



# LETS REMOVE THE STIGMA OF "SPECIAL TREATMENT" AND TURN IT INTO "HIGH-PERFORMANCE INFRASTRUCTURE."

Think of this resource like curb cuts (the slopes in sidewalks). They were originally designed for people in wheelchairs, but they ended up benefiting parents with strollers, travelers with suitcases, and cyclists.

"User Manuals" for "Humans at Work" are the "curb cuts" of the corporate world.

By fixing the friction points for neurodivergent people, you smoothen the path for every single human in your network. By building a workplace that works for the most sensitive or structured brains, we build a workplace that is more efficient, clear, and profitable for everyone.



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# The Importance of Neurodiversity in Workplaces

## Embracing diverse minds fosters innovation

With **1 in 7** people being neurodiverse, their unique perspectives can enhance creativity and problem-solving, driving a more inclusive and productive work environment for everyone.

## Common Challenges for Neurodiverse Employees



### Overload

Too many stimuli can be overwhelming.



### Communication

Different styles may lead to misunderstandings.



### Time

Meeting deadlines can feel daunting.



### Interaction

Social cues may be missed or misinterpreted.



# “User Manual” for “Humans at Work”

The Interview “Vibe-Check” Audit



# The Interview "Vibe-Check" Audit

Research shows that traditional interviews are often "social aptitude tests" rather than "skill aptitude tests." For many neurodivergent individuals, the "vibe check" is where systemic bias lives. "If we hire for 'vibe,' we are simply hiring for 'familiarity.' To find true talent, we must look past the social performance and audit the actual potential."

The "Social Polish" Trap shows that traditional interviews reward:

Sustained eye contact	→	which can be physically painful or distracting for some
Rapid-fire verbal processing	→	which penalizes those who think deeply/slowly
"Small talk" and charisma	→	which are rarely the core skills needed for the actual job

Goal : Matching the right brain to the right task, not the right personality to the right lunch table.

# The Inclusive Interview Checklist for Pre-Interview Transparency



Send Questions in Advance: Send 3–5 core technical questions 24–48 hours early. This allows candidates to prepare substance rather than panicking over delivery.



The "What to Expect" Guide: Send a PDF explaining:

- Who exactly will be on the call/in the room (with LinkedIn photos).
- The exact schedule (e.g., 10 mins intro, 30 mins technical, 10 mins Q&A).
- A statement that notes, stimming (fidgeting), or looking away to process thoughts are welcomed and will not be penalized.



Sensory Control: If in-person, ensure the room has no buzzing lights or strong scents. Offer water immediately.



Virtual Safety: Encourage the use of "Blur Background" to reduce visual noise for the candidate.

# The Bias-Correction Scorecard

Interviewers should fill this out immediately after the session to catch "vibe-based" bias.

Question for the Interviewer	Reflective Check
"Did they make eye contact?"	<b>Does it matter?</b> Will this person be staring at people's eyes while they code/write/analyse data?
"They seemed nervous/awkward."	<b>Anxiety is not Incompetence.</b> Was the "awkwardness" actually just a different communication style?
"They didn't answer quickly."	<b>Processing Time.</b> Did the quality of the answer improve because they took 10 seconds to think?
"They aren't a 'Culture Fit'."	<b>The Danger Zone.</b> Are you looking for a "Fit" (someone just like you) or a "Culture Add" (someone who brings a new perspective)?



# “User Manual” for “Humans at Work”

The Neuro-Affirming Language Guide



# The Neuro-Affirming Language Guide

"Language is the first interface of inclusion. By shifting from a 'medical deficit' model to an 'identity-affirming' model, we stop treating people like problems to be solved and start treating them like experts on their own experience."

The conflict of "Person-First" vs. "Identity-First"

Person-First:	→	"A person with Autism" (Separates the person from the condition).
Identity-First:	→	"An Autistic person" (Recognizes the neurotype as an inseparable part of who they are).

**The Goal:** There is no "perfect" word for everyone, but the gold standard is **Individual Preference. When in doubt, ask**, but notice that the Autistic and Deaf communities largely prefer Identity-First language.

# The "Swap This for That" Table

This tool helps staff move away from clinical, stigmatising language towards empowered, functional language.

