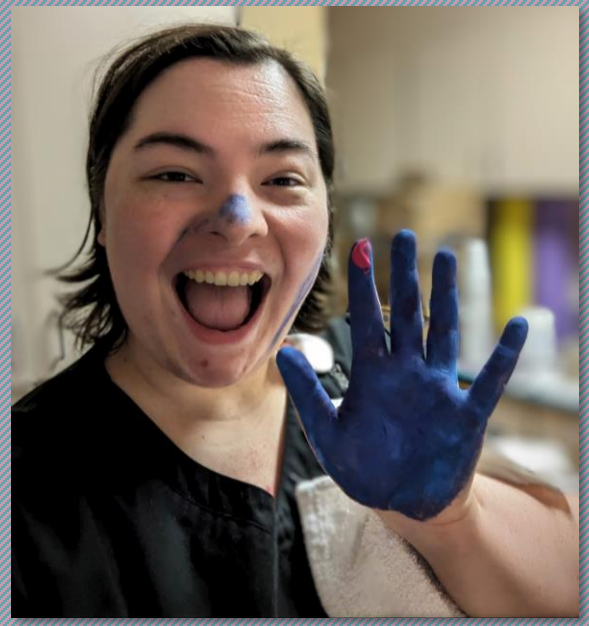
PRACTICE WHAT YOU TEACH: UTILIZING EMPATHY AND FLEXIBLE THINKING DURING THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

Rebecca Coffin, MS, CCC-SLP

Margaret C. Adams, OTD, OTR/L



WHO WE ARE

Rebecca Coffin, MS, CCC-SLP grew up in Alaska and identifies as neurodivergent. Diagnoses include ADHD, social anxiety, and sensory processing disorder. Rebecca also identifies as a gestalt language processor and credits this gift with her ability to easily connect with neurodivergent patients.

Margaret Adams, OTD, OTR/L born and raised in Alaska. Diagnosed with ADHD at an early age when the understanding of neurodivergence and its system-wide effects were less known. This informs her perspective on trauma informed care and neuro-affirming goal writing. Currently working with extremely high needs underserved clientele.

THE WHY

- Communication barriers can increase behaviors that are not conducive to community living (ie. physical assaultive, danger to self)
- Age/size exacerbates the problem
- Traditional techniques can increase feelings of isolation and frustration
- Occupational Therapist's are not provided this information in school and cannot address it alone
- However, we need to have a baseline understanding so we can address within our scope to prevent institutionalization

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the basic tenets of neurodiversity culture as it relates to therapeutic interventions
2. Compare and contrast compliance-based interventions versus connection-based interventions
3. Describe gestalt language processing
4. Provide reasoning for why a trauma-informed approach is necessary when working with neurodivergent populations

