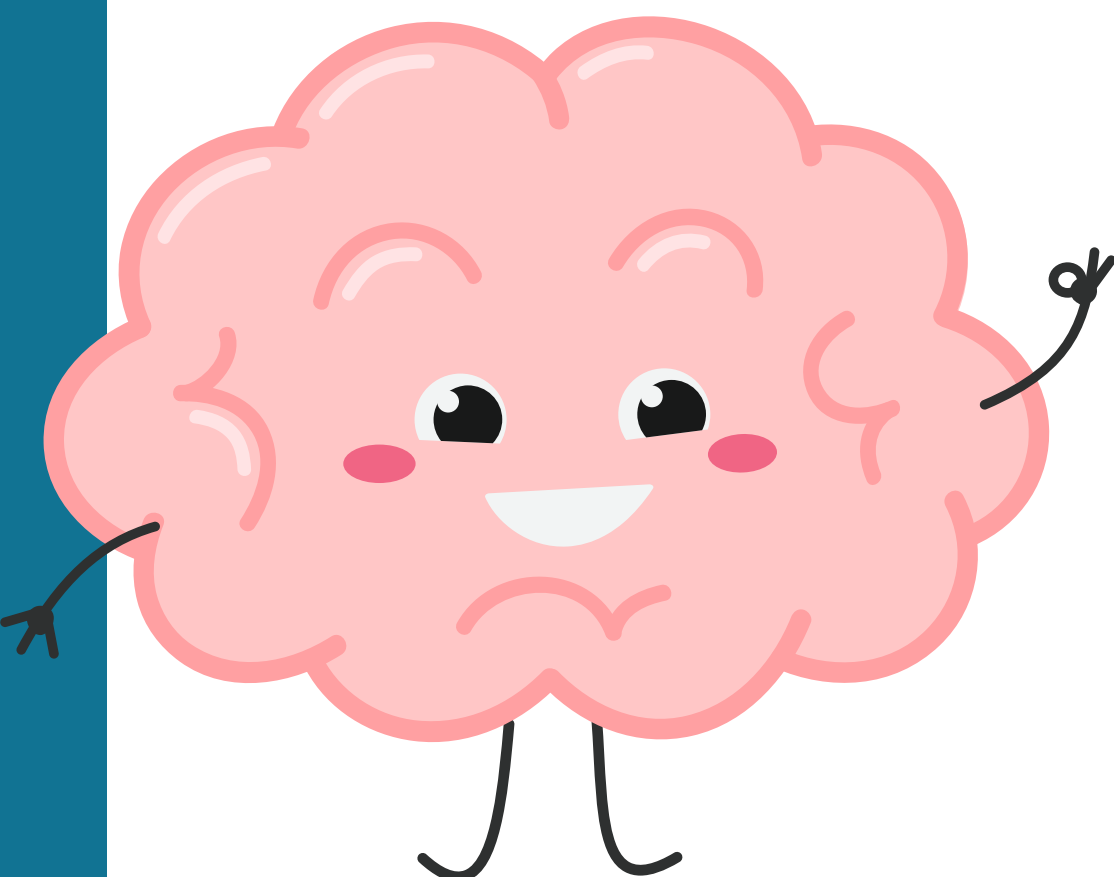# Understanding **ADHD** at Work:
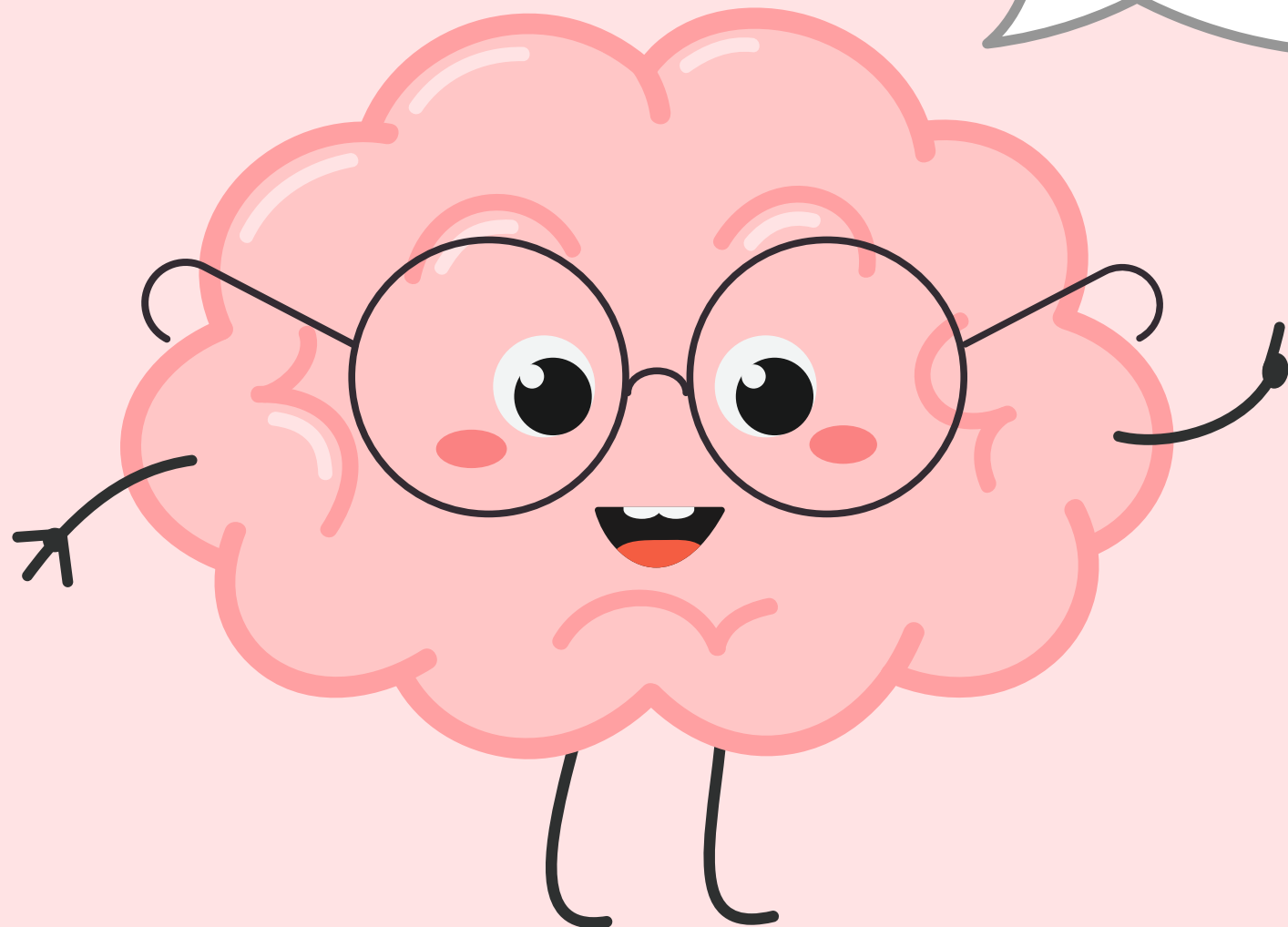# A Learning Resource for Managers

