



PRACTICE EDUCATOR REFRESHER SESSION

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For Salford
February 2026

The What? Why? How? framework



In their research Wilkins, Lynch and Antonopoulou (2018) listened to audio recordings of supervision. To decide whether they thought the supervision was practice-focused they considered the questions:

1. Do we know what the social worker is going to do in the next home visit or the next few home visits with the family?
2. Do we understand why the social worker is going to do these things and how?
3. Has this discussion helped the social worker think more carefully about what they are going to do, how and why?



The 'golden thread' of supervision is based on the What? Why? and How?



The 'golden thread' of supervision is based on the What? Why? and How?

At the end of key discussions in supervision I ask the student to quickly summarise for me their 'what? why? how?'

- What are they going to do now?
- Why are they doing that?
- How will they do it?

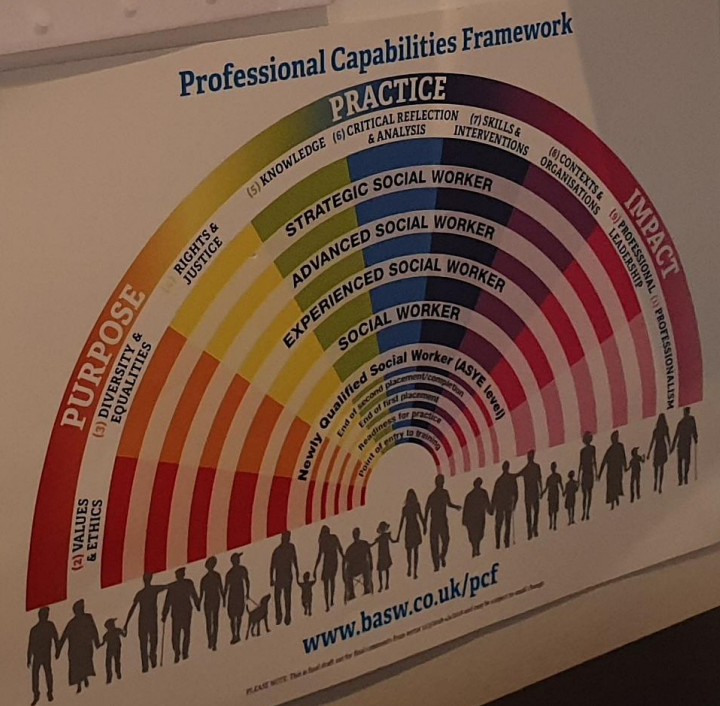
The PCF three 'super domains' reflect the what? why? and how? framework:

Practice: What?

Purpose: Why?

Impact: How?

"LIFE ISN'T ABOUT WAITING FOR THE STORM TO PASS IT IS ABOUT LEARNING TO DANCE IN THE RAIN"



Objective of supervision THE WHY	Associated function THE WHAT	The student should experience... THE HOW
Ensuring competent, accountable practice	MANAGERIAL Also referred to as the accountability, administrative or normative function	Space to discuss their practice and reach decisions with support. A level of shared decision making and clearly agreed accountability.
Encouraging continuing professional development	DEVELOPMENTAL Also referred to as educative or formative	Opportunity for reflective discussion to enable learning and development.
Offering personalised support	SUPPORTIVE Also referred to as the restorative or pastoral function	Personal support with the challenges of the role. Space for discussion about the emotional context of practice. It is important though to recognise that supervision is not a counselling session and the balance needs to be well managed with professional boundaries maintained.
Engaging the practitioner with the organisation	MEDIATION Also referred to as the negotiation function	Understanding of the role of a student, support to 'mediate' the roles of learner and practitioner.



The functions of supervision are not met by throwing in a couple of questions...



What is the purpose of supervision?

Core Functions of Social Work Supervision:

- 1 Professional Development
- 2 Organisational Role Performance
- 3 Personal Well Being

All are interdependent and aim to:

- 1 Improve
- 2 Develop
- 3 Support
- 4 Protect



the social work practitioner and their practice so they deliver positive outcomes for people they support



Personal Development

Developing professional competence
Space for reflective discussions
Applying learning to practice

Organisational Role Performance

Case management
Shared decision making and planning
Service delivery and issues affecting service delivery

Personal Well Being

Work life balance
Providing a safe space
Providing support

THINKING STYLES

Temple Grandin (2006) claims that people think in one of three main ways:

- Verbal thinkers
- Visual thinkers
- Mathematical or musical thinkers



The student supervision chair

Skilleter, C. (2022) '*Lets Start at the Beginning*' in Dix, H. and Howells, A. *Creative Approaches to Social Work Practice Learning*. St Albans: Critical Publishing.



A secure base

- The concept of a secure base comes originally from the work of Bowlby.
- In line with Bowlby's concept of a secure base, the supervision chair is seen as a comfortable chair; a safe haven to return to from the stressors of placement where the student can safely explore feelings and thoughts, and then return to the outside world feeling that things are more manageable.

A Secure Base and the Supervision Chair

- The Team as a Secure Base model, by Biggart, Ward, Cook and Schofield (2017) identifies five domains for promoting a secure base; availability, sensitivity, acceptance, co-operation and membership. The Supervision chair holds these domains in mind:
- Availability – the Practice Educator is available for the student (Chair legs)
- Sensitivity – the student is enabled to feel safe enough to explore feelings (chair arms and getting in and out of the chair)
- Acceptance – the feelings and identities of the student and the Practice Educator and are accepted and respected (chair seat)
- Co-operation – supervision is a joint endeavour (seat back and getting in and out of the chair)
- Membership – both the Practice Educator and the student value and understand each other (chair seat)

The Chair legs

What do you need in order to feel that supervision and me as your supervisor are available, stable and predictable?



The Chair Seat

What do we need to know about each other so that we can sit comfortably with each other?

How can we learn more about each other?

What do we need to acknowledge in terms of the seat of power and privilege?

How will we manage challenge or conflict?

How do our values, beliefs, life and work experiences, cultural similarities and differences impact on how we 'sit' with each other?



Chair arms

What do you need from me as a Practice Educator to feel accepted, emotionally contained and supported?

How will you know this is happening?

How might previous experiences of supervision impact on the creation of an emotionally containing supervisory relationship?



Chair back

What are the ground rules that will help us to stay sitting up and paying attention to each other?

What learning style or thinking styles do we prefer and how will we utilise these?

What has helped us to keep focus in previous supervisions?



Getting in and out of the chair

At each supervision, what activity or ritual would help you settle into your chair at the start of supervision and to leave your chair at the end of supervision?

Having left the supervision chair, how will we remember the main points from the supervision?



Reviewing the chair

What will we do if the chair feels uncomfortable?

When will we review the continued comfort and effectiveness of our supervision chair?

How comfortable did the supervision chair feel today?

What could we do to improve the comfort of the chair for next time?

Next time, which aspects of the chair do we need to pay more attention to?



Feedback

- PE – *“it broke down barriers really quickly” “it helped to stress supervision as a joint endeavour, more equal than the usual agreement I would use” and “I really feel it helped us develop a fantastic working relationship”*
- Student – *“I felt really clear about my supervision and that we were working in partnership” and “It really helped set the scene for the type of supervision we wanted to create” and “It helped me understand the sort of safe space supervision could be”*

Regular agenda items

- Brief work update
- SHARE the week / SHARED agenda setting
- Theory and practice
- Reflective model of the week
- Anti-oppressive practice
- Progress on evidence – standards
- Feedback



SHARE the week SHARED agenda setting

- Something that you have SEEN this week
- Something that you have HEARD this week
- An ACTION you have taken this week
- Something that you have READ this week
- How you are EVALUATING the placement



SEEING



HEARING



ACTION








READING



EVALUATION

SHARING This week on placement

Date 12 May 2025

 Seeing	<p>I went to shadow a home visit. I saw some home conditions I'd not seen before and I'd like to talk about that - how I felt and what I learnt.</p>
 Hearing	<p>I had a discussion with a support worker I found some of what she said concerning but I wasn't sure how to challenge it.</p>
 Action	<p>I wrote up my first assessment. Could we discuss it?</p>
 Reading	<p>I read the care working policy in a bit more detail. I read an interesting article on neurodiversity.</p>
 Evaluation	<p>Generally I think things are going well. I've had lots of shadowing opportunities this week.</p>



SEEING

What does the student see on placement?
Do they get sufficient opportunity to observe other workers?

What does the Practice Educator see of the student's practice?
(Direct Observations)



HEARING

What will the student hear on placement?
From who?

What does the Practice Educator hear?
(Conversations with the student?, feedback from others)



ACTION

What will the student get opportunity to do on placement?

What does the Practice Educator need to do to support the student?
Is that what you would expect?



READING

What will the student read?

The Practice Educator will read the student's recording and their reflections



EVALUATION

How will the student evaluate the placement experience?

How does the Practice Educator evaluate the student's practice?

SHARE in the learning...