Avoid (Deficit Language)	Use (Affirming Language)	Why it matters
"High/Low Functioning"	"Support Needs"	"Functioning" labels ignore how much effort someone is putting in to "appear" normal.
"Suffers from ADHD/Autism"	"Is ADHD/Autistic"	Neurodivergence isn't a disease to suffer from; it's a different way of being.
"Normal" employees	"Neurotypical" employees	"Normal" implies that anyone else is "Abnormal" or "Broken."
"Special Needs"	"Access Requirements"	"Access" is a right; "Special" sounds like an optional favor.
"Disorder / Deficit"	"Difference / Neurotype"	Focuses on the diversity of the human brain rather than a medical failure.

# “User Manual” for “Humans at Work”

The Neuro-Inclusive Meeting Guide



# The Neuro-Inclusive Meeting Guide

"Meetings shouldn't be a test of who can talk the fastest. They should be a space where the best ideas regardless of how they are processed can surface."

## The "3-Step Success" Worksheet



### The 24-Hour Rule

Never hold a meeting without an agenda sent a day in advance.

Why? It allows deep processors to arrive with ideas already formed.



### The "Silent Minute"

During the meeting, after asking a big question, set a timer for 60 seconds. No one talks; everyone writes.

Why? This stops "extrovert bias" and lets everyone contribute.

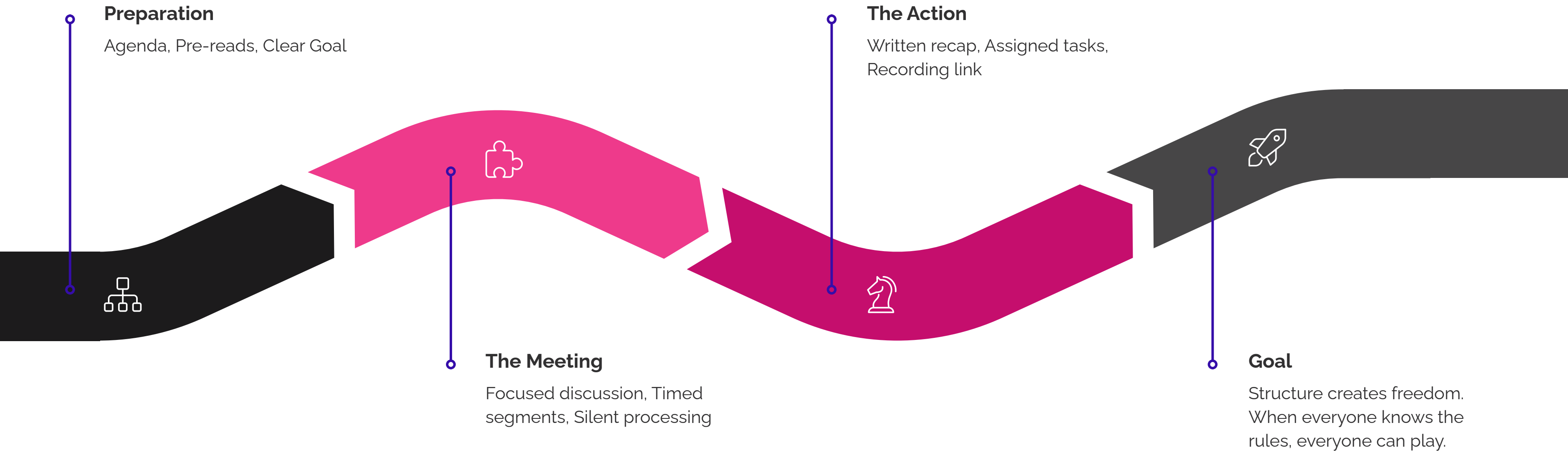


### The Multi-Channel Option

Always have a chat box or shared doc open.

Why? Some brains can type their genius while their voice is still catching up.

# The Roadmap for Meetings



# “User Manual” for “Humans at Work”

The Individual “User Manual”



# The Individual "User Manual"

"We don't buy a piece of software without a manual, yet we expect to collaborate perfectly with complex human brains without any instructions. This tool replaces 'mind-reading' with 'manual-reading'."

## Why Everyone Needs One?

Most workplace conflict stems from a mismatch in expectations. One person thinks a "quick call" is helpful; another finds it an intrusive interruption to their focus.

The Goal: To reduce "Social Anxiety" and "Communication Friction" by being radically transparent about how we work best.



# The "Personal Specs" Worksheet

Invite every team member to fill these out. There are no right or wrong answers only honest ones.