Inclusion by Design
Empowering Neurodiversity. Transforming Workplaces
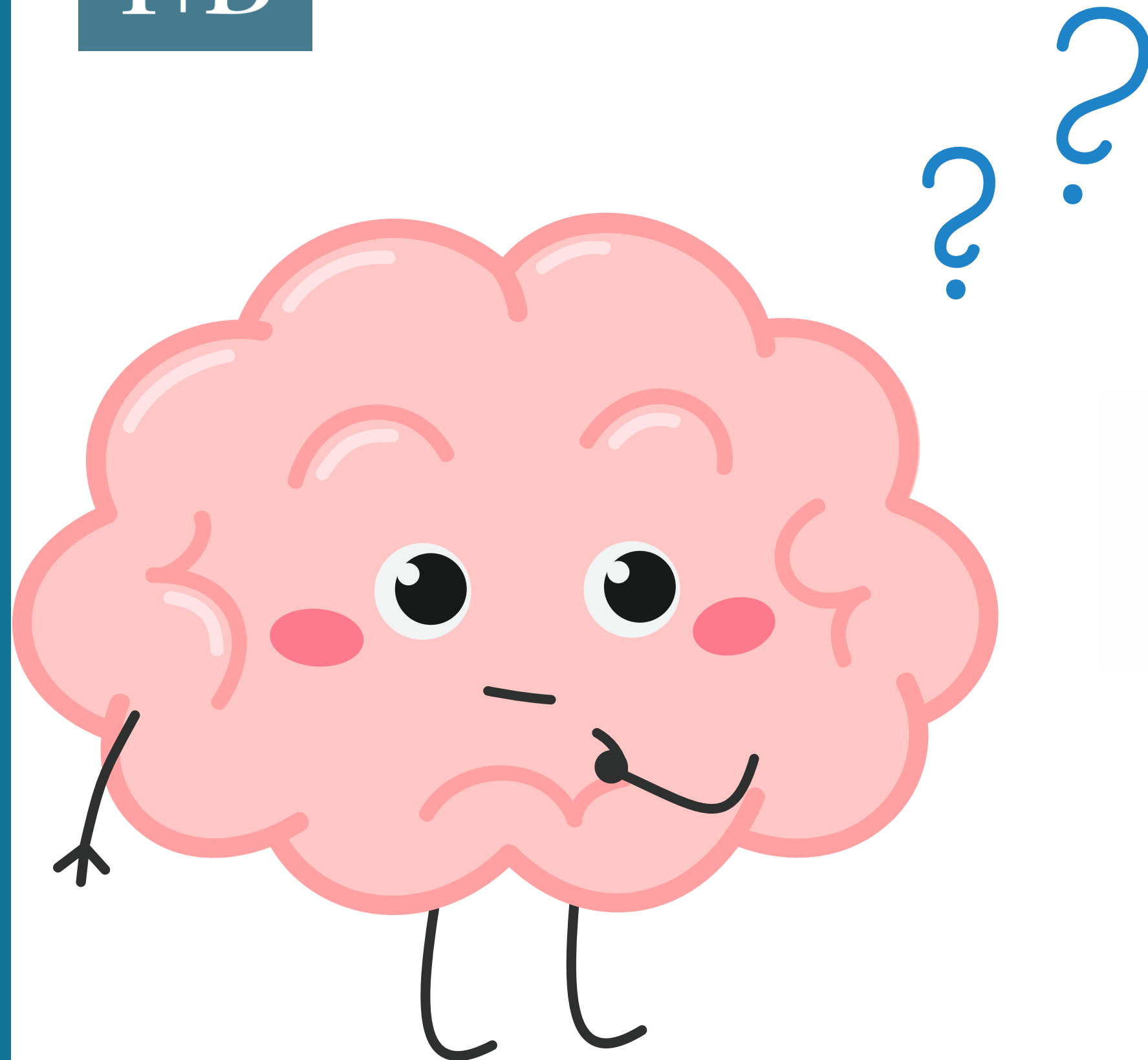
Overview

Understanding ADHD

ADHD In the Workplace

Common Challenges

Supporting Team Members

Manager Mindset

Building Empathy and Inclusion

Practical Takeaways

What is ADHD?

ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects attention regulation, impulse control, and activity level. It is not a lack of intelligence or effort; it's a difference in how the brain processes information and manages executive functions.
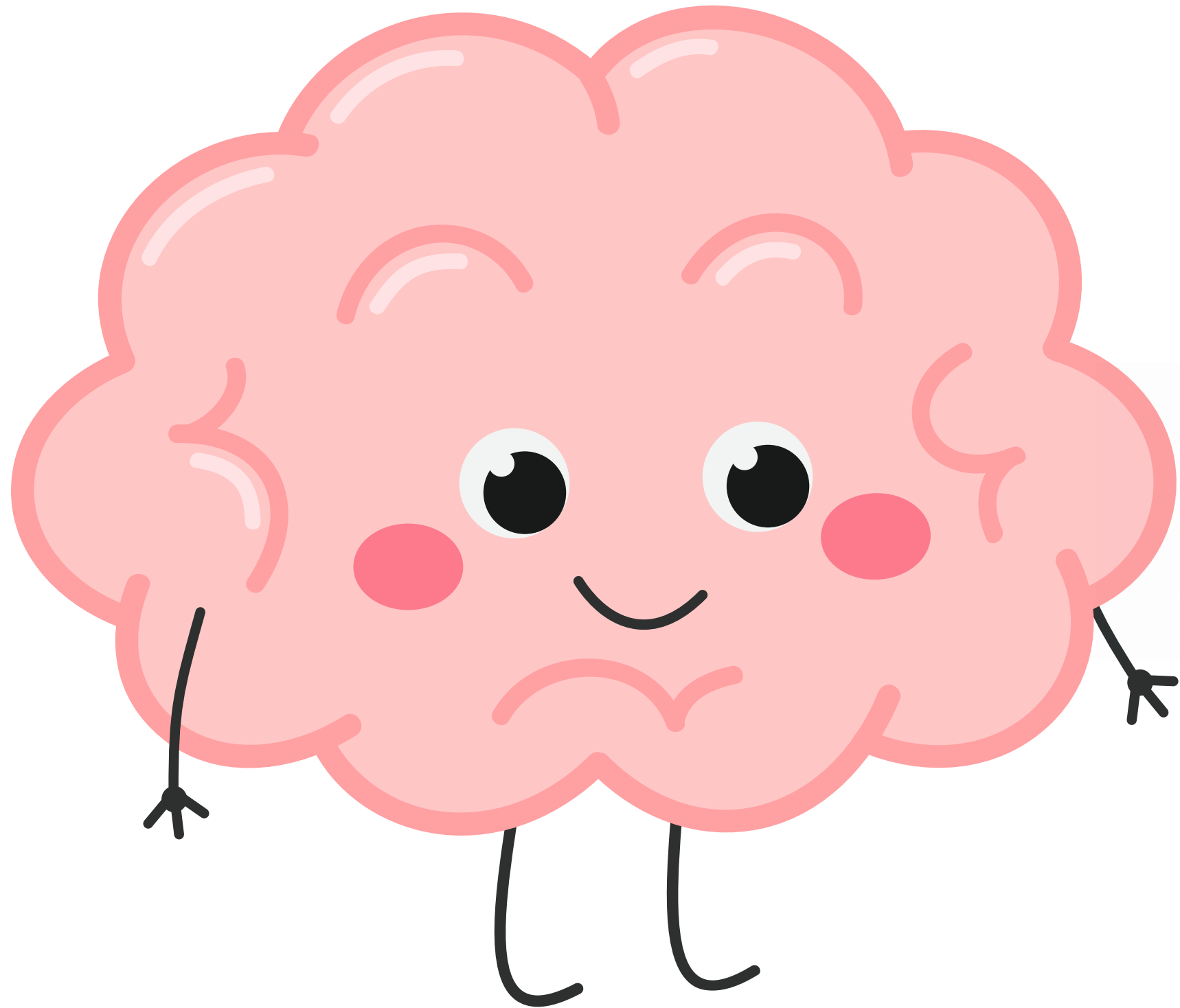
Understanding how ADHD behaviors may show up at work.

