

Sexual Assault & Autistic Survivors

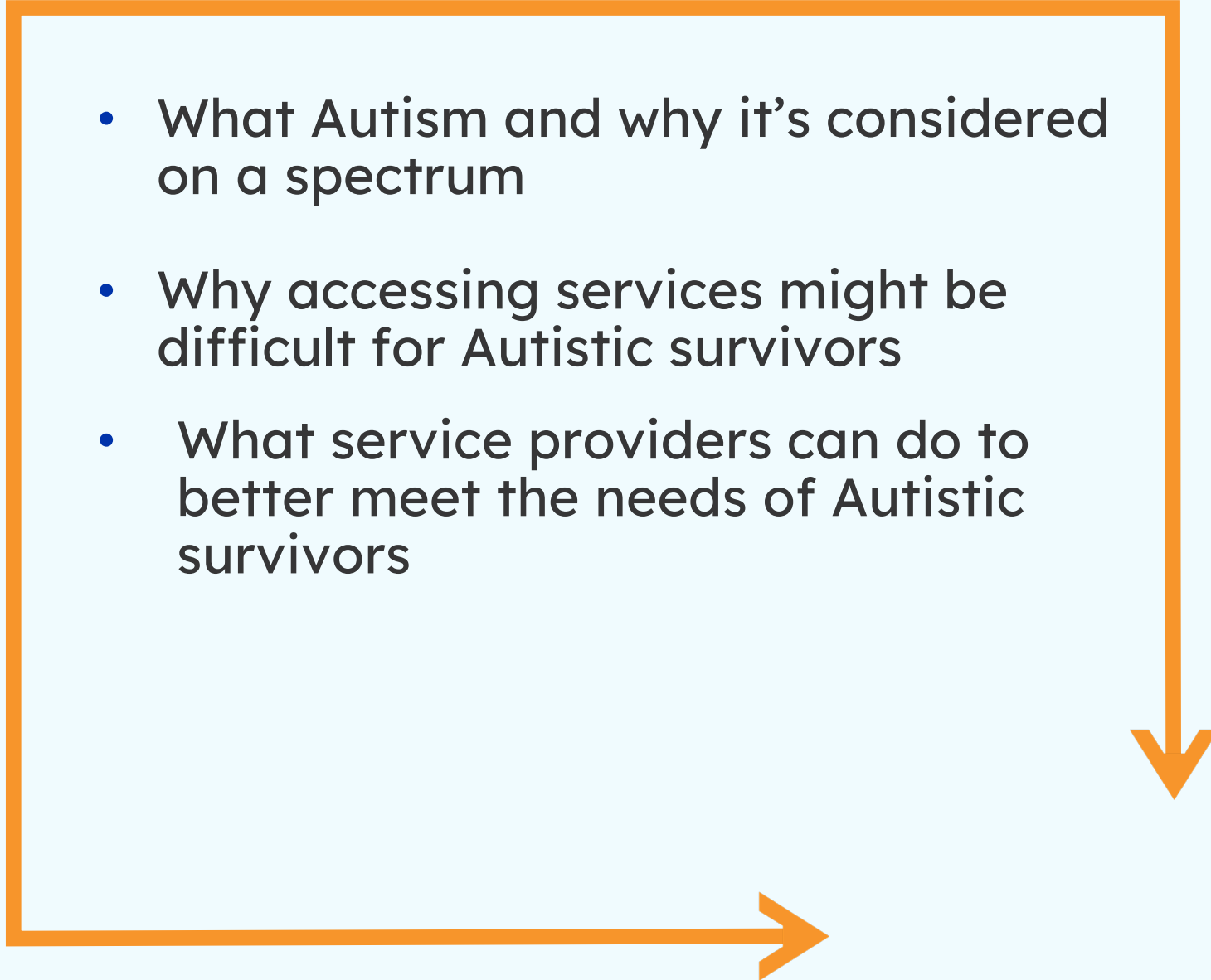
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At the end of this webinar, you will know:

- What Autism and why it's considered on a spectrum
- Why accessing services might be difficult for Autistic survivors
- What service providers can do to better meet the needs of Autistic survivors

