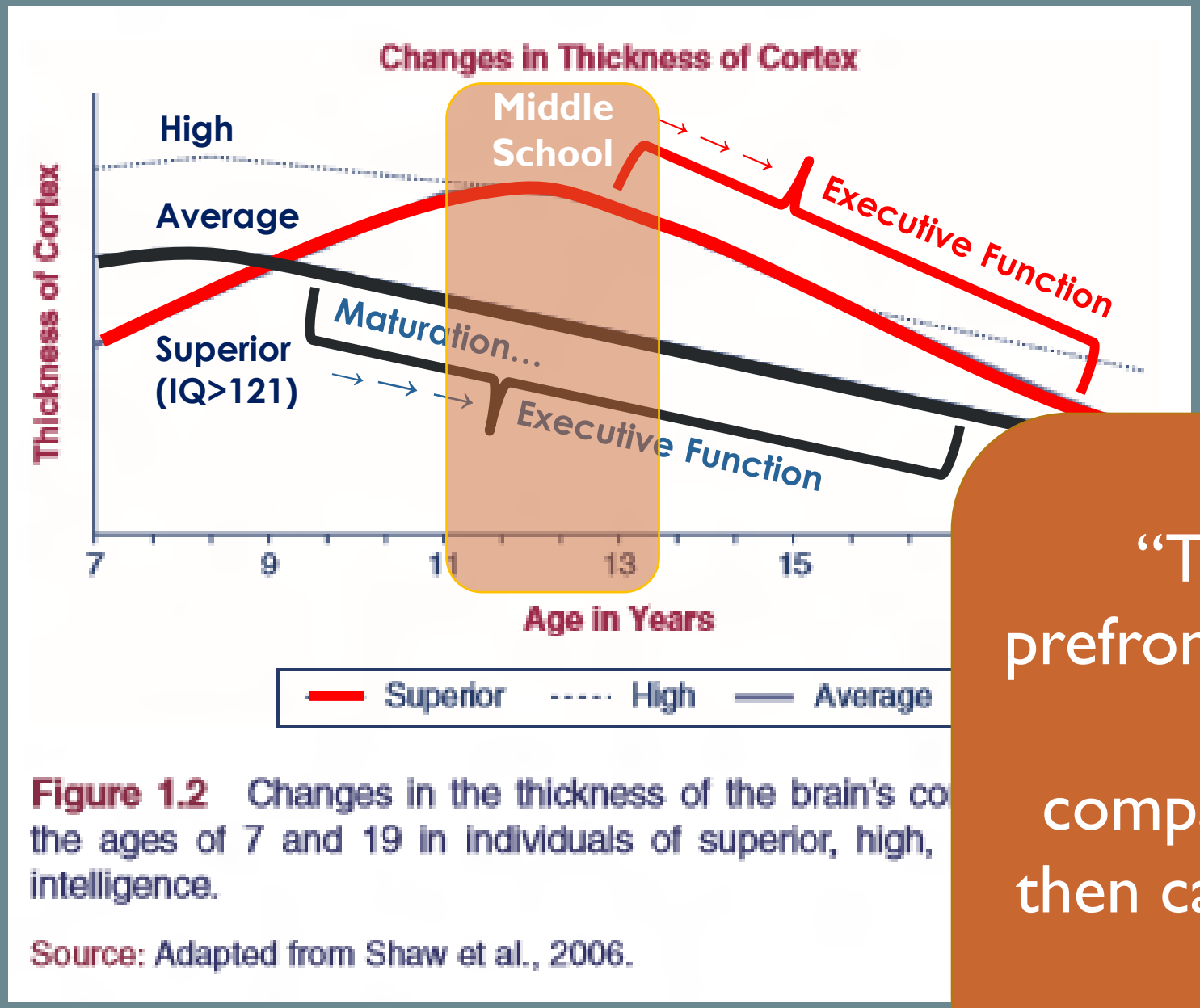

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PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAIN

"The **maturation** of the prefrontal cortex of gifted children is often **delayed**, compared to other children, but then catches up unusually rapidly." (Willis, 2009)

WHAT TO DO?

- Late bloomers may catch up in time (or not)
  - It might take until their 20s…
  - Typically 10th-11th grade
- Tough love doesn't work
  - Are report card grades measuring subject mastery or executive function?
- Need MORE scaffolding & support for executive function
  - Through middle school & early high school
  - Just like ADHD support

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EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF)

"If I'm so smart, why can't I find my keys?" – S. Wollum

Organization

Organizing things, time, or procedures

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Sustaining attention through distraction

Waiting to speak until it's your turn

Mental flexibility

Black & white thinking

Initiating, getting started

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10 WAYS TO SUPPORT EF

1. Make time visible (schedules, calendars, timers, tech)
2. Visible cues, charts, checklists for EVERYTHING
3. Folders, not binders
4. Keep a "master binder" of all handouts/homework/worksheets
5. Have extra pencils/markers/rulers/etc available
6. Pre-planning to break down big projects
7. Graphic organizers, sticky notes & highlighters
8. Homework reminders; flexible late/missing policies
9. Class time to update the planner & organize backpacks/folders/desks
10. Follow students' plans (IEP & 504)

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SUPPORTING EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Teaching Skills,
Tools & Habits

Ongoing, Hands-on Help to
Know WHEN to use the Tools

Fade into Technology Reminders

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THE GIFTED BRAIN IS LIKE

A Ferrari…

with a tiny steering wheel

Neuroscience Common Link:

Lack of Inhibition!

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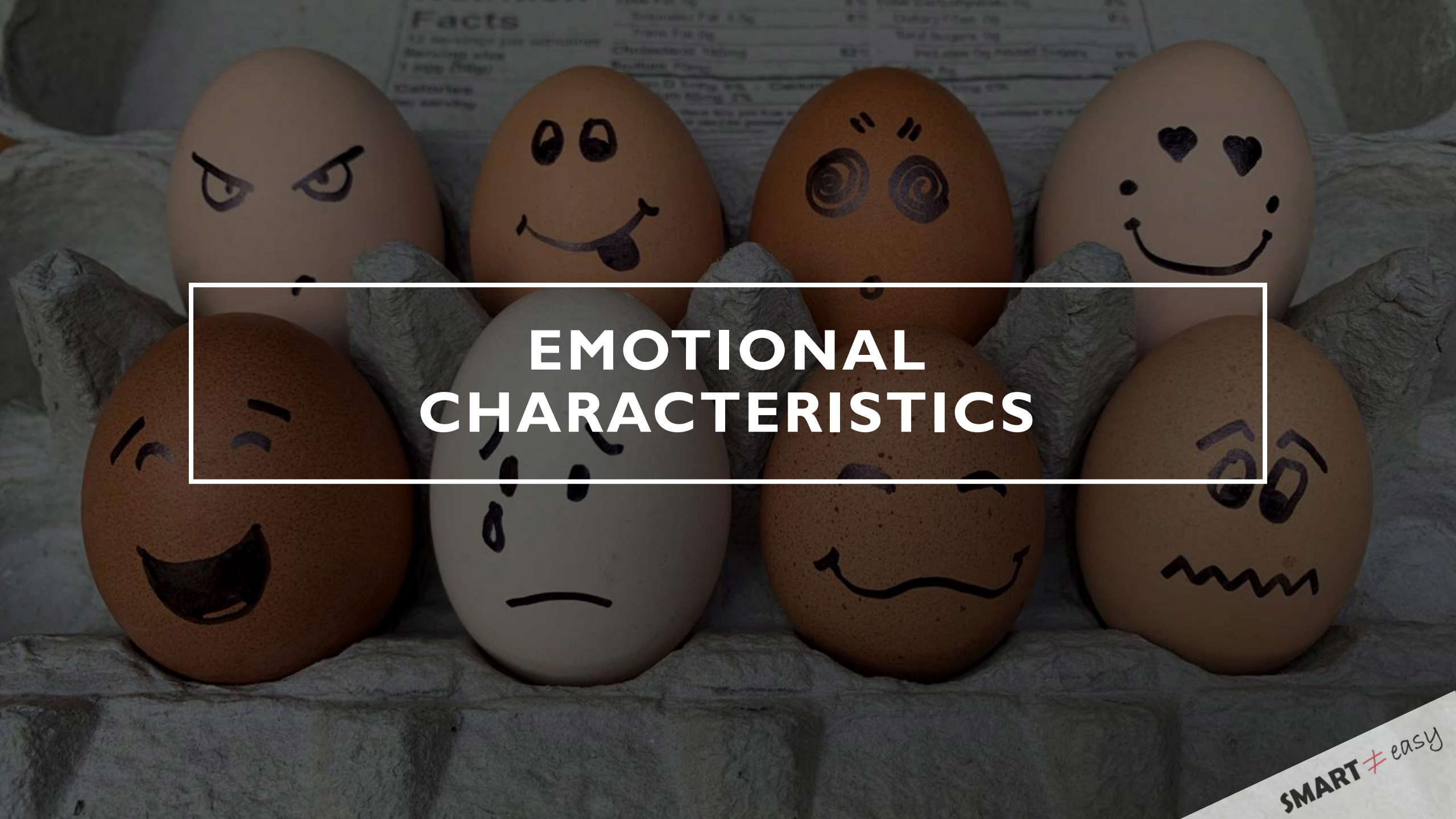

EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

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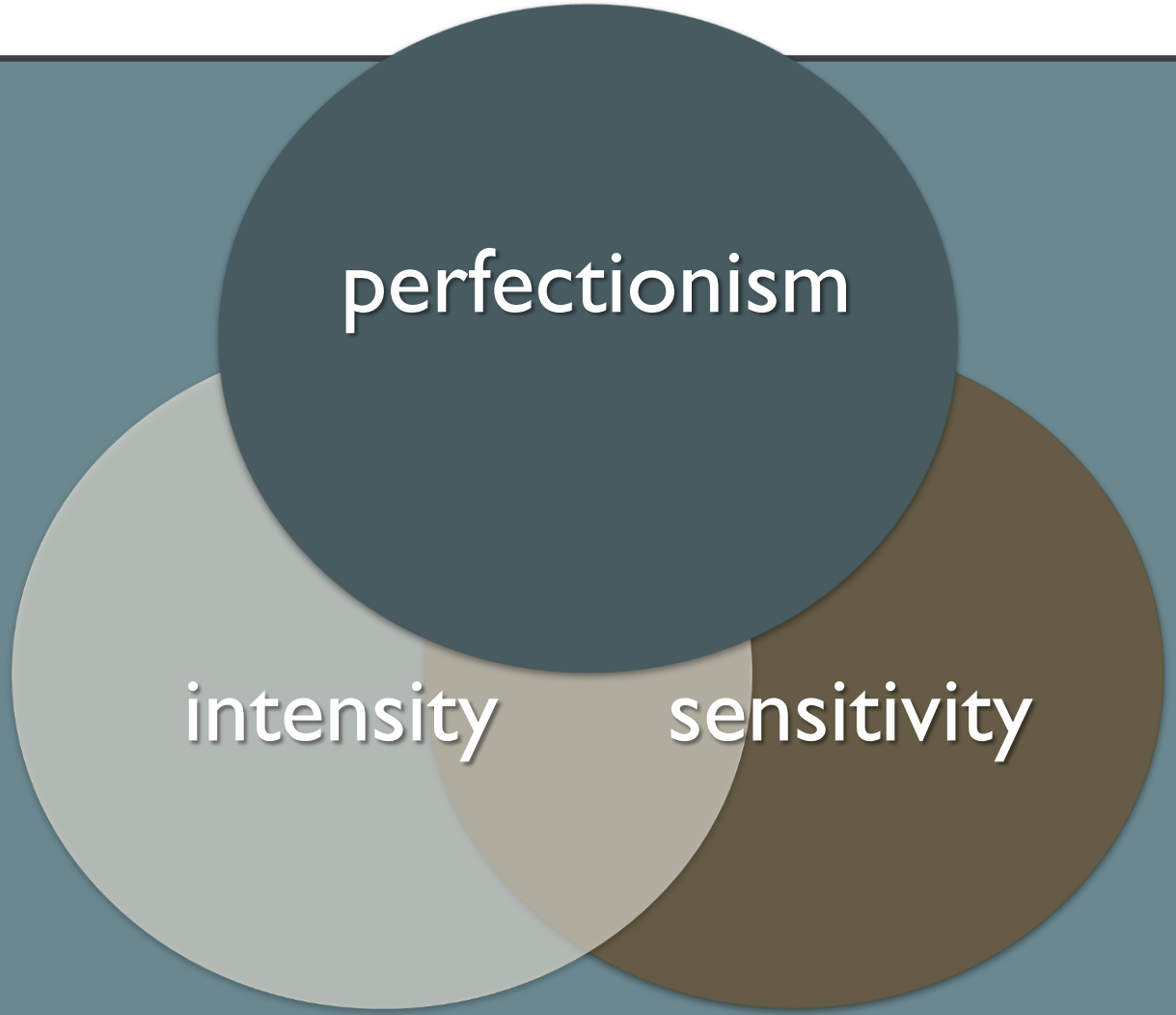
3 COMMON CHARACTERISTICS



SENG: Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (www.sengifted.org)