- Difficulty priorotizing or completing adminstrative tasks

- Overwhelm with unstructured or high interrupt environments

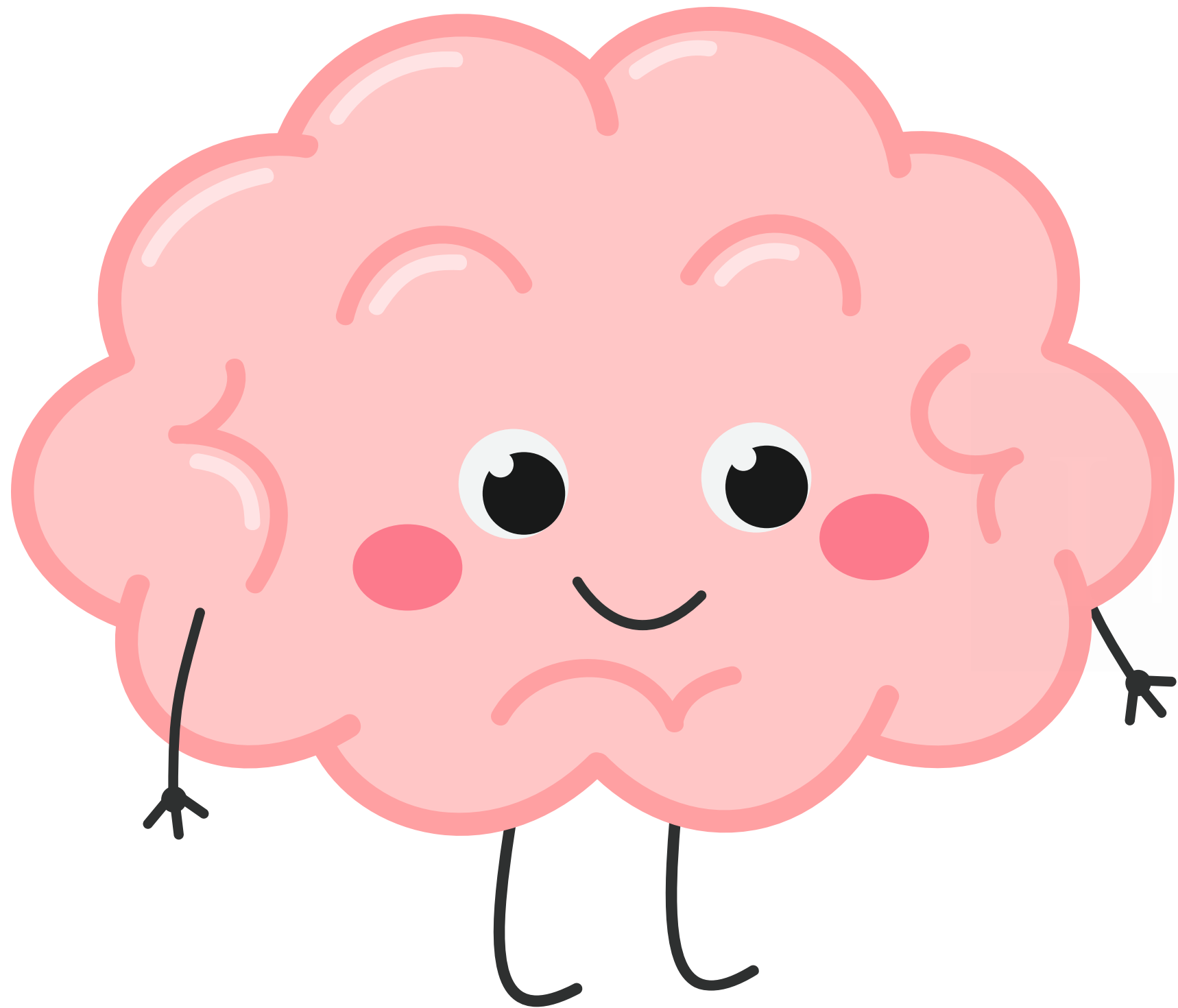- Creativity, innovation, and rapid problem solving in stimulating settings

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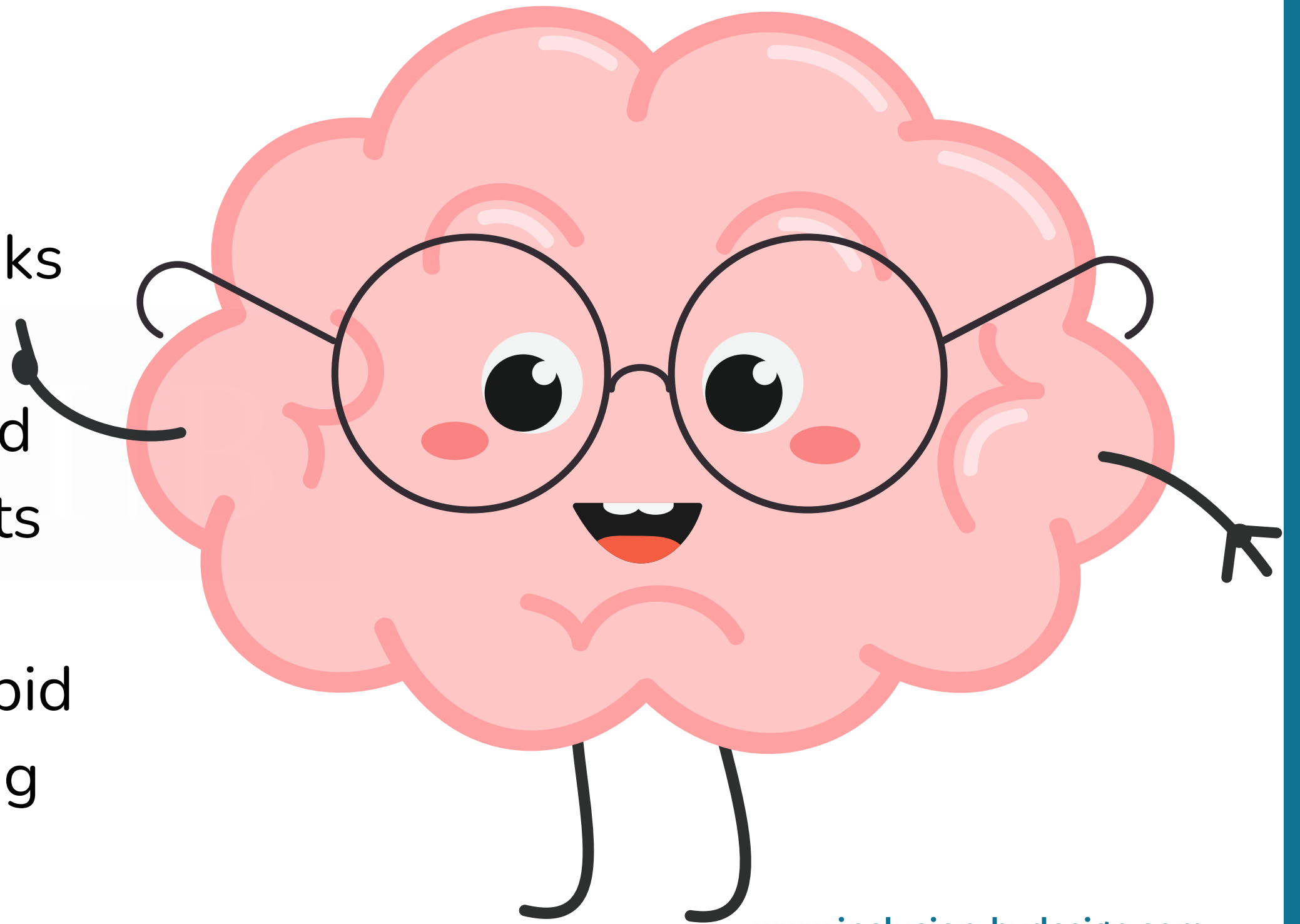
Inattention:

"Inattention" in ADHD isn't laziness. It eflects differences in executive functioning, particularly how the brain regulates focus, motivation, and working memory.

Inattention:

ADHD brains are interest based, not importance based. This means attention is drawn by stimulation, novelty, or urgency rather preceived obligation.

Understanding Hyperactivity in the workplace:

Hyperactivity in adults doesn't always look like bouncing off the walls. It often shows up as internal restlessness, constant mental activity or need for movement and stimulation to maintain focus.

It's less abut excess energy, and more about uneven energy regulation, the brain's drive to stay alert and engaged in a world that often feels slow or under-stimulating.
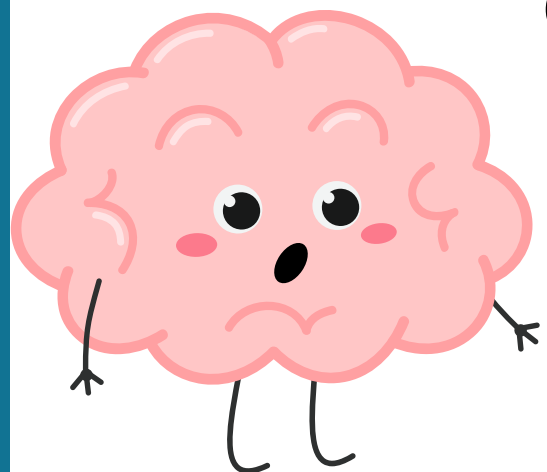
Understanding Impulsivity in the Workplace:

It's not a lack of discipline or professionalism. It's a neurological timing difference in how the brain processes inhibition, emotional cues, and descion-making.

Instead of pausing before responding, the ADHD brain often acts in real-time, driven by urgency, passion, or emotional intensity.

