

REWIRING LEADERSHIP:
UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL
OF NEURODIVERSITY IN THE
NONPROFIT SECTOR

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I WAS 52!



AGENDA

- How common is it
- Strengths and challenges
- Disclosure
- Leading as a neurodivergent leader
- Leading neurodivergent staff
- Q&A
- What's next



I IN 5

AS MANY AS ONE IN FIVE PEOPLE
ARE NEURODIVERGENT.

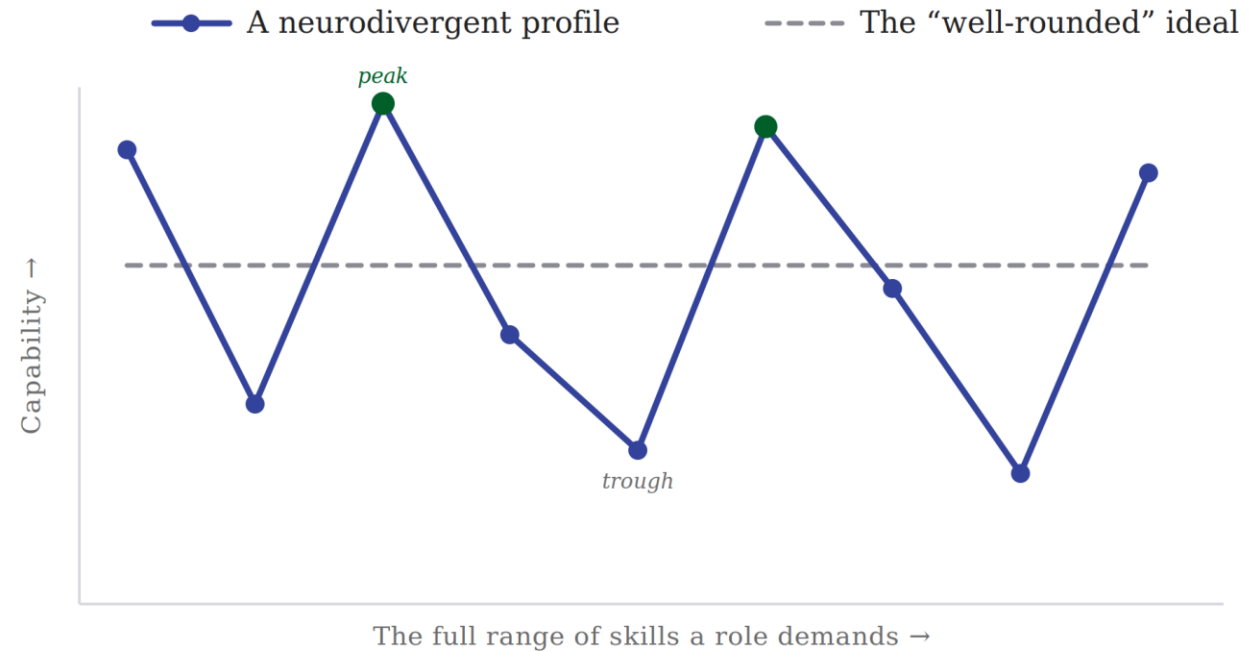
WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY

- ADHD
- Autism
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyspraxia
- and more



THE SPIKEY PROFILE

A spikey profile isn't a deficit. It's a mismatch between a real person and a system designed for an average that doesn't exist.



Most roles are built for the flat line. No real person is it.

THE PEAKS

- Pattern recognition
- Hyperfocus
- Deep expertise
- Systems thinking
- Creativity / divergent / lateral thinking
- Resilience and adaptability
- Justice and values orientation

THE TROUGHS

- Executive function
- Sensory load
- Communication styles
- Social expectations
- Masking
- Burnout

DISCLOSURE

SHOULD I TELL THEM?