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PERFECTIONISM

- Erase a hole in the paper
- Impatient with others who aren't "doing it right"
- Meltdown at the first sign of trouble
- Can't make a decision
- Reach for impossible goals
- Hate criticism, Dwell on mistakes
- Trouble accepting compliments
- Unwilling to start, afraid to try, "I don't want to"
- **"Challenge Cards" in the corner of the classroom may not work…**

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SENSITIVITY

- Too loud: fireworks, movies, toilets
- Too scary: movies, even Disney ones!
- Crying when another kid gets hurt
- Concern about the tigers going extinct
- Scratchy tags in clothing, buttons, sock seams…
- Low pain tolerance
- Bathing/swimming: water in my eyes/nose!
- Picky eater - foods touching, textures, smells
- Food sensitivities/allergies
- Big reactions to minor setbacks, discipline
- Sensory seeking - loves snuggling, soft fabrics…
  - Or, hates to be touched…

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INTENSITY

- Tears of joy at a beautiful sunset
- So focused they don't "hear" you
- Obsessions about a topic of interest
- Difficulty with transitions
- Big focus on fairness
- Competitive: most, best, fastest, highest
- Intense nightmares, fears
- Sleep issues, hard to settle down, stay asleep
- Major meltdowns
- Mood swings: higher highs, lower lows
- Stubborn, strong-willed, inflexible

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OVEREXCITABILITIES - OES

- Dabrowski's 5 "super-stimulatibilities"
  - Psychomotor – Sensual – Imaginational – Intellectual – Emotional
- Hard wired - fMRI shows "Brains on Fire" (Eide, 2004)
  - Experience a more intense reaction
  - For a longer period than normal
  - To a stimulus that may be very small
- (Not all gifted kids have OEs)
- Honor it! Coach how to cope with it, not change it

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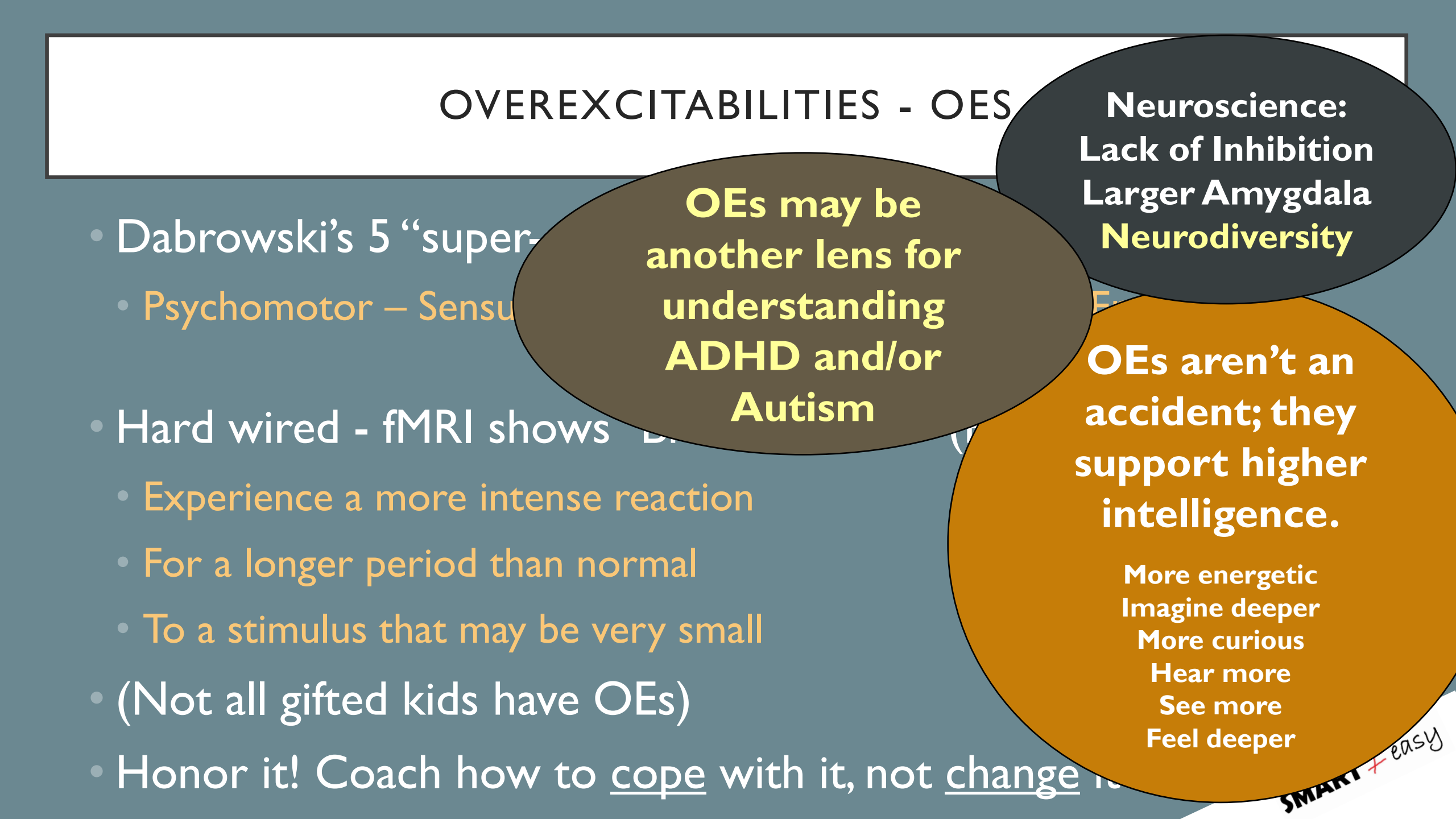
Neuroscience:
Lack of Inhibition
Larger Amygdala
Neurodiversity

OEs may be another lens for understanding ADHD and/or Autism

OEs aren't an accident; they support higher intelligence.

More energetic
Imagine deeper
More curious
Hear more
See more
Feel deeper



TAMING THE WORRY MONSTER

From Dr. Dan Peters, Summit Center

- Amygdala is the seat of emotion & worry
  - Tries to trick you, exaggerates, lies, "takes over"
- Big brain surrounds the tiny amygdala
- Use your big brain to keep your amygdala from taking over
  - Keep your brain fed and strong – nutrition matters!
  - "Boss it back!"

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS DO YOU RECOGNIZE IN YOUR "CHAIR" STUDENT?

In your other students?

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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INTROVERTS VS. EXTROVERTS

- Introverts
  - Get energy by being **alone**
  - Stereotype: quiet, shy, reserved, need processing time, think before talking, prefer 1-on-1 over groups, want a few good friends
  - But, some can be very social – with a time limit
- Extroverts
  - Get energy by being **with other people**
  - Stereotype: outgoing, enjoy parties, think out loud, lots of friends

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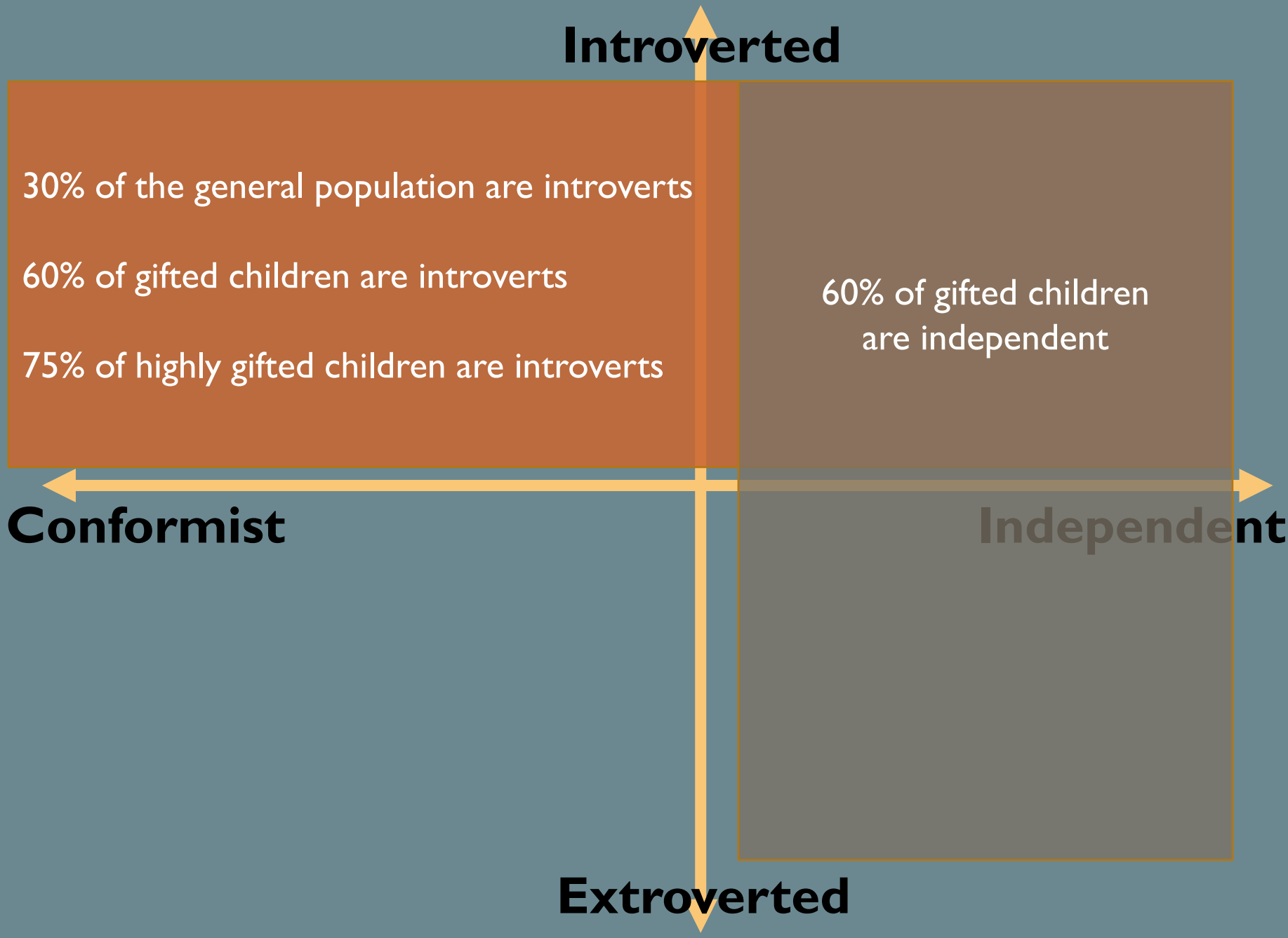
INDEPENDENT VS. CONFORMIST

- Independent
  - March to their own drummer
  - Personal desires aren't swayed by group opinions
  - "To thine own self be true"
- Conformist
  - Want to be with the group
  - Will adjust their desires to go with the group
  - Want to blend in, fit in
  - Sensitive to peer pressure


Introverted
30% of the general population are introverts
60% of gifted children are introverts
75% of highly gifted children are introverts
60% of gifted children are independent
Conformist
Independent
Extroverted

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“

WHEN GIFTED CHILDREN ARE ASKED WHAT THEY MOST DESIRE, THE ANSWER IS OFTEN ‘A FRIEND’

THE CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL IS COMPLETELY COLORED BY THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF FRIENDS.

”

DR. LINDA SILVERMAN

AXIOMS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. You can't force two kids to be friends
   - Authentic social connection is vital
2. Social development requires practice
3. All humans seek belonging and to be understood

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SOCIAL MISMATCH

- More complex vocabulary
- More involved games, stricter rules, fairness
- Interested in niche topics, ask unusual questions
- Kids realize very early
  - They are somehow *different* – but WHY?
- Gravitate to older kids or adults
- Feel like they have to "fake it" to make a friend
- "No one understands me" "They don't get my jokes"

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SOCIAL MATURITY

On average, the higher the IQ, the more mature a social relationship the child is seeking

- ***Stage 1: "Play partner"***
- ***Stage 2: "People to chat to"***
  - *sharing of interests*
- ***Stage 3: "Help and encouragement"***
  - *uni-directional*
- ***Stage 4: "Intimacy/empathy"***
  - bi-directional
- ***Stage 5: "The sure shelter"***
  - PG 6-7 year old vs. neurotypical 11-12+ year old
  - "A friend is a place you go to when you need to take off the masks. You can take off your camouflage with a friend and still feel safe."

(Miraca Gross, 2002)
study of 700 children

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Friends who are "just like me"

Stage 4: Intimacy/empathy

- Someone who shares your hopes and dreams.
- Someone who understands your deepest feelings.
- Someone who feels the same as you about things that are important.
- Someone who would want to be with you if they were feeling lonely or unhappy.

(Miraca Gross, 2002)
study of 700 children

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ASYNCHRONOUS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Desire higher maturity level relationships
- BUT, may lack practical social & friendship **skills**
  - Some kids need explicit instruction
  - Or, lack of practice
  - Or, just average social skills
- ALSO, there's a difference between neurotypical social rules and autistic social rules ("double empathy problem")
- OR, a child may have great social skills
  - Can flex to match interests, play patterns of others
  - But still longs for "someone who really gets me"

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HOW IT PLAYS OUT OVER TIME

- **Biggest social maturity gap ages 4-9 (Gross, 2002)**
  - Gifted kids looking for deeper relationships
  - But, other kids still pretty inclusive
  - So far, the gap is largely invisible
  - No one really understands me, "silent suffering"
- **Social mismatch becomes visible in 4th-5th grade**
  - Left out of parties, playdates, playground games

Why? What's so special about 4th-5th grade?