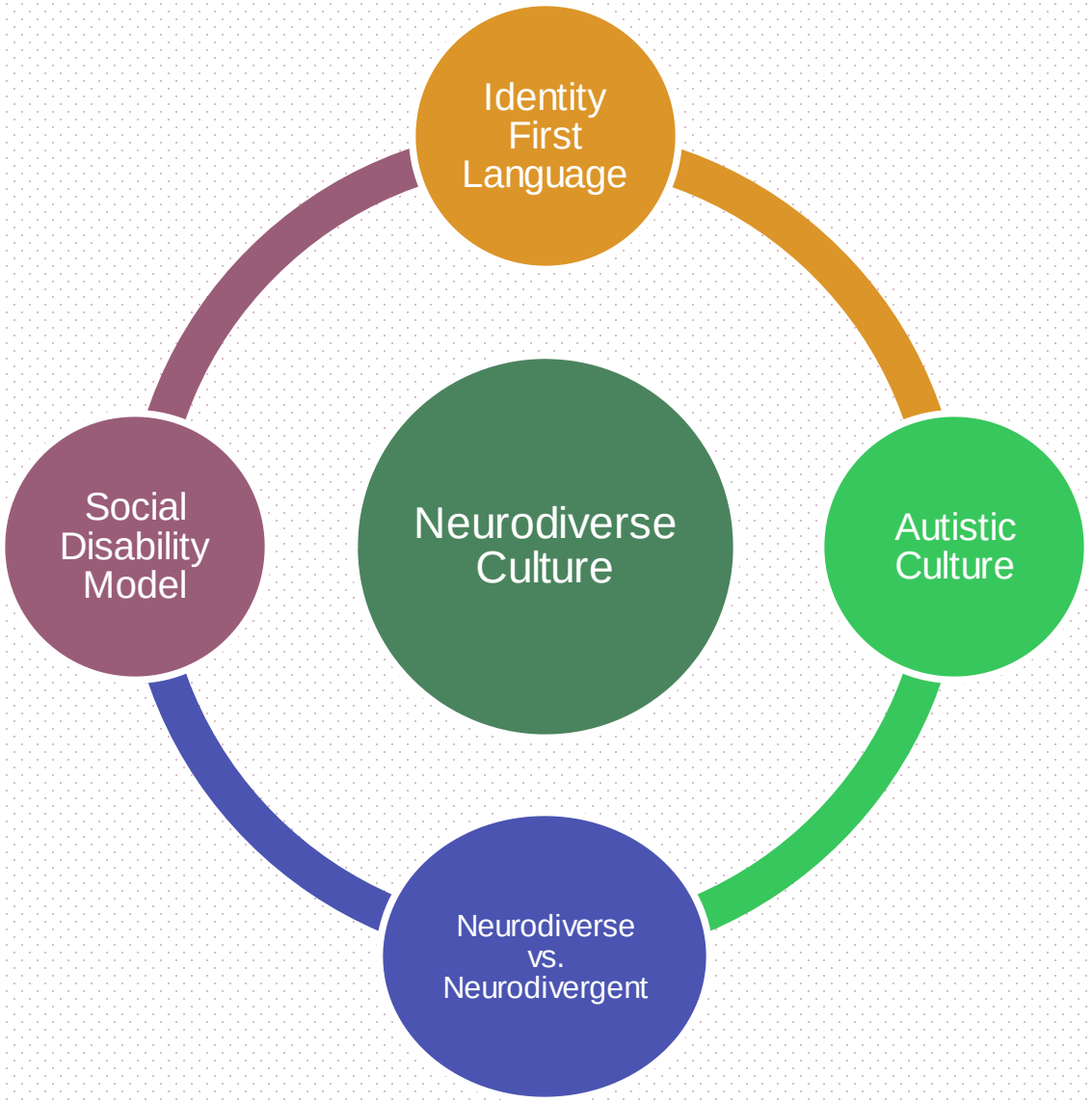
Neurodiversity Culture

Neurodiversity is a concept that regards individuals with differences in brain function and behavioral traits as part of normal variation in the human population.

The Neurodiversity movement seeks to uncover the strengths of neurodiverse individuals and utilize these talents to increase innovation and productivity within society.

(Stanford Neurodiversity Project, 2022)

Neurodiversity Culture



Challenges When Working with Autistic Patients

- Decreased attention
- Difficulty following directions
- Repetitive behaviors
- Strong preference for specific objects
- Poor regulation

Challenges of being Autistic

- Decreased attention
- Difficulty following directions
- Repetitive behaviors
- Strong preference for specific objects
- Poor regulation

A Shift in Perspective

- White/Gold or Blue/Black?
- Which do you see?
- How would you respond to someone who sees a different color than you?
- Who is correct?
- Is this a problem?