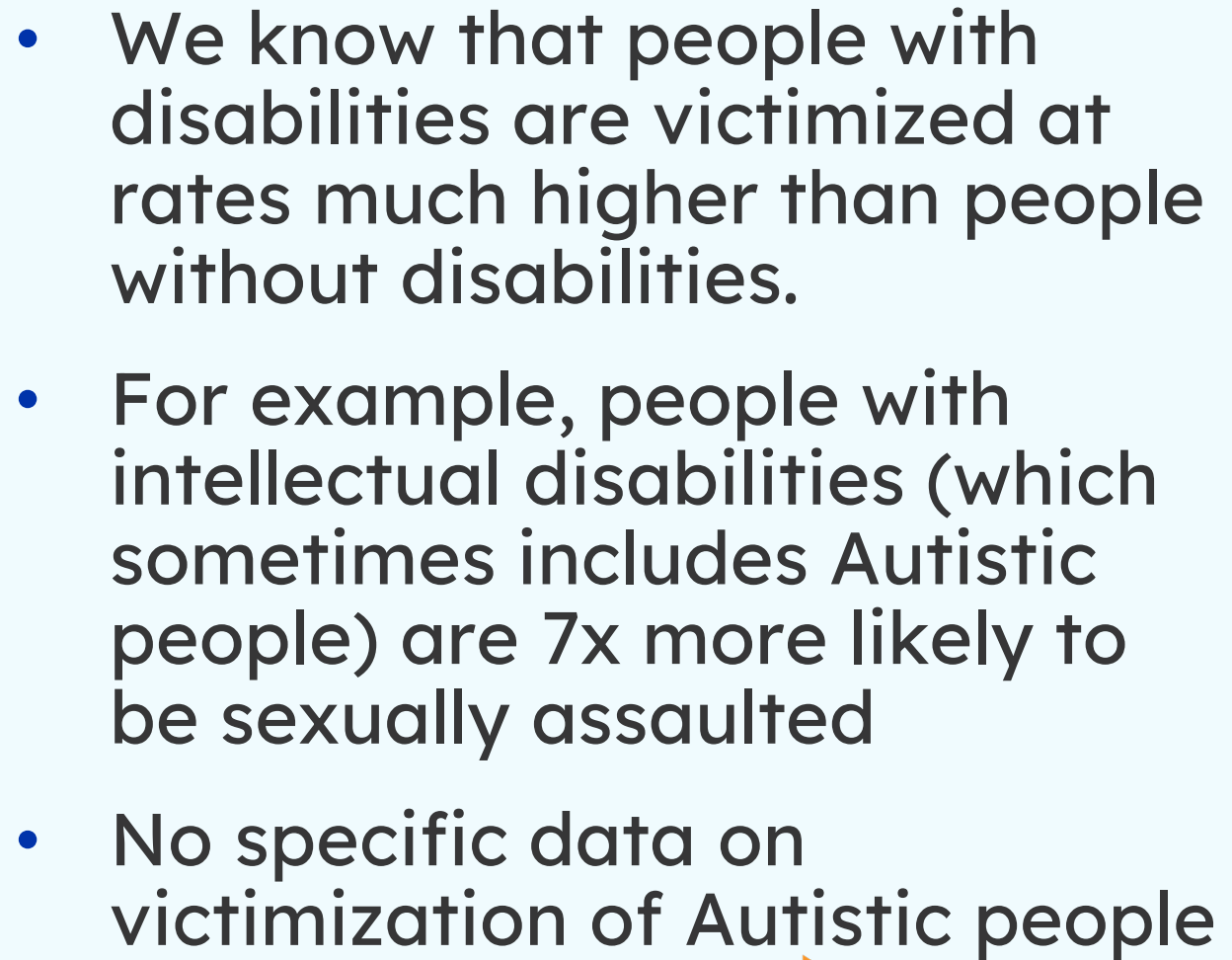


First, a note on language..