In supportive environments, this translates to decisiveness, creativity, and authenticity.
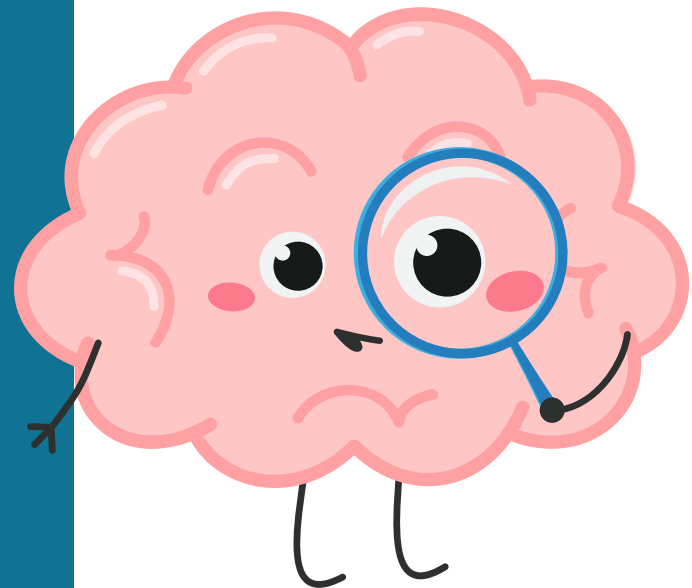
Common Workplace Challenges:

- Time Management
- Organization
- Focus & Attention
- Communication
- Emotional Regulation
- Task Completion
- Feedback Evaluation

- Time blindness, underestimating how long tasks take, or difficulty switching tasks
- Desk or digital Clutter, misplaced files, or trouble managing competing priorities
- Zoining out in meetings, hyperfocusing on one thing for hours
- Speaking out of turn, over-sharing, or forgetting to follow-up
- Frustration with slow processes, sensitivity to tone, or visible stress
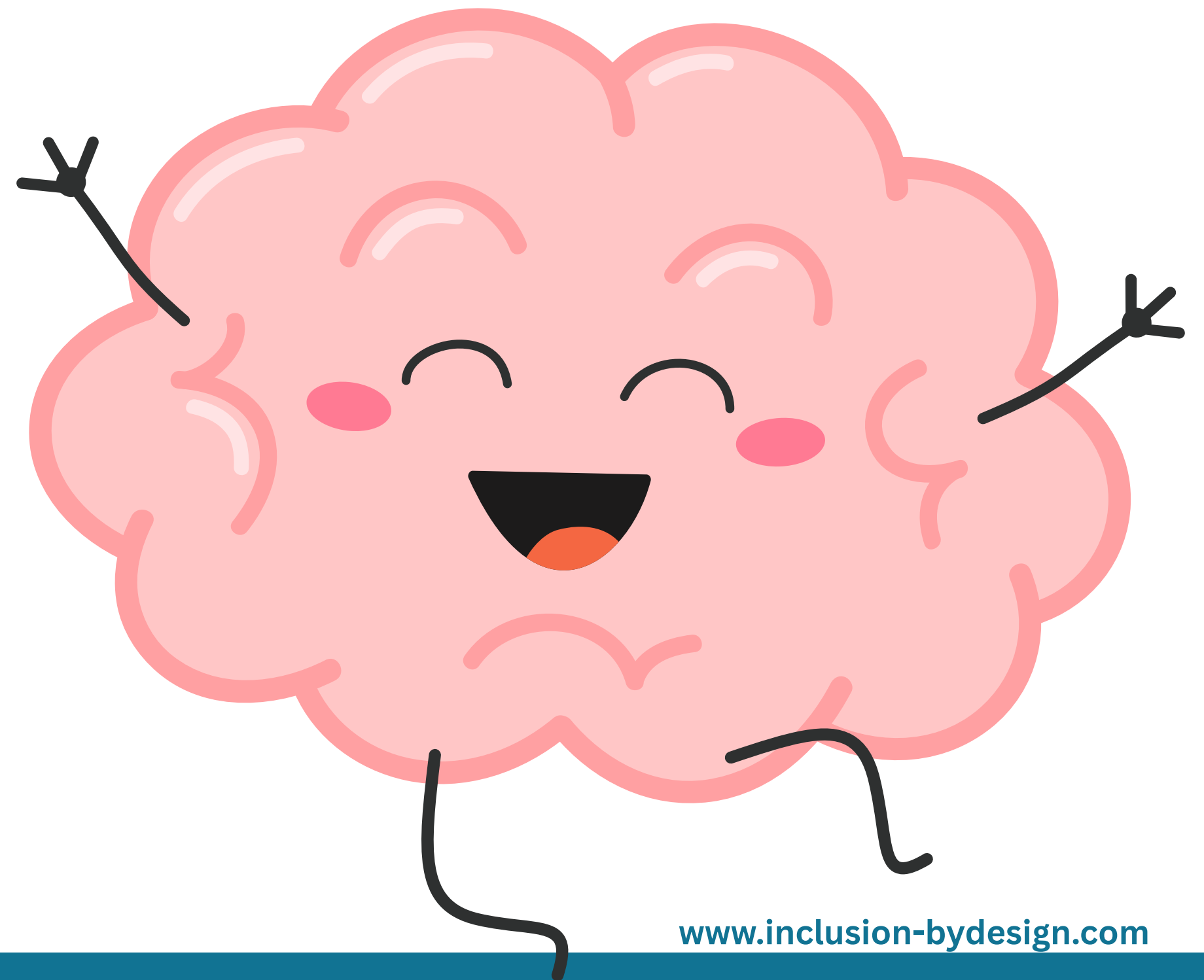- Starting multiple products without finishing
- Taking feedback personally or reacting definsively

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Social Challenges:

Social interactions can be complex, not because of a lack of care or professionalism, but because of differences in social timing, emotional regulation, and attention shifting.

Self-Esteem:

Self esteem is shaped more by chronic misunderstanding than by capacity. Years of negative feedback, comparison, and unaddressed struggles can create a pattern on internalized failure, even amoung high achievers.
This is called " learned inadequacy".
In reality, these outcomes reflect an environmental mismatch and systemic inaccessibilty, not a personal deficit.

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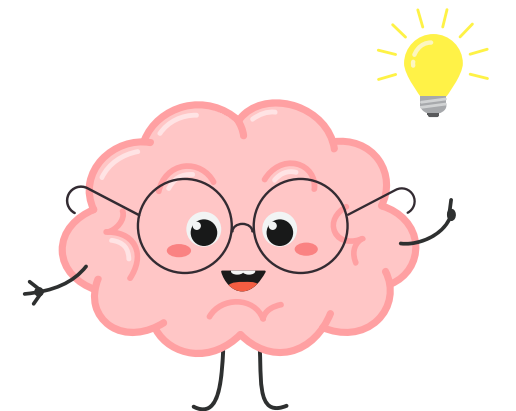
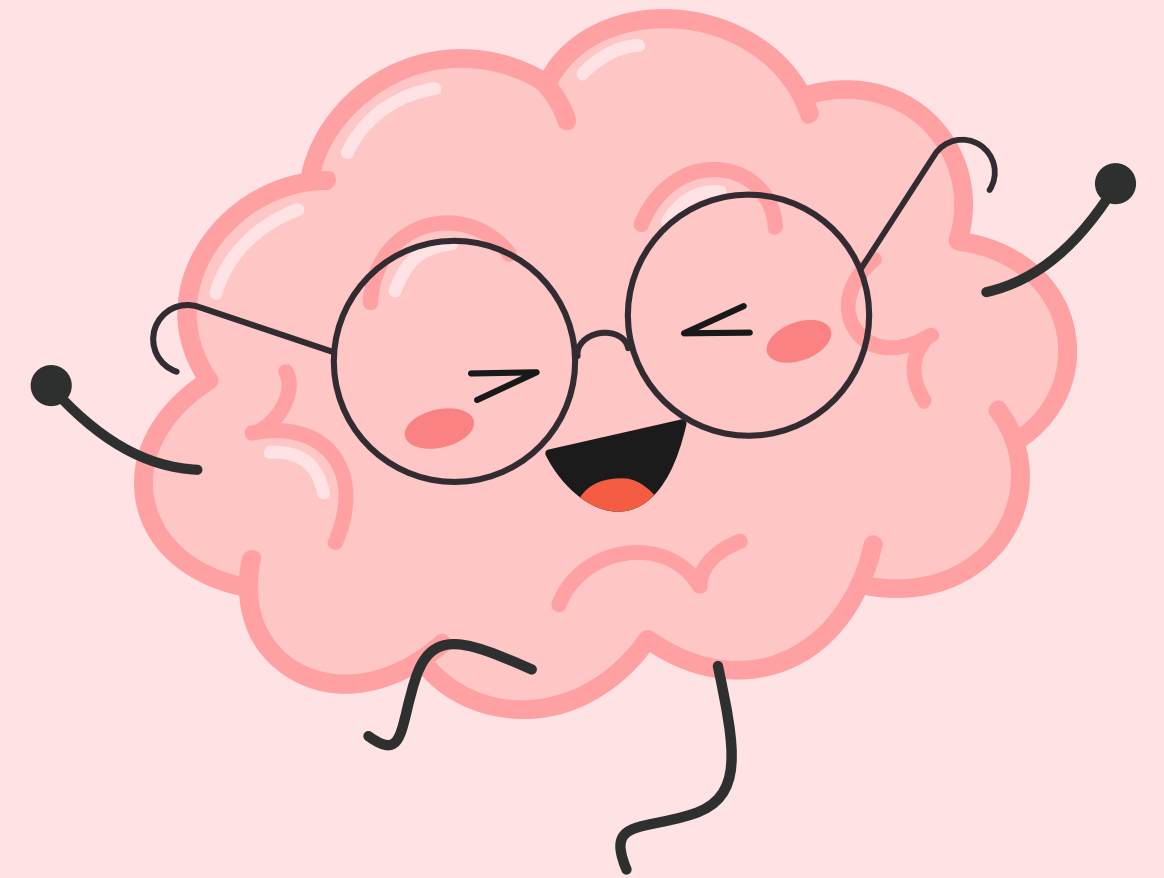# Supporting ADHD Team Memebers: What Managers Should Know