Trauma-Informed Perspective

Loss of control

Unknowns

Attunement

Safety

Sensory overwhelm

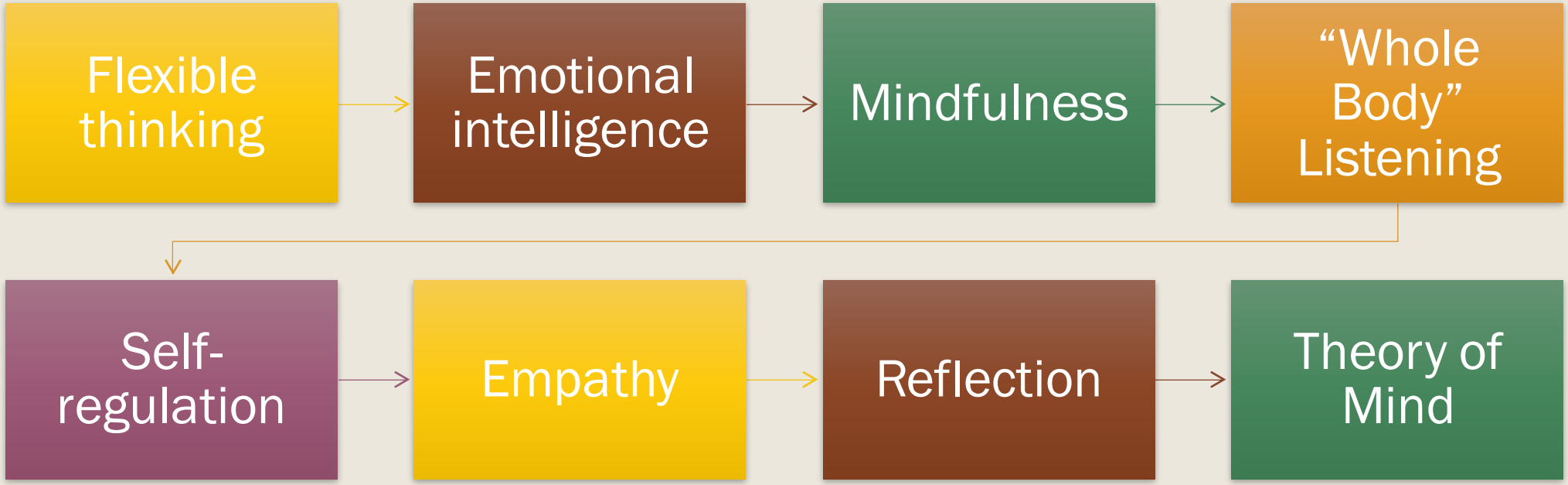
Trauma Responses

Trauma-Informed Care

SAFETY CHOICE COLLABORATION TRUST EMPOWERMENT

https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html

Practice What You Teach

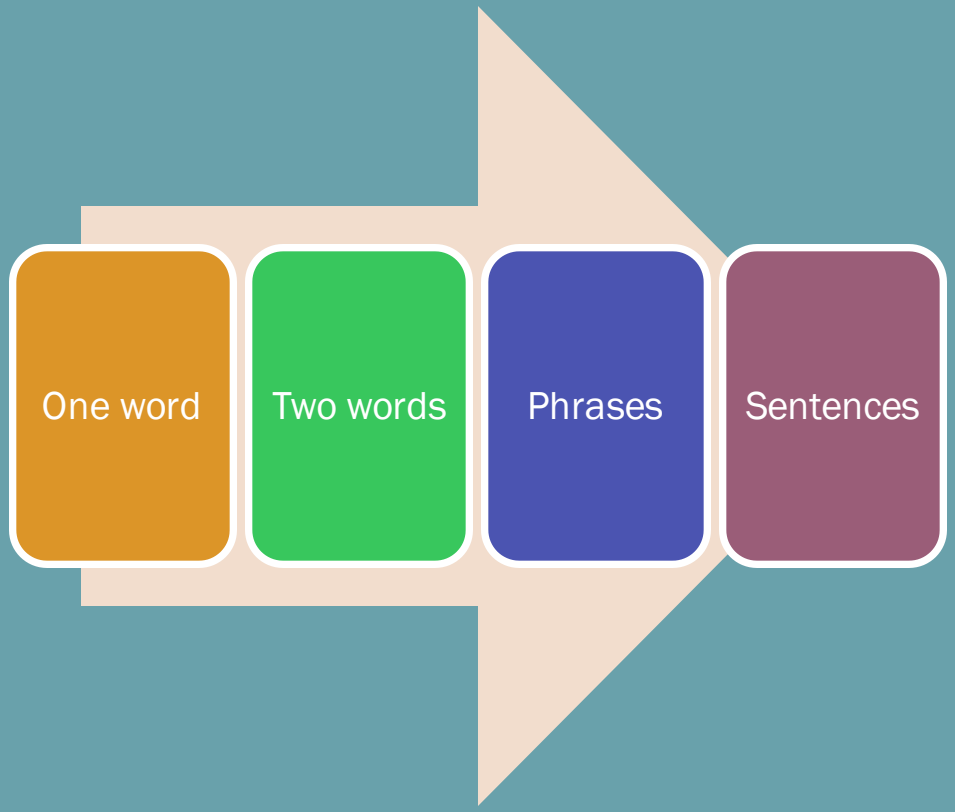


Types of Language Processing

Analytical

Gestalt

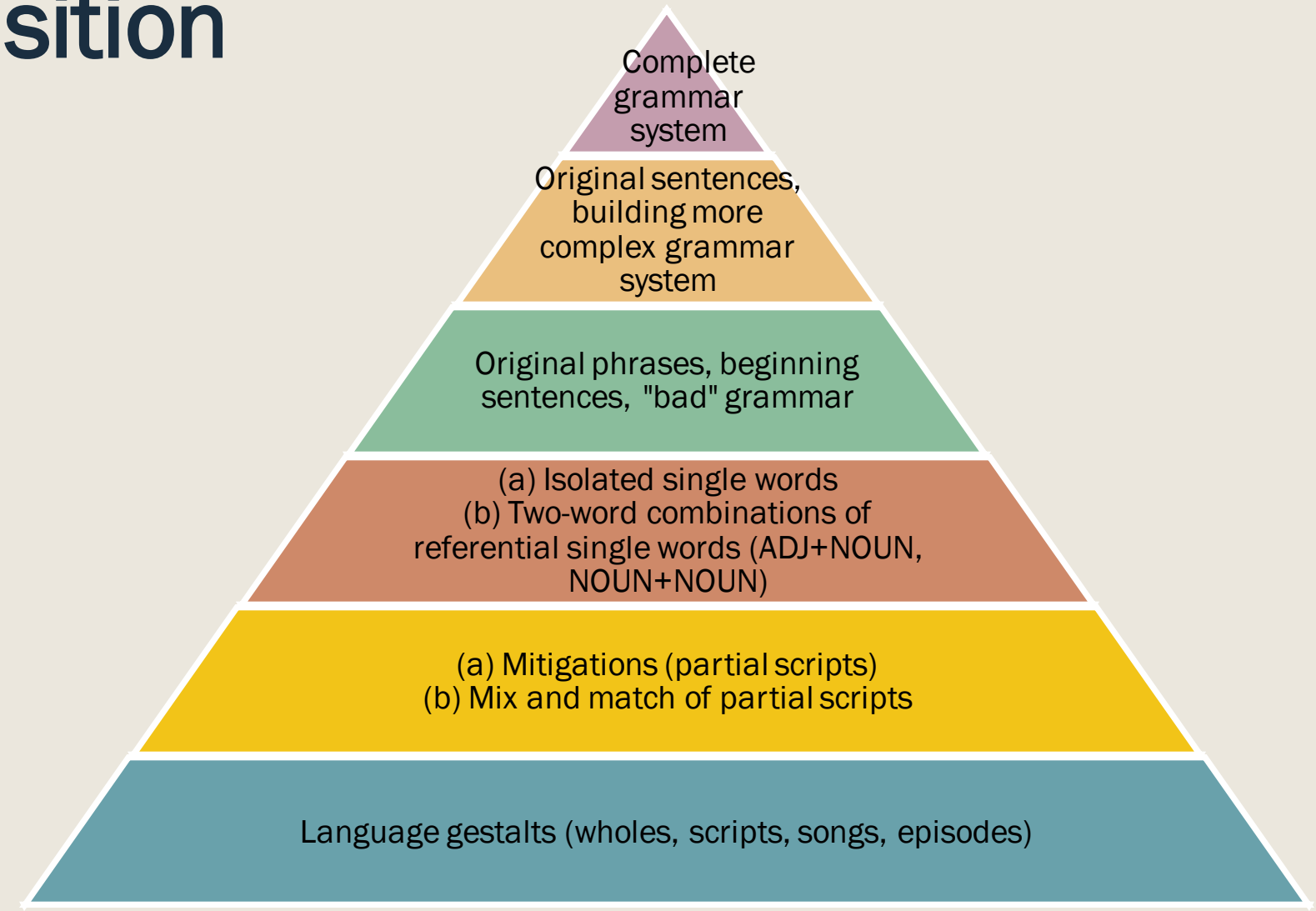
Analytical Language Processing



Gestalt Language Processing

- Whole gestalts or scripts
- Mitigated gestalts or mixed & matched scripts
- Single words and re-combinations
- Self-generated sentences