**My "Deep Work" Window:** (e.g., "8 AM – 11 AM. Please avoid booking meetings then.")

**The Sensory Shield:** (e.g., "If I have my noise-canceling headphones on, I am in focus mode, please DM instead of tapping my shoulder.")

**The Instant vs. Asynchronous Balance:** (e.g., "I love Slack for quick questions, but if it requires more than three sentences, please send an email so I can track it.")

**Processing Time:** (e.g., "I am an internal processor. If you ask me a big question in a meeting, I may need 10 minutes to think or follow up in writing later.")

**How I like to receive feedback:** (e.g., "Direct and in writing first so I can process the emotions privately, then a follow-up chat to discuss solutions.")

**My Stress Signals:** (e.g., "When I'm overwhelmed, I might get very blunt or stop using emojis. It's not personal; it's just focus.")

# "The Five Favorites"

A "light" version to get teams started during a meeting.

Favorite way to start the day:	e.g., No meetings before 10 AM
Favorite way to be reached:	e.g., Teams DM
Favorite way to learn:	e.g., Watching a demo vs. reading a doc
Favorite feedback style:	e.g., "Give it to me straight"
Favorite way to recharge:	e.g., A 15-minute walk after a long call

Effective collaboration doesn't require identical working styles; it simply requires a clear understanding of each other's unique approaches.