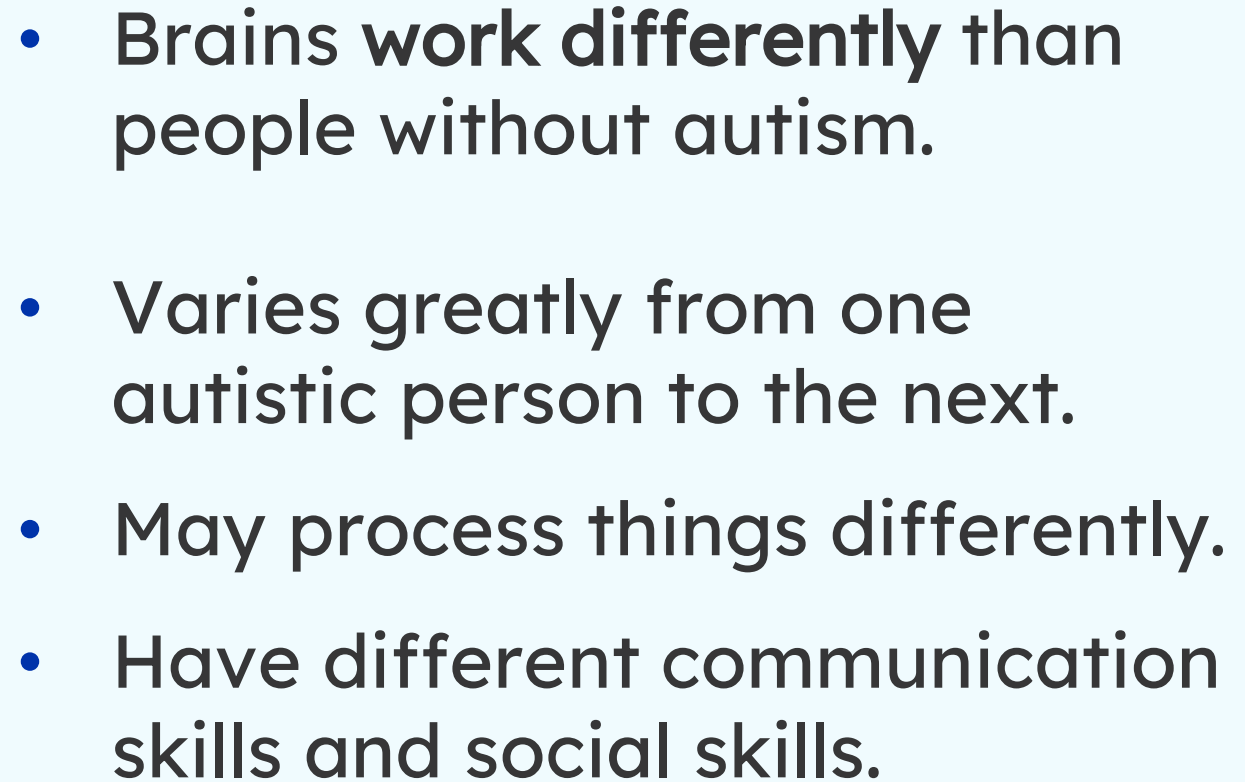
- We are making the choice to use identity-first language in this webinar (Autistic survivors rather than survivors with Autism) – here's why!



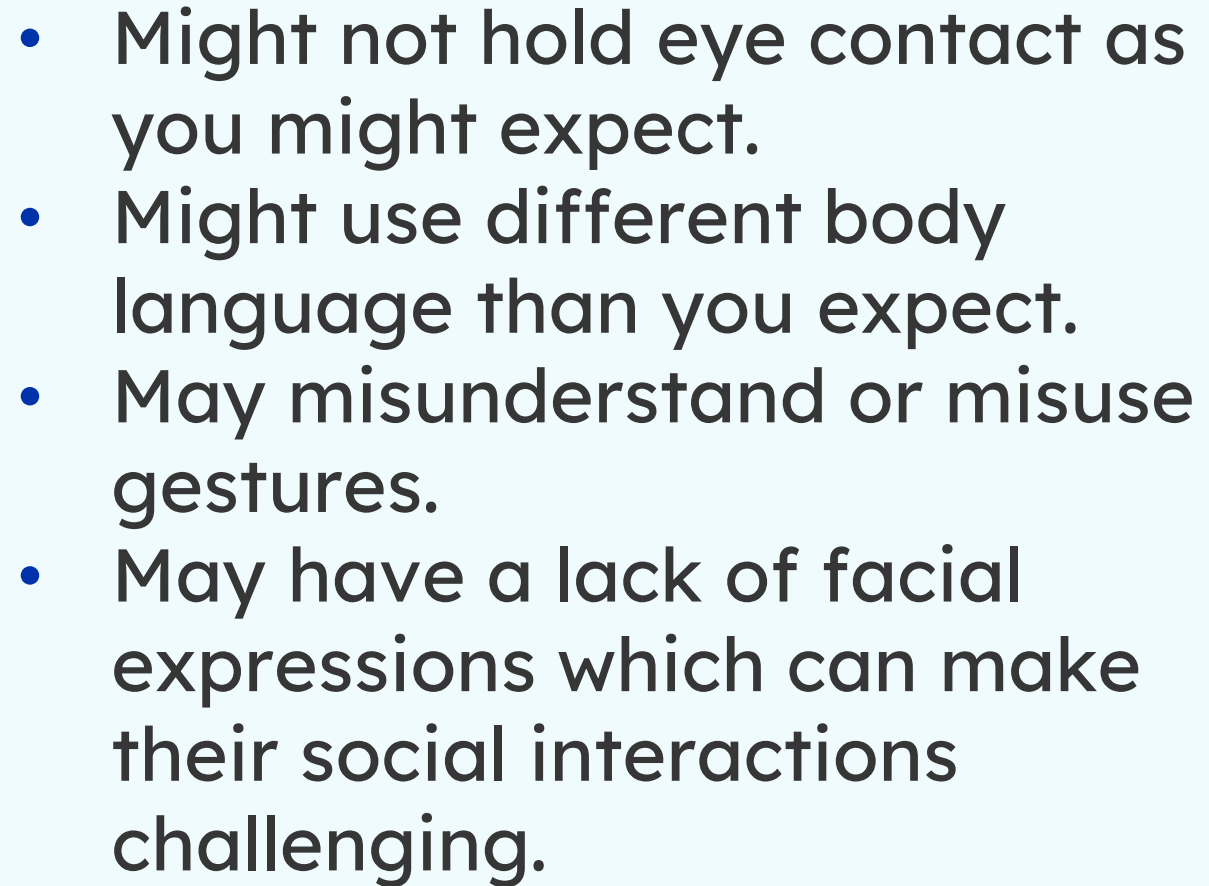
Let's start at the beginning!

