Unlocking the power of Neurodiversity in Games Development

A journey through Neurodiversity at Ubisoft:
Building a 400+ members ERG & a company Talent program

WHO ARE WE ?

Pierre Escaich (he/him)
Neurodiversity Talent Program Director
Ubisoft – Massive

Aris Bricker (they/them)
Associate Game Designer
Ubisoft – Red Storm

1. DEFINITIONS

« Neurodiversity is strong within the Gaming Communities »

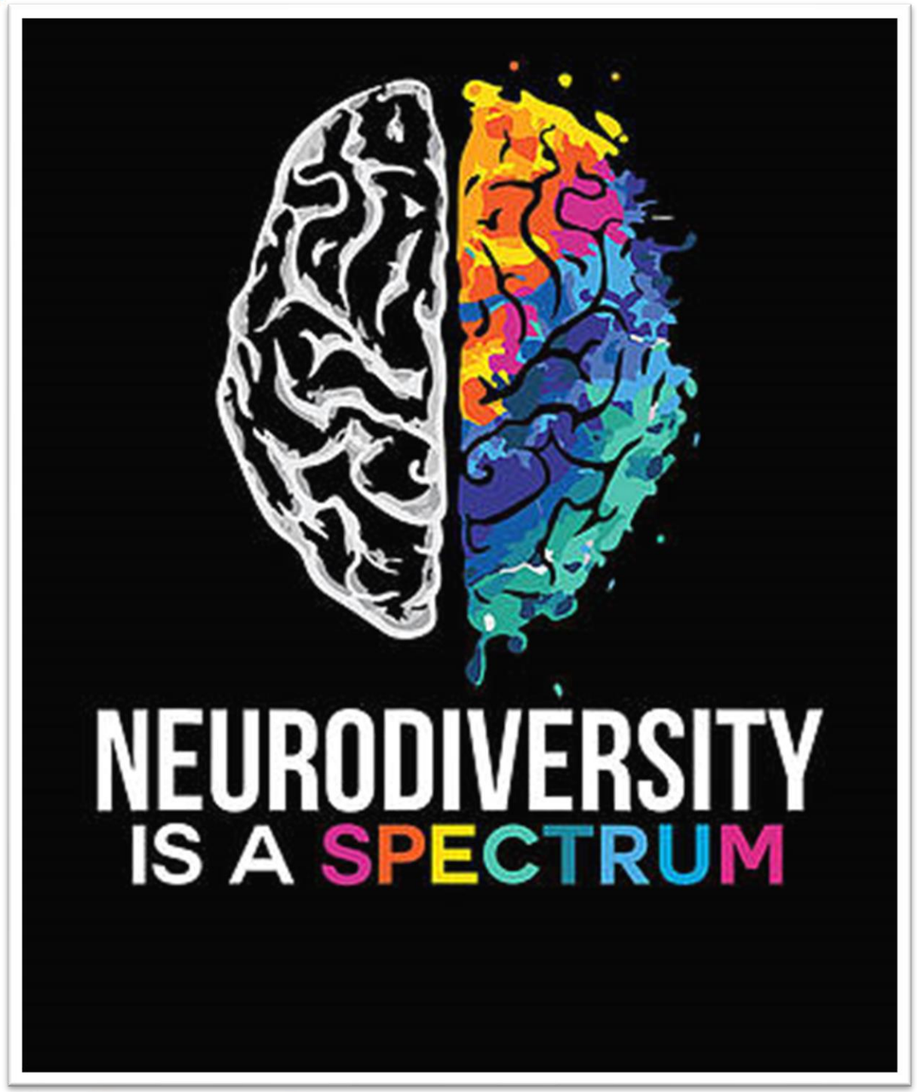
Games Industry

The games industry has more neurodivergent people working within it than the working age population. Overall, 18% of respondents reported having at least one neurodevelopmental condition. More people in games were autistic or had a condition affecting concentration, such as ADHD, than the working age population.