IN 4TH-5TH GRADE:

- Neurotypical kids just got to Stage 4
  - More focus on shared interests
  - Friends who are "just like me," cliques begin
  - Fewer birthday parties inviting the whole class
- Gifted kids often get left out socially
  - THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN
- Everyone needs their clique. Even gifted kids.
  - It's an expected stage of social development

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SOCIALLY SENSITIVE

- An offhand comment from a peer can cause serious turmoil
- Intense response to perceived rejection
  - "No one reached out to invite me to play the game"
  - "He hates me, she thinks I'm weird"
  - "I'll never have any friends"
- Coaching
  - Is it really true? Engage logical reasoning.
  - "Playful" teasing vs. "hurtful" teasing
  - Waiting for an invitation rarely works…

CONSIDER THIS SCENARIO…

- A gifted kid enters preschool with age-appropriate social skills
- In school, feels "different" from other kids, desires deep friendship, but doesn't find it
- After a few years, starts falling behind in social skill development due to lack of practice
- Lack of social skills makes it even harder for them to flex to find common interests with agemates.
- Loses confidence due to perceived rejection.
- Kid is visibly struggling socially, but we strongly believe that kids "need to be able to get along with all kinds of people in this world"

What should we do?

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SOLVING THIS SCENARIO

- When a kid is struggling, do you:
  - (a) Keep throwing them into the deep end of the pool
  - (b) Put them in the shallow end with a float and a teacher
- Change the environment, so that they can get skill development back on track
  - Group with similar peers: authentic connection, similarly asynchronous social development
  - Coaching & support
  - 1:1 friendship opportunities to build skills

- **Neurotypical kids don't need to bridge these asynchronies to develop socially**
  - ALL kids need "birds of a feather" for social skills growth
  - Diversity is an unrealistic challenge for a gifted kid who is not also gifted socially

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SOLVING THIS SCENARIO

- When a kid is struggling, do you:
  - (a) Keep throwing them into the deep end of the pool
  - (b) Put them in the shallow end [illegible] teacher
- Change the envi[illegible]velopment back on track
  - Group with [illegible]ous social development
  - Coaching
  - 1:1 friend[illegible]
- **Neurotypi[illegible]hronies to develop socia[illegible]**
  - ALL kids need "birds of a fe[illegible]owth
  - Diversity is an unrealistic challenge for a gifted kid who is not also gifted socially

Even better, prevent this scenario by providing an environment with similar peers from the beginning

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A PORTFOLIO OF FRIENDS

- **Find your clique SOMEWHERE and build skills**
  - **THEN branch out**
- 4H/girl scouts/boy scouts/campfire
- Sports teams, especially individual sports (fencing, swimming, golf, martial arts…)
- Classmates, Neighborhood kids
- Older kids, adults, mentors
- Clubs & Contests
  - Math Club, Science Club, Olympiads, Future Problem Solvers, First Lego League, Destination Imagination, Chess, etc…
- Enrichment & summer camps for gifted
  - UW Robinson, CTY, SIG, Davidson, SATORI, Yunasa, …
  - Big list: http://www.nwgca.org (Resources)

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GIFTED PROGRAMS CAN HELP SOCIALLY

- Program models that place gifted children with other similarly asynchronous gifted peers
  - Full-time classrooms
  - Cluster grouping
  - Pull-out programs
  - Walk-to-math, walk-to-reading
- Serving the whole child is more than just appropriate academics
  - Prioritize social & emotional development
- Is it Autism? Socially delayed? Quirky?
  - OR - Lack of appropriate social environment?

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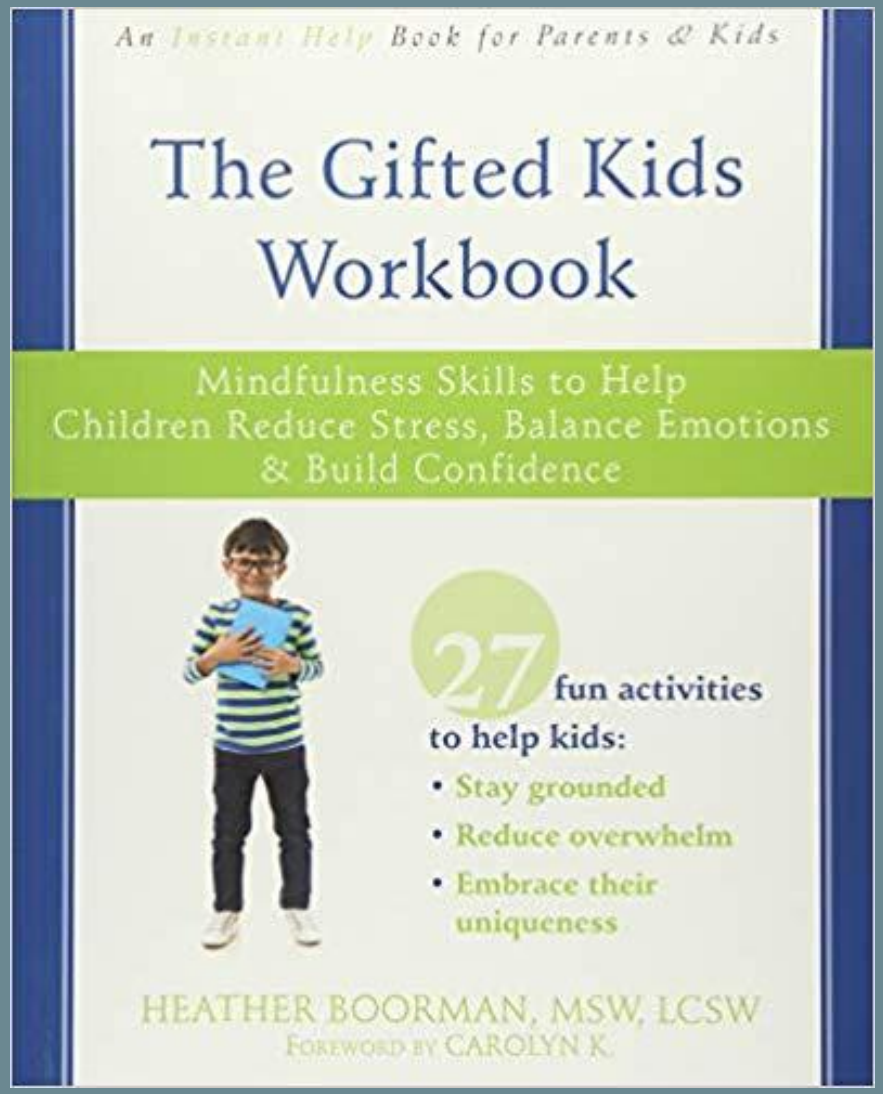
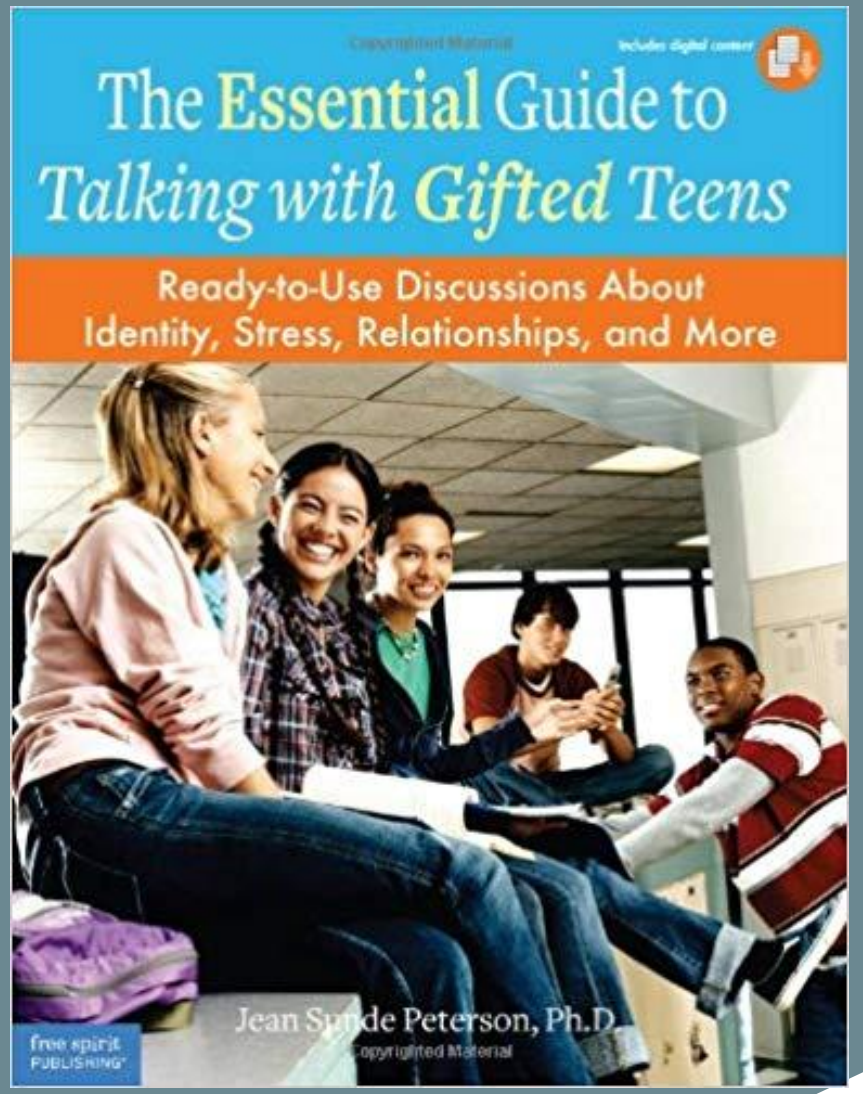
GIFTED SEL CURRICULUMS NOW EXIST!





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WHAT'S ONE WAY YOU CAN SUPPORT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR "CHAIR" STUDENT?

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BIO BREAK

See you back here in 10 minutes

TWICE EXCEPTIONAL

WHO ARE THE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL (2e)?

Bright, gifted, talented, highly capable, TAG, and/or high IQ

AND

Neurodiversity, disability, learning difference,
mental health concern, and/or other challenge

"Their gifts may mask their disabilities
and their disabilities may mask their gifts."

(Reis et al., 2014, p. 222)

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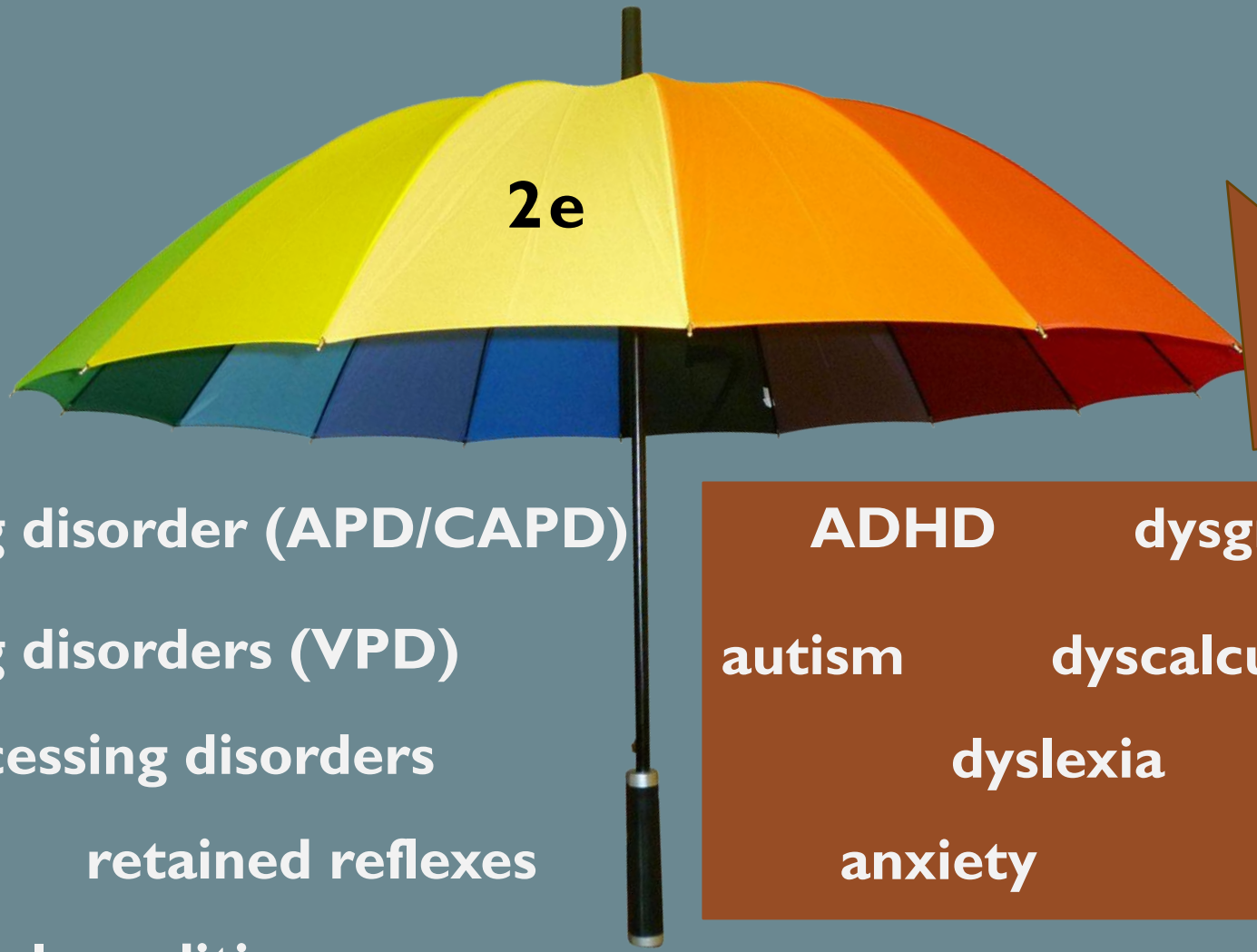
Each needs a DIFFERENT professional to diagnose