The 6 Stages of Natural Language Acquisition



Id-d-dea, Mom.

No – Id-d-dea, Becca.

Idea?

We use hum make issuh dere…

A deku –

No, I'm sorry guy…

That's it!

Let's have a lookit a monster truck!

Let's have a look at a monster truck.

It's ready!

Let's see uh that monster truck!

Let's play it!

Which one?

This one?

Oh sure, this one is good!

It's a fire – mazing – seventy –

No – mm-mm – guy –

Seventy millers wide!

We got – the monster truck –

No – I got the monster truck excavator.

Gestalt Cognitive Processors

Episodic memory

Process events as a “whole”

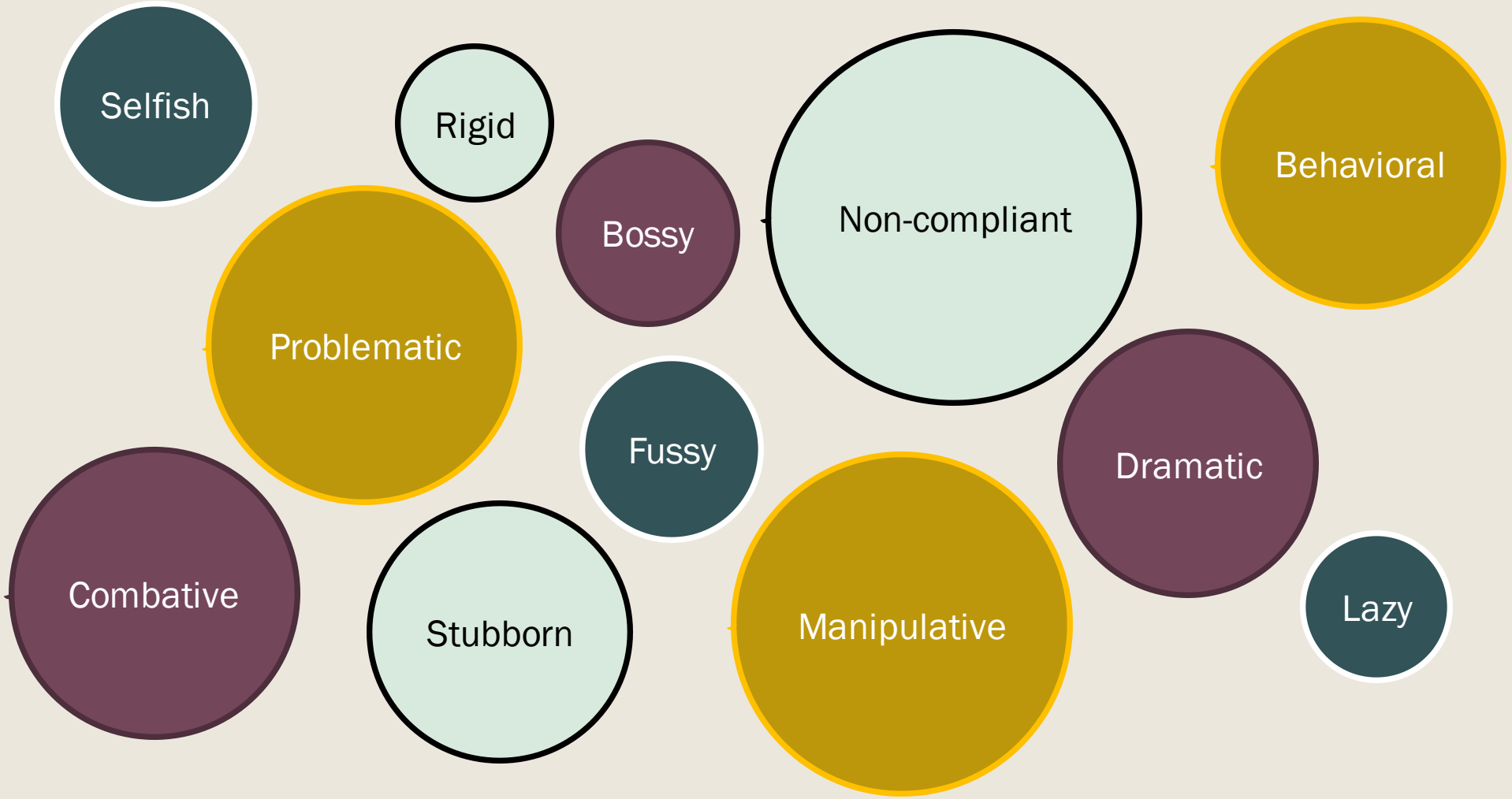
Hyper-awareness of specifics and details