18%

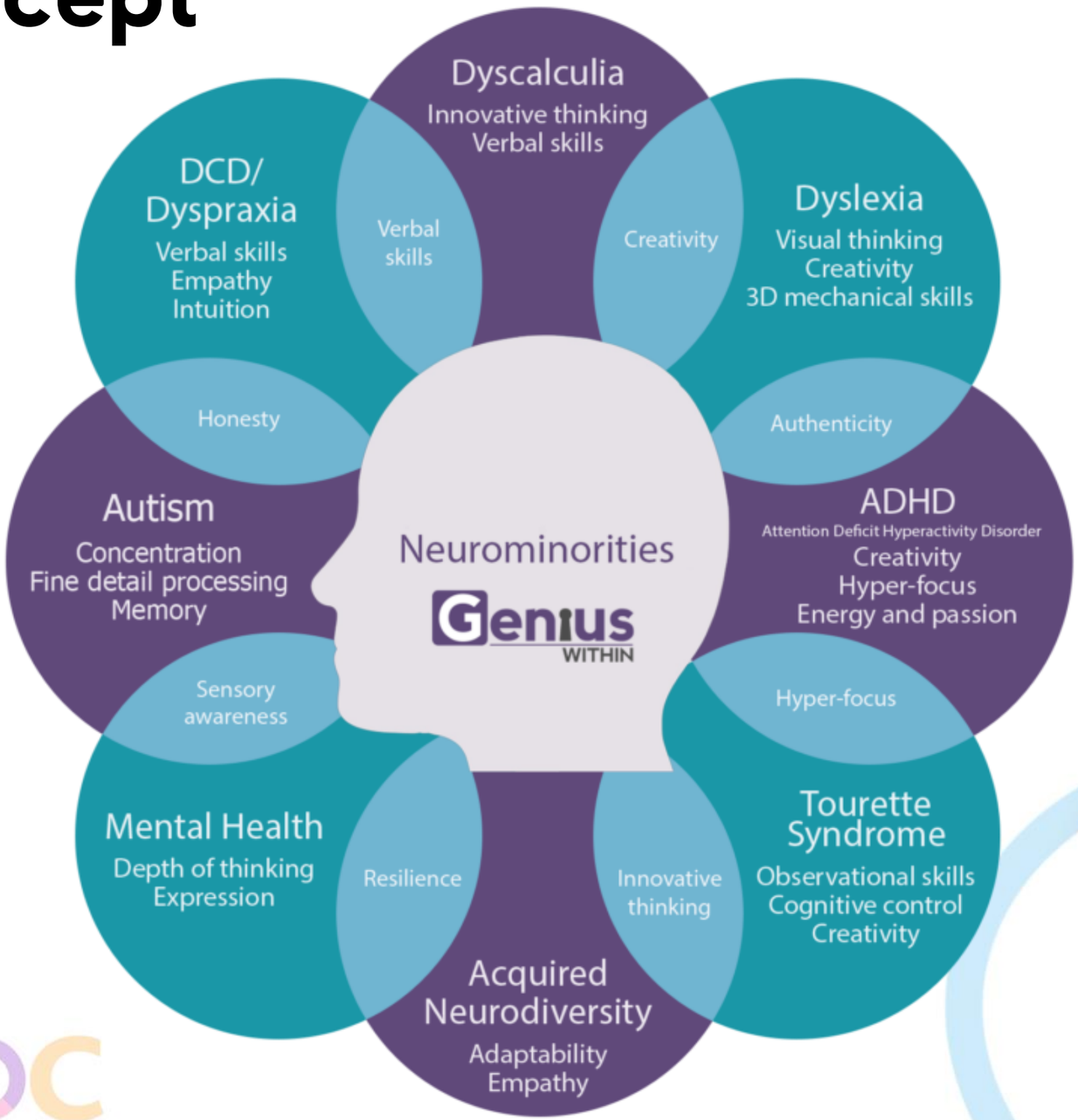
ADHD : 10%
Autism : 4%

Concept



« The term neurodiversity refers to variation in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions in a non-pathological sense. »

Concept



See Talents,
Not disorders

Conditions

ADHD

5% of world population

10% of game developers

Aroreretini
« Attention goes to many things »

DEFINITIONS

Conditions

Dyslexia

Most common neurodivergence accross the world

10 to 15% of the population

Conditions

Autism

2% of world population

4% of game developers

Takiwatanga
« In one’s own time and space »