- We know that people with disabilities are victimized at rates much higher than people without disabilities.
 - For example, people with intellectual disabilities (which sometimes includes Autistic people) are 7x more likely to be sexually assaulted
 - No specific data on victimization of Autistic people
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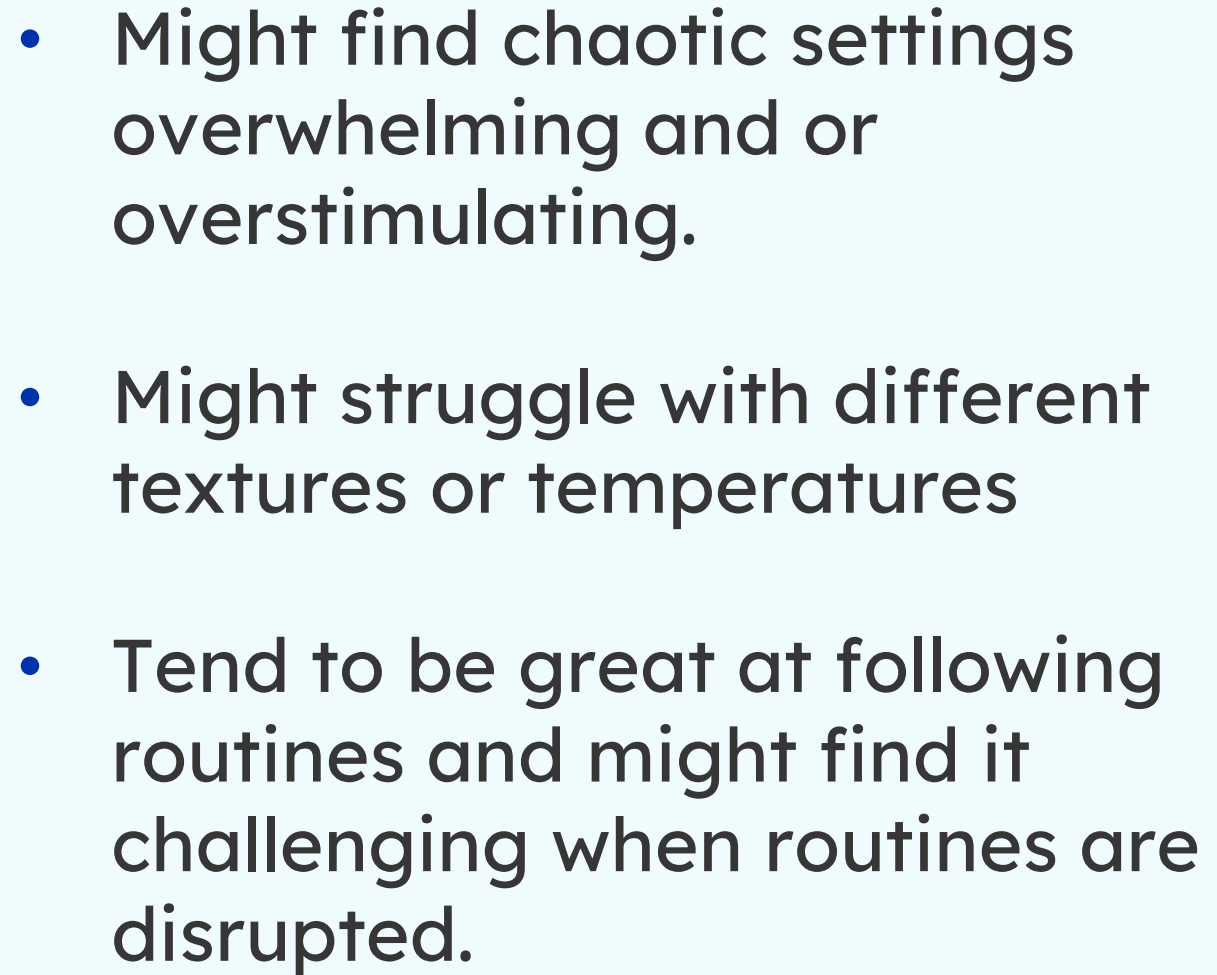
Autistic People