Environmental adjustments can make or break focus for ADHD team members. These changes do not require large budgets, just awareness and flexibilty. Think of adjustments as focus supports, not special treatment. A few small changes in environment often lead to significant improvements in consistency, accuracy, and morale.
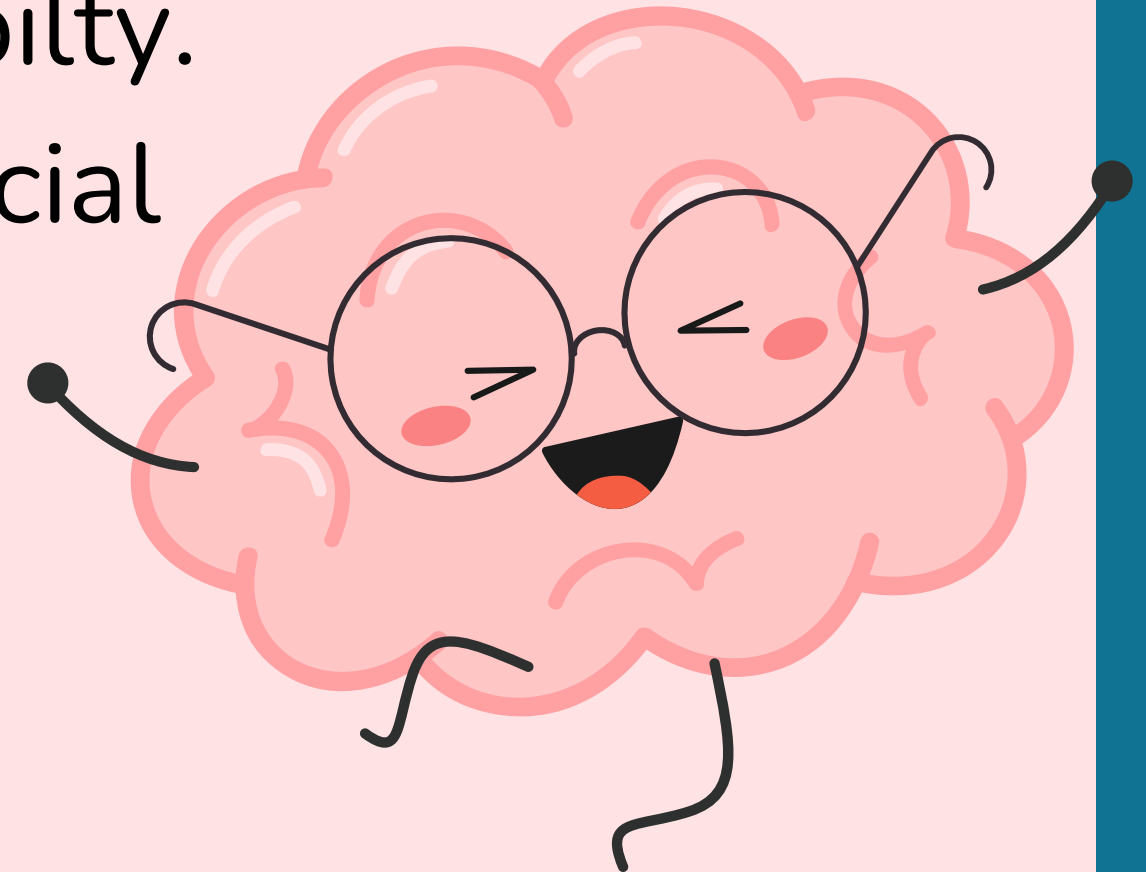
Supporting ADHD Team Memebers: Environmental

- Offer quiet or low distraction spaces
- Allow noise cancelling headphones or background music
- Be flexible with workspace or schedule
- Provide visual task tools
- Minimize unnecessary interruptions
- Offer reminders without judgement