Unexpected changes to routine can disrupt the concept of the “whole” and result in dysregulation

GESTALT COGNITIVE PROCESSING & ROUTINES

Miscommunication & Dysregulation

Gestalt cognitive processors are often misunderstood and may receive negative labels such as:



They don’t *want* to talk.

They’re just lazy/spoiled.

They can do it when they get mad enough.

They’ll say it once and then never again.

Verbal Dyspraxia Common Misconceptions

Verbal Dyspraxia

What's happening?

Oral motor deficits

Fatigue and neural processing challenges

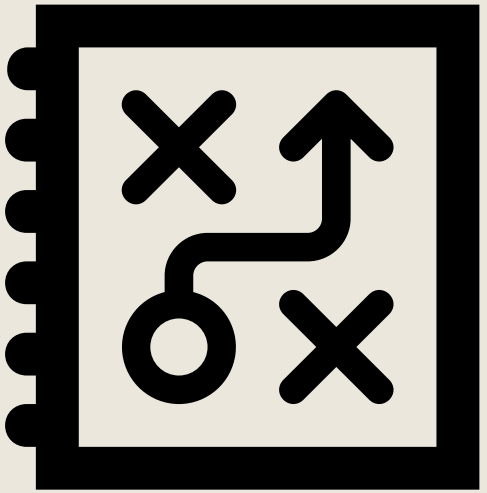
Sensory and emotional regulation issues

Happy “accidents”