- Brains work differently than people without autism.
 - Varies greatly from one autistic person to the next.
 - May process things differently.
 - Have different communication skills and social skills.
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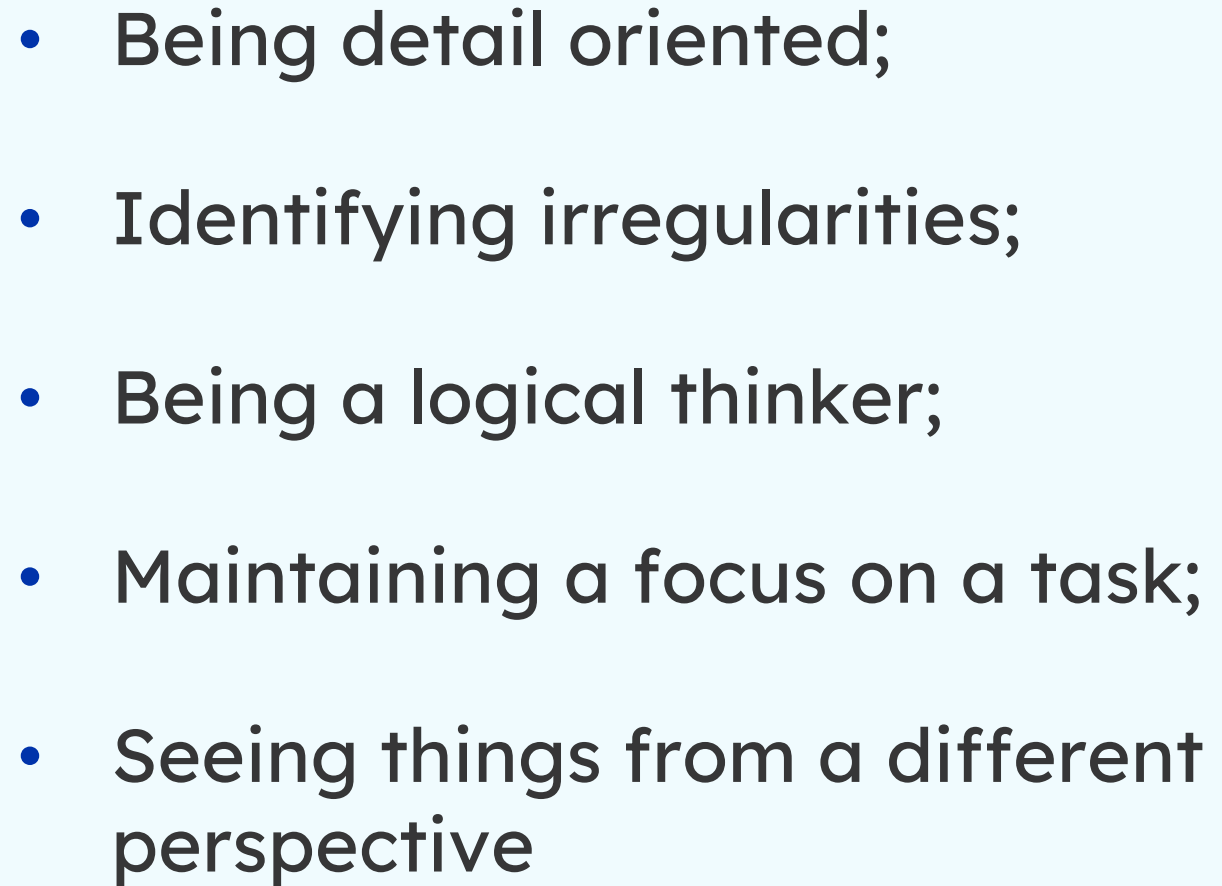
Autistic People (continued):