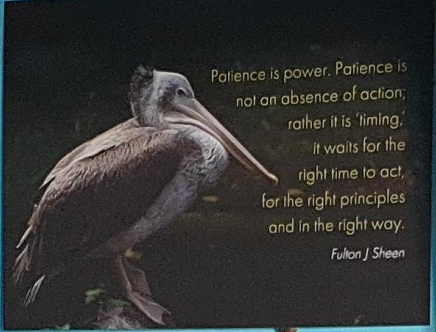
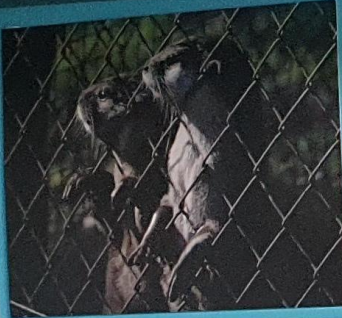


Maclean, Finch and Tedam (2018)

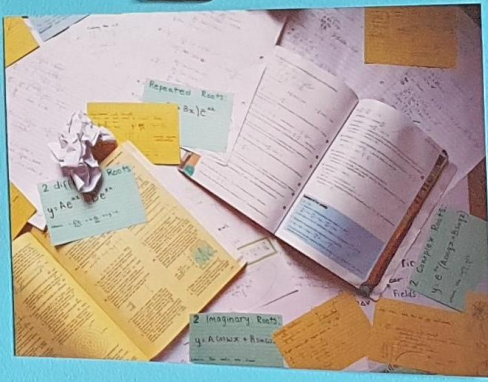
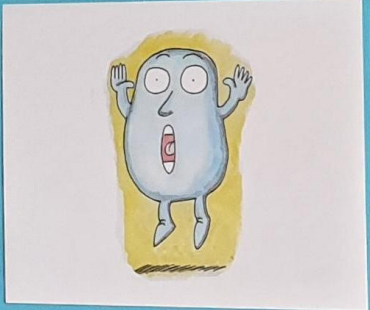
Postcards

- As a method of opening reflective supervision, I have found this particularly helpful
- Builds on the idea of visual learning
- It doesn't work for everyone
- Physical postcards are better

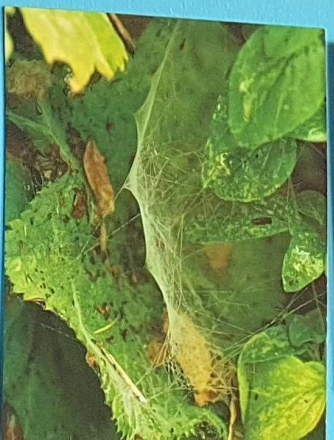




Patience is power. Patience is not an absence of action; rather it is "timing." It waits for the right time to act, for the right principles and in the right way.
Fulton J Sheen



I cannot do everything, but I can do something, and I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.
Edward Everett Hale



NOT ALL OF US CAN DO GREAT THINGS, BUT WE CAN ALL DO SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE
Mother Teresa

Use objects in supervision

- Third object theory
- Bring an object to supervision that represents how you are feeling. We will start with a discussion about the object and your feelings
- Bring an object to supervision that represents a social work theory – tell me about the object and why it represents that theory to you
- Mark Doel's work – social work in 42 objects
- Evocative objects ("We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with."Objects are "companions to our emotional lives, a provocation to thought."
(Turkle 2011)



The visual activities don't need to be limited just to the start of the session...

George Land's Creativity Test (1968)

Test results amongst 5 year olds: 98%

Test results amongst 10 year olds: 30%

Test results amongst 15 year olds: 12%

Same test given to 280,000 adults: 2%



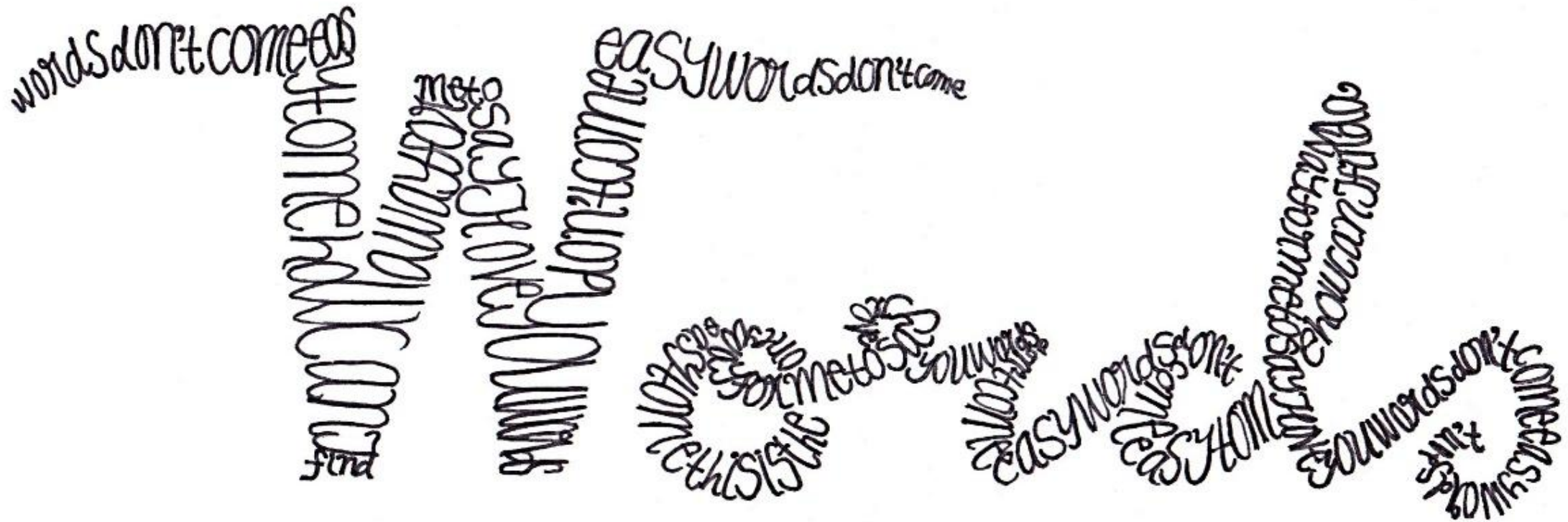
“What we have concluded, is that non-creative behaviour is learned”



Practice educator:
Kim Higgins

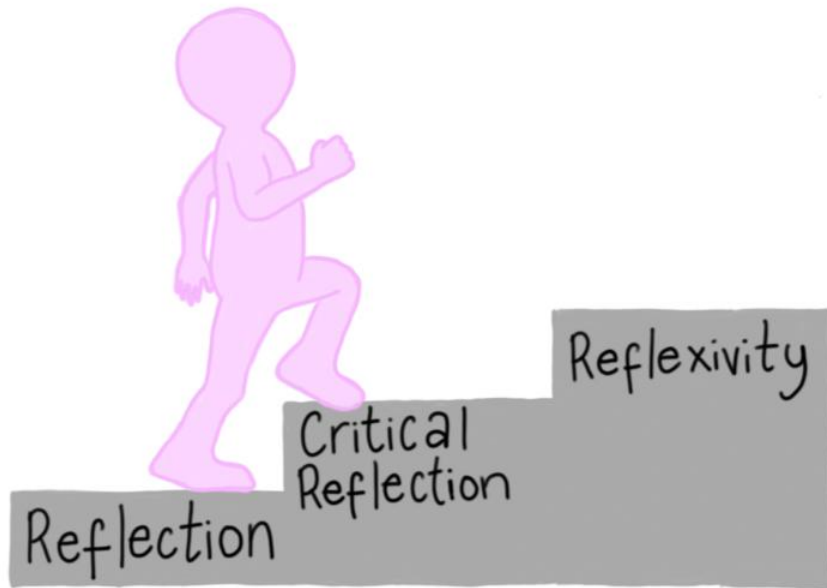


Ask students for a 'word of the week' in supervision
– it's a great reflective activity