Supporting ADHD Team Memebers: What Managers Should Know

Collaboration challenges for ADHD team members are rarely about teamwork ability, but about processing speed, timing, and communication flow. Managers can support by setting the tone for inclusive interaction.
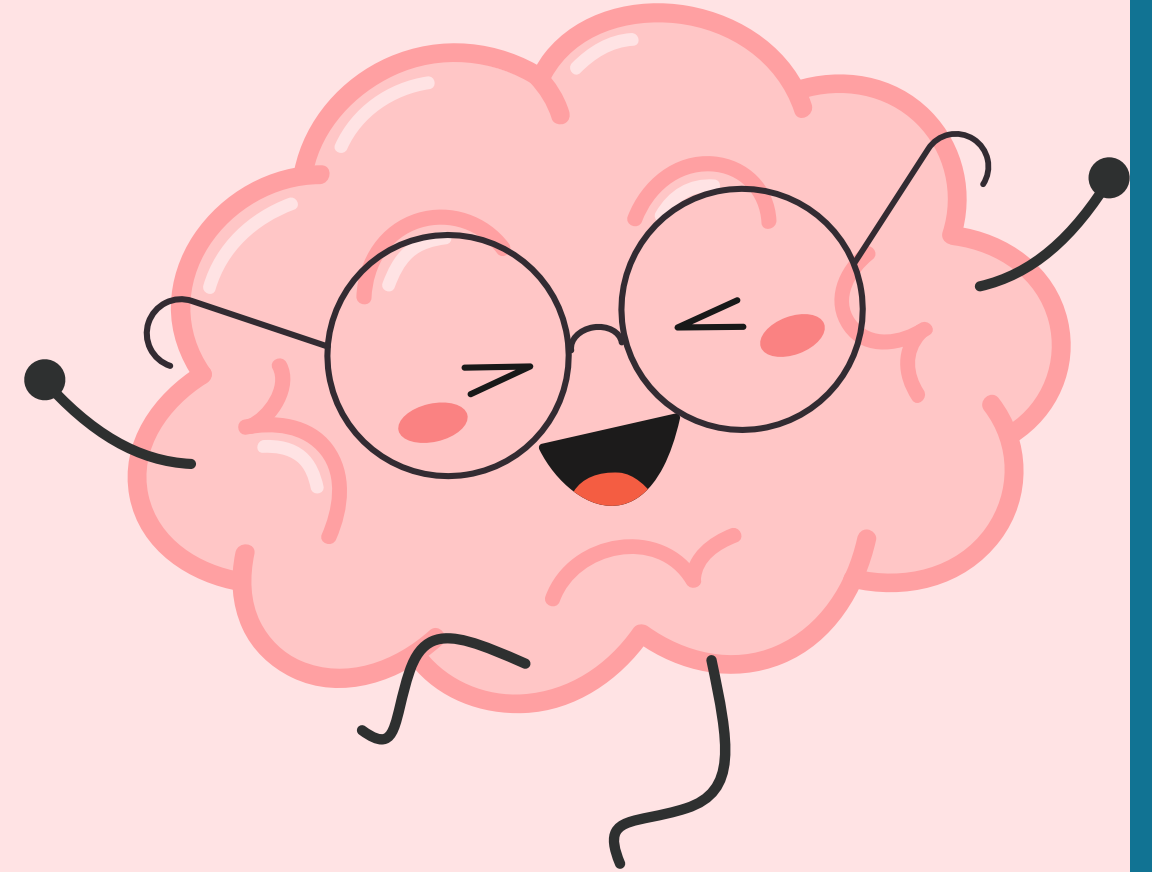Collaboration works best when clarity, kindness, and pacing are built in.
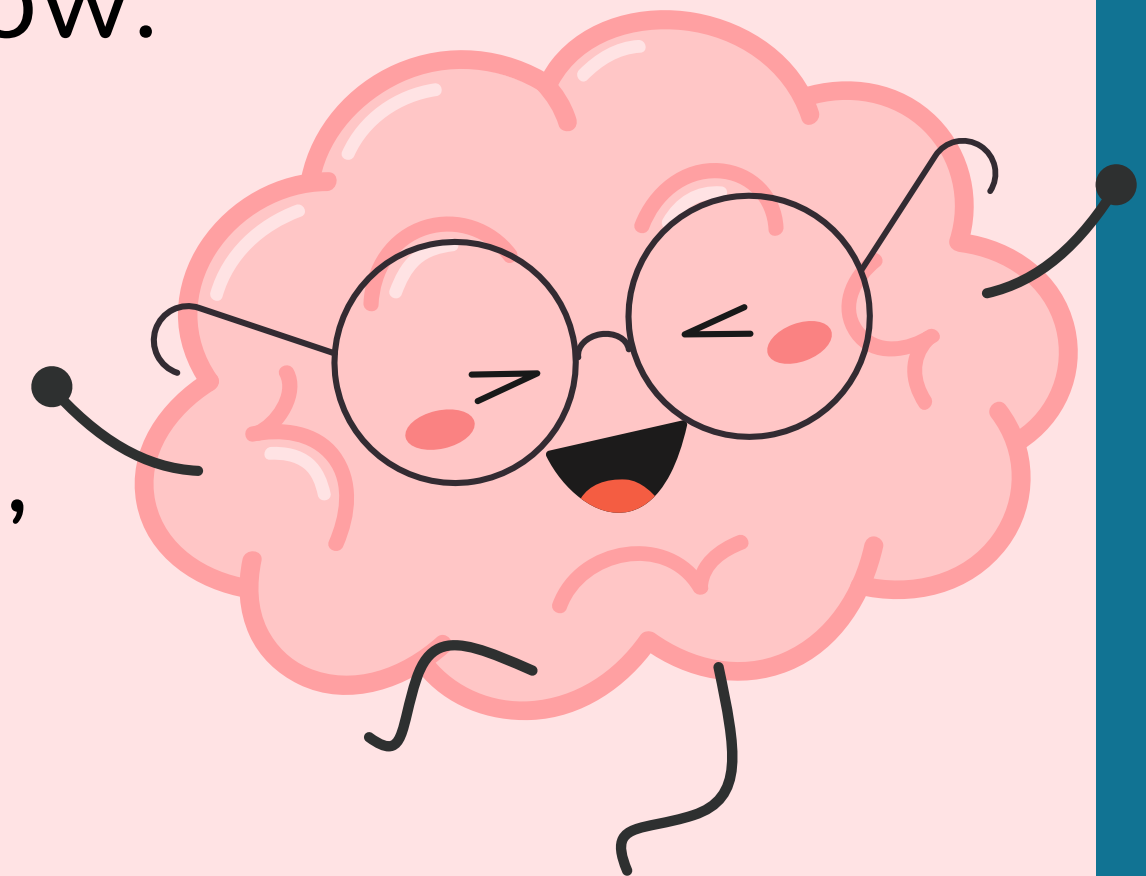
Supporting ADHD Team Memebers: Collaboration

- Sharing meeting agendas in advance
- Summarize verbally and in writing
- Use concise, direct communication
- Provide real-time feedback
- Assign roles in group projects
- Be mindful of tone
- Recognize effort as well as outcomes

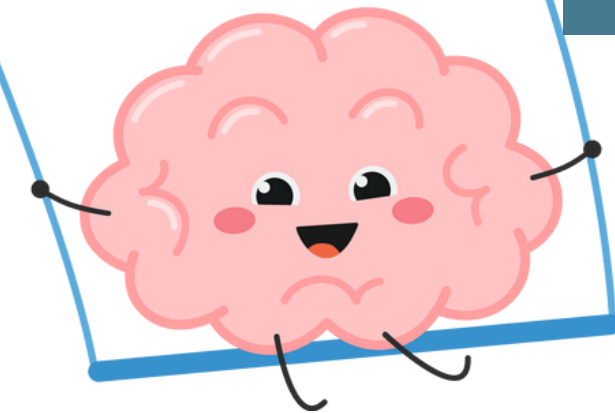**Individualized Support: What Managers Should Know**
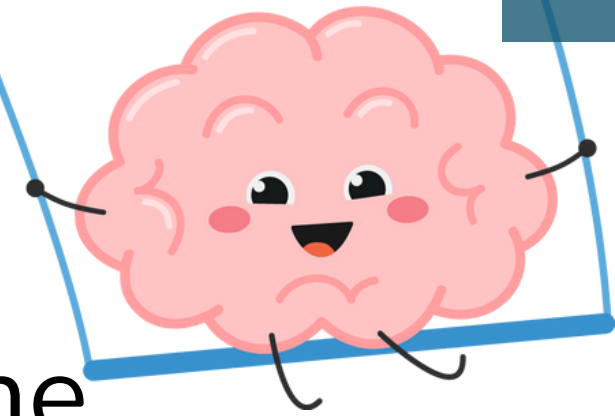
No two people with ADHD experience it in the same way. Some struggle with organization, others with emotional regulation or task switching.

The most effective support begins with conversations.

Your goal as a manager isn't to diagnose, but to understand how the person works best and remove barriers that limit their success.

**Practical Ways to Provide Individualized Support:**

- Ask, what helps you stay focused?
- Document agreed upon accommodations
- Allow flexible structure
- Support prioritization
- Adjust communication flow
- Empower self-advocacy

