

# Where Real Interventions Happen: Rethinking Education for Autistic Students

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## Stats...Stats...Stats! (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022)

- In 2019, Alberta's population is 2.0% of crude prevalence of people ages 1-17 being on the Autism Spectrum.
- Alberta's Population in December 2025 was 5.04 million people.
- That is 100,818 people in this province alone living with Autism.
- The national average is 2.0%.
- Highest prevalence comes from low-income households.

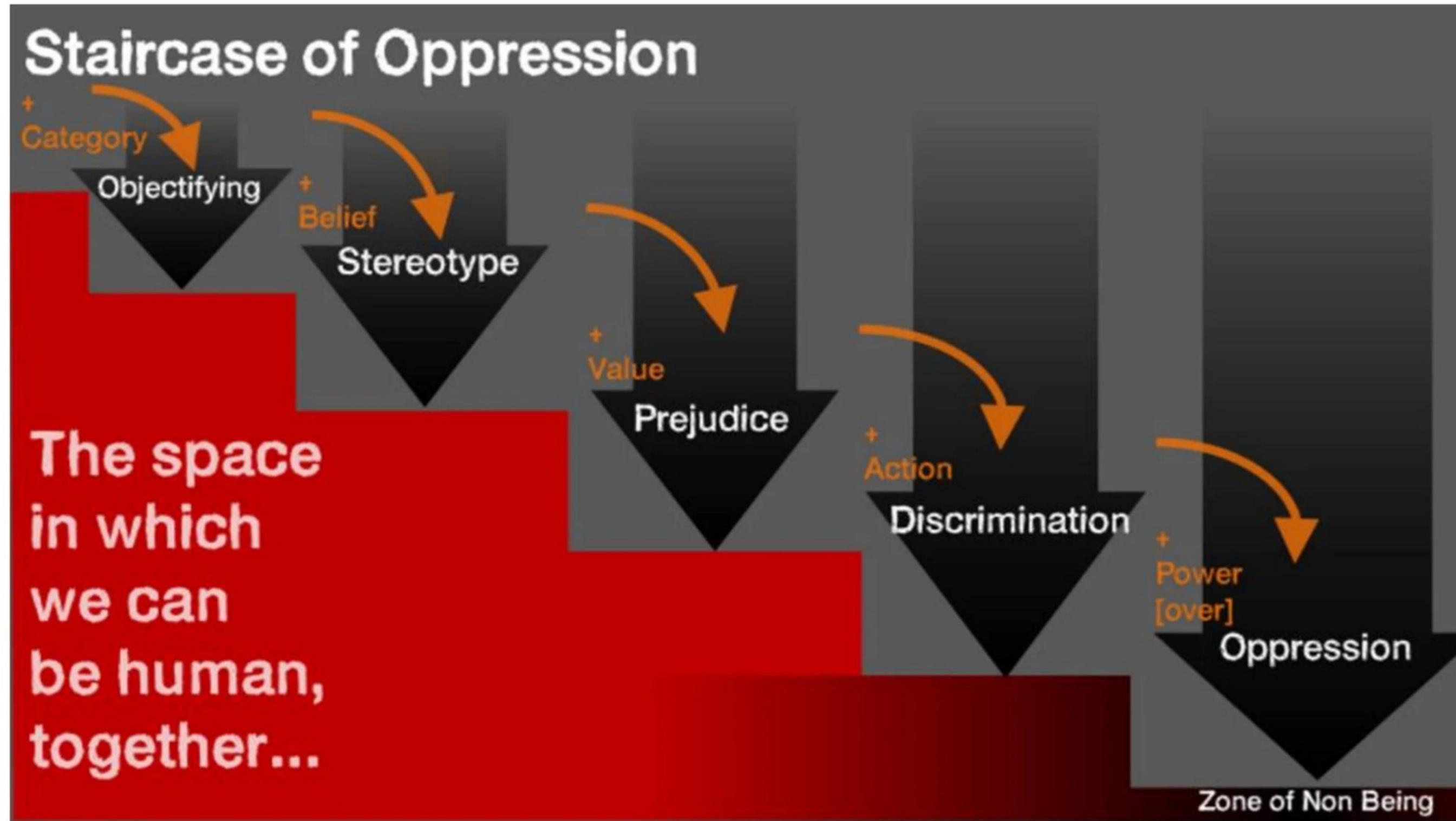


## Why do Stats Matter?

- We are the first line of intervention.
- We are the first ones to notice changes in behaviour that differ from home life.
- We are the ones who have this conversation with parents/caregivers.



# What is the perfect student to you?



## Example 1:

A student is fidgeting in class due to the lights being turned on and the teacher pulls the student out of the classroom for a one on one chat. The teacher stands over the student and threatens the student with consequences if they do not stop fidgeting in their seat. The student continues to fidget by biting on their pencil, tapping their pen on the desk, etc. The teacher sends the child out into the hallway for the remainder of the period where there is a desk just outside the door to the classroom. The teacher never asked why the student was doing what they were doing, but instead assumed they were disruptive and rude.