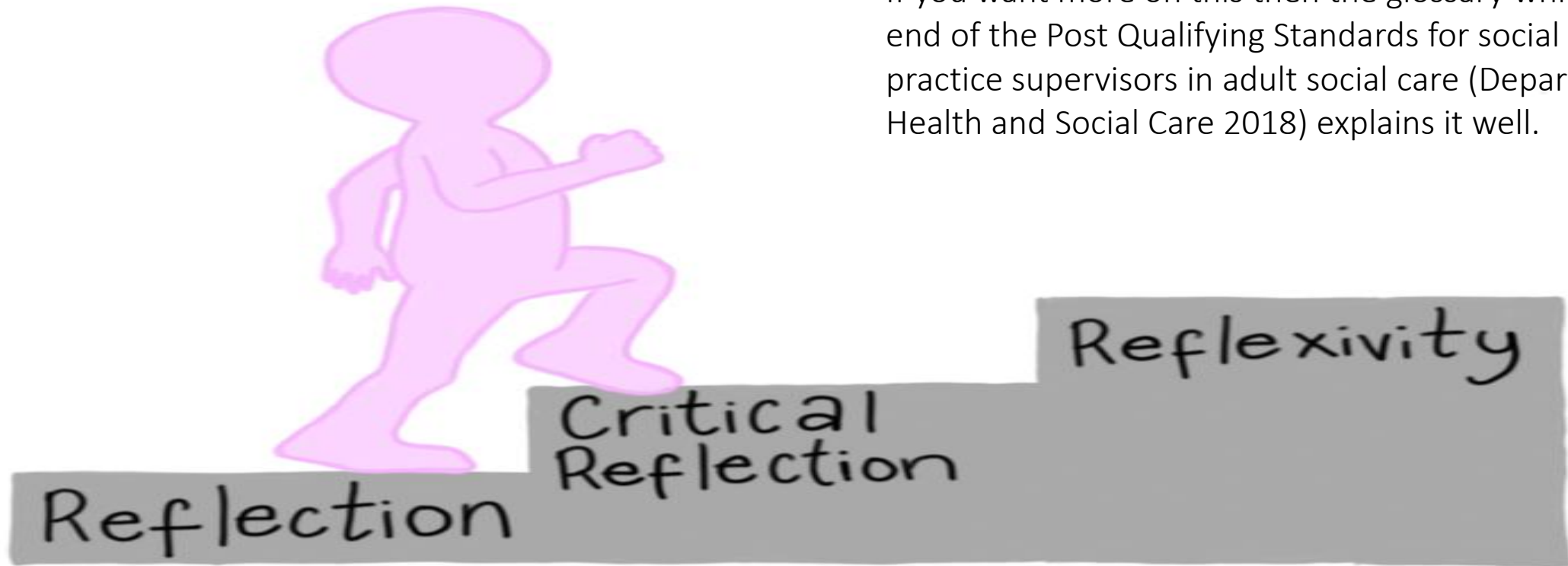
Put the words together at the end of the placement – it will give you
a really good discussion point going into final report writing

THE STEPS OF REFLECTION



- In social work we use the phrase reflective practice to cover three related but distinct concepts
- These three distinct concepts can be used to help us to think about growth and progress as we develop as social workers – the steps of reflection...

If you want more on this then the glossary which is at the end of the Post Qualifying Standards for social work practice supervisors in adult social care (Department of Health and Social Care 2018) explains it well.



Reflection

Thinking actively and persistently
Exploring thoughts and insights
Feelings
Learning
NOT just with hindsight

Critical reflection

Adds issues of power and the socio-political context
Sufficient depth to create change

Reflexivity

Originally from research
Adds issues of relationships
Inter-connections (connectivity) not always apparent
Centrality of self

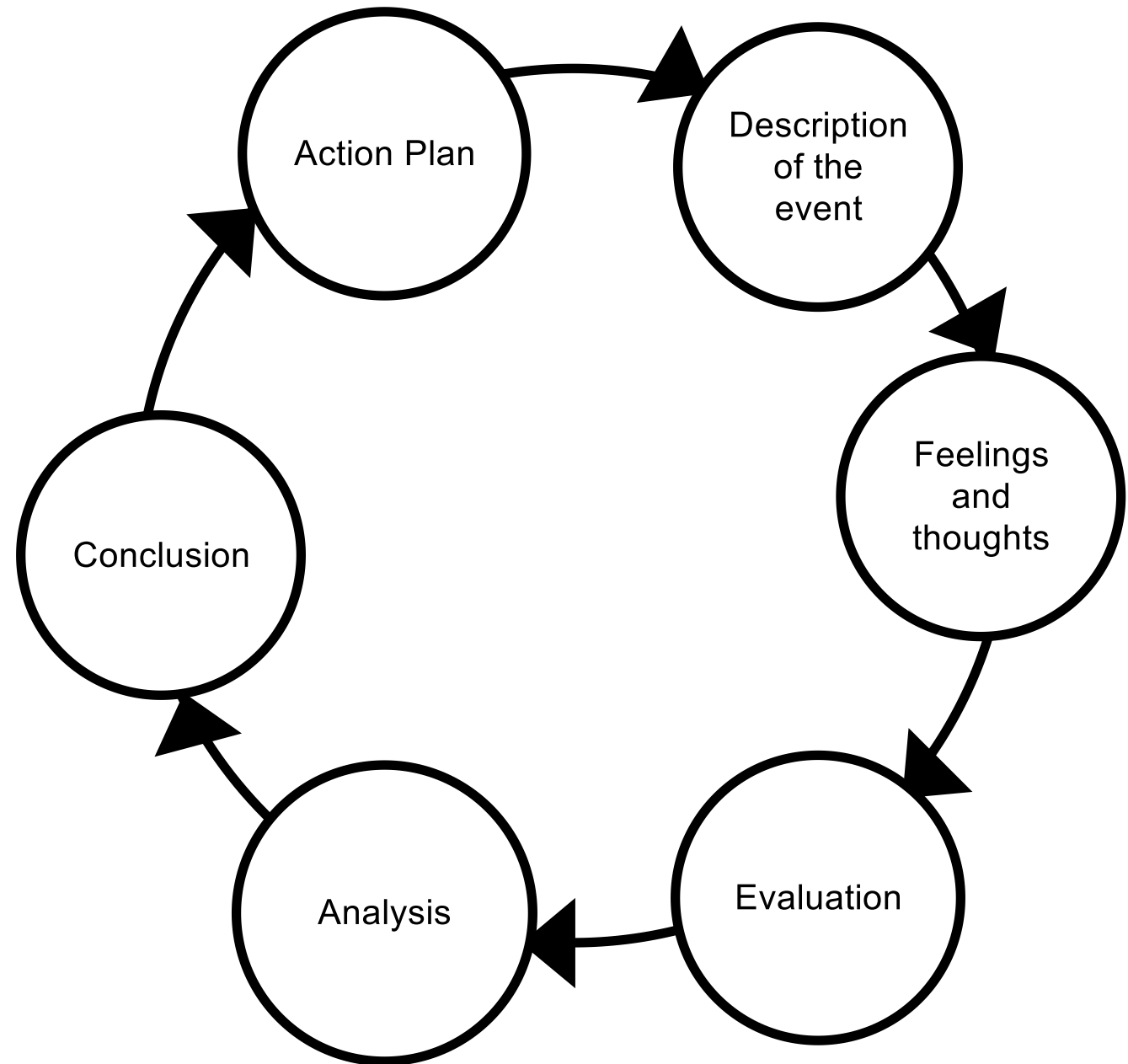
REFLECTIVE STRUCTURES: PROCESS OR COMPONENT MODEL

- Most models are linear – and provide a process to be worked through
- Process models can only be used to reflect on action, whereas component models can be used at any stage
- Components may be considered in any order
- Component models are more flexible
- Component models can leave people less confident about using them



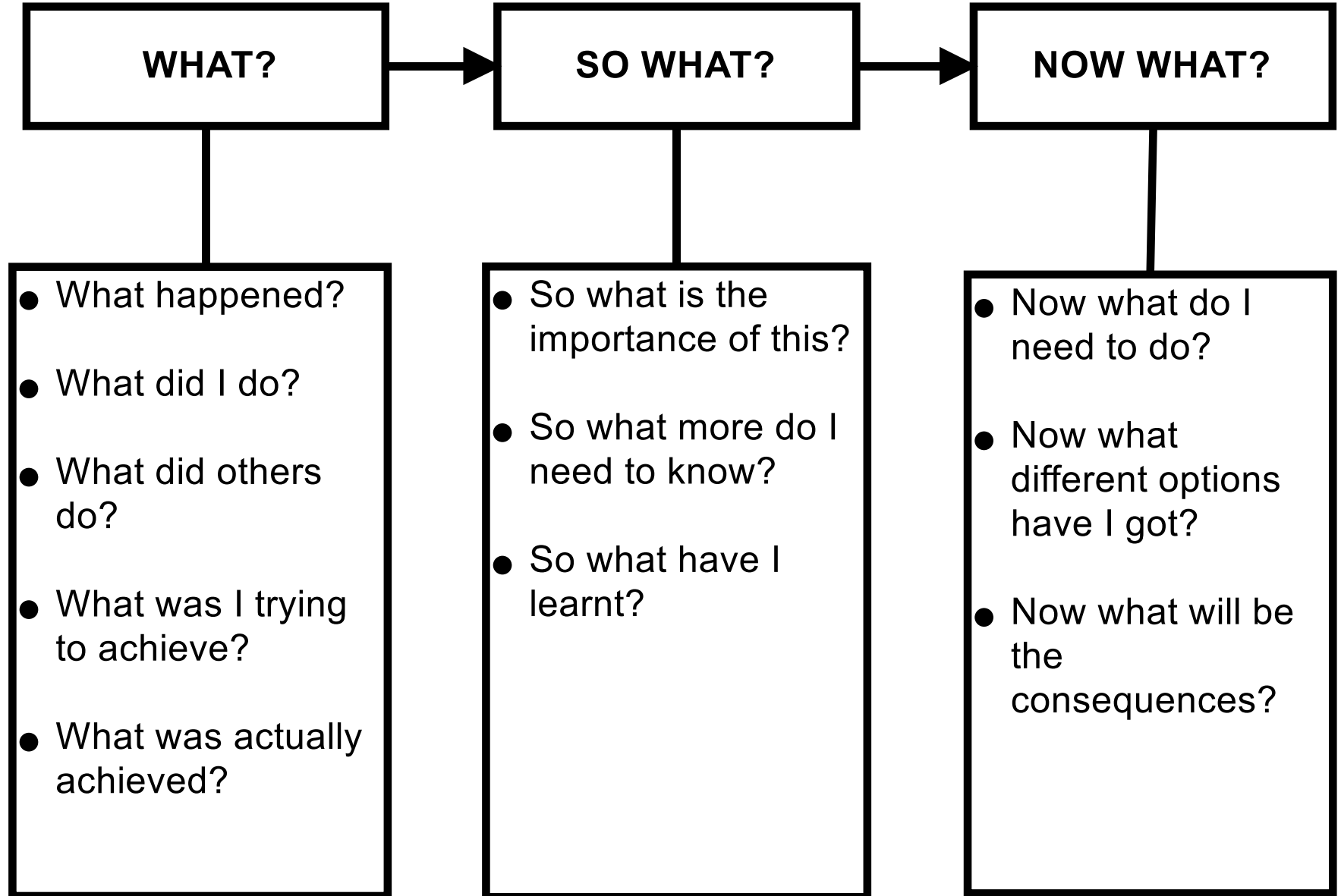
Gibbs (1988)