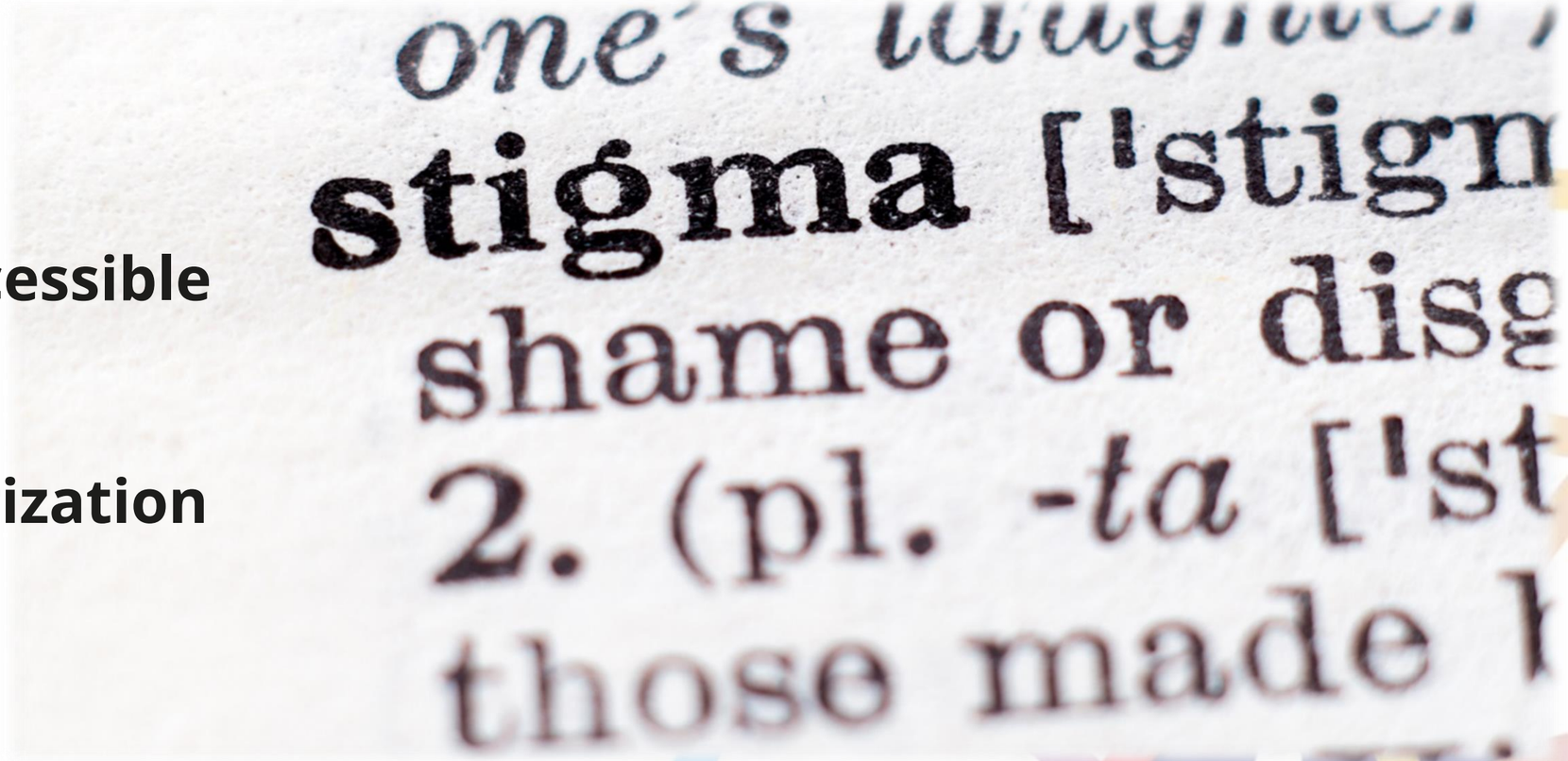
DEFINITIONS

Conditions

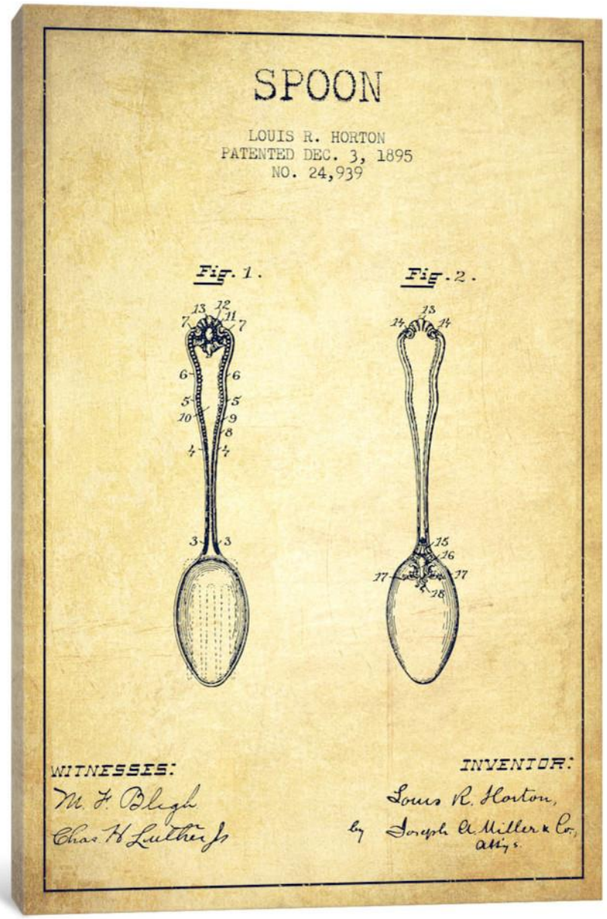
Challenges

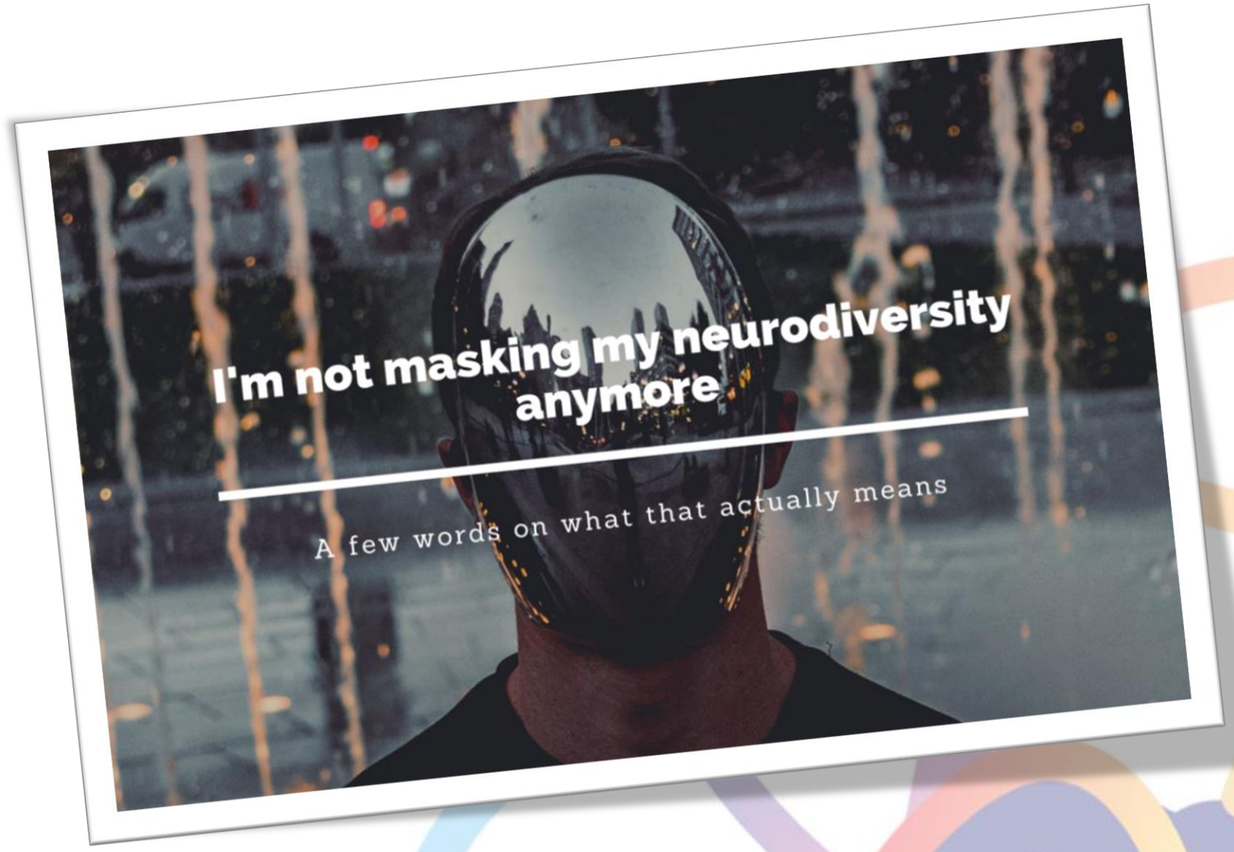
DEFINITIONS

- General lack of accessible support
- Persistent stigmatization



Challenges





DEFINITIONS

Challenges

30 to 40% unemployment rate

↪ 80% among autistic adults

In California:
50% of homeless and incarcerated are dyslexic

In Denmark:
ADHD adults have 2 to 3 times more chance to be unemployed, sick or incarcerated

➤ Worse for women and ethnic minorities

Takeaway

- 18% representation in Game Industry
- Strengths match game dev talent needs
- Lack of support & stigma
- Masking has a cost
- Exclusion toll