Neuropsychologist or Clinical Psychologist

auditory processing disorder (APD/CAPD)

vision processing disorders (VPD)

sensory processing disorders

medical conditions

retained reflexes

physical conditions

PANDAS/PANS

sleep problems

ADHD

dysgraphia

autism

dyscalculia

dyslexia

anxiety

depression

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NEURODIVERSITY, ANOTHER LENS ON 2E

- Neurodiversity is not just about autism
- Different brain "operating system," patterns of **strengths** and **challenges**
- **Careful**: neurodiverse brains are not "worse" (or "better")
  - They are **DIFFERENT**
- Many common diagnoses are better understood as neurodiversity
  - **ADHD** – strengths in quick response time, acting under pressure, noticing changes
  - **Dyslexia** – strengths in visual/spatial, creativity, big picture, entrepreneurial
  - **Autism** – strengths in spotting patterns, details, logic

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WHAT DOES 2E LOOK LIKE?

- explosive behavior
- distractible
- trouble finishing work
- trouble getting started
- great at talking, but not on paper
- anxiety
- perfectionism
- low frustration tolerance
- impulsive
- overexcitabilities?

Easy to Misunderstand
“lazy”
“unmotivated”
“doesn’t care”
“mis-identified as TAG”

Probably a lot more gifted kids are 2e than we think. Maybe even the majority, especially among highly gifted.

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BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION

- When a 2e student is having a hard time, **you will see it in their behavior**
- "Not won't, **CAN'T**" "Kids do well when they can." – Dr. Ross Greene
- "Shifting from addressing behaviors to trying to **understand their origins and triggers** means making a shift from managing our children to **understanding them deeply**." – Dr. Mona Delahooke
- **"It's never about lazy." – Dr. Austina De Bonte**

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WHY DIAGNOSIS MATTERS

"Why do you need a label?

Because there is comfort in knowing you are a normal zebra, not a strange horse.

Because you can't find community with other zebras if you don't know you belong.

And because it is impossible for a zebra to be happy or healthy spending its life feeling like a failed horse."

The important part is that the label is ACCURATE
Find the correct root cause(s)

Image Credit: pngall.com Quote Credit: Instagram #omgimautisticaf

WHY DIAGNOSIS MATTERS

- Accurate diagnosis helps build positive self-concept
  - "Lazy," "Unmotivated," Try harder" is harmful
- Applying the wrong supports causes frustration when they don't help
  - Wasting time that could be spent developing strengths
- Early intervention works better – neuroplasticity!
  - Dyslexia intervention in 1st or 2nd grade is **twice** as effective as in 3rd (Lovett et al., 2017)
- **2e students are masters of masking & compensating**
- **Accurate diagnosis is tricky! It's probably not just one thing…**

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WHY DIAGNOSIS MATTERS

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Realize that you're playing the game in hard mode

- **2e students are masters of masking & compensating**
- **Accurate diagnosis is tricky! It's probably not just one thing…**

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BUCKET THEORY

- Everyone has a bucket to handle adversity
- As challenges stack up, they fill up your bucket
- When your bucket overflows, that's **overwhelm**

Game Plan

FIRST, STOP FOCUSING ON THE TRIGGERS

Identify the rocks in your bucket

a - Get them out

b - Make them smaller

c - Self-understanding (Predict!)

Create more space for **resilience**

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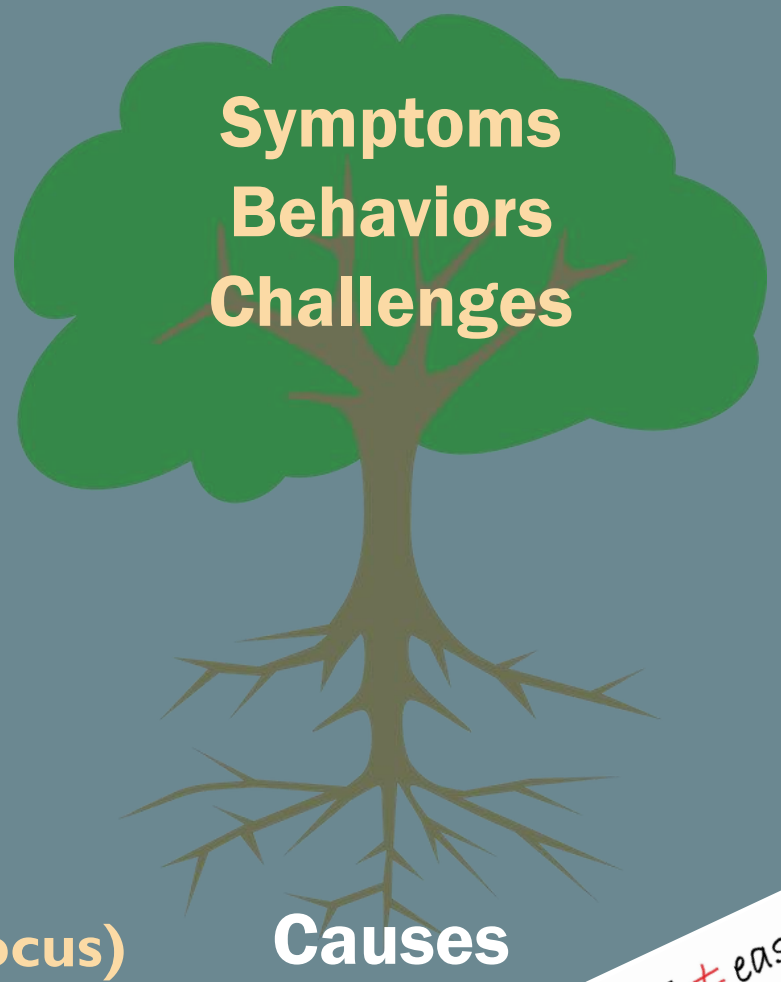
LOOK FOR THE ROOT CAUSE(S)

- There's a reason. Find the reason.
  - "Kids do well if they can." – Dr. Ross Greene
- Find **ALL** of the causes
  - You need DIFFERENT practitioners
  - Start at foundations (vision, auditory, etc.) and work up
- Different strategies for different causes
  - **Interventions**
  - **Tools**
  - **Accommodations**
  - **Understanding (Neurodiversity-affirming, Strength-focus)**



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10 FLAVORS OF 2E

- The most common flavors of 2e
- Many 2e kids have more than one flavor

- Teachers are NOT qualified to diagnose (or even suggest)
  - But having awareness of the possibilities will help you problem solve
  - And better understand any diagnoses in kids' IEPs and 504s

VISION PROCESSING DISORDERS (VPD)

Common but subtle – worth screening anyone having trouble

How the brain processes what the eyes see

- Many flavors: Convergence insufficiency, teaming, tracking, 3D, distance vs. near

Letters/words/numbers flip (b d p q), move, or get blurry

Goofy mistakes in math (+ - x)

Clumsy, trouble with sports & balls, dislikes 3D movies/rides

Fatigue, lack of stamina when reading, especially with small fonts

Inconsistent scores on standardized tests

NOT dyslexia, but it's common to have both

1

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VISION PROCESSING DISORDERS (VPD)

Common but subtle – worth screening anyone having trouble

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How to Help

Interventions

- Diagnose with a specialist (covd.org)
- Vision therapy is effective at any age

Accommodations

- Slant board
- Large print
- Enlarge worksheets or Snaptypeapp.com
- Reading guide strips
- Turn notebook paper on its side for math

NOT dyslexia, but it's common to have both

1

AUDITORY PROCESSING DISORDER (APD)

2

Hearing is normal or super-sensitive

One ear "hears" a split second before the other

Wears hats, hoods, long hair, headphones

Dislikes noisy environments, trouble understanding in background noise

Fatigue, comprehension problems in lecture halls, big classrooms

Slower conversational timing (social!)

Rising anxiety/fatigue/frustration through the day

May look like ADHD, ODD, PDA, explosive behavior, or withdrawal

Common reason for classroom overwhelm/behavior

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AUDITORY PROCESSING DISORDER (APD)

Hearing is normal or super-sensitive

Or

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How to Help

Interventions

- Auditory therapies (many options; mixed results)

Tools

- Ear filter (ablekidsfoundation.org)
- Low gain hearing aids (drraestout.com)
- **Headphones (Playing music! Not pure quiet)**

Accommodations

- **Teacher always uses microphone!**
- Preferential seating away from noise
- Check in with student for understanding
- Auditory breaks during the day

2

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RETAINED PRIMITIVE REFLEXES

- Primitive reflexes should have integrated by early childhood
- If still present, can cause a wide variety of concerns:
  - Trouble sitting still, poor coordination, motion sickness, anxiety, trouble with handwriting, unusual posture, unusual gait, toe walking, emotional dysregulation, balance/vestibular issues, clumsiness, …
- Moro startle reflex – sensitivity to stimuli, sounds, tactile, lights, etc.
  - There are about a dozen others

3

RETAINED PRIMITIVE REFLEXES

- Primitive reflexes should have integrated by early childhood
- If

How to Help

Interventions

- Exercises to re-integrate reflexes
- OT can handle the most common ones
- Search online, or work with a specialist (senseenabled.com)

Accommodations

- Allow movement in class (walking lane)
- Provide alternate seating (standing, wobble chair, etc.)
- Provide fidget tools

- ADHD
- Autism

3

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AUTISM

- Probably way more common than we think, especially in girls (#actuallyautistic)
- Different brain operating system – not broken, **different**
- Creates challenges in **unsupportive environments**
  - ➔DSM lists distress responses of autistic individuals in **unsupportive** environments

- **Essence of Autism**
  - **Sensory differences (interoception, tactile, auditory, visual, etc.)**
  - **Autistic social patterns (see: Double Empathy Problem)**
  - **Monotropism (Special Interests SPINs, focus on details over big picture)**

- **Anxiety, irritability, perfectionism, prone to getting overwhelmed**
- Non-Clues: eye contact, empathy, social, affectionate, humor, creativity

4

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AUTISM

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How to Help

Interventions

- ABA – avoid! Pretending to be "normal" today → Burnout later
- Instead: Neurodiversity-affirming counseling/coaching

Accommodations

- Executive function supports
- Social supports (form a group with other 2e/autistic students)
- Support specific individual needs (sensory, living space, etc.)

Understanding

- Self-understanding as neurodiverse, not broken
- Decide where to spend your energy

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(STEALTH) DYSLEXIA

- Reads everything as a sight word, trouble sounding out
- **Phonological awareness, trouble with rhyming & wordplay**
- Trouble with spelling, writing, grammar
- Skips or substitutes words when reading
- Inconsistent scores on standardized tests
- Trouble with rote memory
- Despite this, excellent comprehension

5

Free oral screener for dyslexia - www.thepasttest.com

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(STEALTH) DYSLEXIA

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How to Help

Interventions

- Dyslexia-specific tutoring in structured literacy (phonics, etc.) with a focus on spelling/writing

Accommodations

- Audiobooks, text-to-speech
- Dictation, speech-to-text, or a scribe
- Typing all assignments/assessments (SnapTypeApp.com)
- Access to spellcheck for all classwork/assessments
- Extra time for assignments/assessments
- Provide written notes, scribe, allow recording

5

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DYSCALCULIA

- Less well understood than cousin dyslexia
- Difficulty with judging quantities, less vs. more
- Lack of number sense
- Trouble with calculations
- Can memorize some sequences but not understand why

- Good math problem solving skills, but trouble remembering math facts?

➔**Consider dyslexia**

DYSCALCULIA

- Less well understood than cousin dyslexia
- Difficulty with judging quantities, less vs. more
- Lack of number sense

How to Help

Accommodations

- Provide manipulatives
- Provide number line, hundreds chart
- Provide multiplication table
- (Provide calculator)

➔**Consider dyslexia**

WRITING CHALLENGES (DYSGRAPHIA ETC)

7

- Many causes:
  - Physical/motor challenges, strength, pencil grip (OT)
  - Lack of motor automaticity in writing letters/numbers
    - "Lazy 8 Motor Memory Technique" (early elementary)
  - Vision Processing Disorders (VPD)
  - Dyslexia (especially spelling)
  - Trouble getting ideas out, organizing thoughts

- **Figure out the specific cause(s)**

THIS IS A TOUGH TRANSITION

Lots of interconnected ideas in brain

?