- Stage 1: Description
- Stage 2: Feelings and thoughts
- Stage 3: Evaluation
- Stage 4: Analysis
- Stage 5: Conclusion
- Stage 6: Action planning



Borton (1970)

- What?
- So what?
- Now what?



Korthagen's reflective onion (2001)

Environment

Behaviour

Competences

Beliefs

Identity

Mission



The main components of reflective practice

- Rethinking / deconstructing power
- Awareness of values and implications for practice
- Exploring emotions / emotional intelligence
- Drawing on knowledge / developing knowledge and practice wisdom
- Self awareness
- Creating uncertainty through dynamic questioning – willingness to live with that uncertainty



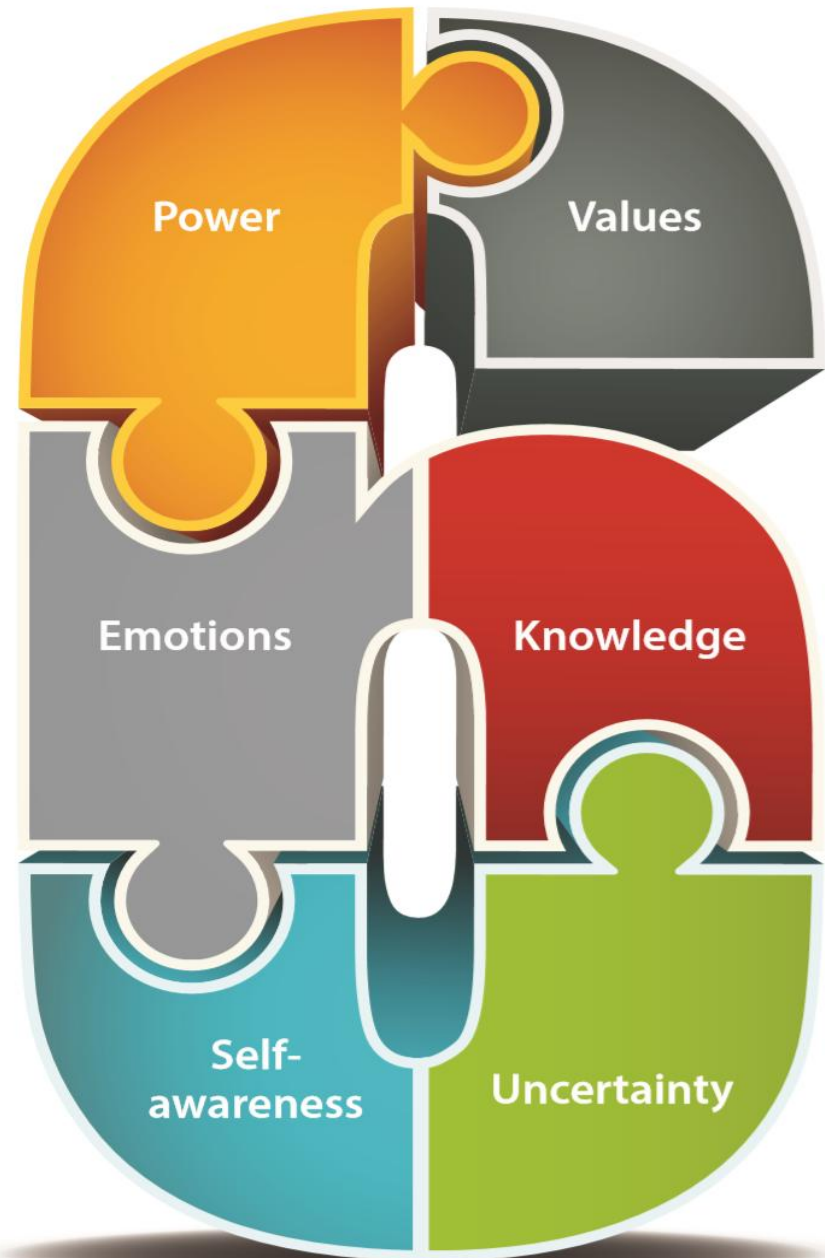
The main components of safeguarding practice

- Power and powerlessness
- Changing societal values
- Emotional impact / distress
- Developing / emerging knowledge
- Impact of personal experiences / values (self awareness)
- More questions than answers (lots of uncertainty)



THE “BIG SIX”

- POWER
- VALUES
- EMOTIONS
- KNOWLEDGE
- SELF AWARENESS
- UNCERTAINTY



Me, my, more, must: A values- based model of reflection



ME: Who am I?

MY: What has been my
experience? / My thoughts
and feelings?

MORE: What questions do I
have? what more do I need to
know / do / learn? What
more can I do?

MUST: What must I do now?

What about YOU?



YOU: Who are you? what is important to you?

YOUR: What has been your experience?

YET: What do I not yet know about you and your experiences?

YES: What have you consented to in terms of what comes next? What do you want to do in terms of what comes next?

Me: who am I?

My: what was my experience of this?

More: what more do I need to know / do?

Must: what must I do?

You: who are you?

Your: what was your experience of this?

Yet: what do I not yet know about you and your feelings?

Yes: what have you consented to?

ME AND YOU?





Example: You recently facilitated a multi-agency meeting which felt tense, and the outcomes were unclear

Me: “I have high expectations of myself. I am often described by others as a perfectionist. I worried about not meeting expectations.”

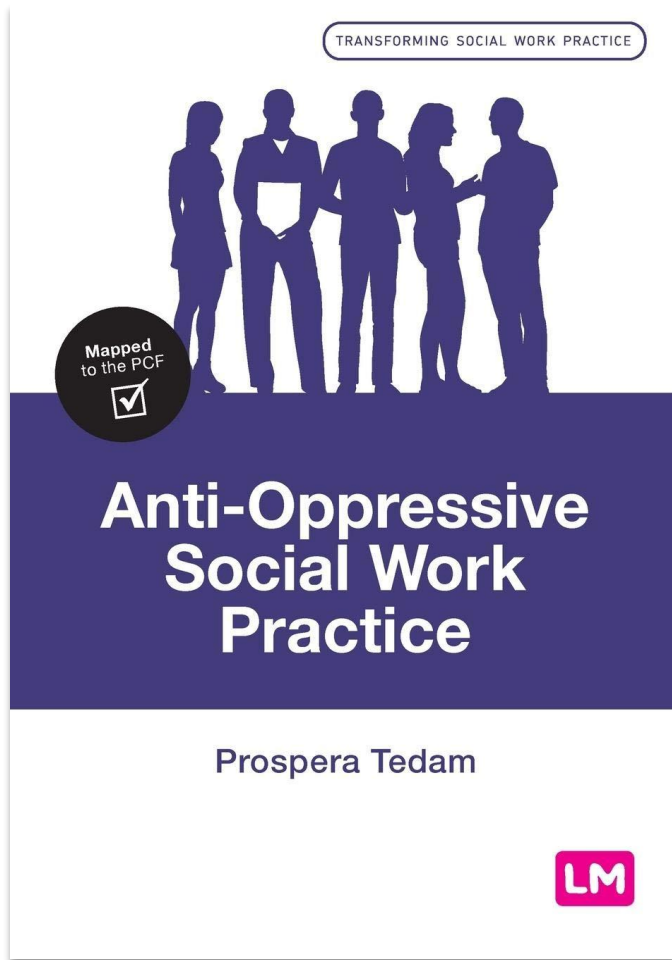
My: “I noticed I felt anxious as the meeting progressed. My facilitation style was direct, but I became less confident when disagreements arose. I didn’t clarify the next steps as clearly as I might have.”

More: “I could benefit from learning more about conflict resolution and group dynamics. I’d also like to observe other facilitators.”

Must: “I must seek out training in facilitation skills, and I must schedule a debrief session with my supervisor to discuss improvements.”

In this way, you move from feeling and noticing, to understanding and acting...