TAKEAWAY

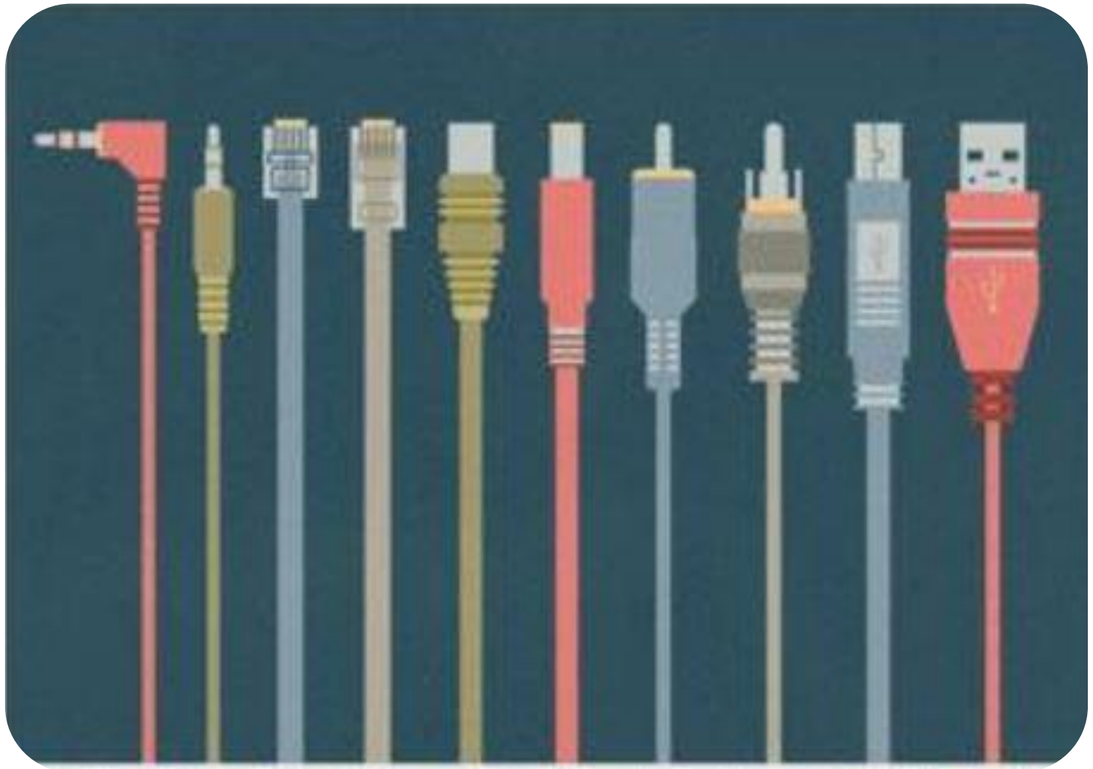
2. PEER SUPPORT

« The experience of the Ubisoft Neurodiversity ERG »

Origins

« We are not alone, and we can do something. »

The ERG



« Create a community that could help individual concerned not feeling isolated. »