First, . Then , , and .

. . because .

linear writing, one word at a time

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HOW TO HELP

1. **Get ideas out of brain in a messy way**
2. **THEN organize where you can see it**

How?

- Sticky notes
- Mind map
- Drawing
- Dictation
- Scribing
- Walk & talk

Help each student find what works for them

Topic/paragraph graphic organizers WON'T HELP in step 1

Why? They impose order too soon

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WRITING CHALLENGES (DYSGRAPHIA ETC)

- Many causes:

How to Help

Figure out the specific cause(s)!

Interventions

- Writing coaching (braindump ideas in a messy way, then organize)

Accommodations

- Dictation, speech-to-text, or a scribe
- Typing all assignments/assessments (SnapTypeApp.com)
- Access to spellcheck for all classwork/assessments
- Extra time for assignments/assessments
- Provide written notes, give alternate assignments

ADHD

- **Types:** Inattentive, Hyperactive, Combined
- Not lack of attention, but trouble regulating attention
- Can focus when: **(INCUP)**
  - **Interesting**
  - **Novel**
  - **Challenging**
  - **Urgent/Pressure**

  (Dodson, 2018)
- NOT: rote, boring, easy, even if very important

How to Self-Hack Your ADHD Brain

- **"Interest-based nervous system"**

Trouble getting started

Staying on task

Time management

Breaking down big projects

Executive function

Can produce when interested in the topic

8

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ADHD RESEARCH

- Movement in ADHD kids increases reaction time & oxygenation in Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex (Hoy et al., 2024)
- ADHD kids move more when working memory is needed (Orban et al., 2017)
- Fidgeting in ADHD adults appears to increase sustained attention (Son et al. 2024)
- ADHD kids who had more intense movement had better performance on a cognitive task (Note: TD children performed worse with movement) (Hartanto et al., 2015)
- **Theory is that movement is a compensation strategy to maintain alertness in the ADHD brain**

Let ADHD kids MOVE! It helps them THINK

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ADHD

- **Types:** Inattentive, Hyperactive, Combined
- Not lack of attention, but trouble <u>regulating</u> attention
- Can focus when: **(INCUP)**

Trouble getting started

Staying on task

t

8

How to Help

Interventions

- ADHD meds can help (and may be therapeutic)

Accommodations

- Executive function supports (scaffold, reminders, cues, body doubling)
- Make things INCUP (Interesting, Novel, Challenging, Urgent, Pressure)
- Beware: "extra time" may not help

pic

ith

distractibility

- **"Interest-based nervous system"**

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ADHD LOOKALIKES

- "A true diagnosis of ADD/ADHD should be as a last resort made by exclusion after ruling out other possible factors such as:
  - depression, anxiety,
  - learning disabilities,
  - preoccupation with personal issues,
  - unrealistic expectations, situational difficulties anc abilities and expectations,
  - auditory processing deficits,
  - mild brain injury, ill health, substance abuse,
  - lack of sleep and/or nutrition, current use of medi

(Webb et al, 2005)

Vision processing (VPD)
Auditory processing (APD)
Sensory processing (SPD)
Retained reflexes
Sleep apnea
Allergies (food or environment)
Sensitivity to food coloring
Chemical sensitivity
Mold sensitivity
PANDAS/PANS

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SLEEP APNEA (AND OTHER SLEEP DISTURBANCES)

- Sleep apnea in kids/teens (and even some adults) can be silent
  - No gasping, night waking, snoring, etc.

REM sleep is needed for consolidating and storing long-term memory

Lack of quality sleep can cause symptoms identical to ADHD

Easy to rule in/out with a sleep study

SLEEP APNEA (AND OTHER SLEEP DISTURBANCES)

- Sleep apnea in kids/teens (and even some adults) can be silent

  No gasping, night waking, snoring, etc.

R

How to Help

Interventions

- Remove tonsils
- Release tongue tie
- Orthodontic palette expander
- Nose/sinus surgery (deviated septum)

Tools

- CPAP machine for sleeping

PANDAS/PANS (…LYME, BARTONELLA, MOLD)

- **Autoimmune reaction to strep** (and/or other bacteria/viruses/mold) **that creates inflammation in the basal ganglia of the brain**
- **Always:** Irritability, Low frustration tolerance, Mood swings, Anxiety (especially separation anxiety, irrational, bedtime, or constant)
- **Often:** Sleep disturbances, OCD, Repetitive/intrusive thoughts, Tics (physical or verbal), Picky/restricted eating, Sensory sensitivity
- **Sometimes:** Headache, Stomachache, Urinary frequency, Bedwetting, Math or handwriting regression, Aggression, School refusal

- **Does NOT have to be acute onset**
- Stanford says only 40% of their PANDAS patients were acute onset

10

PANDAS/PANS (…LYME, BARTONELLA, MOLD)

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10

How to Help

Interventions

- Medical treatment needed, MUST find a specialist
  - Neuroimmune.org
  - Pandasnetwork.org
  - Pandasppn.org
  - http://aspire.care
  - inflamedbrain.org

Book: A Light in the Dark for PANDAS & PANS (Crista)

efusal

onset

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PROVIDING HELP THAT'S ACTUALLY HELPFUL

When in doubt,
Provide more support

- Different strategies for different causes
  - Figure out the correct root cause(s)
- **Interventions**
  - Vision therapy for VPD, Tutoring for dyslexia, Reflex integration, Occupational Therapy, Medication for ADHD, Treatment for medical issues
- **Tools**
  - Ear filter/LGHA for APD, Assistive technology for dyslexia & VPD & writing
- **Accommodations**
  - Preferential seating, written notes, notetaker/scribe, teacher uses microphone, extra time, large print, audio books, etc.
- **Understanding:** Neurodiversity-affirming, Strength-focused
  - For autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dysgraphia, and everything…

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Rewarding neurotypical learning styles teaches ALL kids that neurotypical brains are superior.

This is harmful to neurodivergent kids.

NeuroWild

CREATE A **NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMING** CLASSROOM & HOME ENVIRONMENT

Infographic by #neurowild on Instagram & Facebook

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Share one thing you just learned that will help your "chair" student

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THE BRIGHT STUDENT DILEMMA

What do grit and growth mindset have to do with it?

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THE BRIGHT STUDENT DILEMMA

Most kids "learn how to learn" in elementary school

Reading, spelling, subtraction, multiplication, etc.

Learning to tolerate confusion, recovering from mistakes, asking for and receiving help…

Building persistence, perseverance, grit, growth mindset

Time management, study skills (middle school)

Bright students already know most of the curriculum

School is too easy, not challenging

Two implications:

1. Lack of opportunity to build these skills
2. Any 2e disabilities remain hidden

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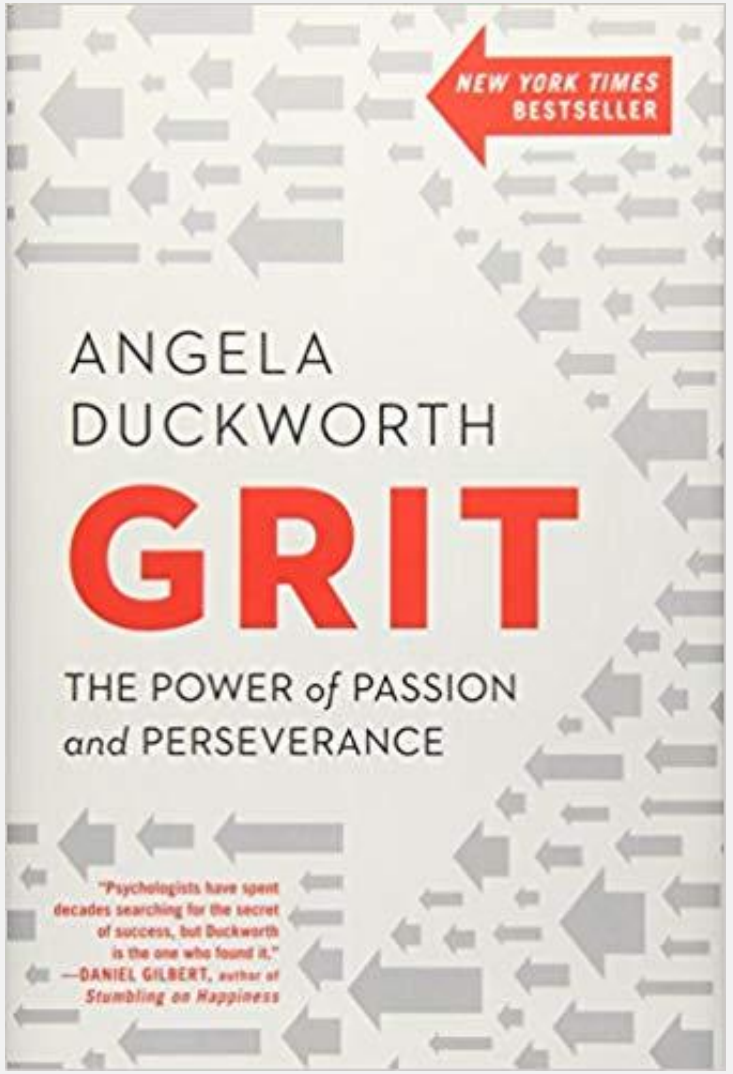
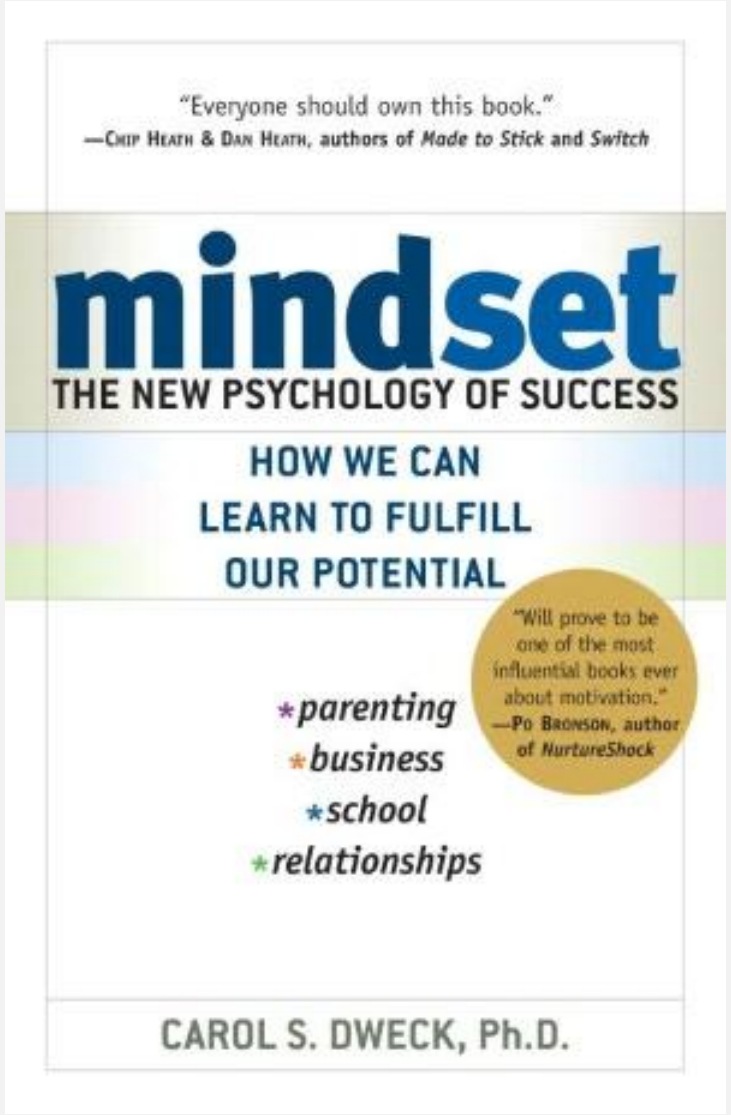
GRIT >> IQ (2016)