4D2P model (Prospera Tedam 2021)



- The 4D2P model (Tedam 2021) is a useful model for anti oppressive practice
- I find it helpful to consider in my own work
- It can be used to support students in reflection
- It is particularly helpful in highlighting the difference between being non-oppressive and ANTI-oppressive

The first 3 Ds

DISCUSS: During discussions people may allude to or directly inform you about their experiences of oppression. Covert oppression may be more difficult to identify, hence the importance of a discussion that is sincere, empathic and open.



DISCOVER: You might discover hurt, discontent, experiences of othering, racism, microaggressions emerging from the discussion.



DECIDE: What exactly is going on? Is this a microaggression? Overt or covert oppression? What kind of oppression is it (sexism, ableism, homophobia, classism, ageism, racism etc). Social workers make decisions on the basis of evidence all of the time – what evidence are you drawing on in reaching your decision?



The 'magic' 4th D

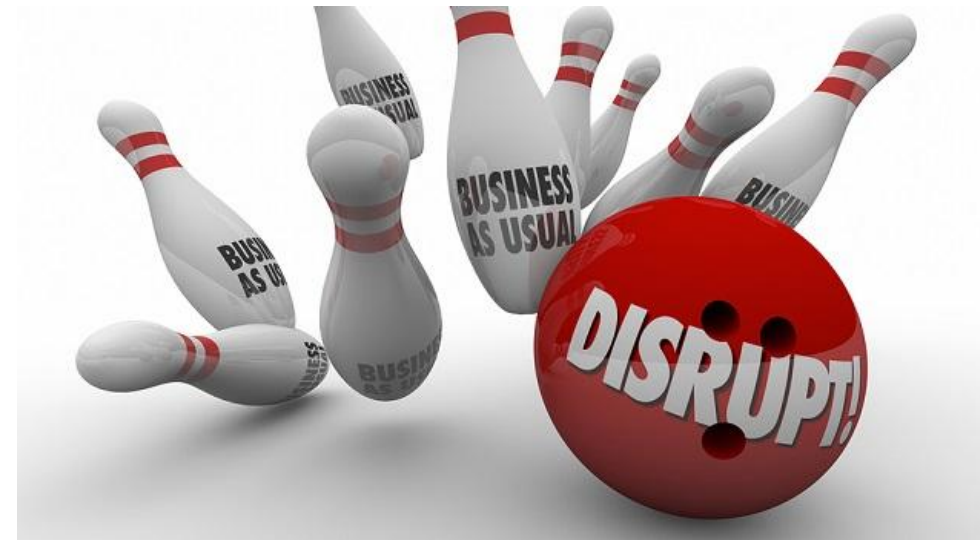
DISRUPT

The Oxford English Dictionary defines disruption as:

'making it difficult for something to continue in the normal way'

As social workers we have started to normalise oppression and oppressive practices

If we do not disrupt, then we reproduce



The 4Ds and social work practice



Discuss: Starting an assessment



Discover: Gathering information

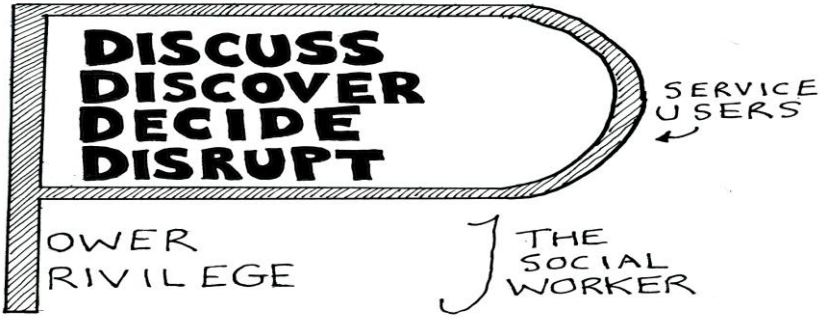


Decide: Analysis and decision making



Disrupt: Intervene and bring about change

**THE 4-D'S AND 2P'S OF
ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE**



The 4Ds are
underpinned
by 2Ps

Power

Privilege: earned and
unearned privilege

Take some time to use this as a reflective tool...



Discuss: think about the discussion



Discover: what did you discover?



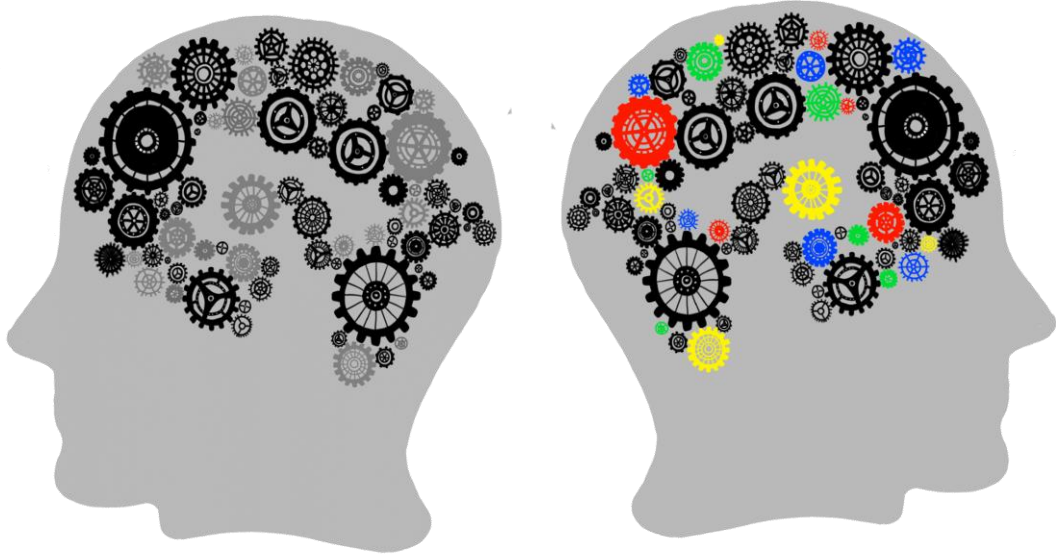
Decide: what did you decide?



Disrupt: what did you do to bring about change?

All the time think about your own power and privilege...

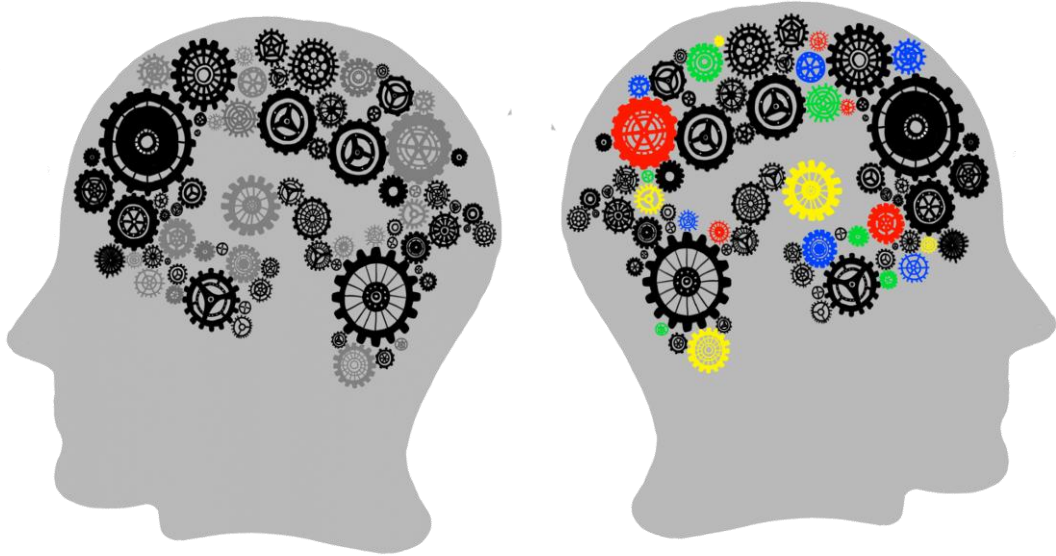
What is Neurodiversity?



Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many ways; there is no one right way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

(Baumer and Frueh, Harvard Health Publishing, 2021)

What is Neurodiversity?



Neurodiversity describes the population as a whole and recognises the diversity of different brains. Neurotypical describes most of the population the majority group that expresses themselves in ways that are seen as the societal “norm”. Neurodivergent describes the minority group that diverts neurologically from said “norm”. This is estimated to be 1 in 7 people, although with an increase in awareness and late diagnosis this is likely to be higher.