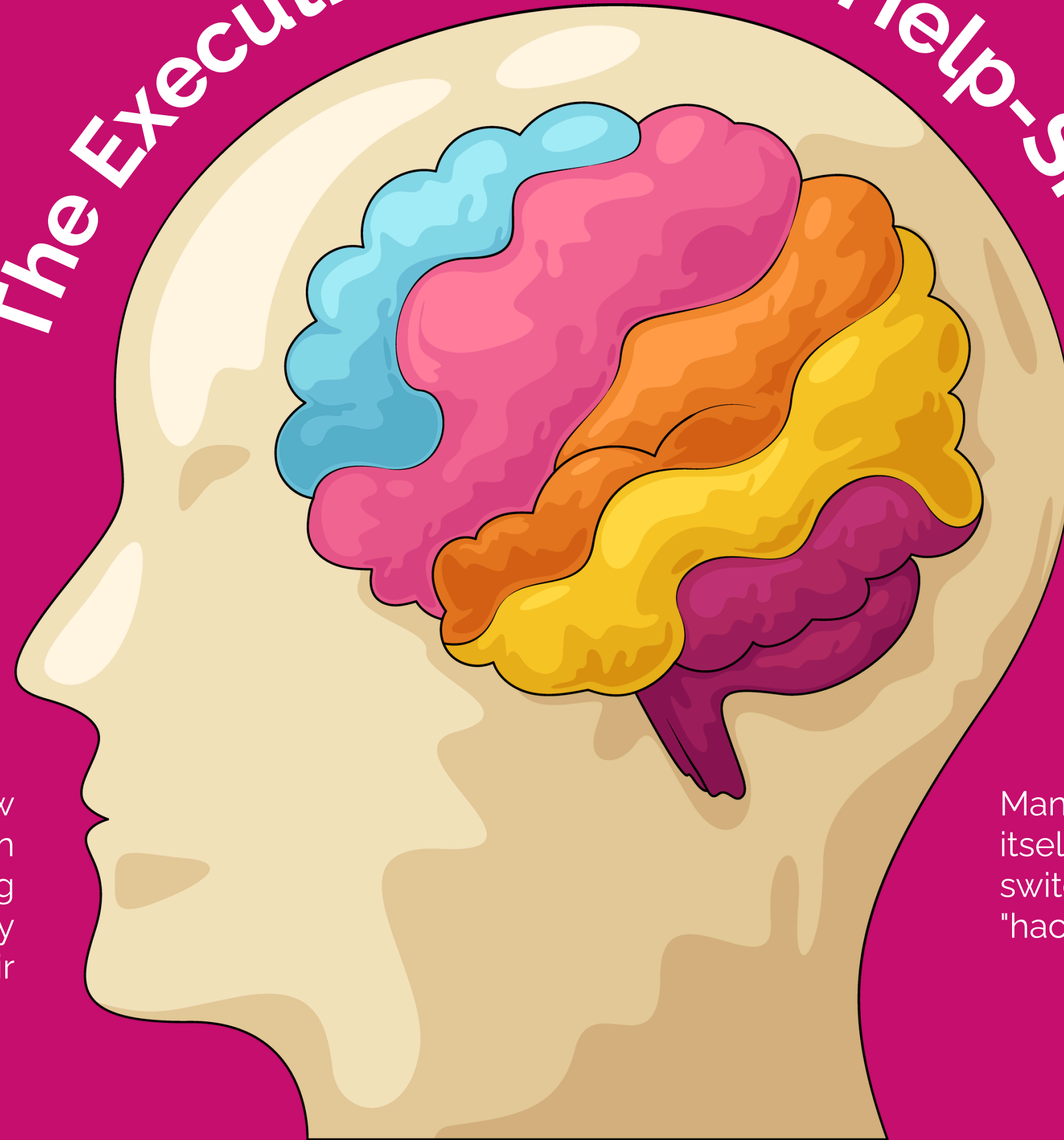


# “User Manual” for “Humans at Work”

The Executive Function Help-Sheet



# The Executive Function Help-Sheet

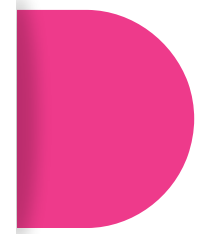


"Disorganisation is rarely a character flaw or a lack of effort; it is often a breakdown in executive processing. By providing 'external' scaffolding, we help every employee stay on track, regardless of their mental load."

Many employees struggle not with the work itself, but with starting it, prioritizing it, or switching between tasks. This tool provides "hacks" to bypass these mental blocks

# The "Power-Up" Strategies

Ongoing practices for maintaining and advancing leadership effectiveness



## The "Micro-Step" Breakdown (Task Initiation)

**The Problem:** A task feels too big, causing "Task Paralysis."

**The Help-Sheet Fix:** Never put "Project Alpha" on a to-do list. Instead, list the first 5-minute action.

Example: Instead of "Write Report," use "Open Word Doc and type the title."

The Rule: If you can't start, the step is still too big. Break it down again.



## Body Doubling (Focus & Accountability)

**The Problem:** Struggling to stay on task when working alone.

**The Help-Sheet Fix:** Join a "Quiet Coworking" session. Two people sit on a video call with cameras on but mics off, just working.

Why it works: The presence of another person acts as a "social anchor," keeping the brain tethered to the task.