# Where would this place on the Staircase of Oppression?

0

 Objectifying

0

 Stereotyping

0

 Prejudice

0

 Discrimination

0

 Oppression

## Example 2:

A student who lives with autism is being bullied by other students in the classroom. When the student brings this up with the teacher. The teacher says “If I didn't see it, it never happened”. The teacher then moved the student to the front of the room next to the bullies to keep a better eye on things after their parent complained to the teacher.



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## Example 3:

An autistic student in university is training to become a teacher. During second practicum, the student was cornered by their faculty supervisor in the photocopier room where they said that their professional reflection said they were on the autism spectrum and how this impacts their teaching practice and what sorts of things they did to mitigate things. The faculty supervisor then said that this student teacher does not have what it takes to be a teacher on the basis of their communication patterns and their lack of building rapport with the students and suggested that the student teacher get “communication lessons”.



## Example 3: Part 2

The student then said as an autistic advocate they can tell you that no such program exists for adults and that their communication was just fine because they were speaking to the faculty supervisor right now. The student teacher then made a complaint to the education practicum advisor and said if they fail her on her own person, then she will appeal it as she followed the professional code of conduct to the letter and that it was going against the university's safety and respect policy.



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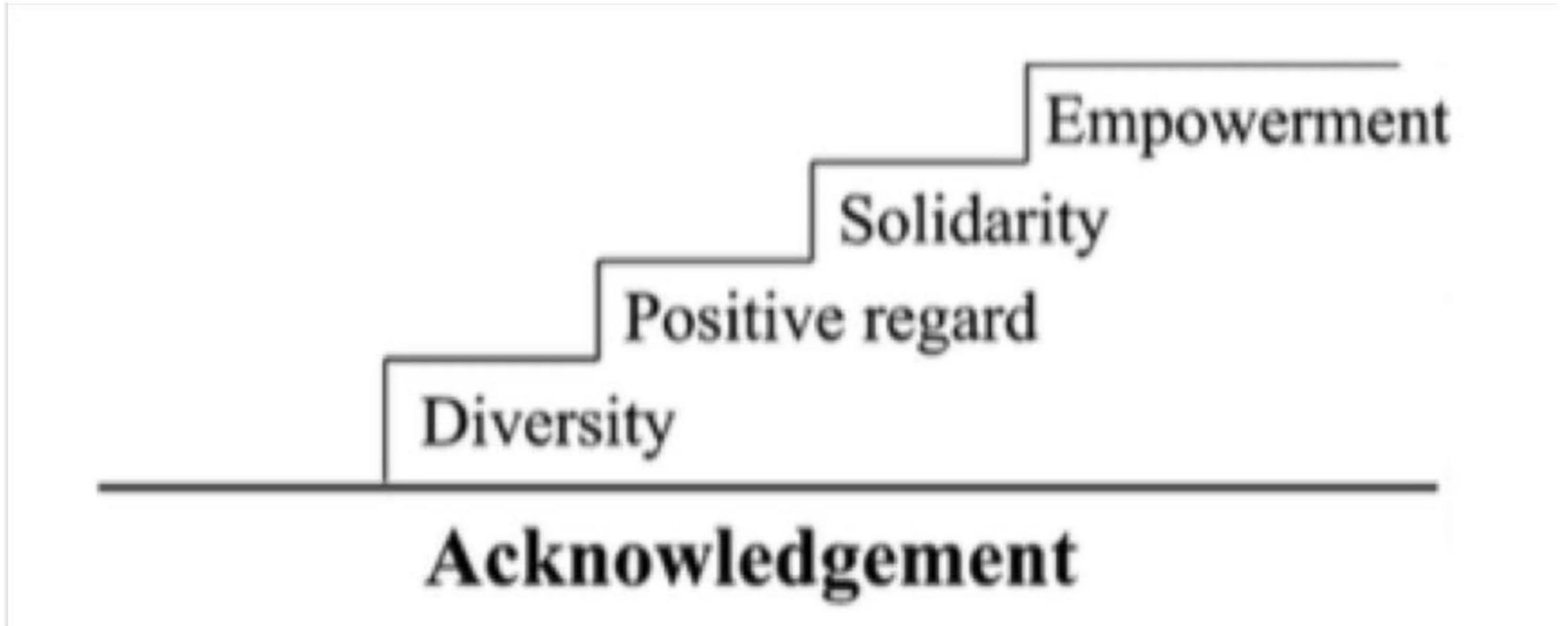
Who is the student in these interactions?





- Bachelor's Degree in History & Anthropology
- Bachelor's Degree in Education (After Degree)
- Applying to complete their Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
- Each example was throughout my educational experience.
- It shaped how I do things in the classroom.

# The Stairway of Empowerment (Thesen, J., 2018)



# Acknowledgement Phase

- Validate, Validate, Validate!
  - The person feels seen & heard.
  - Their person is valued and appreciated.

Teachers provide safe classroom environments in schools and this builds acknowledgement.