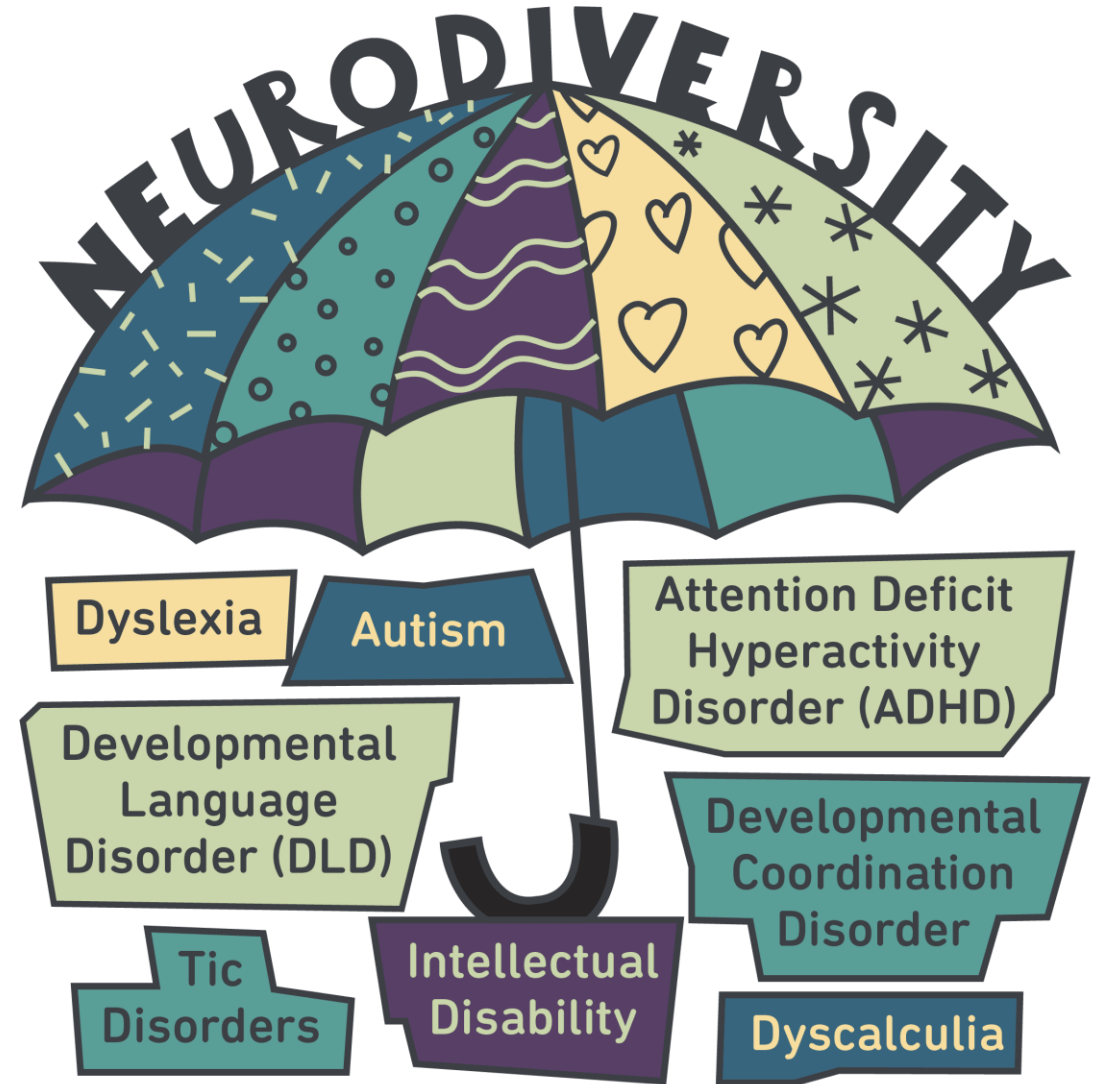
Neurodivergent conditions include Autism/Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)/Variable Attention Stimulus Trait (VAST), Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia and Tourette’s Syndrome (TS) as well as many other conditions. Neurodivergence is classed as a disability, although some neurodivergent people do not identify as disabled but need support to live in a neurotypical society.

The word first appeared in 1998.

There is a debate about where the phrase came from – was it the American journalist Harvey Blume or was it Judy Singer an Australian sociologist who describes herself as “somewhere on the autistic spectrum”?

The idea is that there is diversity in the ways that people's brains process information, the way people function, and how people present behaviourally.

Rather than thinking there is something ‘wrong’ or problematic when some people don't operate similarly to others, neurodiversity embraces all differences.



Some common traits

Sensory processing issues: Being easily overwhelmed by sounds, lights, textures, smells, or tastes (hyper- or hypo-sensitivity).

Social communication: Difficulty with sarcasm, nonverbal cues, small talk, or understanding social norms; sometimes preferring one-on-one interactions. Directness in communication

Focus and attention: Intense focus (hyperfocus) on preferred topics, or difficulty staying on task/being distracted

Routines and change: Strong preference for structure, routines, and predictability; distress with unexpected changes

Executive function: Struggles with planning, organising, time management, or starting tasks

Repetitive behaviors: Stimming (self-stimulatory behaviors) or engaging in rituals for comfort or regulation

Emotional regulation: Intense emotional responses, heightened anxiety, or difficulty managing strong feelings



Possible strengths

Creativity and innovation: Thinking outside the box, generating novel ideas, and finding unique solutions

Hyperfocus: Intense concentration on preferred tasks, leading to deep expertise and high-quality work

Pattern and detail recognition: Noticing subtle details and connections others miss

Problem solving: Developing innovative approaches and seeing problems from different angles

Memory and logic: Strong factual recall, complex calculation abilities, or logical thinking

Visual thinking: Good observation skills

Resilience / adaptability: Developing strong 'coping mechanisms' and unique strategies

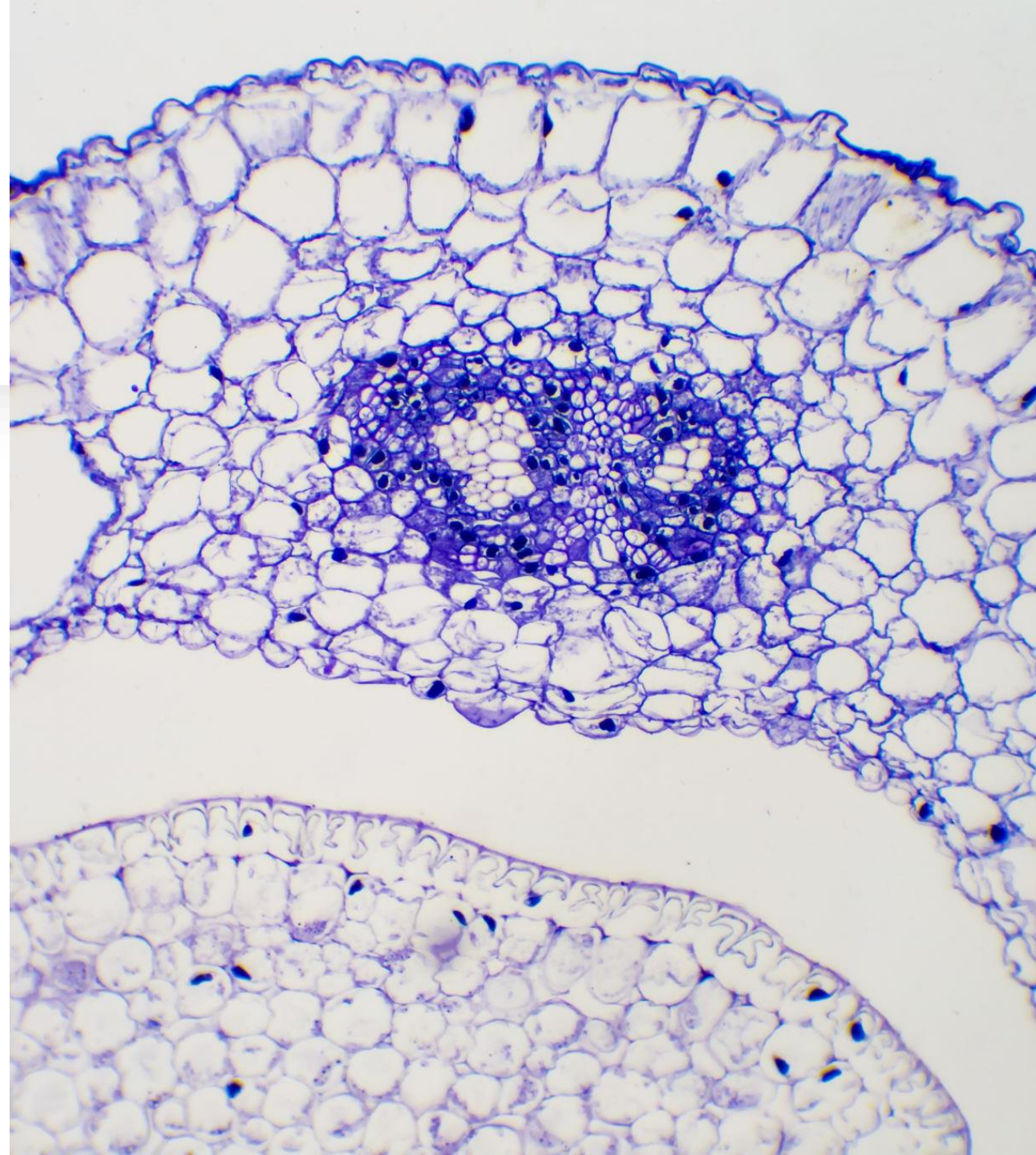
Justice and fairness: A passionate commitment to social justice and challenging norms