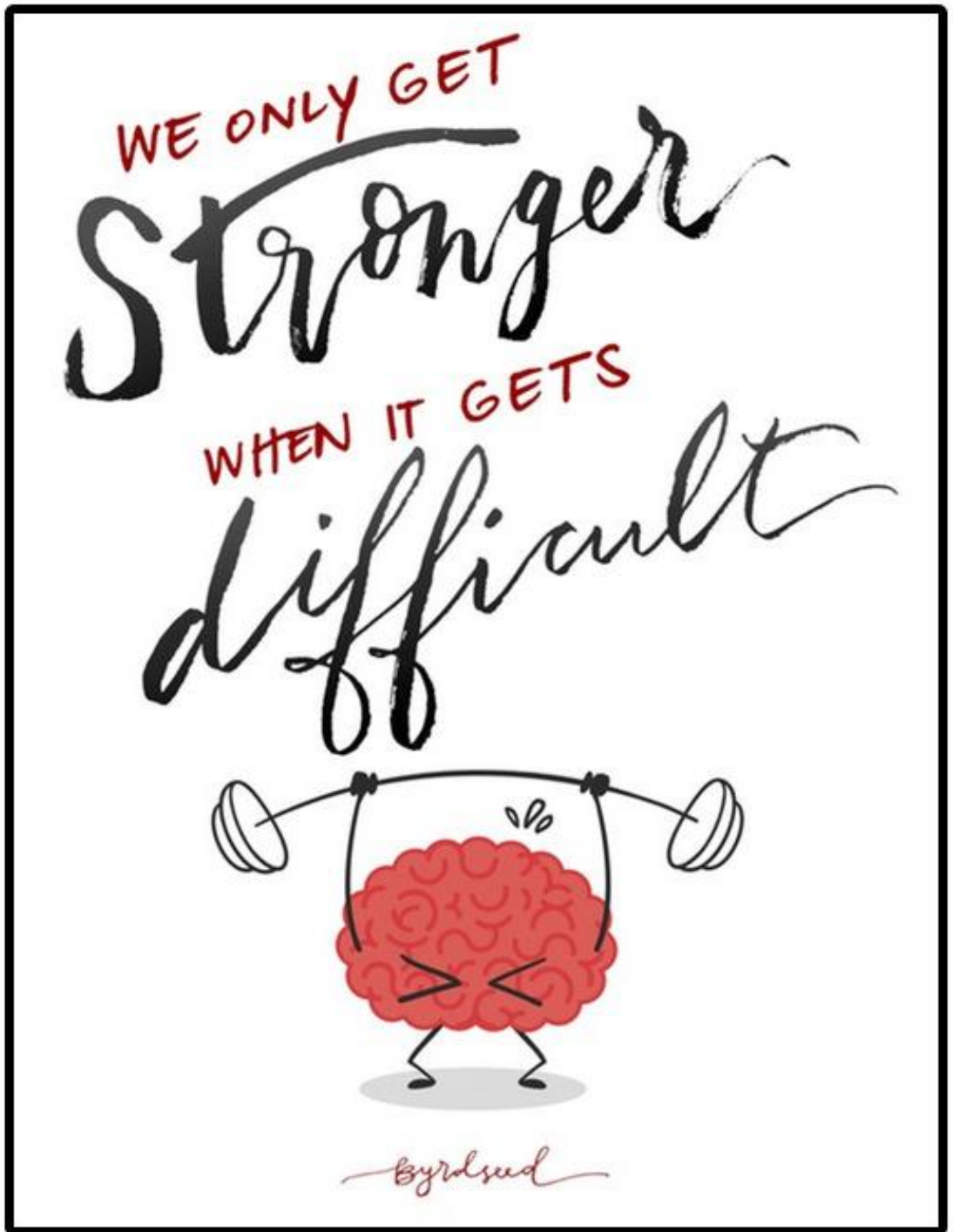
- Duckworth studied success at:
  - West Point Military Academy
  - National Spelling Bee
  - High school juniors, 8th graders
- "It wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks, physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was **grit**."
- "Self-discipline predicted academic performance more robustly than did IQ."
- **"In our data, grit is usually unrelated or even inversely related to measures of talent."**



GROWTH MINDSET (2006)

- "Effort Effect"
  - Kids who were told they were smart didn't try as hard next time
  - Kids who were praised for effort did better
- Takeaways
  - Don't praise kids for being smart
  - Praise real effort and progress (not results)
    - "Keep on trying…"
    - "Practice really works!"





"THE BRAIN IS LIKE A MUSCLE. IT NEEDS A WORKOUT TO GET STRONGER."

POSTERS & LESSON PLANS

BYRDSEED.COM

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IQ ALONE DOES NOT PREDICT "SUCCESS"

- Two longitudinal studies of **exceptionally gifted individuals**
  - Terman Study (1921-1993)
  - Study for Mathematically Precocious Youth (1972 – ongoing)
- Overrepresented with affluent white males
  - Under-rep: non-white, low-income, EL/ML, twice exceptional, girls

- On **average**, high IQ individuals were more successful (degrees, occupation, leadership positions, creativity, …)
- **BUT look at the median…** More than 60% of men, and 80% of women had a salary of LESS than $100,000 (SMPY, 2004)
  - A few individuals were "exceptionally successful" and raised the average
  - Most gifted individuals lead typical adult lives

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  - A few in
  - Most gif

What Predicted Success?

The most successful individuals had

support & acceleration

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SMART KIDS AT A DISADVANTAGE

- When not challenged in school, LESS likely to develop
  - Grit & perseverance
  - Tolerance for failure
  - Growth mindset
  - Time management, study skills
- It's hard to truly challenge a gifted kid
  - They are capable of a LOT more than they let on
  - Perfectionism leads them to stay away from challenges that they aren't sure they can tackle

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THE CENTRAL CONCEPT

Leads To

Effort **Results**

Provide experiences with **genuine** challenge

Teach grit & growth mindset
in an area of STRENGTH (not disability)

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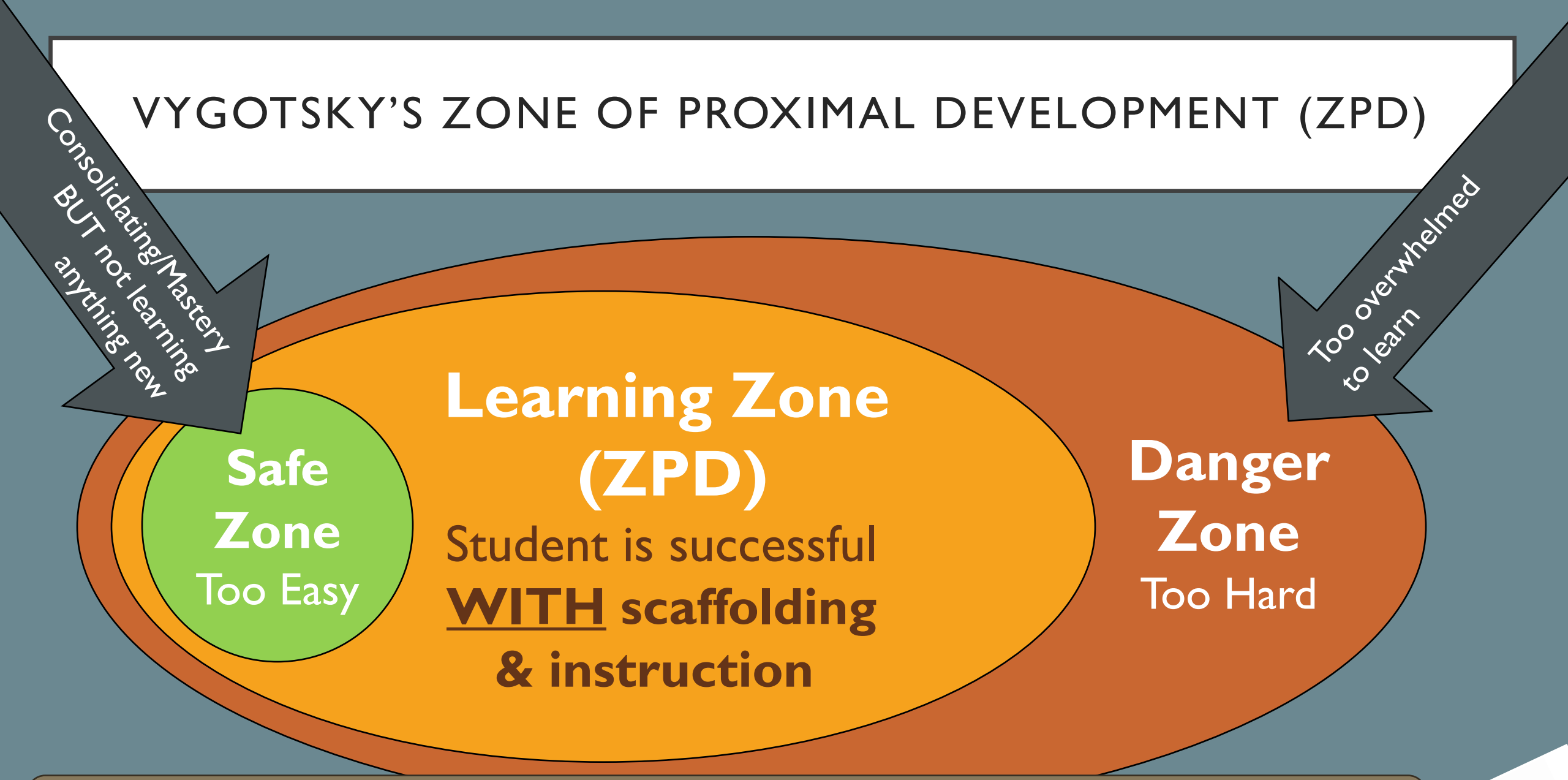
VYGOTSKY'S ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)



Goal: To build grit, every student should be in their Learning Zone at least once a day

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PROPOSED LINGO: "JUST RIGHT LEARNING LEVEL"

Reasoning: "You don't want school to be **TOO EASY** for any student. **That's not fair.**"

- Concerns
  - Different levels in same class
  - How do kids feel when they are not identified as TAG?
  - Strong desire for inclusive practices

- Neutral lingo to normalize that some students need advanced curriculum
  - Teachers to use with students
  - Students to use with each other
  - Teachers to explain to parents
- Modeled after "Just Right Books" ➔ **"Just Right Learning Level"**

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BUILD UP PERSISTENCE & GRIT

- Where to find challenge?
  - Advanced school programs
  - Musical instruments, especially private instruction
  - Foreign language
  - Sports teams, individual sports - Martial arts, swimming, fencing, tennis…
  - Independent study projects, Contests, First Lego League Robotics, Chess, Destination Imagination, Future Problem Solvers, etc.
- Discuss perfectionism openly
- Let kids struggle and fail (within reason)
- Insist on persevering through challenge
  - Not just academics – extracurriculars, sports…

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ACCELERATION IS THE CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATION

2023 National Working Group on Advanced Education

- Allow children who are ready for advanced material in all subjects to skip entire grade levels
- Allow children to skip grade levels in particular subjects
- Offer "grade-compressed" pathways for students
- Offer advanced courses in as many subjects as possible in grades 6–12
- Automatically enroll students participating in elementary school advanced education programs in subsequent advanced learning opportunities in middle and/or high school

REMINDER:
ADULTS DON'T HAVE TO BE GREAT AT EVERYTHING

Adult careers will focus on **STRENGTHS**

Adults find "niche" environments that support or avoid their weaknesses

(Armstrong, 2012)

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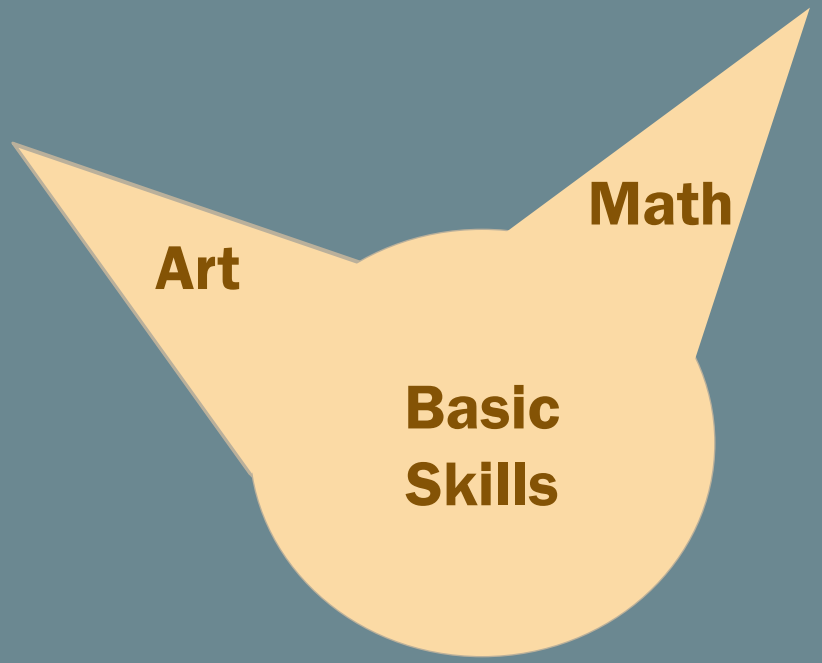
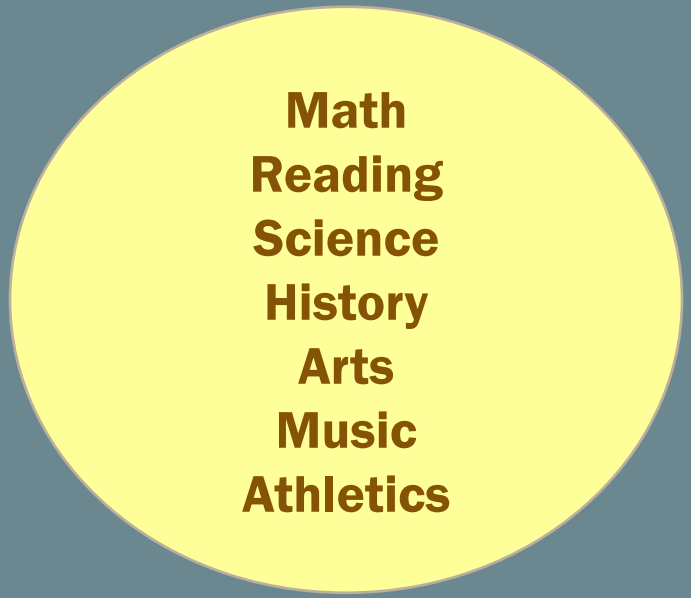
Spiky Strengths



Well-Rounded



Colleges are looking for "spiky" applicants!