- Noise Cancelling headphones
- Decompression space (if a school has one)
- Creating Zen Den's in the classroom (bonus points if you let the student choose what goes into the zen den).
- Visual aides in the classroom
- Checklists of tasks for the class period.
- Technology integration



# Diversity

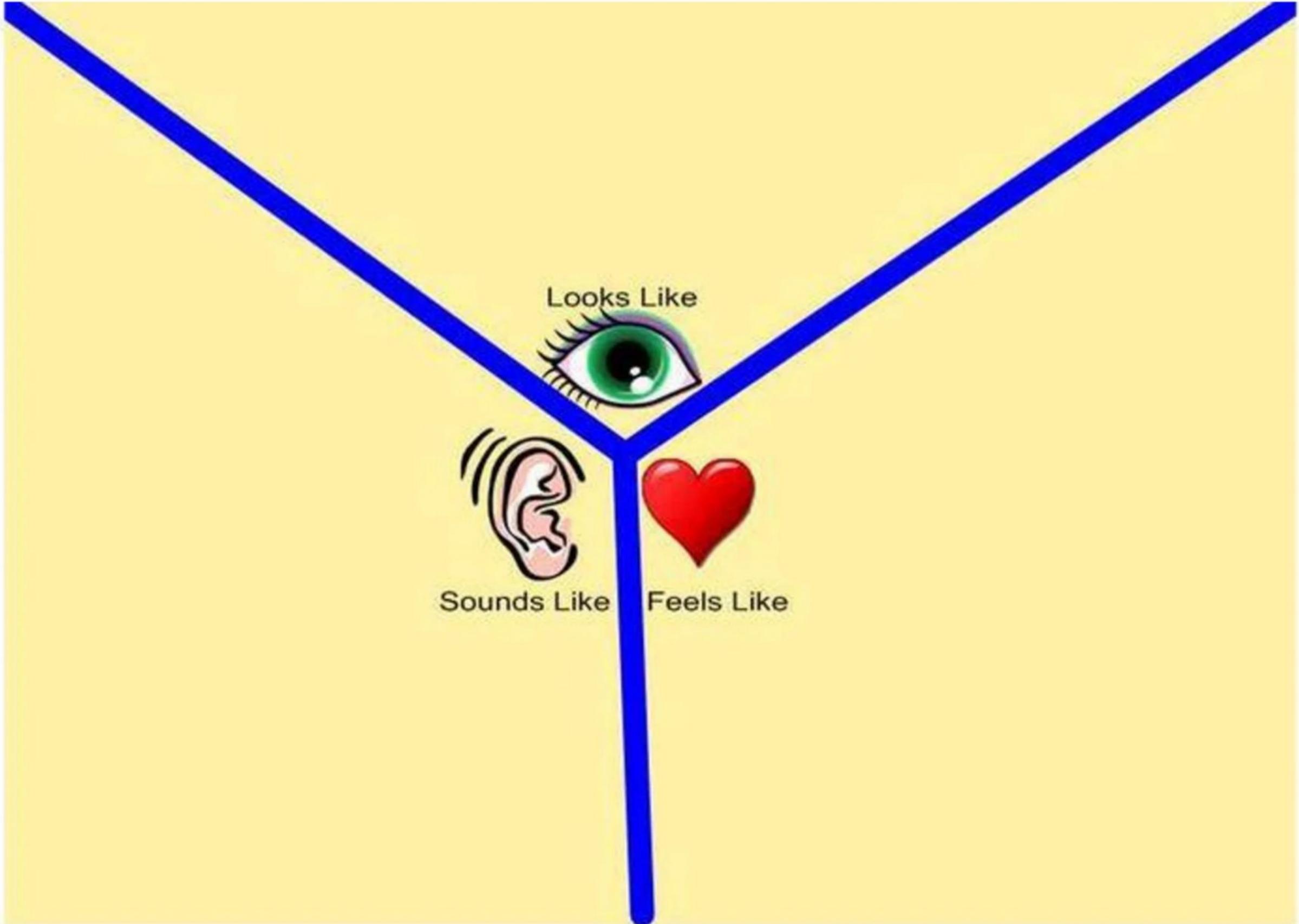
- Actively value differences rather than seeing them as a basis for stereotyping.
- Find a positive with that student and build off of that.
- Could be when they do things on task.
- Could be when they solve that hard to figure out problem.
- Could be when their doing things that foster independence.
- Social-Emotional Learning integration into your classroom will also be important here so that other students build this diversity into their behaviours over time.



# Positive Regard

- When you treat others with respect and empathy.
- Modelling behaviours as teachers is huge.
- Classroom Contracts at the beginning of the year where they help create their classroom environment.
- You implement what it feels like, looks like, sounds like as a model for students.
- If you model what kindness looks like to the the students.
- Students will over time foster that independently.





# Solidarity/Empowerment

- Where we foster control in the person's life.
- You act more as a guide to provide appropriate choices, and then support them in the choice they make.
- Autonomy + Choice Making = Independence
- Fosters self-worth, confidence, ownership, accountability, and more.



# What are your plans for fostering empowerment for Autistic Students today?

1 Submission      There are no submissions yet.

2 Voting (0)

3 Result

Thank you for engaging with me today! I am free to take your questions you might have.