## The "Now / Not Now" Filter (Prioritization)

**The Problem:** Everything feels like a Priority 1, leading to overwhelm.

**The Help-Sheet Fix:** Use a two-column list.

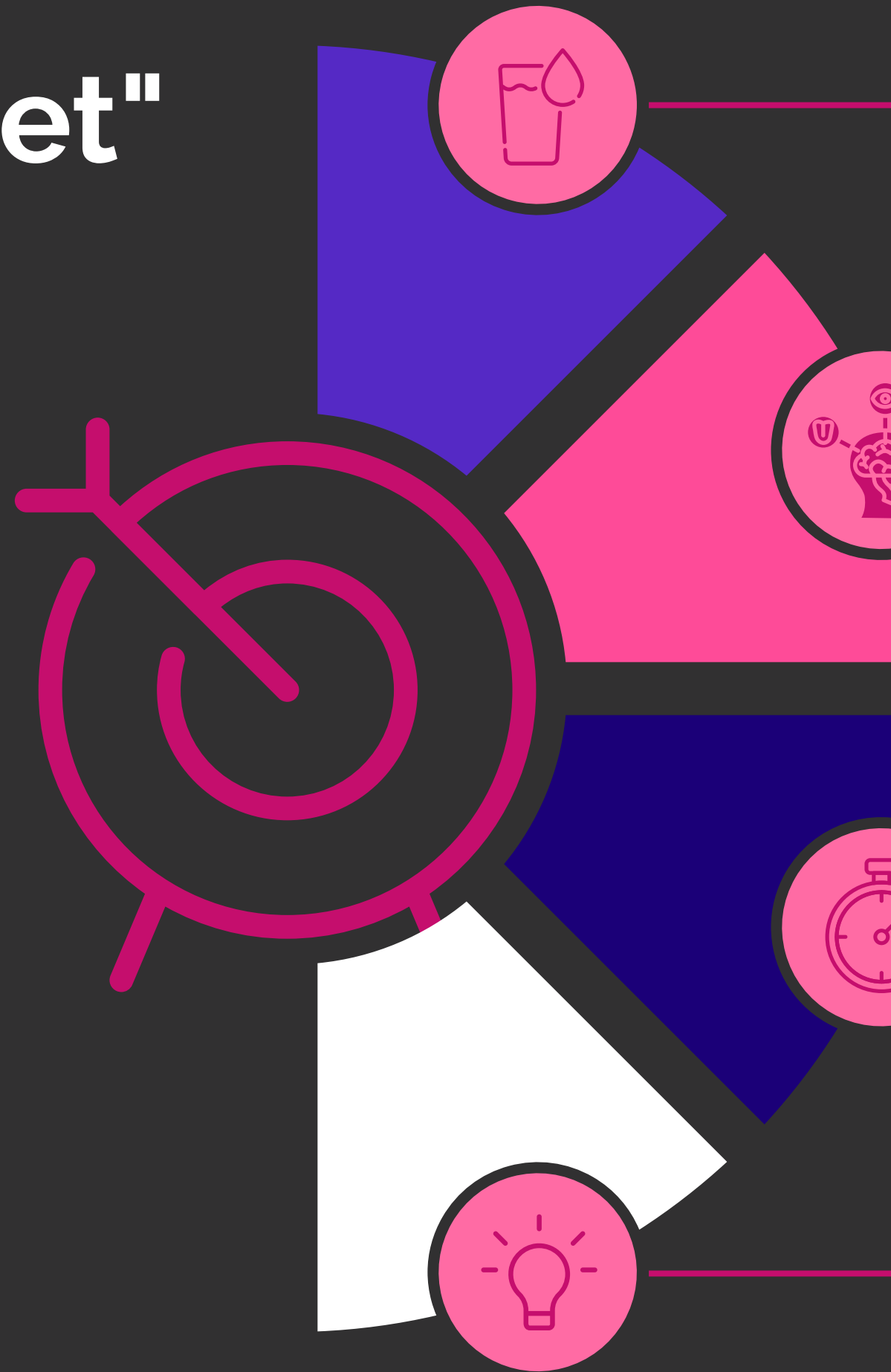
**Column 1 (NOW):** The one thing I am doing right this second.

**Column 2 (NOT NOW):** Everything else.

Rule: You cannot move an item to "Now" until the current one is checked off or moved back to "Not Now."

# The "Reset" Audit

When you feel "stuck" or "spinning," go through this checklist:



## Hydration/Fuel:

Have I eaten or drank water in the last 3 hours?

## Sensory Check:

Is there a noise or light that is draining my "battery"?

## The Smallest Step:

What is the absolute tiniest thing I can do in the next 60 seconds to move forward?

## External Brain:

Is this task written down, or am I trying to "remember" it? (Write it down immediately).

# The "Friction Audit"

If you are stuck, don't look at your "willpower", look at the Friction.

The Friction Type	The Question	The Innovation Fix
Cognitive Friction	"Do I actually know the first step?"	The "Loom" Request: Ask your manager for a 2-minute video recording explaining the goal instead of a long email.
Environmental Friction	"Is my desk a mess or the room too loud?"	The "10-Item Sweep": Put away exactly 10 things. No more, no less. Then start.
Emotional Friction	"Am I scared of failing at this?"	The "B-Minus" Draft: Give yourself permission to write a "deliberately bad" first draft just to get words on the page.

# Building a Culture of Inclusion

## Fostering respect and awareness in workplaces

Promoting **awareness training** and encouraging employee resource groups help create a supportive atmosphere, where psychological safety thrives, and everyone feels valued and respected in their unique contributions.

When we use User Manuals, we drastically reduce the 'onboarding' time for new relationships. Instead of a new hire spending six months 'figuring out' how their manager likes to communicate, they know on Day 1. This isn't just about neuroinclusion; it's about Team Velocity. It's about building a culture where 'clear is kind' and performance is the priority.