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GETTING MORE FLEXIBLE

If kids are different, and they all need to be challenged and supported in different ways, we must get more **FLEXIBLE**

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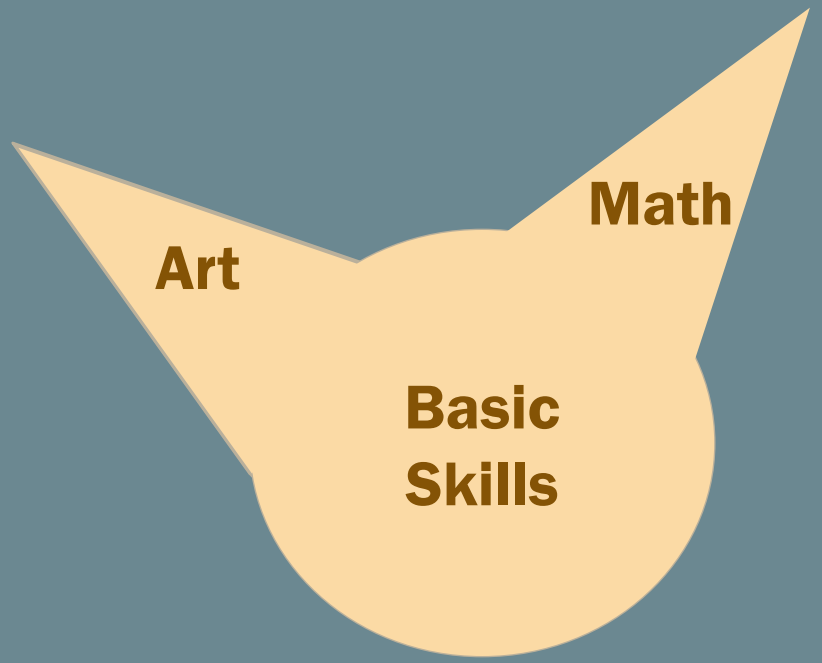
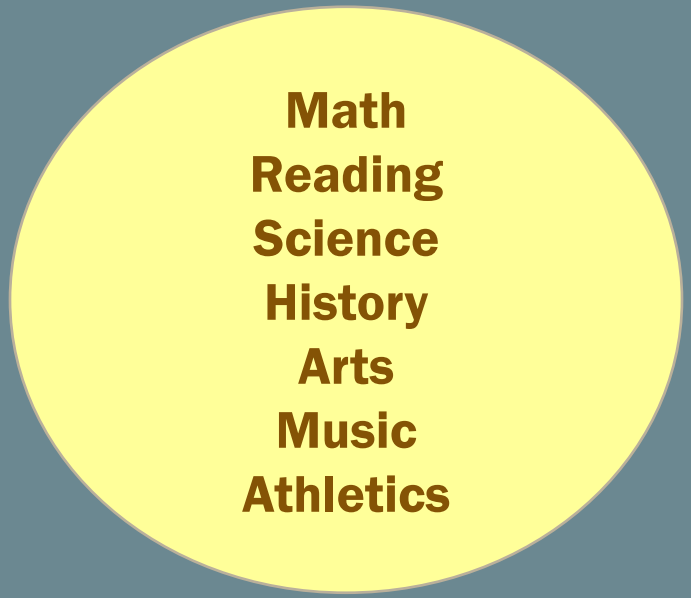
Spiky Strengths



Well-Rounded



Colleges are looking for "spiky" applicants!

SMART ≠ easy

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) PRINCIPLES

- **WHY**: Multiple Means of Engagement
  - Make the topic meaningful for each student
  - Connect to interests & prior knowledge
- **WHAT**: Multiple Means of Representation
  - Use multiple modalities: text, audio, video, models, etc.
  - Provide accommodations universally, especially Assistive Technology
- **HOW**: Multiple Means of Expression
  - Allow students to show what they know in different ways
  - Modify assignments to highlight student strengths

"I am interested in learning this"

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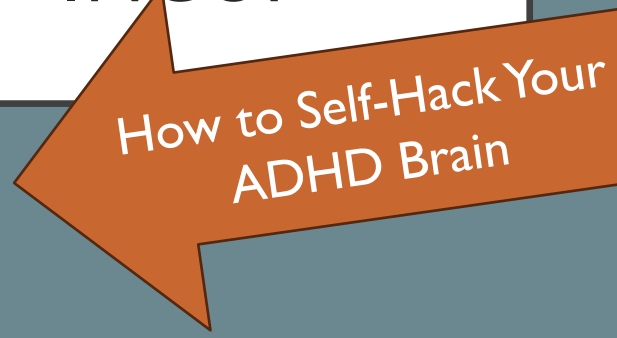
MODIFY ASSIGNMENTS FOR ENGAGEMENT - INCUP

"find the hook" for each student



- **Interesting**
  - Align with a topic of interest, intro with a surprising video, authentic projects for external audiences
- **Novel**
  - Pick an unusual topic, do it upside down, with crayon, pretend you're counting aliens, do it without the letter M, get creative…
- **Challenging**
  - Set a personal goal to achieve, make the task harder, add complexity, look for connections, add abstraction, application (caveat: contests)
- **Urgent** (Don't over-rely on this strategy!)
  - Create a deadline, authentic deadlines for external audiences are ideal
- **Pressure** (Social)
  - Invest in that teacher-student relationship!

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"I learn in the best ways for my brain"

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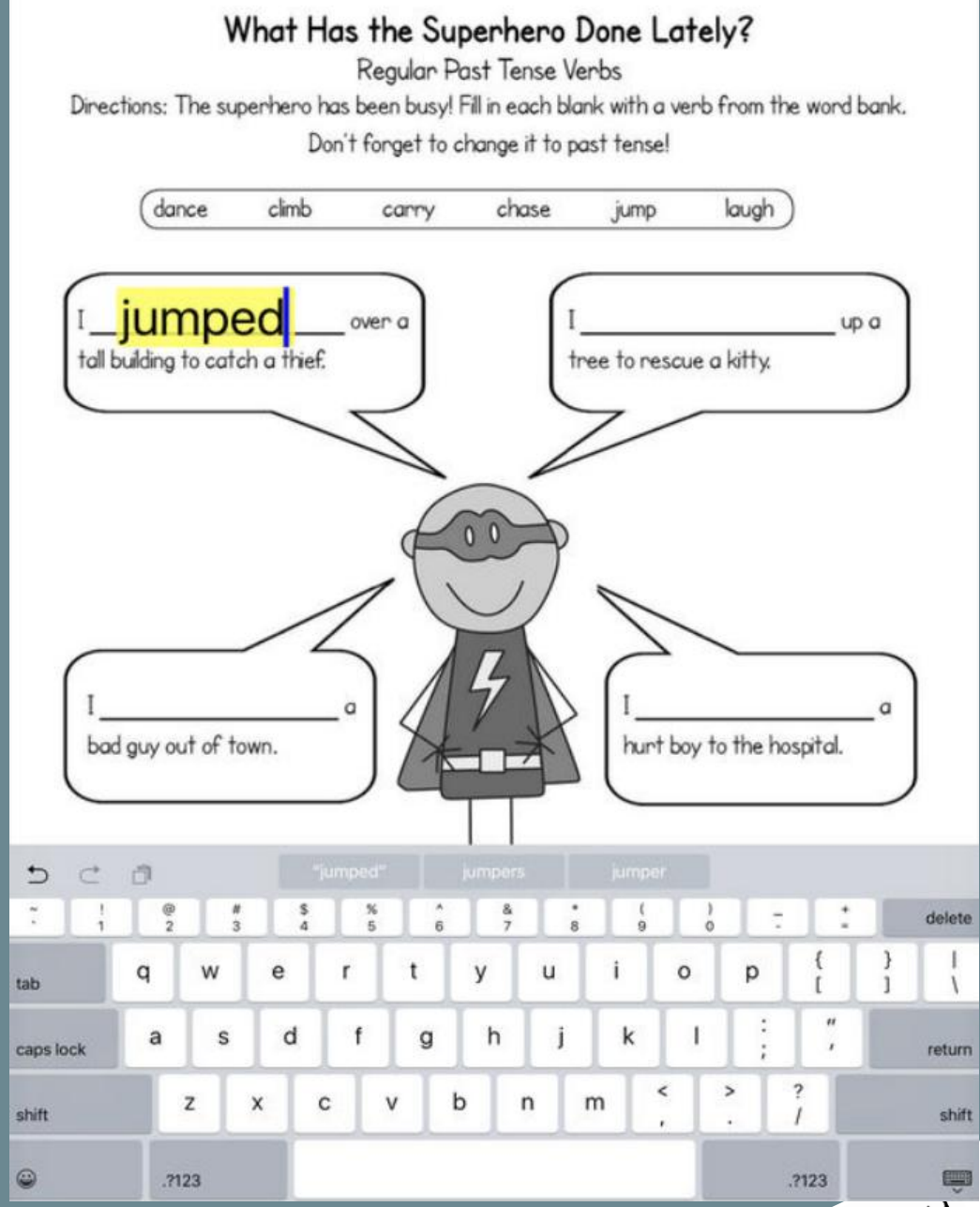
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

- Enable higher order thinking without getting bogged down in the mechanics

- Keyboarding/Dictation/Scribe
- Spellcheck
- Grammar tools/Grammarly
- **SnapTypeApp.com** (iPad/iPhone/ Chrome/Android)



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UNIVERSAL ACCOMMODATIONS

- Make all learning accessible to all students
- Provide accommodations & supports to ALL students
  - Keyboarding, dictation, spellcheck, audiobooks, …
  - **Just like a pencil**

- 2e students think accommodations are "cheating" if they are the only ones allowed to use them
- Many other students will also benefit
  - **Most 2e students will never be formally diagnosed**

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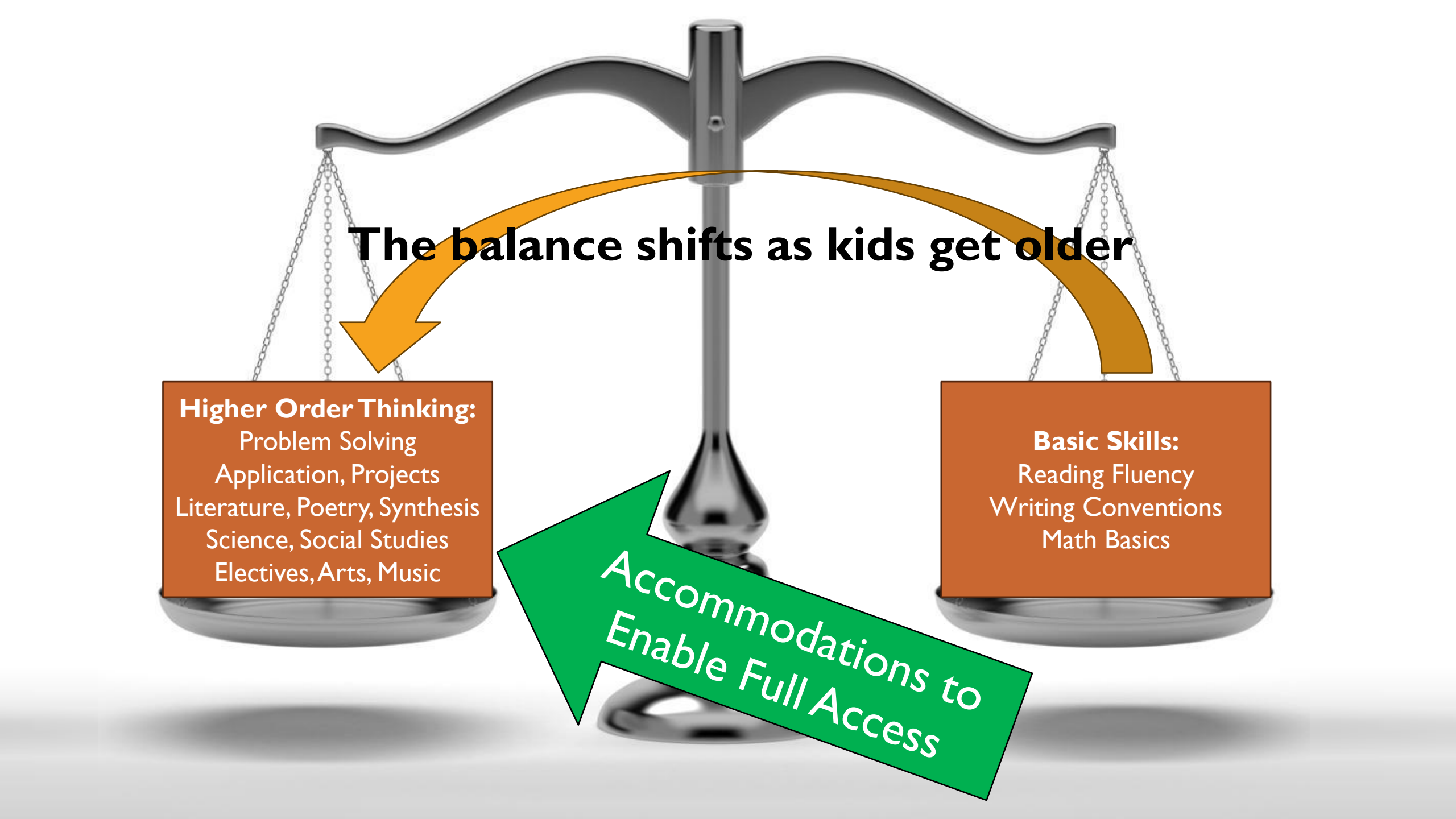
The balance shifts as kids get older
Higher Order Thinking:
Problem Solving
Application, Projects
Literature, Poetry, Synthesis
Science, Social Studies
Electives, Arts, Music
Basic Skills:
Reading Fluency
Writing Conventions
Math Basics
Accommodations to Enable Full Access