Neuroinclusion

Neurodiversity inclusion, Neuroinclusion, Neuroinclusive, Neuroinclusivity. This language is largely used in relation to workplaces:

“Neurodiversity inclusion or 'neuroinclusion' involves consciously and actively including all types of information processing, learning and communication styles.” (The CIPD neuroinclusion at work guide)



CIPD key principles for creating a neuroinclusive organisation

Principle 1: Understand where you are now and commit to a long-term plan of action

Principle 2: Focus on creating an open and supportive culture where people feel comfortable talking about neurodiversity

Principle 3: Proactively consider neurodiversity in all people management transactions

Principle 4: Allow individual employees to be masters of their own journey

Principle 5: Embrace flexible working to enable everybody to thrive

Principle 6: Practice ongoing attention to wellbeing

Principle 7: Empower neurodivergent voices



Neuroaffirmative approaches

This is a concept much more referred to in terms of ‘treatment’ or care rather than in the workplace / organisation. Day et al (2024) of the British Psychological Society say that neuroaffirmative practice is about:

- Support which targets needs and challenges
- Recognition of value
- Respect for neurodivergent culture and identity
- Reframing from disorder to neurotype
- Rejection of compliance-based behaviour approaches
- Rejection of neurotypical social skills training
- Stop pathologizing approaches
- Advocating for systems and environmental changes
- Fostering positive neurodivergent identity as parity
- The process of ‘ever becoming’



There is a real move
towards
acknowledging
learning issues for
neurodivergent
students...



**Guide to Practice-Based Learning
(PBL) for Neurodivergent Students**

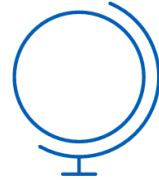
“As much as poor support can lead to poor outcomes, it is also vital to confront students’ own perceptions of their challenges. Student’s internalised stigma and harmful self beliefs contribute to their experience (Greaney, 2018). This can prevent students from disclosing their diagnosis in fear of inconveniencing the staff they are working with (Noris et al, 2019). Students often feel they can avoid disclosing and “muddle through”, but this prevents them from reaching their full potential (King, 2018).”

(Health Education England nd)



Tips for educators

General Tips



Environment

A significant issue surrounding students not receiving the support they need is the responsibility of disclosing falling to them. Due to stigma and a fear of the reactions to disclosing, students are not able to access support. Therefore, it is important that students feel their environment is safe, encourages open discussion and is free from criticism and discrimination. Some students are more likely to come to a teacher, tutor, or mentor that they know they can trust.



Diagnosis

For some students, it may be that they are unaware that their challenges are not due to a lack of effort but an in-built part of them. They may not understand that there is support, adjustments and accommodations available. It is important to assess students with this in mind and signpost them to university services or external sources to seek a diagnosis so they can ensure their needs are met appropriately.



Education

Increasing the awareness of neurodivergence across staff teams would directly improve students' experiences. There should be an acknowledgement that everyone is different but a level of understanding and appreciation for the different challenges that neurodivergent people face in their ability to learn, process, perform and communicate.

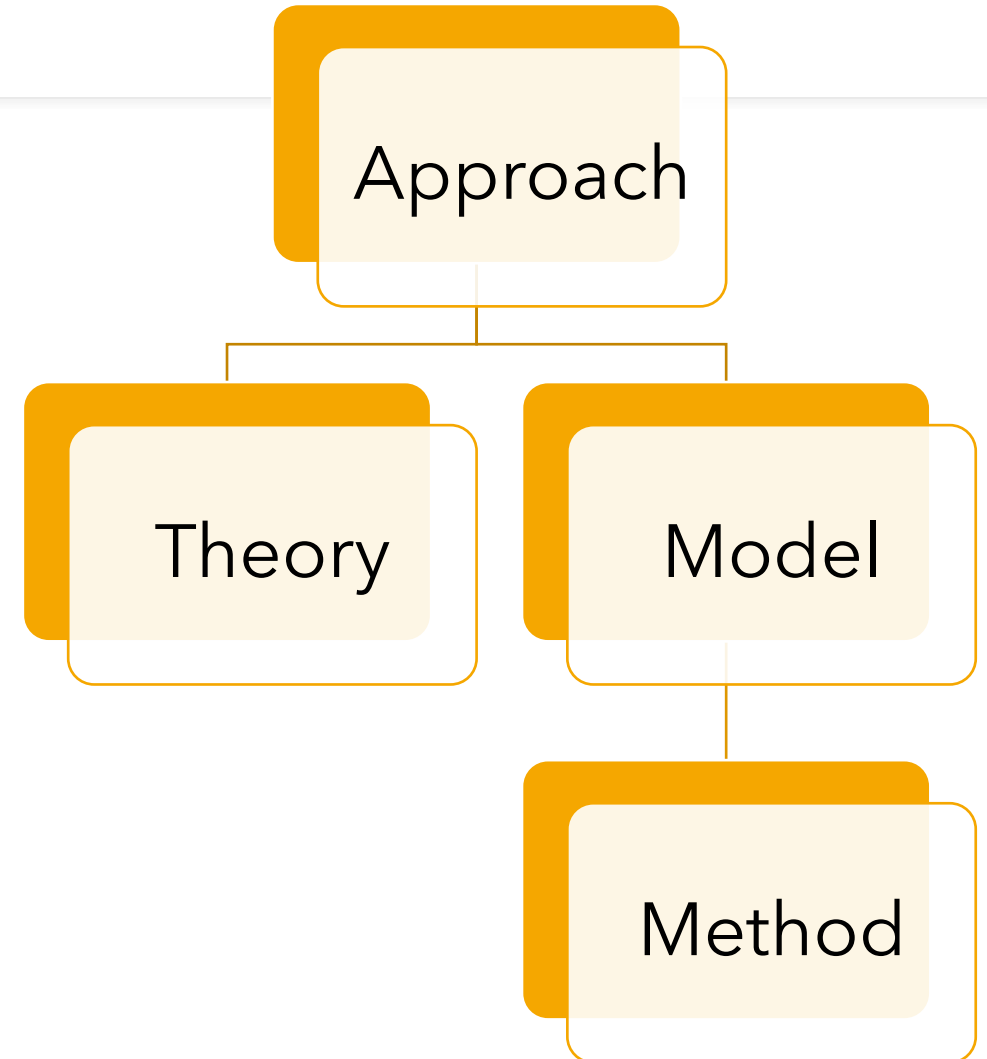
The theory 'framework'?

An approach is the **overall way** we go about something

A theory helps us to **understand**

A model helps us to **intervene**

A method is a specific tool used in practice



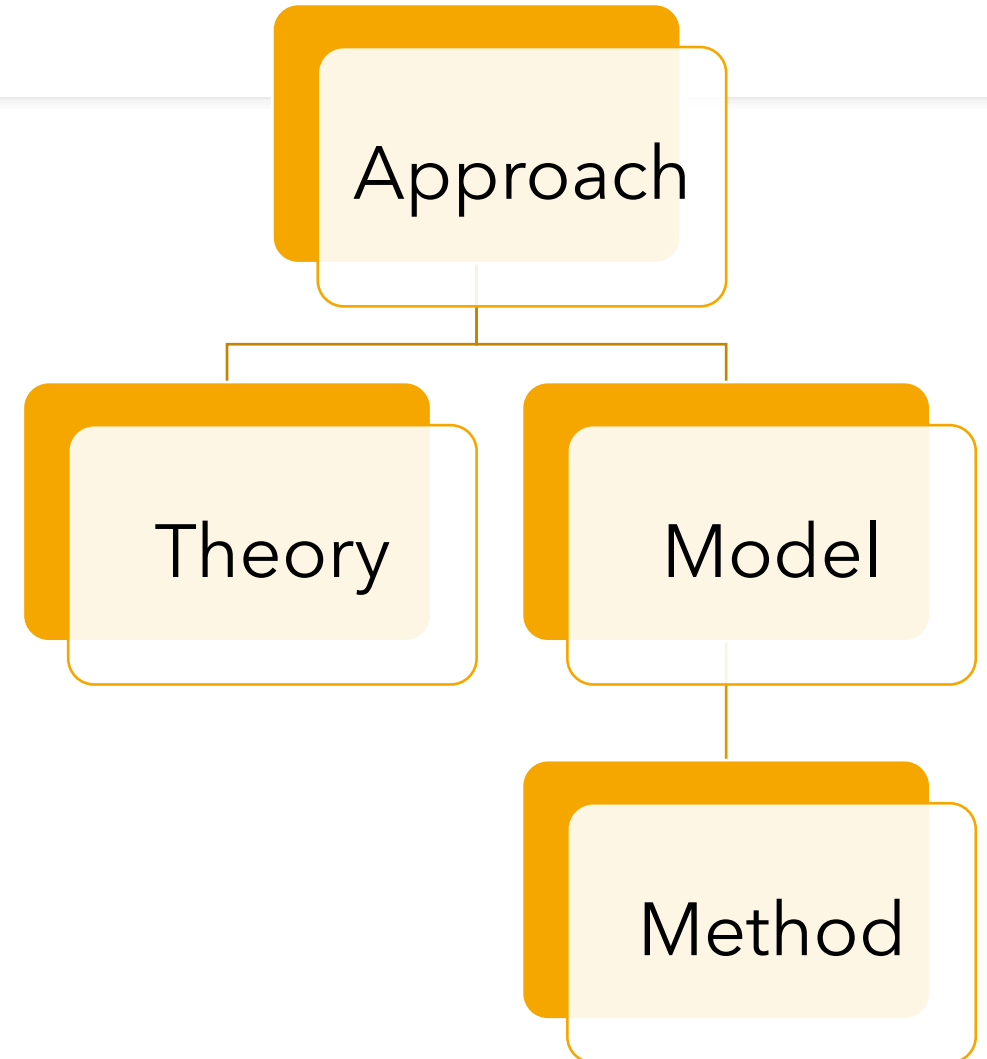
Neurodiversity & practice education

Neuroaffirmative or neuroinclusive approach should be the **overall way** we approach our work with students