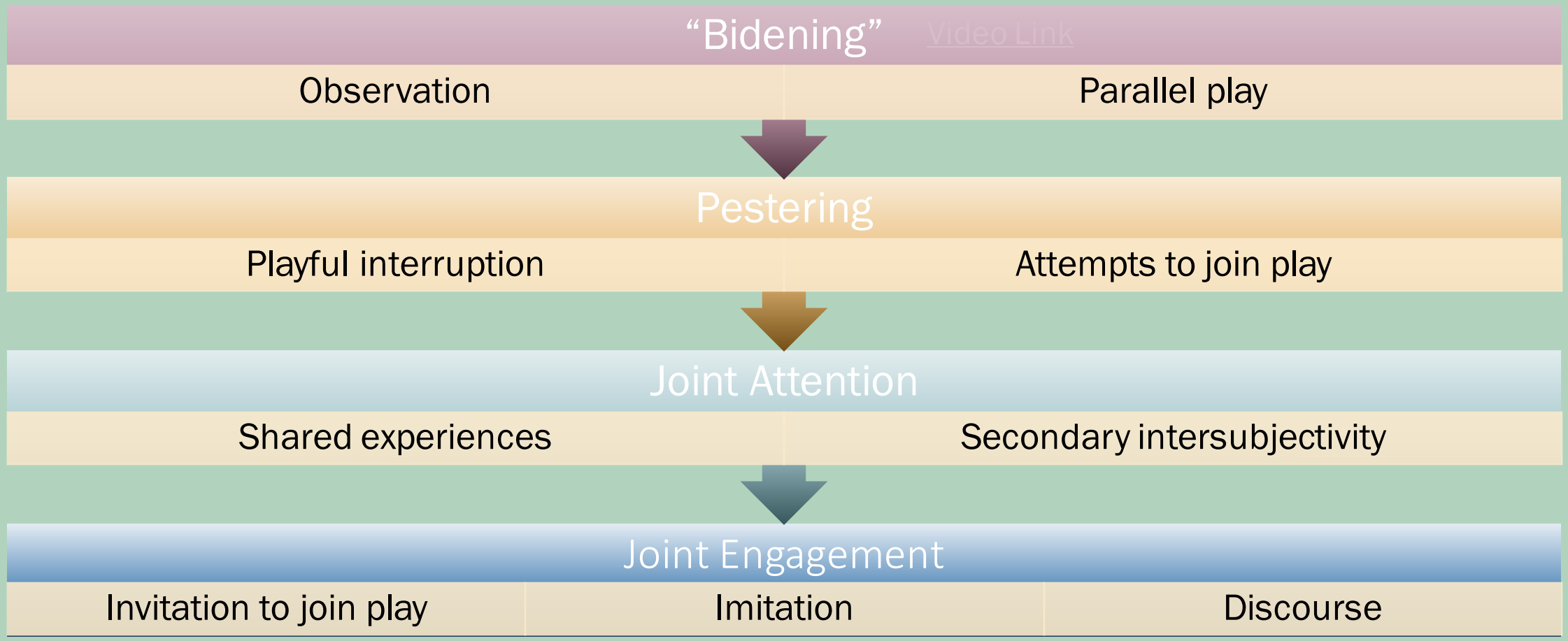
THE POWER OF MEDIA

Strategies

- Empathize
- Read between the lines
- Connection over compliance
- Practice *following*
- *REFLECT*
- Make it musical
- Make it fun

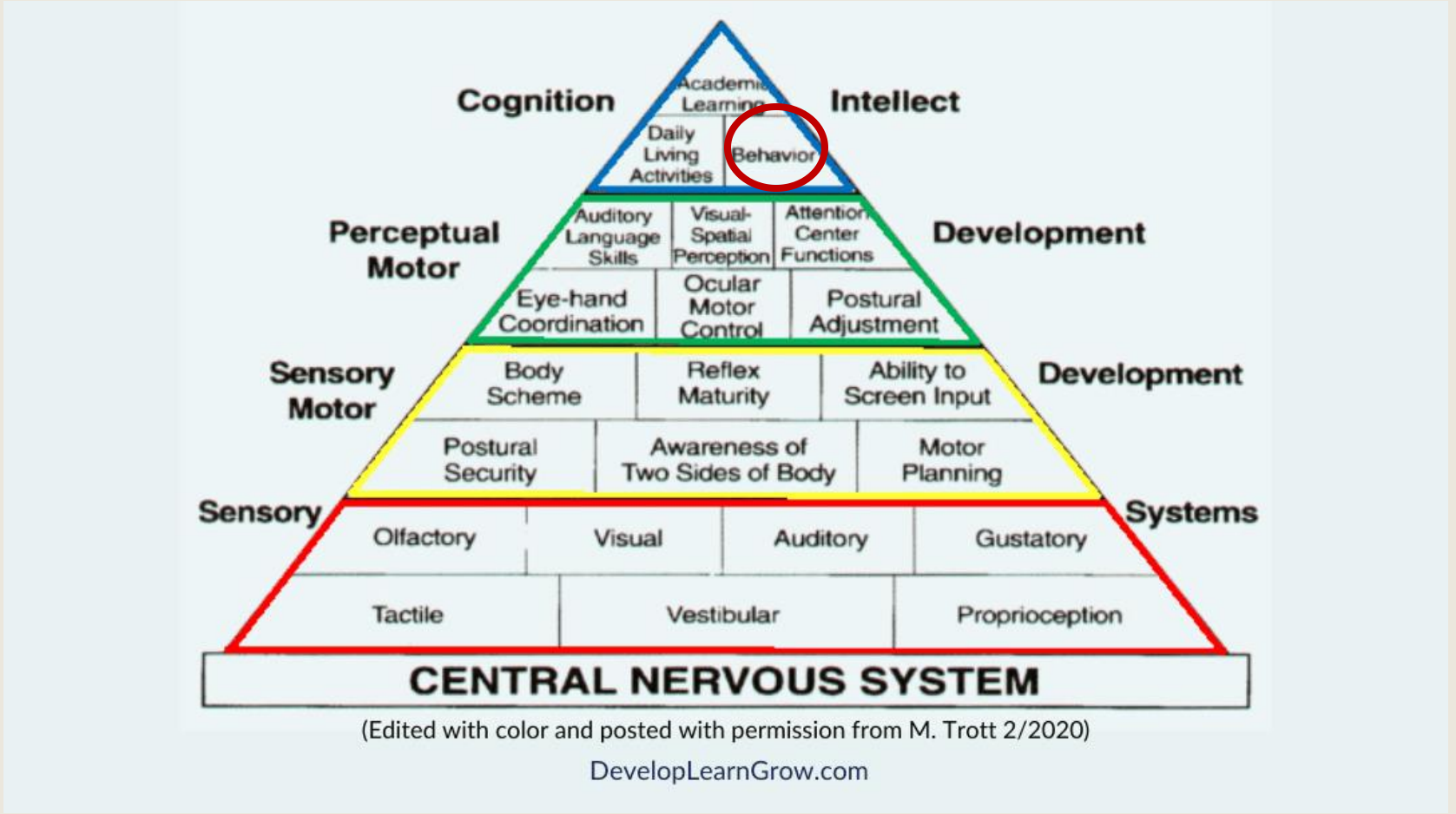


Part of Your World



Empathize –

Behavior is a form of communication!