- Might not hold eye contact as you might expect.
 - Might use different body language than you expect.
 - May misunderstand or misuse gestures.
 - May have a lack of facial expressions which can make their social interactions challenging.
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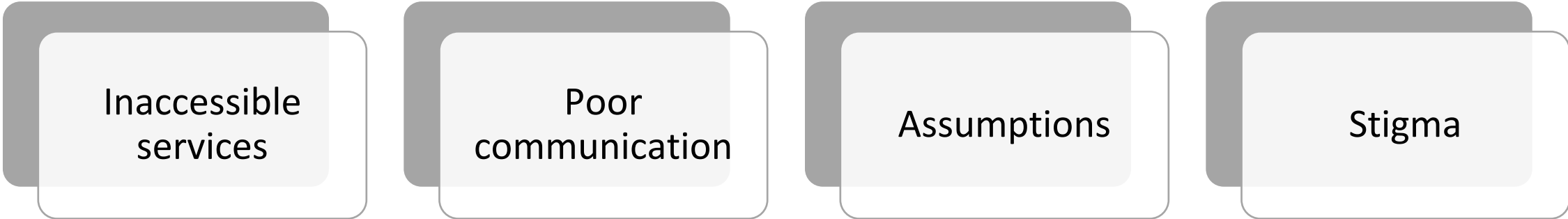
Autistic People (continued)

- Might find chaotic settings overwhelming and or overstimulating.
 - Might struggle with different textures or temperatures
 - Tend to be great at following routines and might find it challenging when routines are disrupted.
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Some Key Strengths of People on the Autism Spectrum

- Being detail oriented;
 - Identifying irregularities;
 - Being a logical thinker;
 - Maintaining a focus on a task;
 - Seeing things from a different perspective
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Challenges Created by Service Providers



Inaccessible
services

Poor
communication

Assumptions

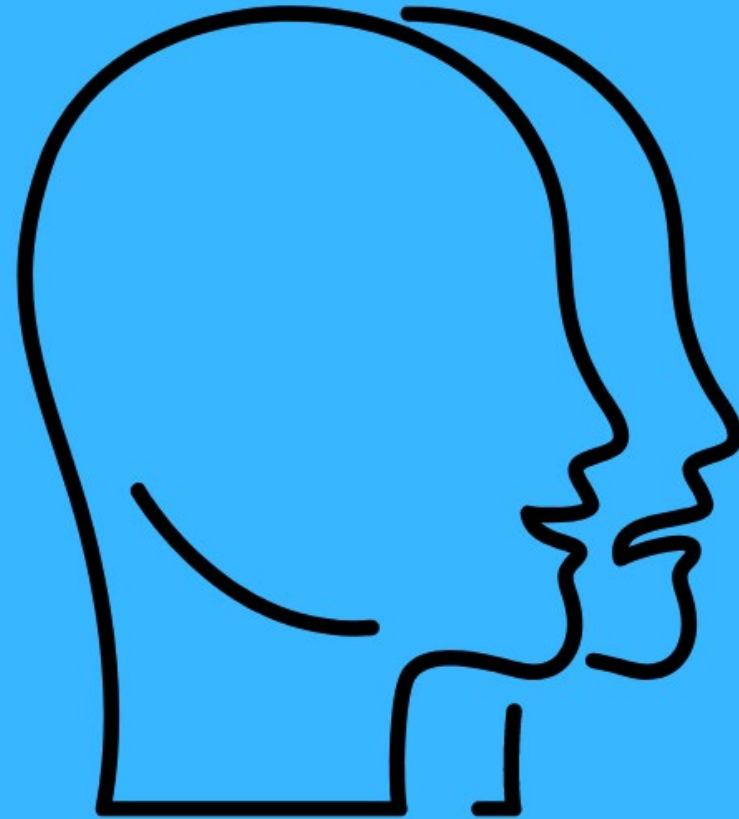
Stigma

Masking and Implications

→ *Masking (v.): artificially 'performing' social behavior that is deemed to be more 'neurotypical' or hiding behavior that might be viewed as socially unacceptable.*