↪ Rallying the Herd Through Awareness Events

The ERG

An employee based intiative

400+ members

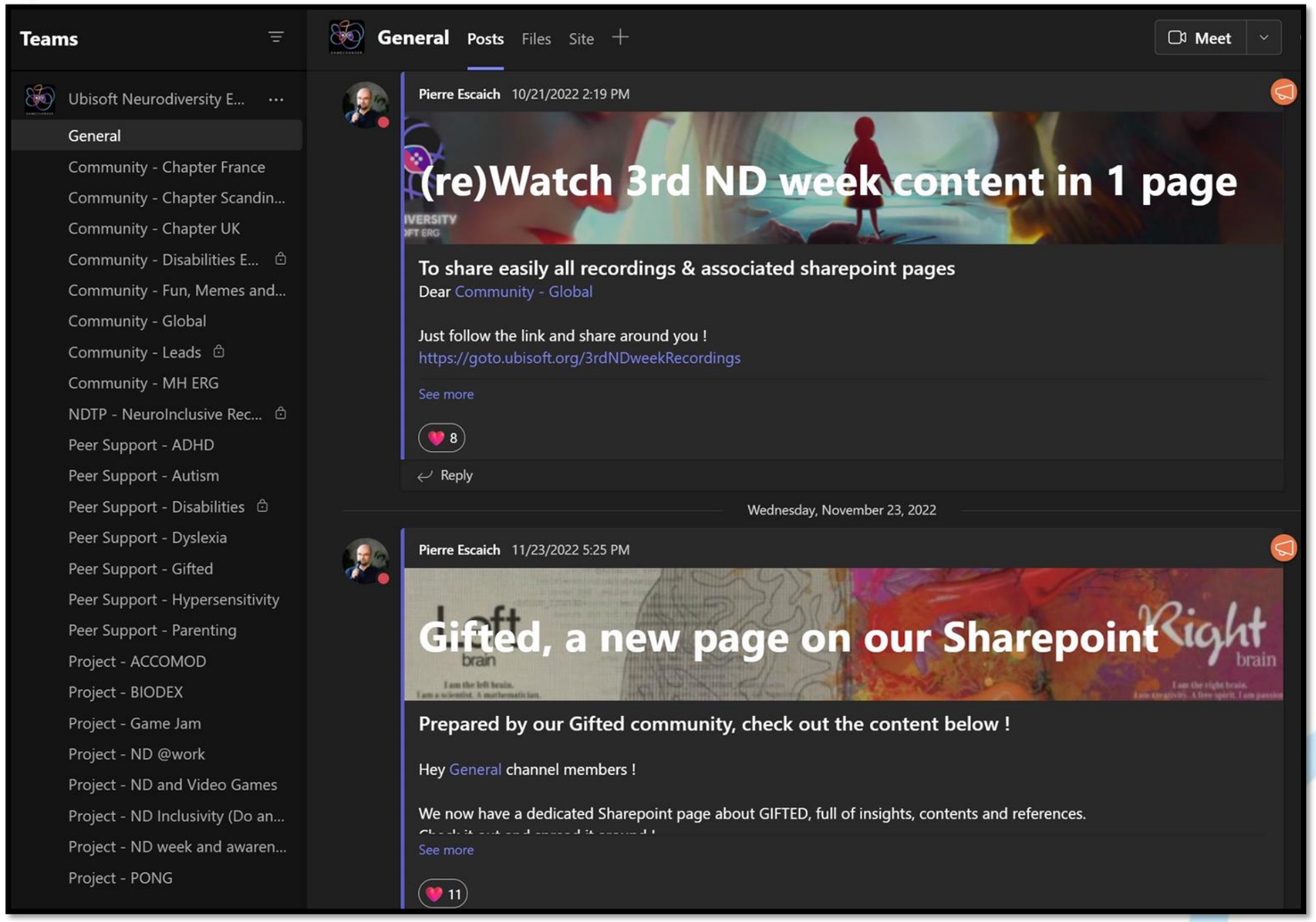
20 countries

NEURODIVERSITY

A **UBISOFT** ERG

PEER SUPPORT

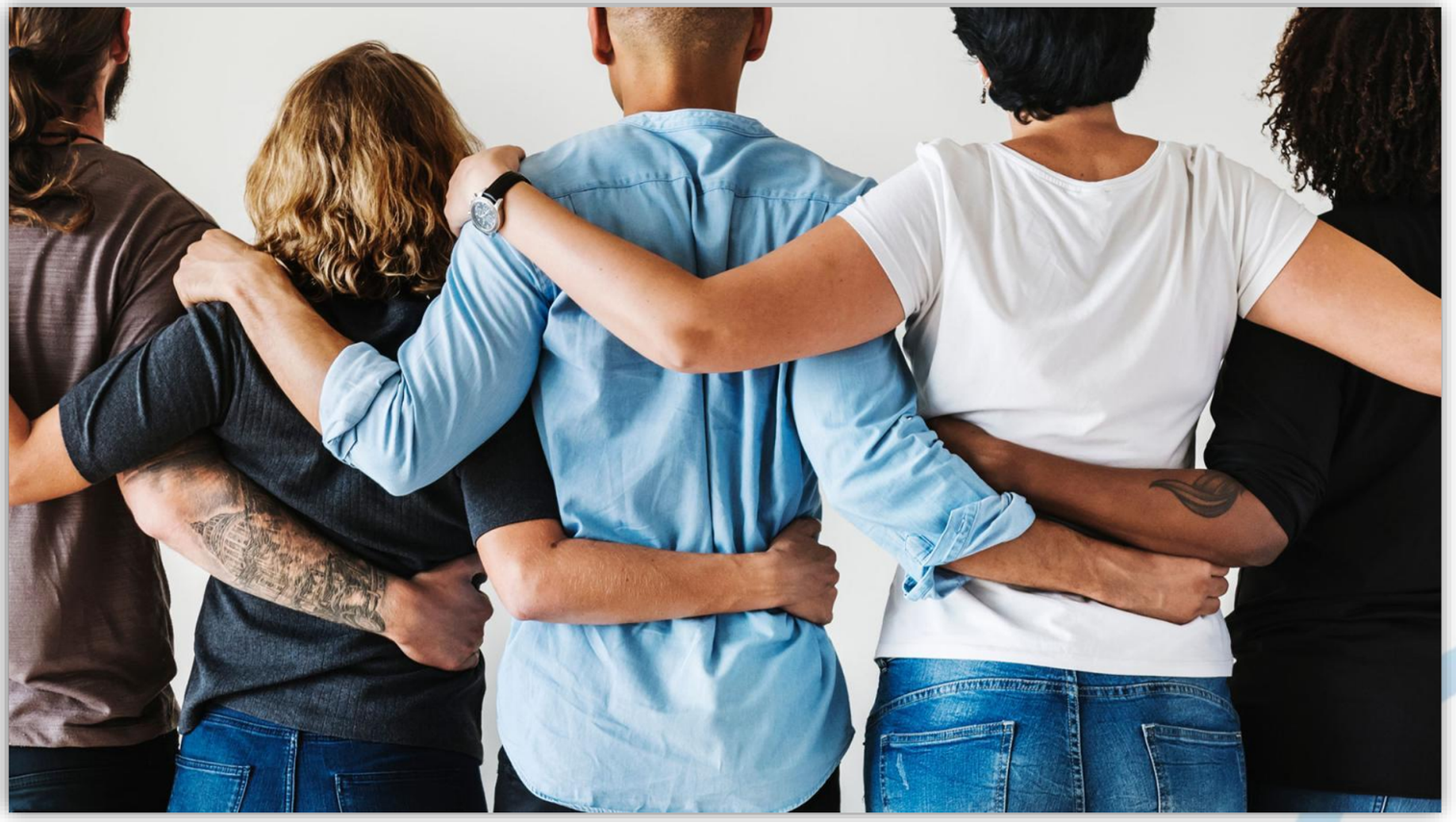
The ERG



THIS IS A SAFE SPACE

PEER SUPPORT

Peer Support



Bringing Psychological Safety

Peer Support

Monthly Presentation : The Third Sandwich (repost)

ADHD and going to bed at reasonable hours

ASD & Gender Identity

Dyslexia in multiple languages

Chaotic passionate Productivity

Parenting as a neurodiverse parent

ADHD and Agile(Scrum)

Paperwork

Advice needed

ADHD and Chronic Pain

Verbal vs Written Feedback: The Struggle Is RealTM

Need help finding ressources to explain what is ADD/ADHD to my supervisor

Austism and Noise - seeking recommandations

Debating with non ND people, or people with strong bias about gifted people - list of arguments

PEER SUPPORT

Peer Support

Learnings:

Sharing chain

Welcoming self-identification

Guidelines to meet professionals

We are not medical professionals

Benevolence, support and empathy

↪ **PEER SUPPORT** groups contributes to psychological safety at work

PEER SUPPORT

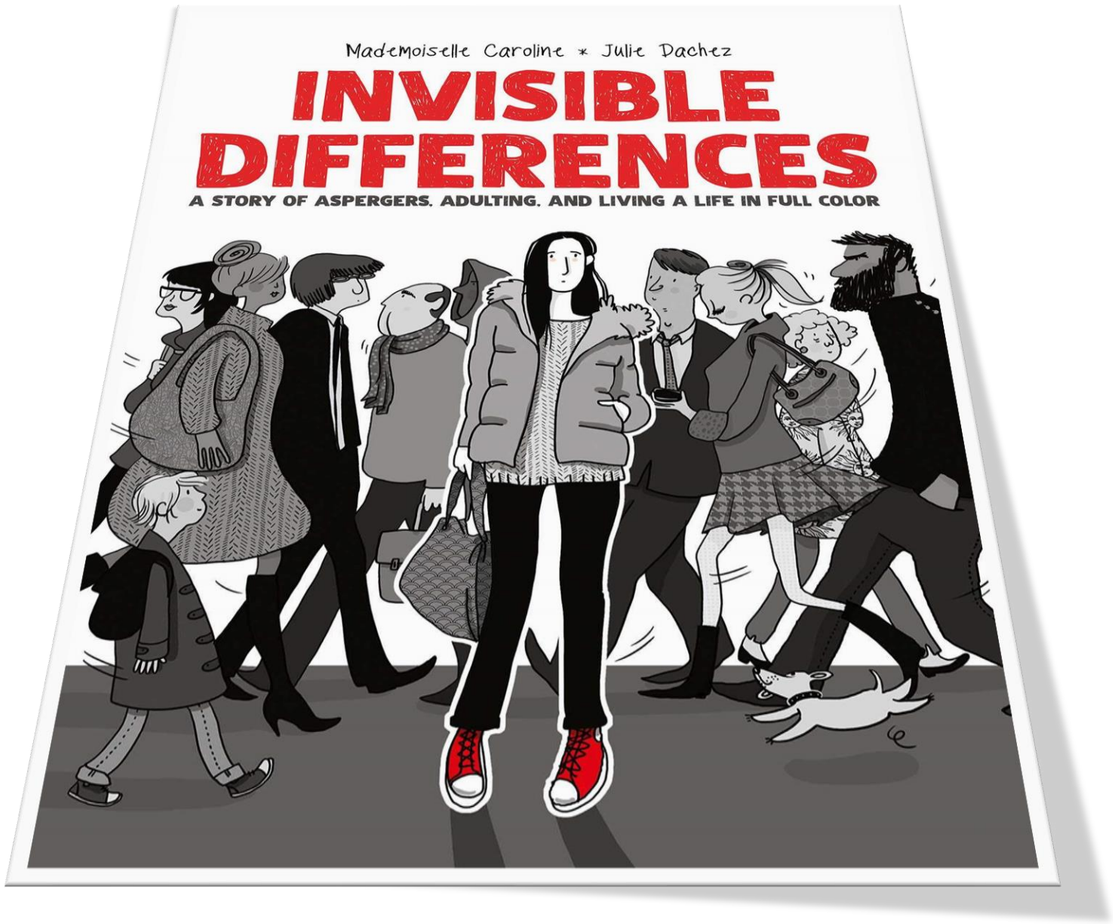
Benefits

PEER SUPPORT

« The work done by the people in this ERG, the support… It's honestly the first time i've ever seen the subject of neurodiversity talked about so openly in a professional setting.

On a personal level, it empowered me to ask for small adjustement to make work easier, which was amazing. »

Challenges



Access to diagnostic

Psychological safety at work

Workplace Accessibility

Parents of special needs children

Takeaway

- Employee led initiative (ERG)
- Raising awareness first
- Offering Peer Support groups
- Bringing Psychological Safety
- Empowering Neurodivergent employees

TAKEAWAY

3. TALENT PROGRAM

« Tools to script

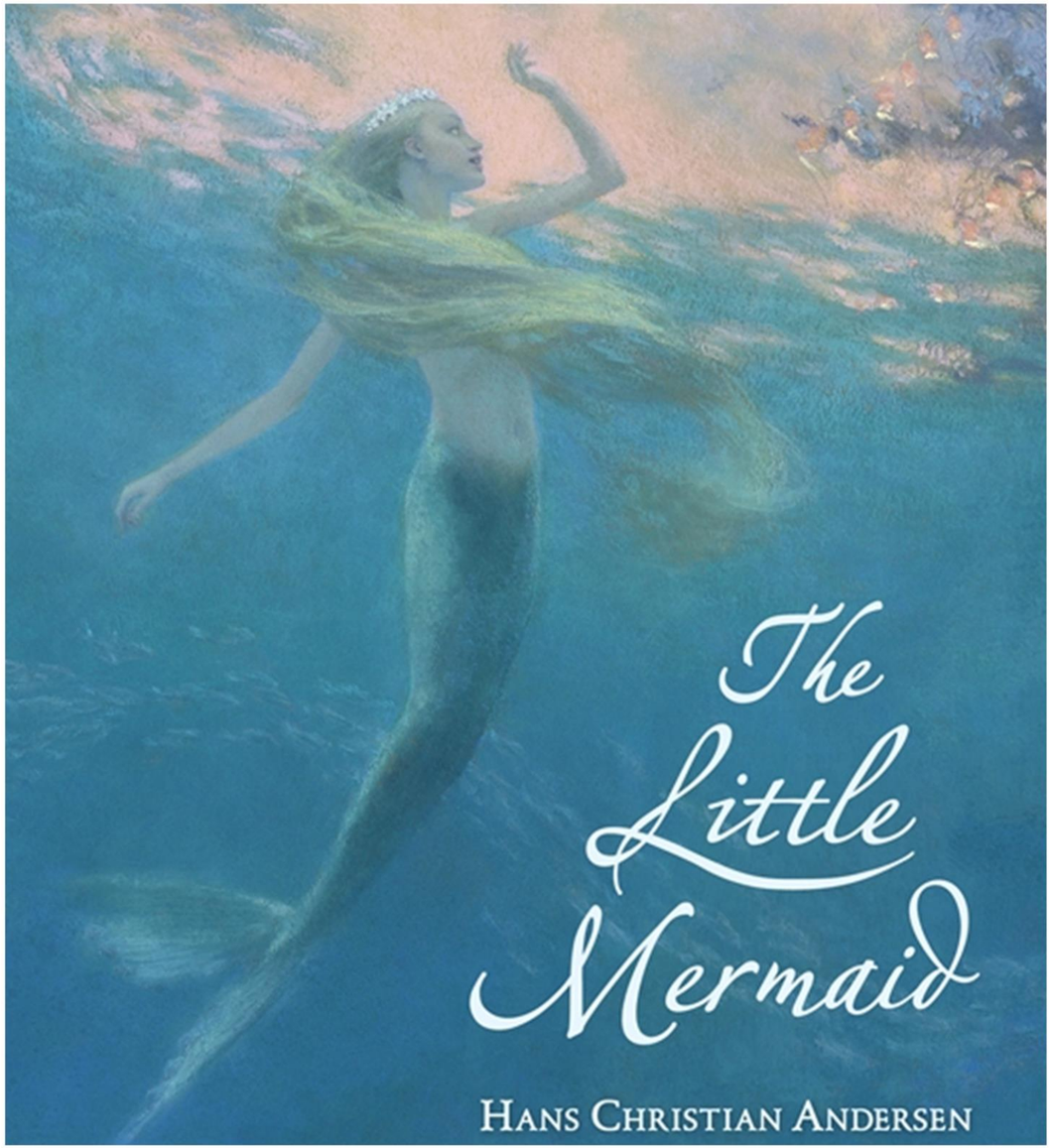
a Neuro-Inclusive approach »