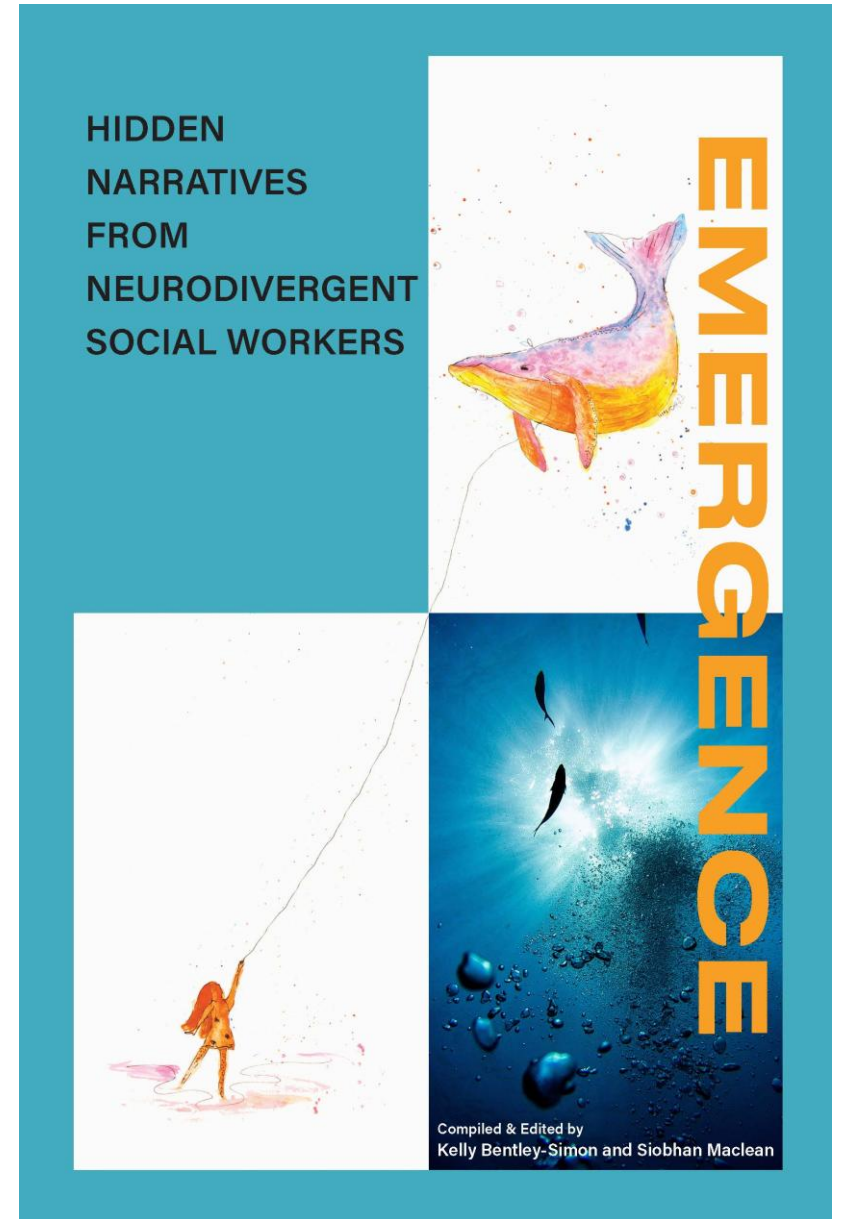
Adult learning theory helps us to **understand** the student, the placement environment and learning processes

Particular models of supervision can be useful; specific models of reflection; different models for feedback etc (so how do we **intervene** with students?)

A method is a specific tool used in practice



The learning from this is so valuable!



How to help

Most neurodivergent people have spent their whole lives trying to adapt to communicating and doing things in a neurotypical way.

They might have a way of doing things which makes zero sense to you but does make sense to them. If the outcome is the same, then there is no need to be prescriptive.

Agree how conversations should be structured

If you need to think more about a topic before giving a view, you can say 'I need to think about it' and I will move on.

Do you prefer it if I ask a question and then give you some time to think before you answer?

Is it easier if I ask questions for you to answer, I don't want you to feel interrogated!

Do you like small talk, or do you prefer to just get into why we are talking?

I know that these things can help focus and I won't interpret these as signs you are not interested or listening'.

Some people don't like eye contact, find it hard to sit still or like to fidget with something whilst talking, please do what you need to feel comfortable.

Structuring Conversations

Avoid 'catching' someone when they are doing other things. Random chats in the kitchen or hallway are likely to be more stressful and information may be misinterpreted, lost or forgotten.

Offer to write down verbal instructions, requests or follow up with an email, message or task.

Clarity

Avoid vague and abstract language.

Vague - 'have files up to date by next supervision'

A bit better – 'have all of your care plans and risk assessments updated by next supervision'

Better – 'here is the printed list of the status of your care plans and risk assessments, the ones in red need to be updated by 20th September'.

Best – 'here is the printed list of the status of your care plans and risk assessments, the ones in red need to be updated by the 20th November. Let's look together at your diary and book out protected time to allow you to do this. Let me know if there are pressures for you to do other things in this time and I can support you. Would it be best for you to work at home or book out a quiet space for that day?'

Practical support and adjustments

- Relationships and 'disclosure' conversations
- Recognition of identity / culture
- Reasonable adjustments
- Workflow scaffolding



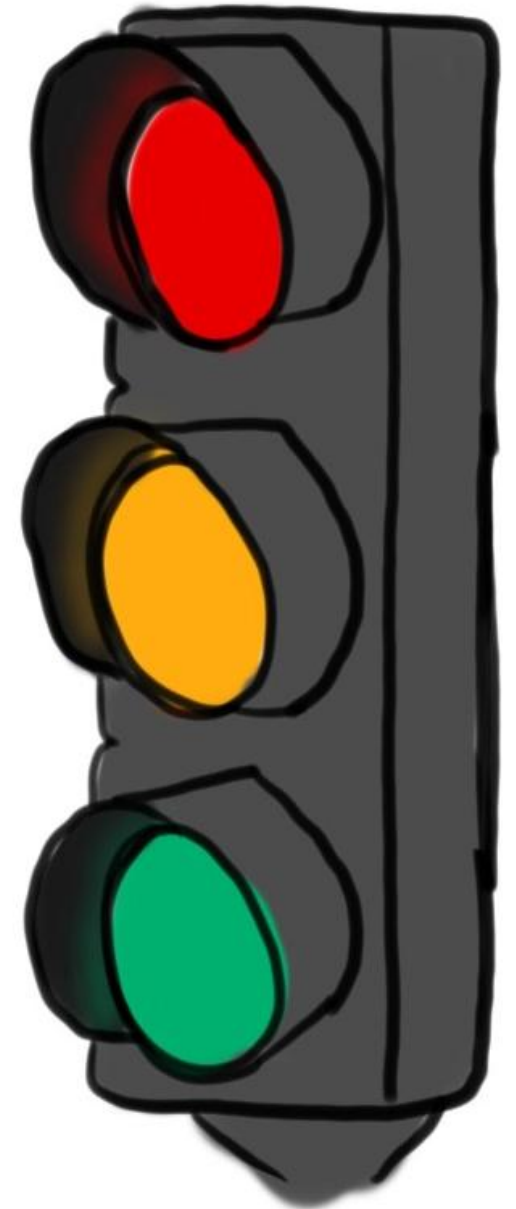
Adapting Supervisory styles

- Neuroinclusive communication:
 - Replace vague instructions with clear (if necessary written) ones
 - Follow up
 - Use 'checked understanding' rather than assuming
 - Allow longer processing time for verbal information
- Performance management v Neurodivergent traits: Differentiate between genuine performance management issues and neurodivergent behaviours like distractibility, hyperfocus, atypical social cues and different ways of achieving something
- Work on feedback style and strategy



I find stop, start and continue a useful feedback technique – and often use it as a 360 feedback technique: something I want the student to stop, something I want them to start and something I want them to continue. They share the same with me – something they want me to stop, to start and to continue....

STOP
START
CONTINUE



I always end supervision with some 'concluding reflections'
Some people use a different concluding technique each week
– I use the same technique every time...

Concluding reflections