Strength Focus

Spend more time/effort on building strengths than remediating deficits

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"Build up my spiky strength area"

DEMONSTRATING MASTERY VIA SPIKY STRENGTHS

- Draw a diagram
- Make a poster
- Create a slide presentation
- Draw a comic strip
- Record a podcast
- Make a video
- Build a model
- Write a letter
- **Give choices…**

Each kid could be doing a DIFFERENT thing based on their individual strengths

Flexible assignments

Encourage creativity

Build on student strengths

The point is communication of ideas

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POLYVAGAL SAFETY IS ESSENTIAL

Learning only happens here

Porges polyvagal theory

- **Autonomic nervous system is constantly evaluating the environment for safety**
- Co-regulation with safe, trusted others

Create a neurodiversity-affirming classroom (& home)

- Student can be their **authentic** self
- Relationship with teacher (& parents)
- Environmental safety in classroom (& home)
- Relational safety with classmates (& family)

Adapted from Deb Dana 2022; Porges 2011

KIDS CAN MASK & COMPENSATE SO MUCH

- **Masking**: pretending to be "normal" (neurotypical) to fit in, hide, or "camouflage"
- **Compensating**: using strengths to make up for challenge areas

- Implication #1: Masking & compensating takes ENERGY
  - We don't want kids feeling like they have to **pretend** all day long
  - Fatigue leads to overwhelm & dysregulation

- Implication #2: Challenging curriculum finally surfaces 2e challenges
  - Silver lining: **YOU** are in the best position to notice there's a struggle

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HOW STUDENT NEEDS MIGHT DIFFER

- Vision Clarity
- Light Sensitivity
- Auditory Sensitivity
- Tactile Sensitivity
- Self-Regulation
- Organization Skills
- Emotional Sensitivity
- Need for Movement
- Social Differences

Our Job

Honor individual differences

Provide supports to maximize student learning

Keep supporting until development catches up

Protect from psychological harm

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THE 5 ENVIRONMENTS FOR 2E LEARNERS

Physical

- Layout allows for multiple uses - quiet area, movement, collaboration
- Allow every student to have access to spaces

Intellectual

- Authentic and meaningful learning
- Various modes of instruction for differing learning preferences aligning with strengths, interests and preferences

Social

- Establish rapport and model relationship building, both peer-peer and teacher-student
- Like a jigsaw, each student has a valuable role and contribution in the classroom community

Creative

- Offer choices in the way students learn and show mastery of knowledge
- Give students creative choices with learning by incorporating art, technology, games, music, and drama

Emotional

- Understand the asynchronies within students' chronological, intellectual and emotional ages
- Provide a culture of acceptance, tolerance, empathy, accountability and psychological safety

Binde, Dann, Lamb, Monterusso, & Vargas

OUR GOAL

- Every student feels safe 100% of the time
- Every student can be their authentic self MOST of the time
  - Minimize the amount of masking/compensating needed to participate

- Every student is DIFFERENT - so to achieve this goal we must be

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HOW WOULD WE KNOW IF YOUR "CHAIR" STUDENT FELT **SAFE**?

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Jess Zeidman
@jzeidz · Follo

You were "gifted
your path:
anxiety
depression
fear of failure
intense guilt
potential
good at cross
all of the abo

12:04 PM · Jan 31, 201

126.6K Reply

LL McKinney
@ElleOnWords

5:05 PM · 11/18/20 · Twitter for iPhone

What Causes This?

- Lack of challenge to develop grit
- Unsupported 2e
- Social isolation
- "We expect great things from you"

The problem is NOT the label.
It's what you DO about the label.

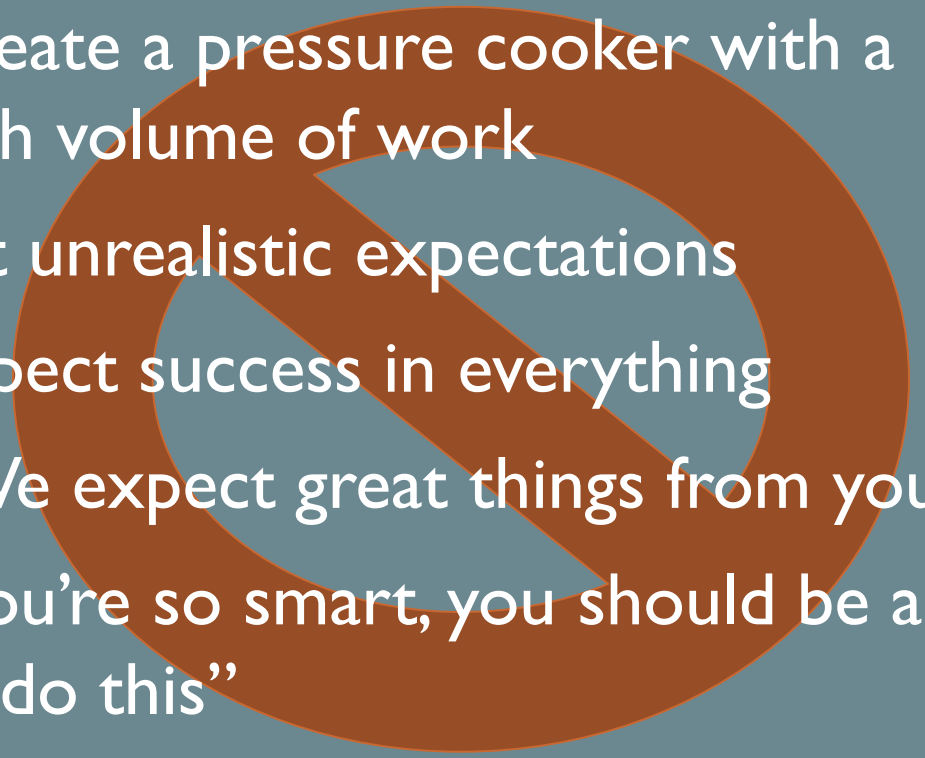
PREVENT GIFTED CHILD SYNDROME

DO

- Regular challenges create opportunities to build grit
- Normalize making mistakes and asking for help
- Reward effort, not results
- Be on the lookout for subtle 2e
- Provide accommodations <u>universally</u> (like a pencil)

DON'T

- Create a pressure cooker with a high volume of work
- Set unrealistic expectations
- Expect success in everything
- "We expect great things from you"
- "You're so smart, you should be able to do this"



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NOT MORE WORK, DIFFERENT WORK

- **Gifted education does NOT mean**
  - Extra classwork or piles of homework
  - A pressure cooker, competitive environment

- Remember the goal:

- The goal is just enough challenge to **build grit**
  - This will look **DIFFERENT** for each student (flexibility!)
  - This happens best in each student's **spiky strength** area

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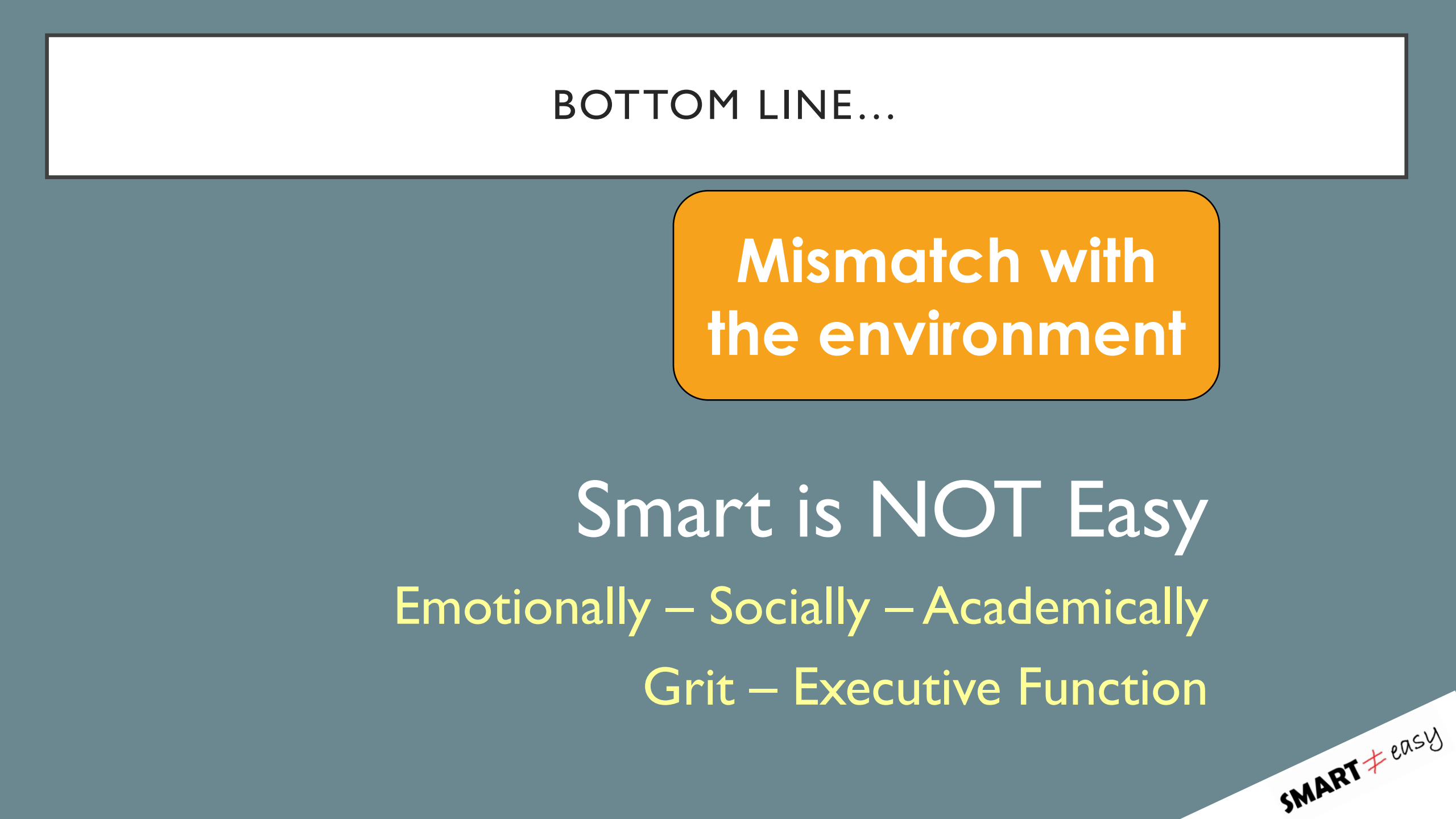
BOTTOM LINE…

Mismatch with the environment

Smart is NOT Easy

Emotionally – Socially – Academically

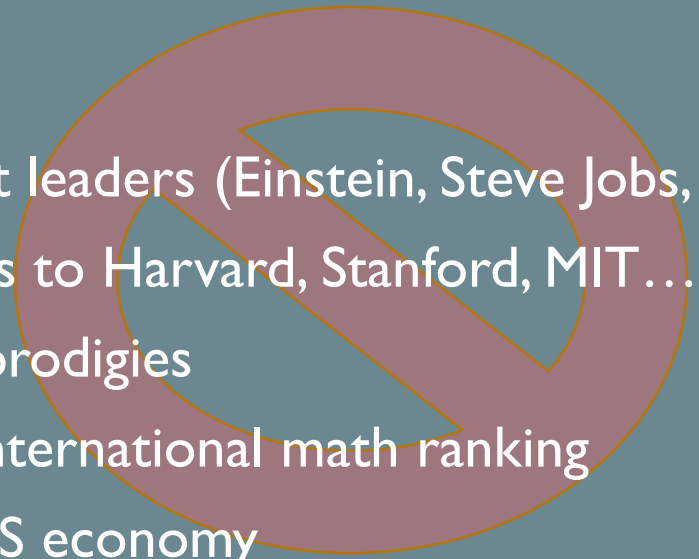
Grit – Executive Function



WHY DO WE SERVE TAG KIDS?

- They are a special needs population
- Without intervention they are at risk
- Nurturing the WHOLE CHILD
- GOAL: Functioning citizens in our community

- NOT:
  - To create eminent leaders (Einstein, Steve Jobs, …)
  - To send more kids to Harvard, Stanford, MIT…
  - To nurture child prodigies
  - To increase our international math ranking
  - To improve the US economy



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EXIT TICKET

What are 5 ideas you are taking away from today?

Write each one on a separate card

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THANK YOU

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Smart is not Easy LLC
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