Business Case

TALENT PROGRAM

Refusing to accomodate, one size fits all policy and standardized way of thinking

- ROI decrease on employee talents
- Poor level of creativity and innovation



The Program

TALENT PROGRAM

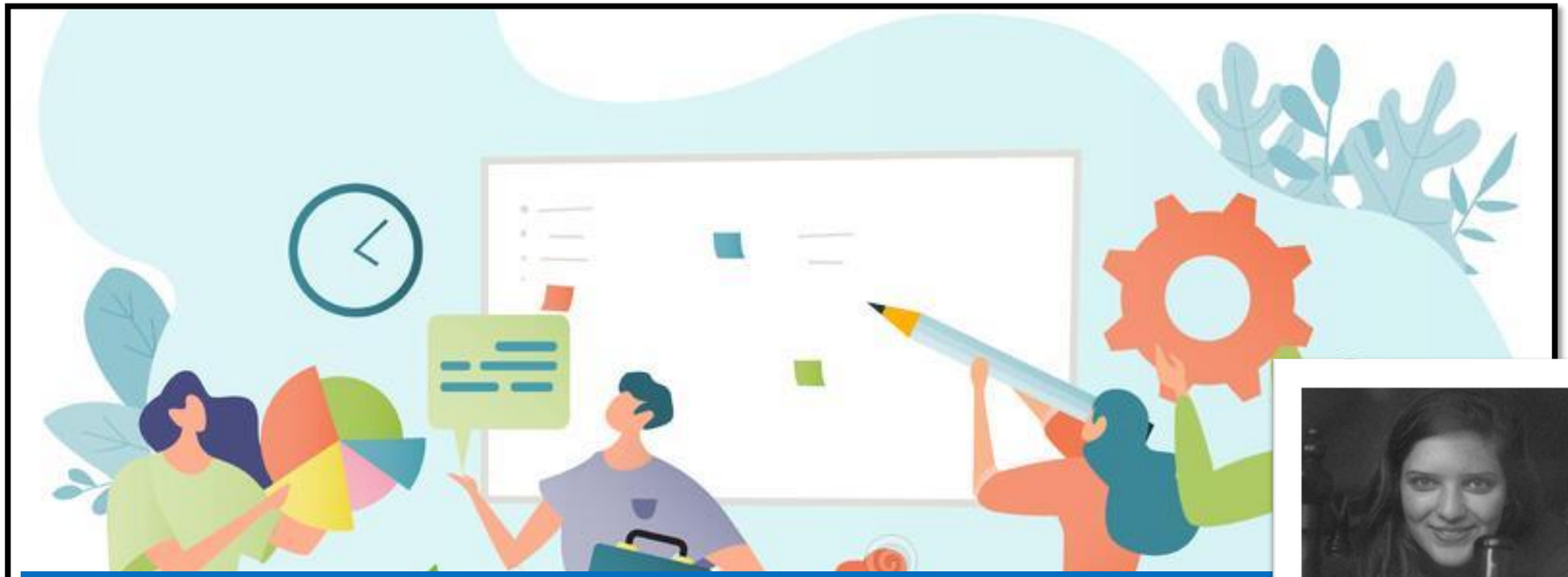
Focus on Training and Inclusion first

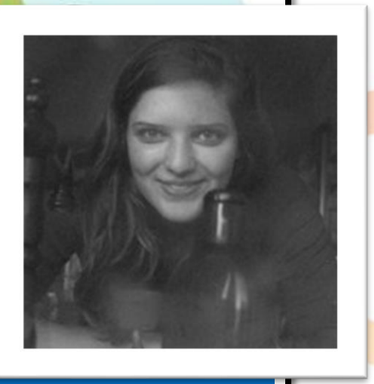
- **ND Talent Program**

Biodex

TALENT PROGRAM

A Teammate User Manual





Ubisoft BIODEX - Original template

By answering this form, you'll be setting up your own Biodex.

The biodex is a form with questions on topics like **Communication, Feedback & Collaboration and Work.** Fill in your preferences and share it with your team, as a personal user manual, to show them how you'd work most comfortably and efficiently. The biodex is a tool for understanding and expressing recommendations. It can be used as support for constructive dialogue whenever preferences don't match.

The survey has 4 pages and will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

GDC

Biodex

TALENT PROGRAM

4. Preferred means of contact *

- **Preferred:** This is how I prefer to communicate
- **Comfortable:** This method of communication is fine for me
- **Slightly Uncomfortable:** I wouldn't like it, but I can communicate this way
- **Very Uncomfortable:** I would prefer never to communicate in this way
- **I don't know:** I haven't tried it or I don't have a strong opinion on this method

	Preferred	Comfortable	Slightly uncomfortable	Very Uncomfortable	I don't know
Teams Chat	○	○	○	○	○
Teams Call with my camera **On**	○	○	○	○	○
Teams Call with my camera **Off**	○	○	○	○	○
Teams Channel	○	○	○	○	○
Email	○	○	○	○	○
Desk visit after a teams message	○	○	○	○	○
Spontaneous desk visit, without teams message	○	○	○	○	○
Meeting Invite	○	○	○	○	○
Text Message	○	○	○	○	○

GDC

Biodex

TALENT PROGRAM

Feedback & Questions

How would you prefer to get feedback or questions?

9. I'm comfortable if colleagues contact me with... *

- **Yes, please do!:** I encourage this no matter if it's in public or private.
- **Yes, please do in private:** I encourage this but only in private.
- **I'm comfortable:** I'm okay with it in public or private, but I don't encourage it.
- **I'm comfortable in private:** I'm okay with it but only in private.
- **Not comfortable:** I would recommend people not to do this since I'm not comfortable with it.
- **I don't know:** I haven't tried it or I don't have a strong opinion on this.