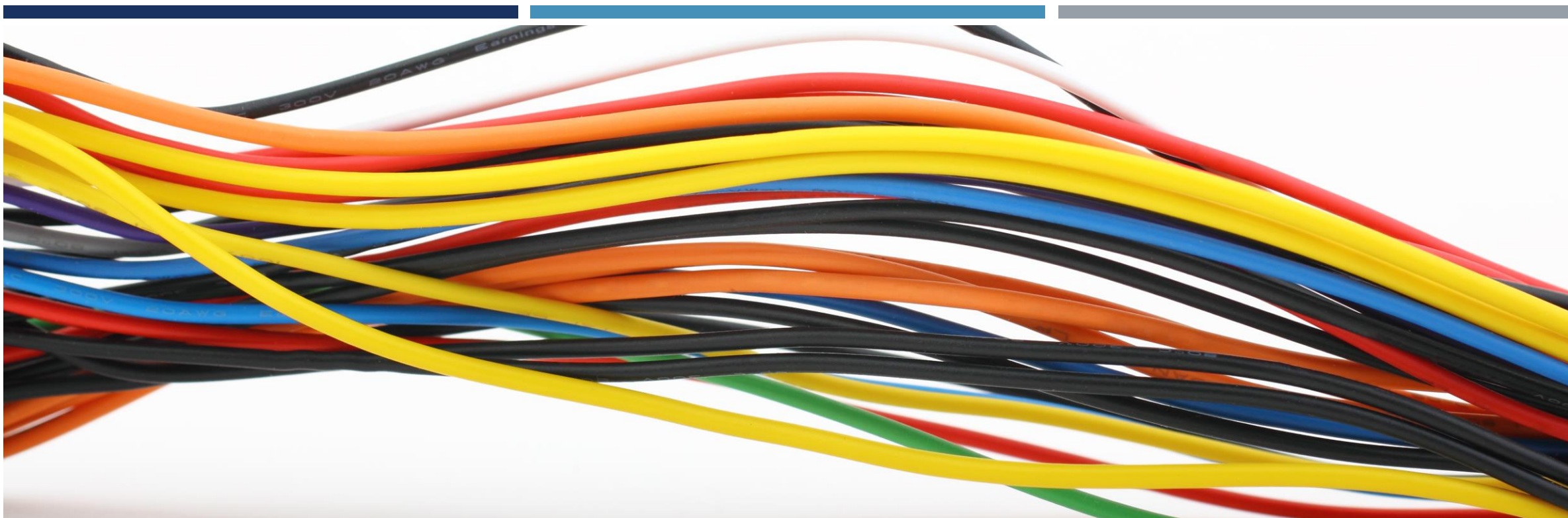
THE JOB ISN'T TO
ENCOURAGE DISCLOSURE.

IT'S TO MAKE DISCLOSURE
UNNECESSARY.



LEADING AS A NEURODIVERGENT LEADER





TIP 1: WORK WITH YOUR WIRING

WORK WITH YOUR WIRING, NOT AGAINST IT



TIP 2: AUTHENTICITY, WITHIN WHAT'S SAFE

BE AS AUTHENTIC AS YOUR CONTEXT MAKES SAFE, AND WORK ON THE CONTEXT.



TIP 3: STEWARD YOURSELF

STEWARD YOURSELF, NOT JUST OTHERS.



TIP 4: SPIKES AND TROUGHS

PLAY TO YOUR SPIKES. STAFF YOUR TROUGHS.