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Manager Mindset

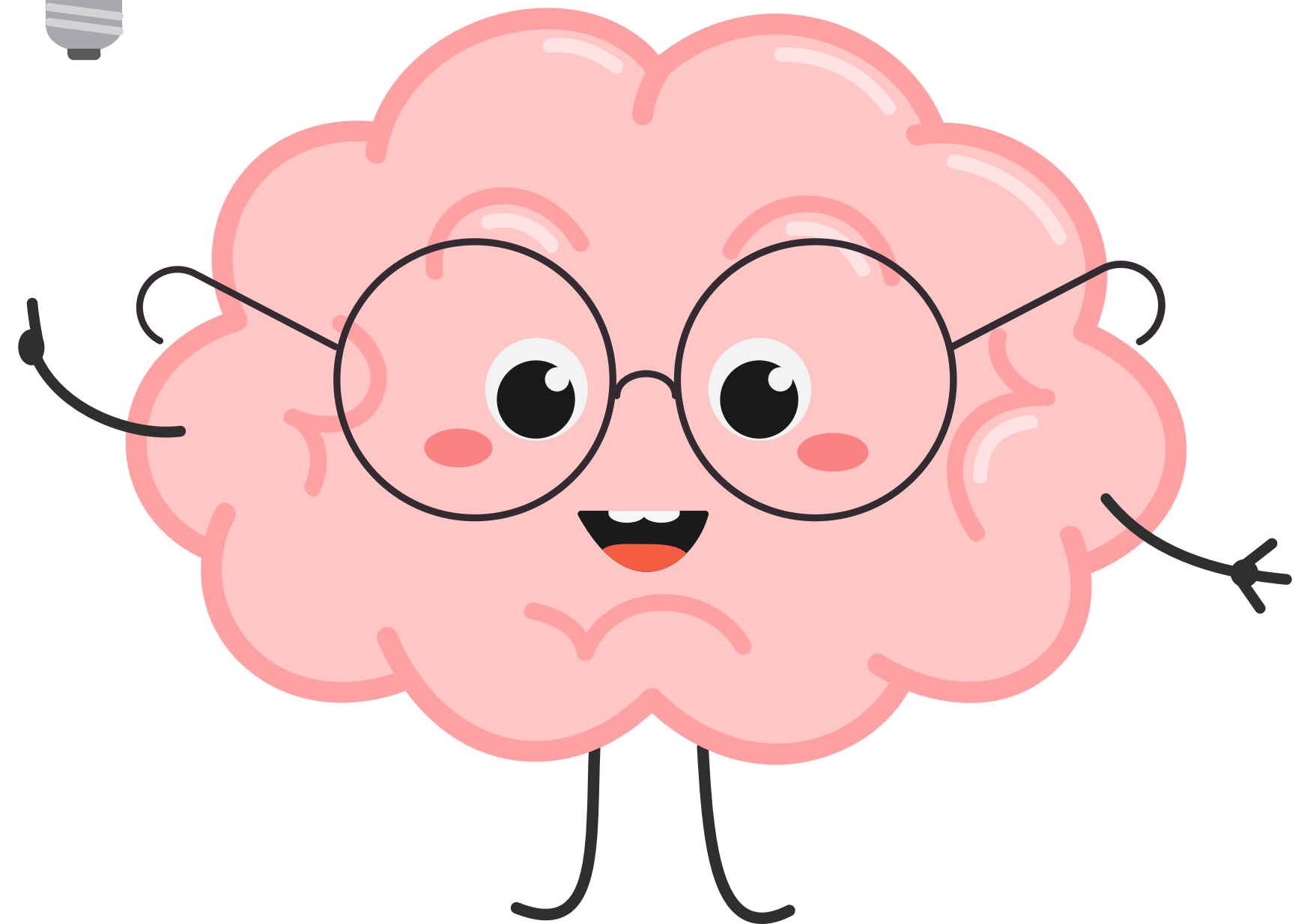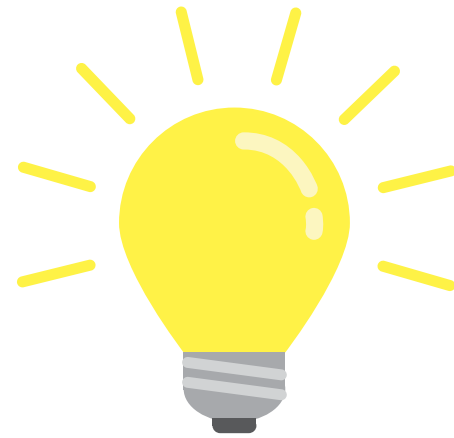Indidualized support is about partnership. By co-creating strategies, managers show team members that their needs are valid, their strengths are recognized, and their potential is worth investing in.
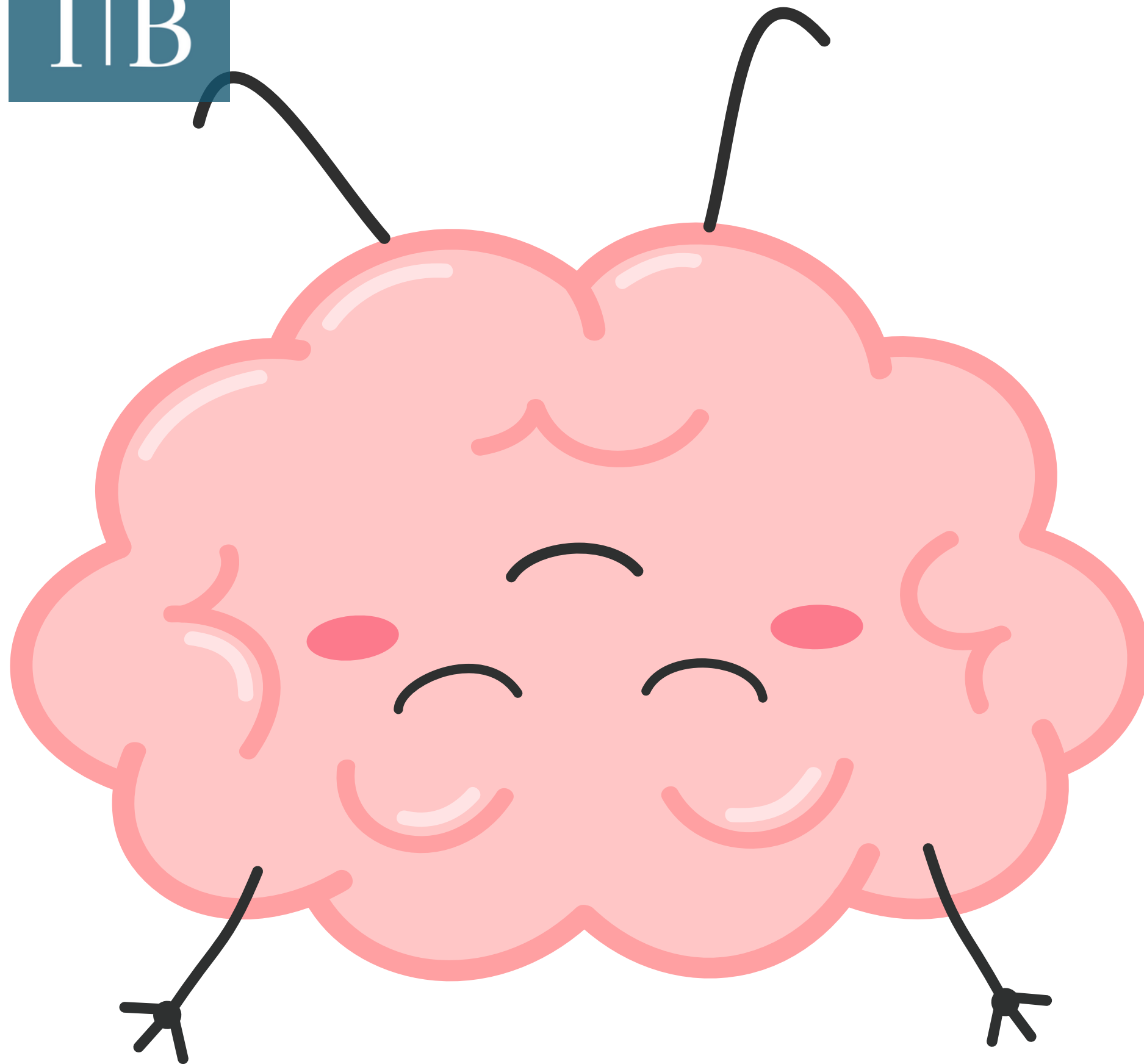
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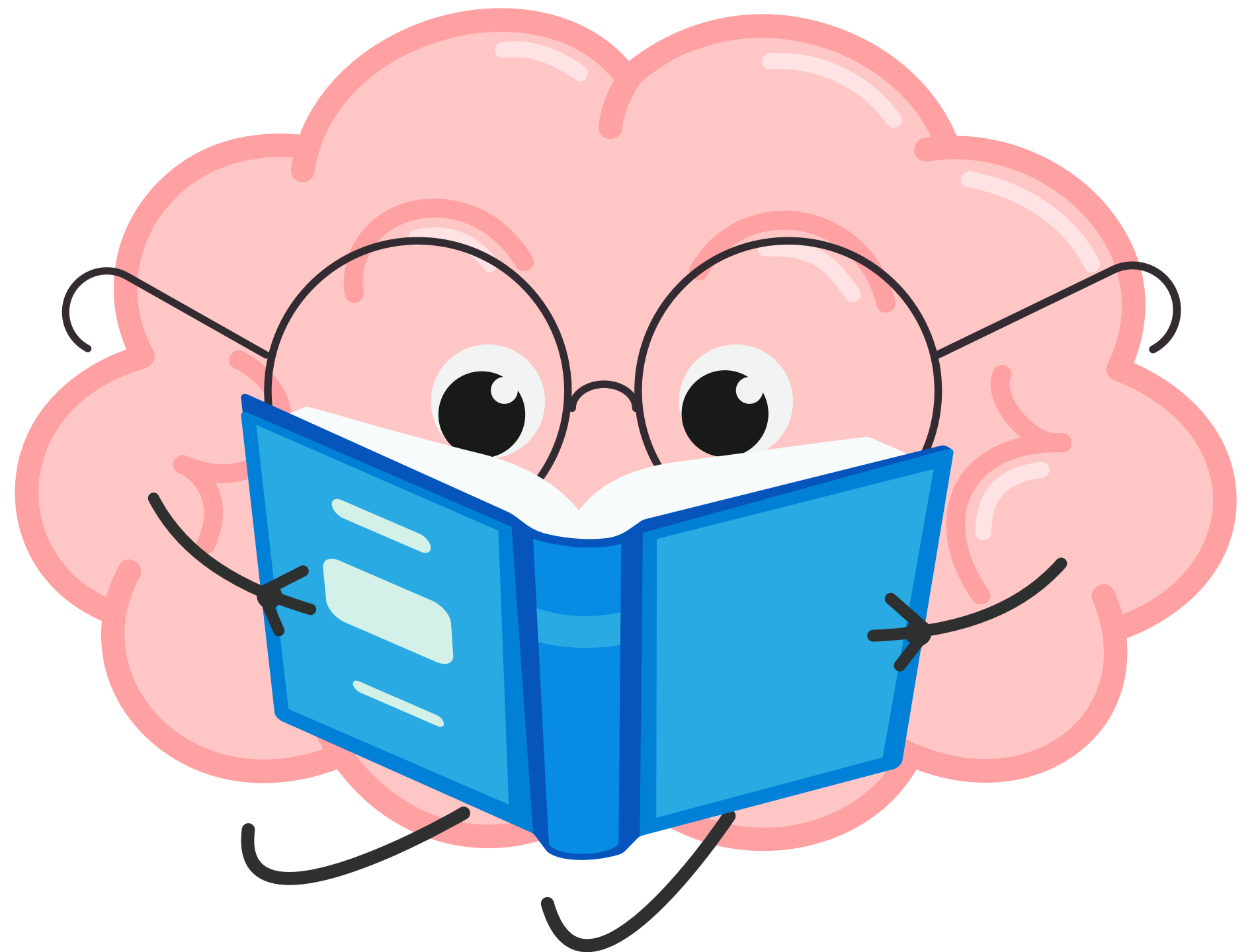
Embracing Neurodiversity