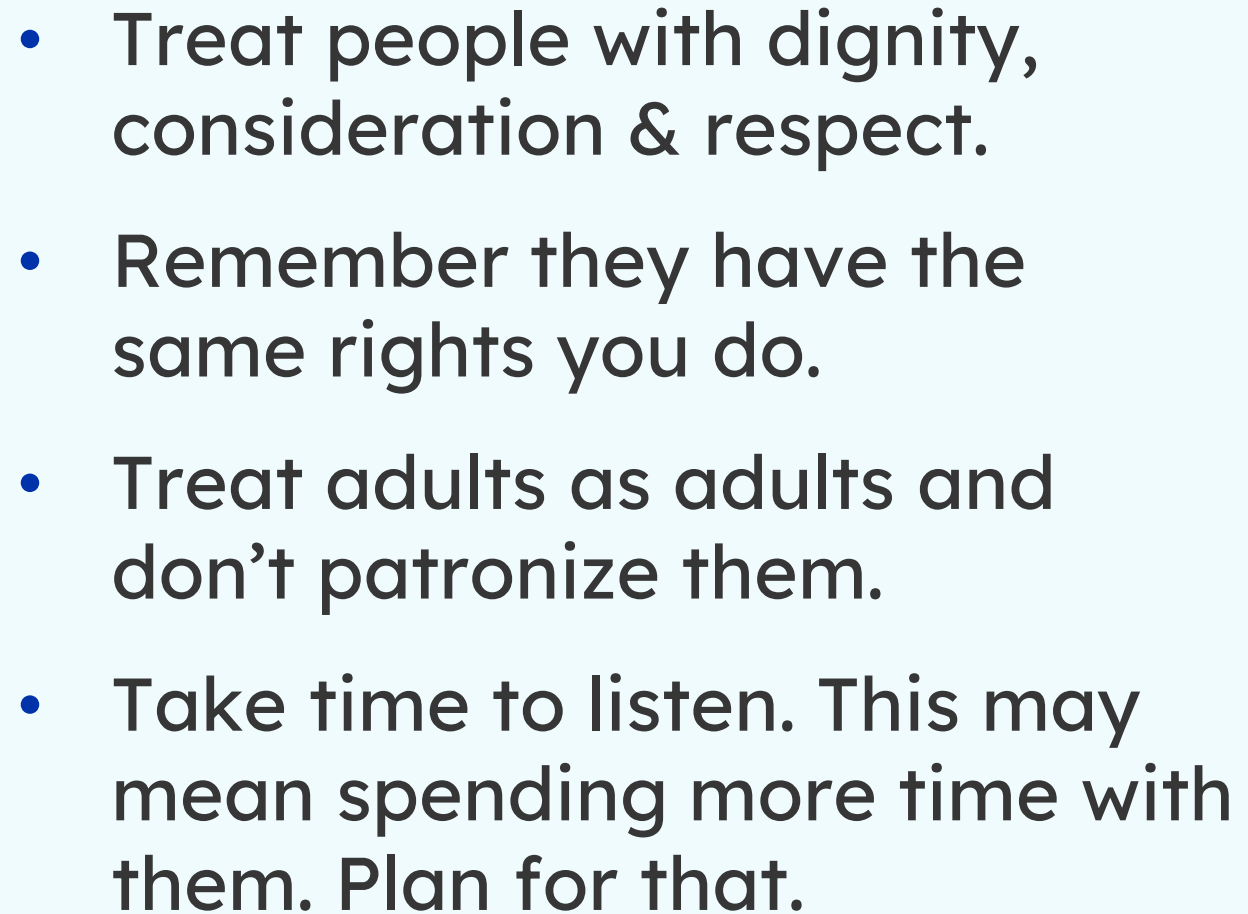


Trauma Response

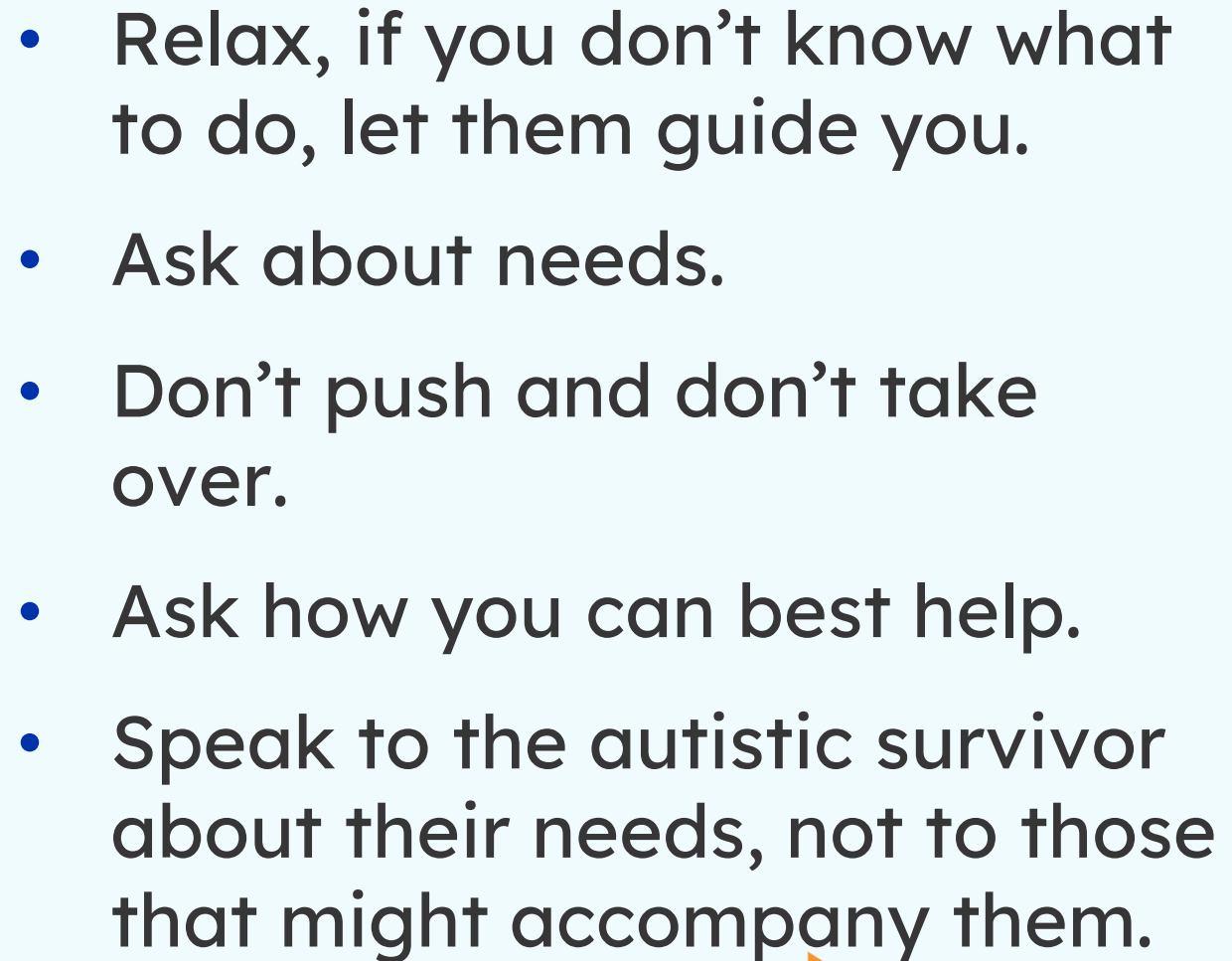


No
typical victim
or survivor.

Important Reminders

- Treat people with dignity, consideration & respect.
 - Remember they have the same rights you do.
 - Treat adults as adults and don't patronize them.
 - Take time to listen. This may mean spending more time with them. Plan for that.
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Reminders (continued)

- Relax, if you don't know what to do, let them guide you.
 - Ask about needs.
 - Don't push and don't take over.
 - Ask how you can best help.
 - Speak to the autistic survivor about their needs, not to those that might accompany them.
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What you can do...

Communication

Physical Environment

Social Environment

Stimming

Accommodations

- Social Stories
- Visual Supports

Effective Communication

- Be Clear
- Don't use figures of speech
- Be direct
- Use Plain language
- Use different modes of communication

Environment



What Else You Can Do

- Materials in plain language
- Visual prompts
- Fidget and stim devices
- Low lighting
- Low distraction or distraction free
- Planned transitions
- Social stories
- Culturally responsive

What Your Organization can do

- Hire Autistic professionals
- Consult with Autistic led organizations and agencies
- Trauma-informed trainings for staff
- Evaluate barriers and accessibility
- Partner with other organizations to coordinate services

Questions?