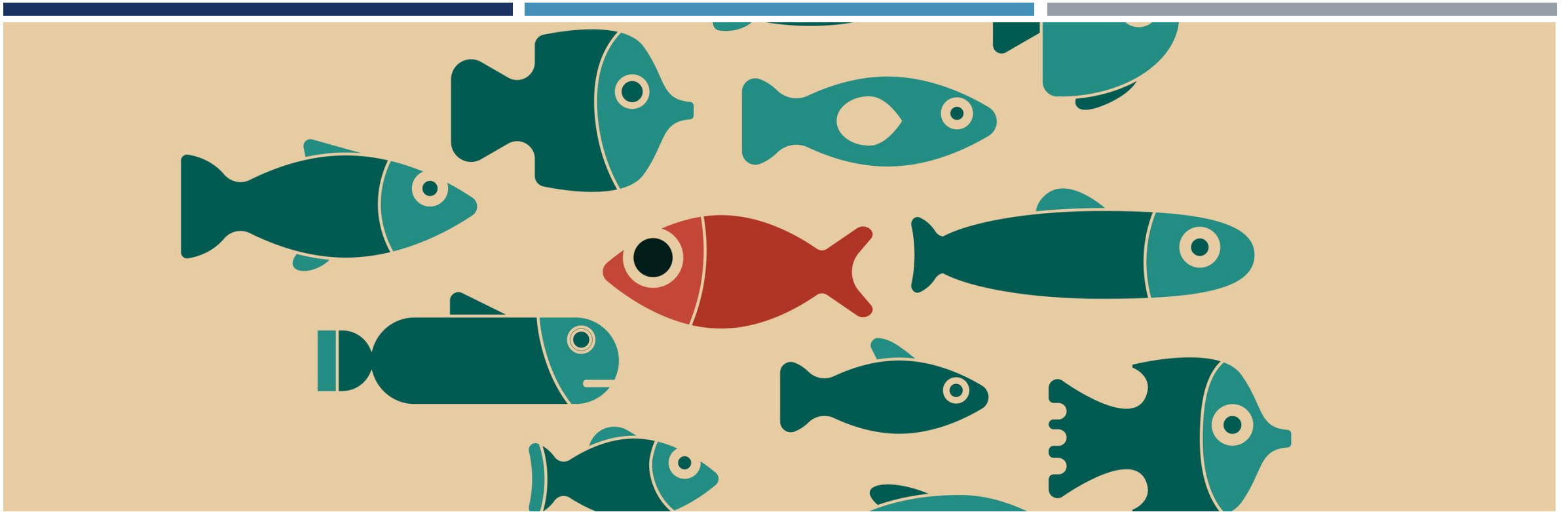
LEADING NEURODIVERGENT STAFF





TIP 1: OUTCOMES, NOT STYLE

DEFINE OUTCOMES, NOT STYLE.



TIP 2: INDIVIDUALIZE

INDIVIDUALIZE. DON'T STANDARDIZE.



TIP 3: COMMUNICATION MODE

CHECK YOUR DEFAULT COMMUNICATION MODE.



TIP 4: DESIGN THE ENVIRONMENT

DESIGN THE ENVIRONMENT, NOT JUST THE RELATIONSHIP.

REVIEW

Leading as a neurodivergent Leader

1. Work with your wiring, not against it.
2. Be as authentic as your context makes safe and work on the context.
3. Steward yourself, not just others.
4. Play to your spikes. Staff your troughs.

Leading neurodivergent staff

1. Outcomes, not style.
2. Individualize. Don't standardize.
3. Check your default communication mode.
4. Design the environment, not just the relationship.

FROM ACCOMMODATIONS TO A CULTURE OF ACCOMMODATION

QUESTIONS



WHAT'S NEXT?



Slides



Recording

LEADERSHIP FUNDAMENTALS FOR NONPROFIT LEADERS



- 5-part webinar series
- Sept 22 – Oct 20, 2026, 2:00–3:00 PM ET
- Topics:
 - Authentic Leadership
 - Transformational Leadership
 - Servant Leadership
 - Effective Management
 - Organizational Change
- Recording, workbook & self-assessment included

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HAVING WORKED IN THE ARTS, HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICE, AND EDUCATION SECTORS, MIKHAEL BORNSTEIN HAS MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS A NONPROFIT LEADER.

MIKHAEL IS AN AFP MASTER TRAINER AND A FREQUENT SPEAKER AT CONFERENCES ACROSS NORTH AMERICA. HE TEACHES AT GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE, FLEMING COLLEGE TORONTO, AND TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY.

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