Embracing neurodiversity means recognizing that our brains work differently and that this diversity is a strength.
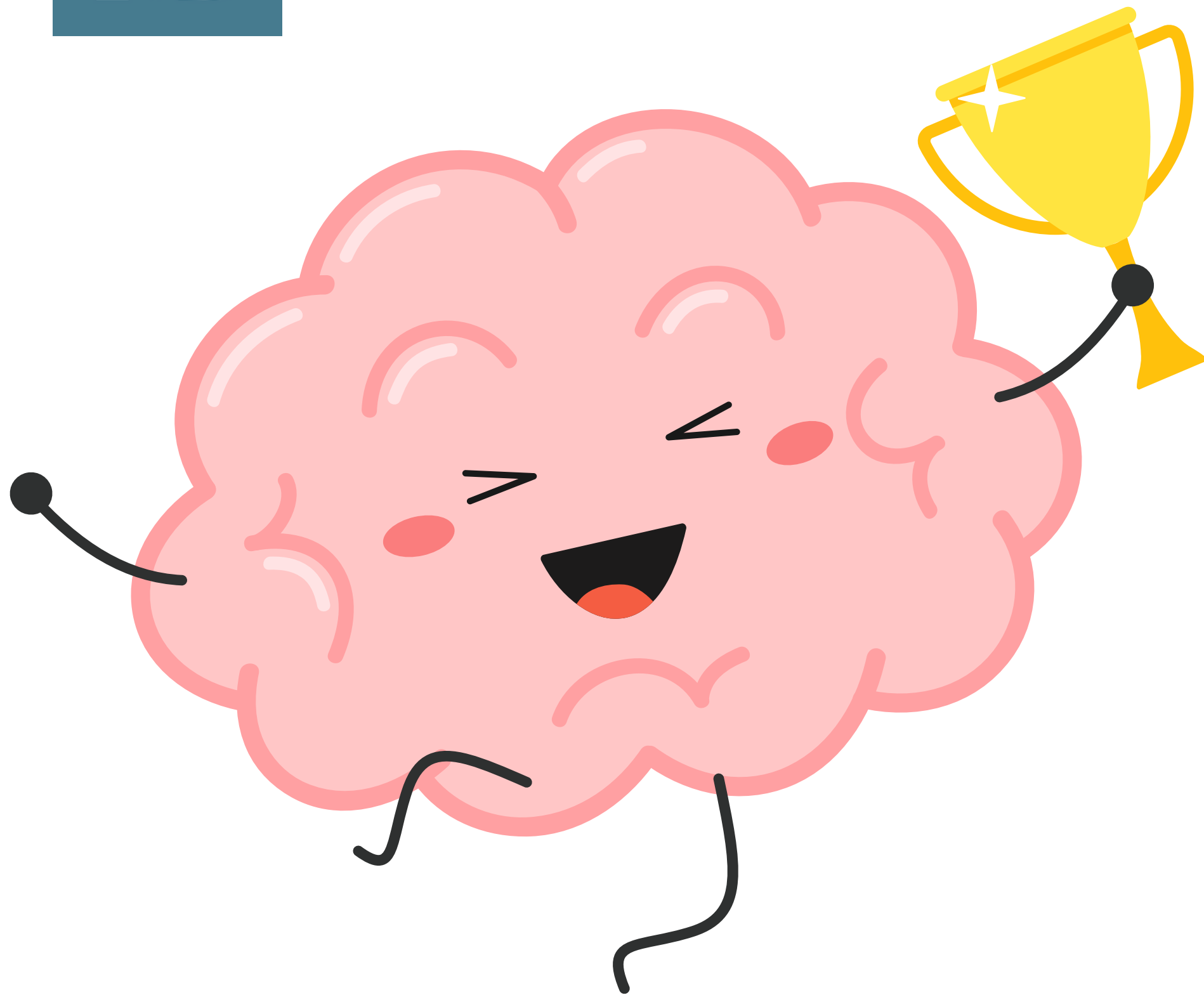
Respect and Empathy:

We should respect and show empathy towards our neurodivergent peers, understanding that their experiences and perspectives are valuable.

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Inclusion:

By creating an inclusive environment, we can celebrate and learn from each other's differences, fostering a supportive and accepting community.

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Tips for Supporting Co-workers with ADHD

- Celebrate creativity and problem solving
- Use clear and concise instructions.
- Be clear and direct. Avoid vague instructions like "asap"
- Respect focus time. Interruptions can derail concentration
- Offer reminders or shared tools
- Avoid judgemental language. Phrases like, " you just need to focus"
- Create accountability partnerships. Check-ins, mutual reminders
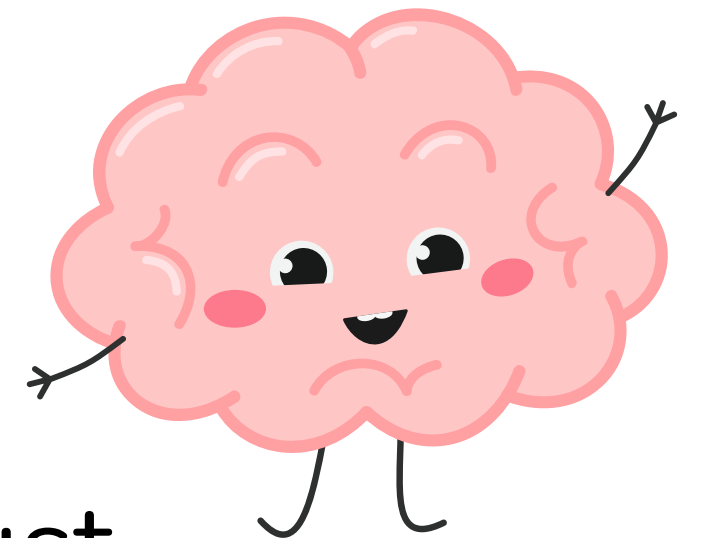
By recognizing the unique strengths and challenges of team members with ADHD, we can provide the necessary support and help them thrive. Let's celebrate our differences and build a world where everyone feels valued and included.

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