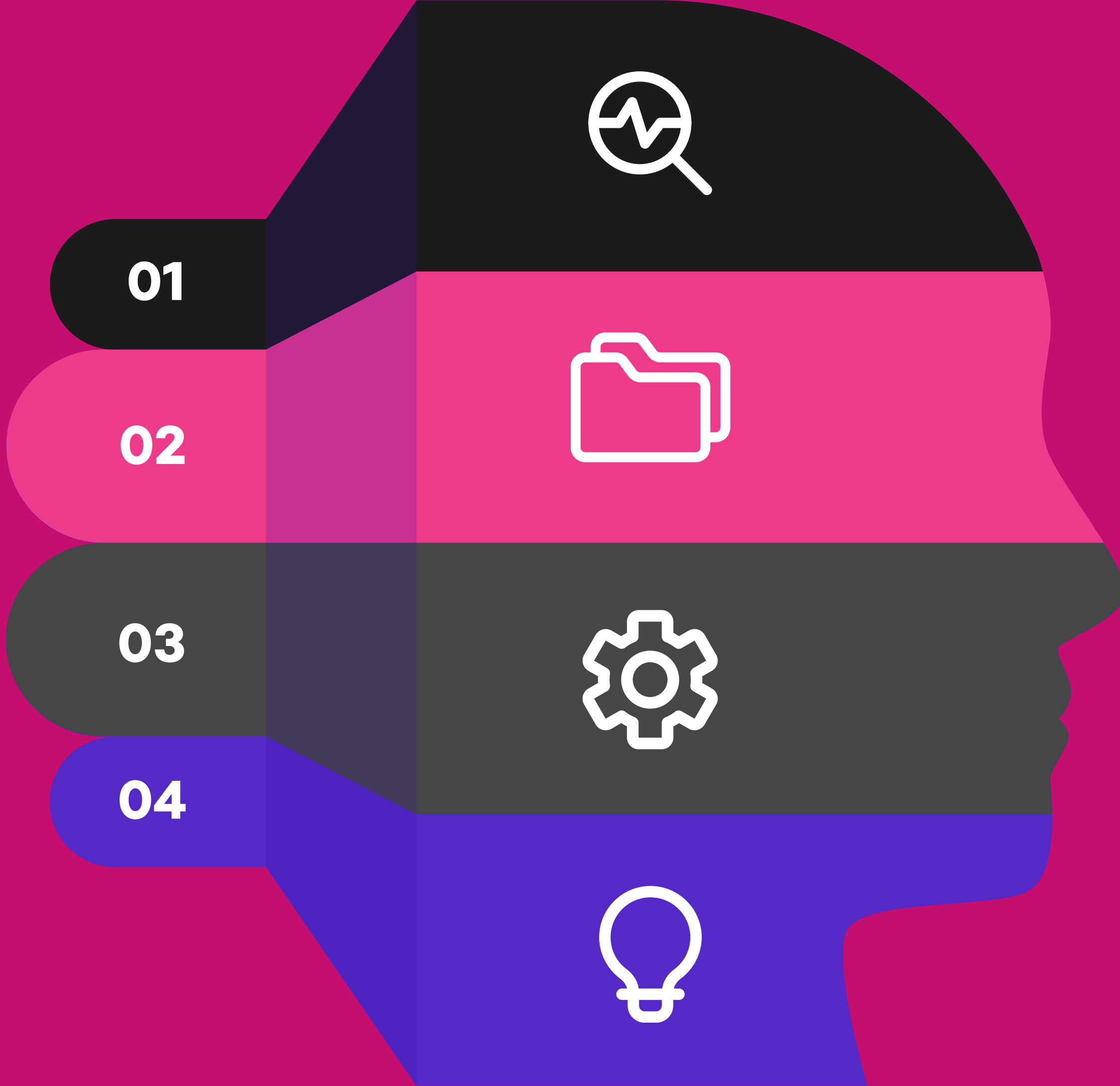


This toolkit is the culmination of a year of deep dialogue, research, and collaboration within the EDI Network, led by Being Woman and proudly supported by Thriving Together Northumberland.

*This toolkit was born from the lived experiences of our EDI network volunteers and network members.*

We urge all partnering organisations whether public, private, or third sector to not only download these resources but to actively practice them within your teams. True inclusion happens when we move beyond awareness and into the structural redesign of how we work.





# Next Steps

## Recognize

Acknowledge neurodiversity as a vital asset.

## Implement

Make necessary accommodations for diverse needs and provide continuous support for all employees.

## Train

Educate leaders on inclusive practices and policies.

## Foster

Encourage open dialogue about neurodiversity and inclusion.

Call us!

Email Us!

Join our network!

Thankyou!  
Click to get in touch!