	Yes, please do!	Yes, please do in private.	I'm comfortable.	I'm comfortable in private.	Not comfortable
Work related questions	○	○	○	○	○
Constructive feedback on my performance	○	○	○	○	○
Constructive feedback on my work	○	○	○	○	○
Personal questions (how are you doing?, how is your thing going?)	○	○	○	○	○
Small talk	○	○	○	○	○
Praise (You did great!/amazing job!)	○	○	○	○	○

11. Preferred timing for constructive feedback *

Select one of the suggestions, or write your own if none of them match.

- ○ Right away. As long as the feedback is polite and constructive I prefer honesty and directness.
- ○ Fast but not instant. Preferably written down in a message after the fact.
- ○ The next day.
- ○ Only when I ask for it.
- ○ No preference, everything is fine.
- ○ Autre

12. Preferred format or location for feedback *

Select any of the suggestions that match your situation. Use the 'other' field to add additional preferences.

- ☐ Verbal
- ☐ Written down
- ☐ Always professional
- ☐ Professional by default. Casual, if we are friends
- ☐ Use keep, start, stop
- ☐ Use head, hand, heart
- ☐ Send me personally
- ☐ Send me on MAP
- ☐ No preference, everything is fine
- ☐ Autre

Biodex

TALENT PROGRAM

« It helped create a **culture of openness, trust, and communication** on my team. »

Quick Wins

1- Organize your meetings like a dinner party

↳ *Neuro-Inclusive meetings*

2- Always acknowledge, never minimize

↳ *Neuro-Inclusive communication*

3- Mostly a matter of skills, not will

↳ *Neuro-Inclusive feedback*

Benefits

Maximize Talents expression

Boost creativity

Motivation & Retention

Access untapped pool of ND Talents

Benefits

The Canari analogy

« Because they are often highly sensitive, neurodivergents may be among the first to perceive issues at work as well as identifying new opportunities. »

Pillars

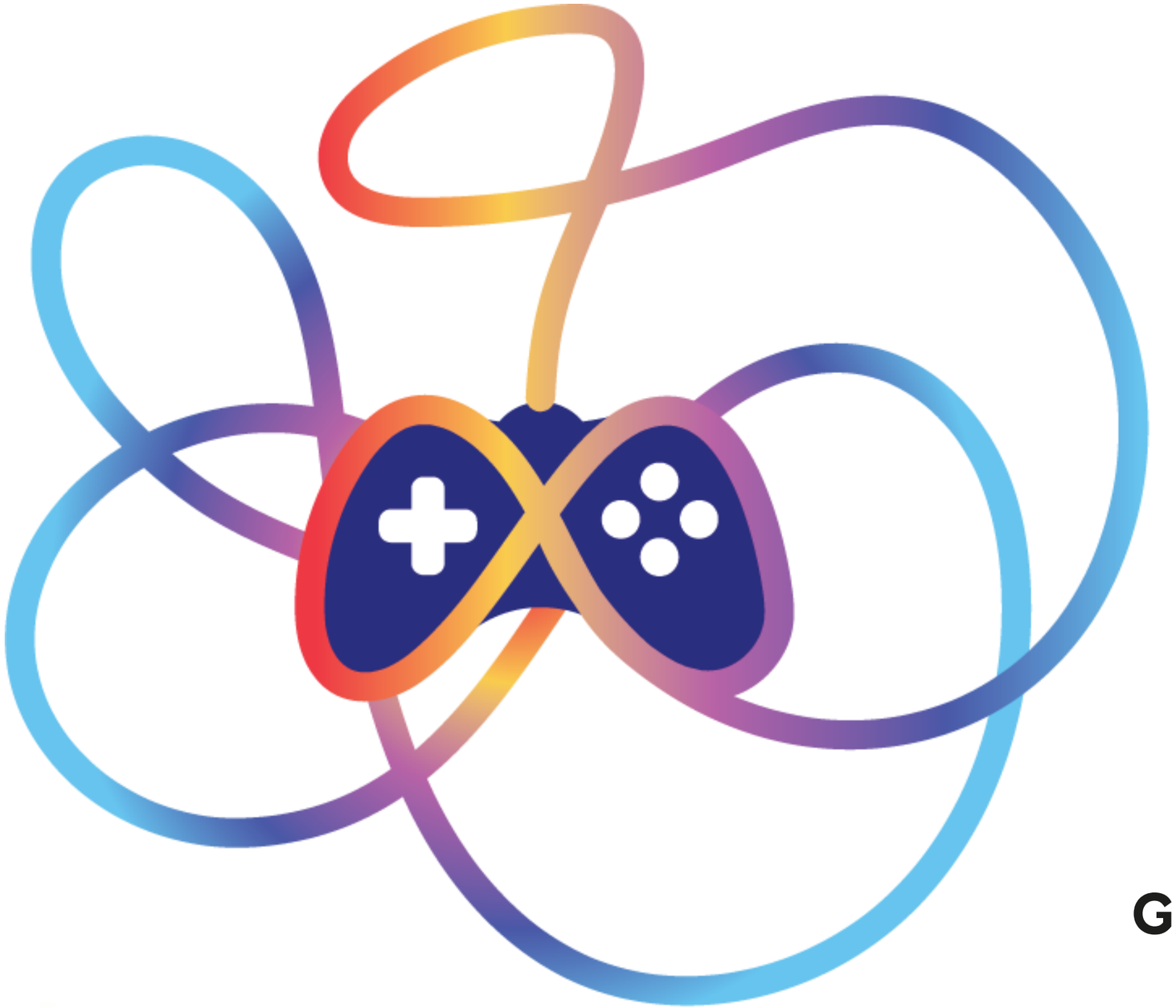
Neuro-inclusion in 3 steps :

Global Takeaway

- A strong link between Video Game & Neurodiversity
- Neurodivergent Strengths match our dev needs
- Create an ERG & offer Peer Support
- Create a Talent Program & offer tools&training
- Link both to drive change
- Neuro-Inclusion will unleash all talents&skills

GLOBAL TAKEAWAY

One more thing...



GAMECHANGER

Thank you

Neurodiverse Game Developers
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https://discord.gg/uG52NapK