(Edited with color and posted with permission from M. Trott 2/2020)

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Read Between the Lines

Practice flexible thinking

Be a detective

Observe – Wait – Listen

Look for patterns and connections

Prioritize Connection Over Compliance

Observe, Wait, Listen

Analyze and hypothesize

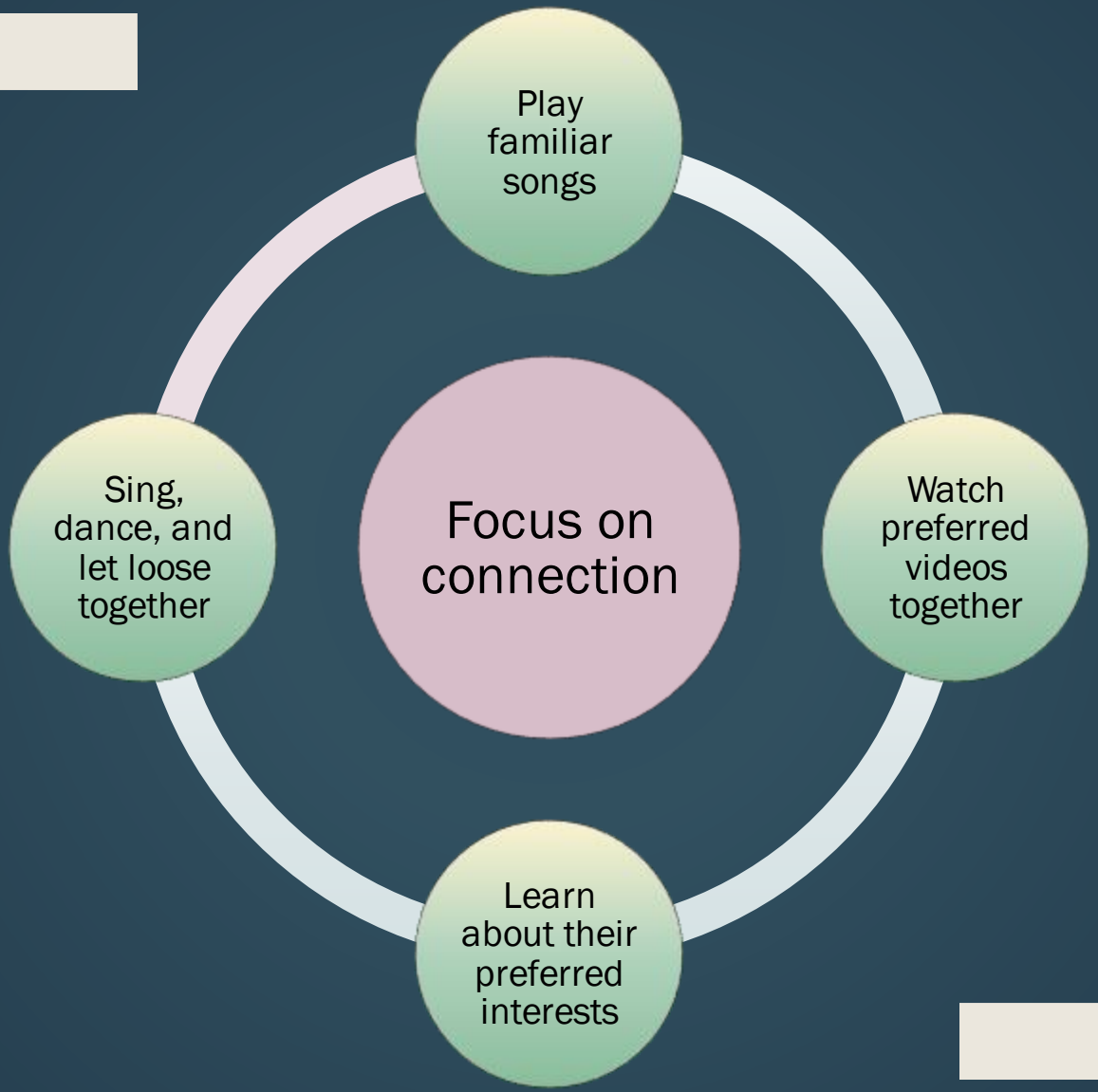
Parallel Play

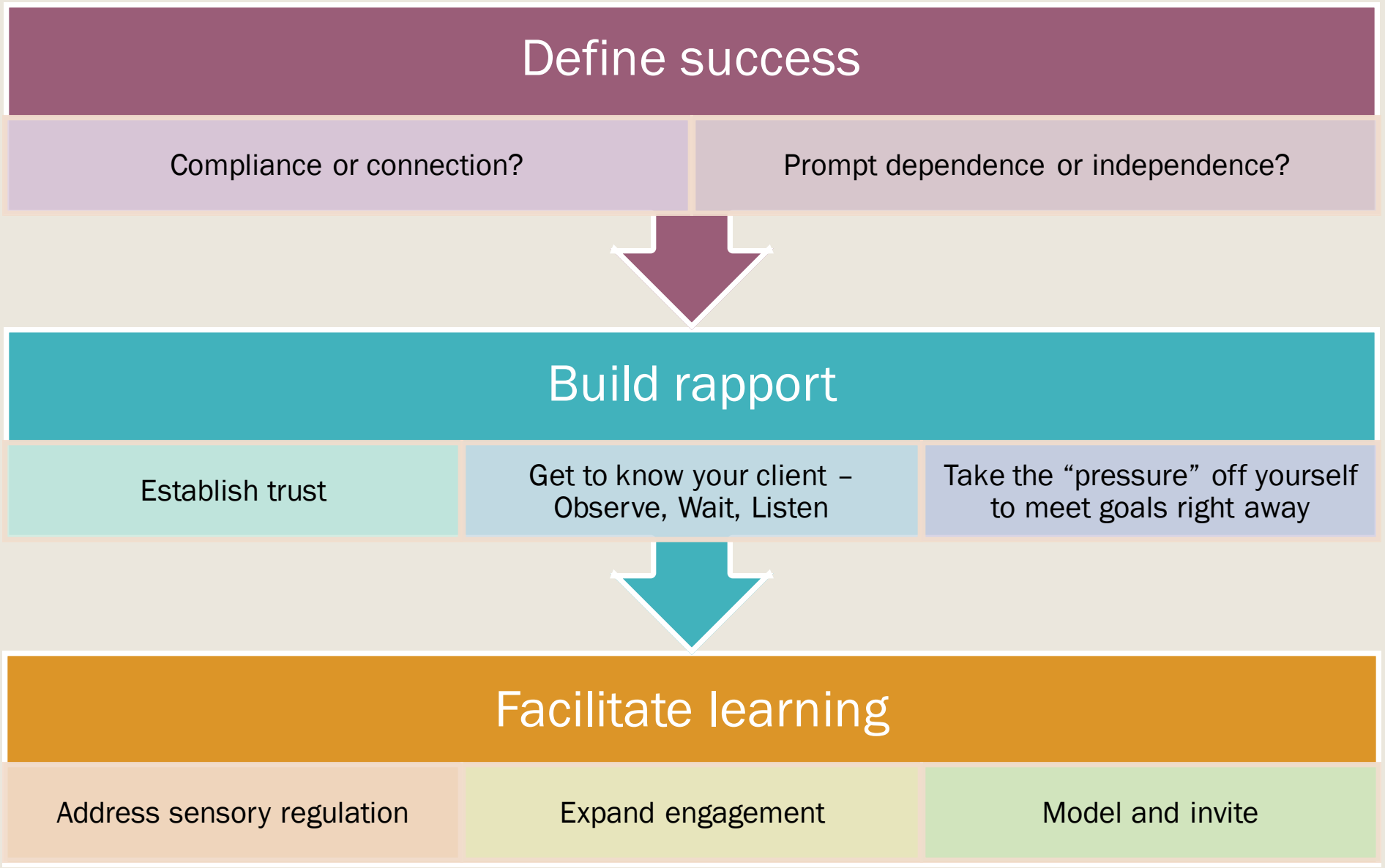
Acknowledge and Engage

Joint Attention

Joint Engagement

Reciprocal Communication


Play familiar songs
Watch preferred videos together
Learn about their preferred interests
Sing, dance, and let loose together
Focus on connection


Define success
Compliance or connection?
Prompt dependence or independence?
Build rapport
Establish trust
Get to know your client – Observe, Wait, Listen
Take the "pressure" off yourself to meet goals right away
Facilitate learning
Address sensory regulation
Expand engagement
Model and invite

Neuro-affirming goal writing

What increases agency?

What are their wants?

Does any aspect of the goal create significant distress?

Harm reduction

Hierarchy of needs

We can't address the top of the pyramid without first addressing the bottom

Safety and Security vs Social Accepted behaviors

This is trauma informed care!

What does this mean to you?

COMPATIBLE?
NOT
COMPATIBLE

Music is *magic!*

Comment/Narrate

Flexible, natural communication

Adjust based on the patient's utterances

Use joint attention gestures

Choosing Communication

Follow the child's lead

- Get on their level
- Let them lead
- Join in their play
- Avoid questions/directions
- Be sensitive but persistent
- Wait and watch – be patient

Imitate the child

- Actions
- Intonation
- Gestures
- Utterances

Recommended Resources

Meaningful Speech

Communication Development Center

Learn Play Thrive

Therapist Neurodiversity Collective

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