



The Messy Church Conference

**All Together**

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**20-22 June 2025**



**Kirstyn Oliver**

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Alma Autism UK



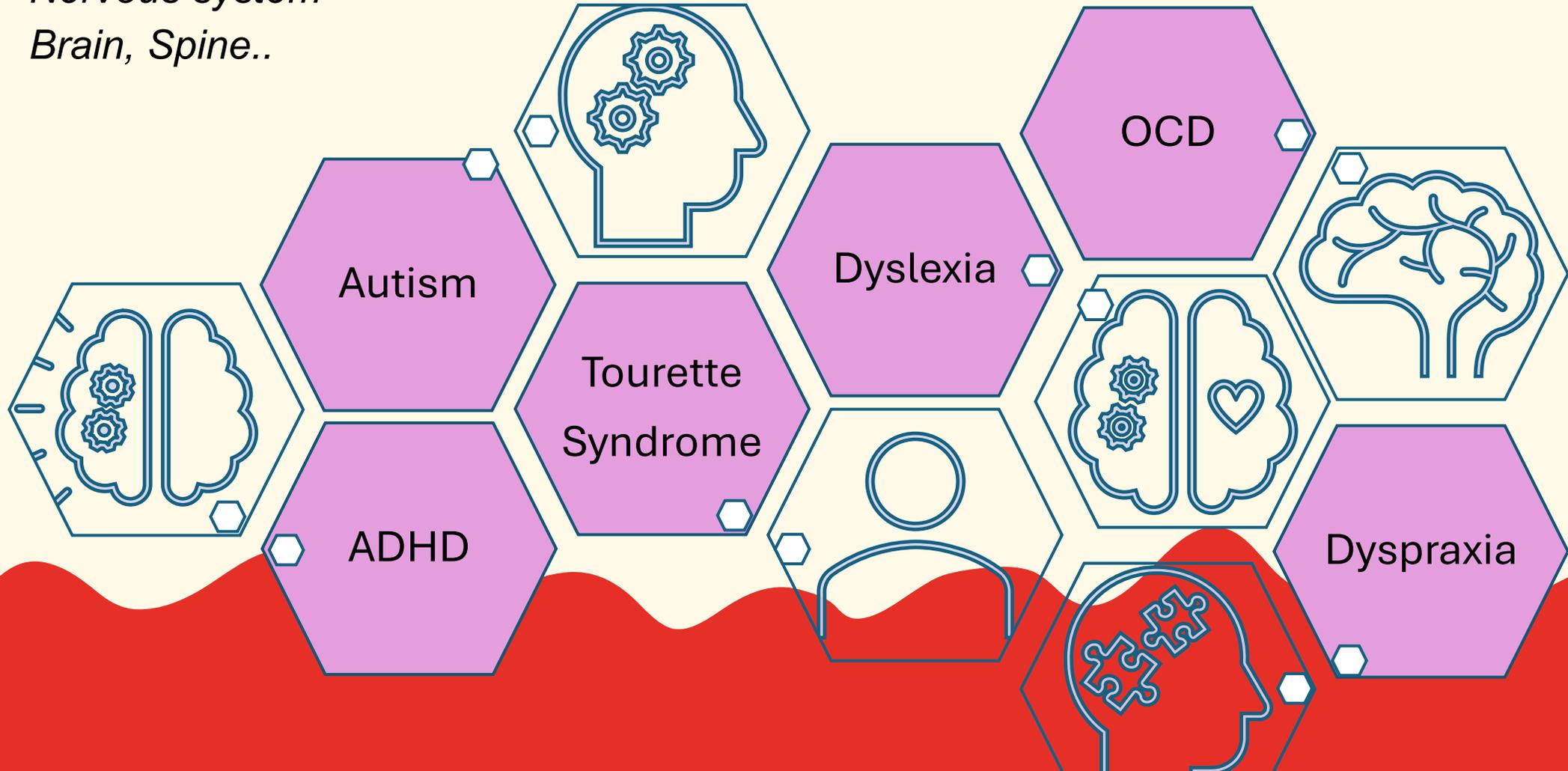
# NeuroDiversity

*Nerve*

*variety*

*Nervous system*

*Brain, Spine..*



# Condition X Disorder

“Life Long Developmental Disability”

Much has improved since 1940s when it was first identified.



**Autistic Person X Person with Autism**

**Neurotypical X Neurodiverse**

**Low functioning X high functioning**

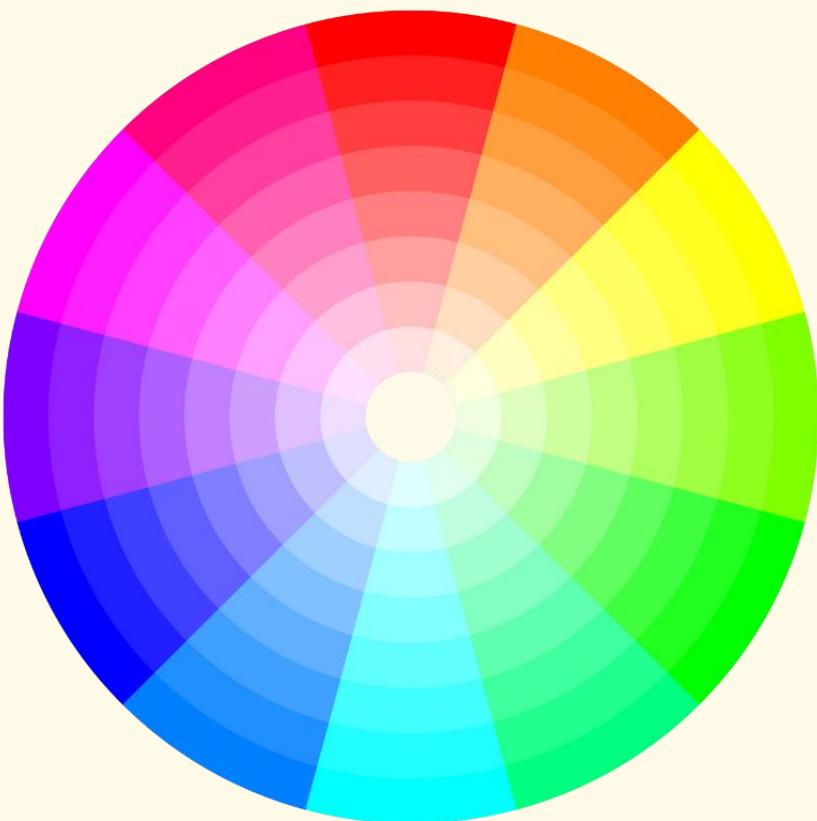


# What autism is:

- ✓ Differences in social communication and interaction
- ✓ Restrictive, repetitive and/or obsessive behaviours or interests



- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Communication |  Sensory Input                        |
|  Behaviours    |  IQ                                   |
|  Food          |  Stims                                |
|  Sleep         |  Routine oriented                     |
|  Obsessions    |  Receptive & Expressive Communication |



**Honest & direct**



**Difficulty with change**



**Difficulty making friends**



**Strong emotions**



**Sensory seeking  
&/or avoidant**



**Stimming**



**Routine Focused**



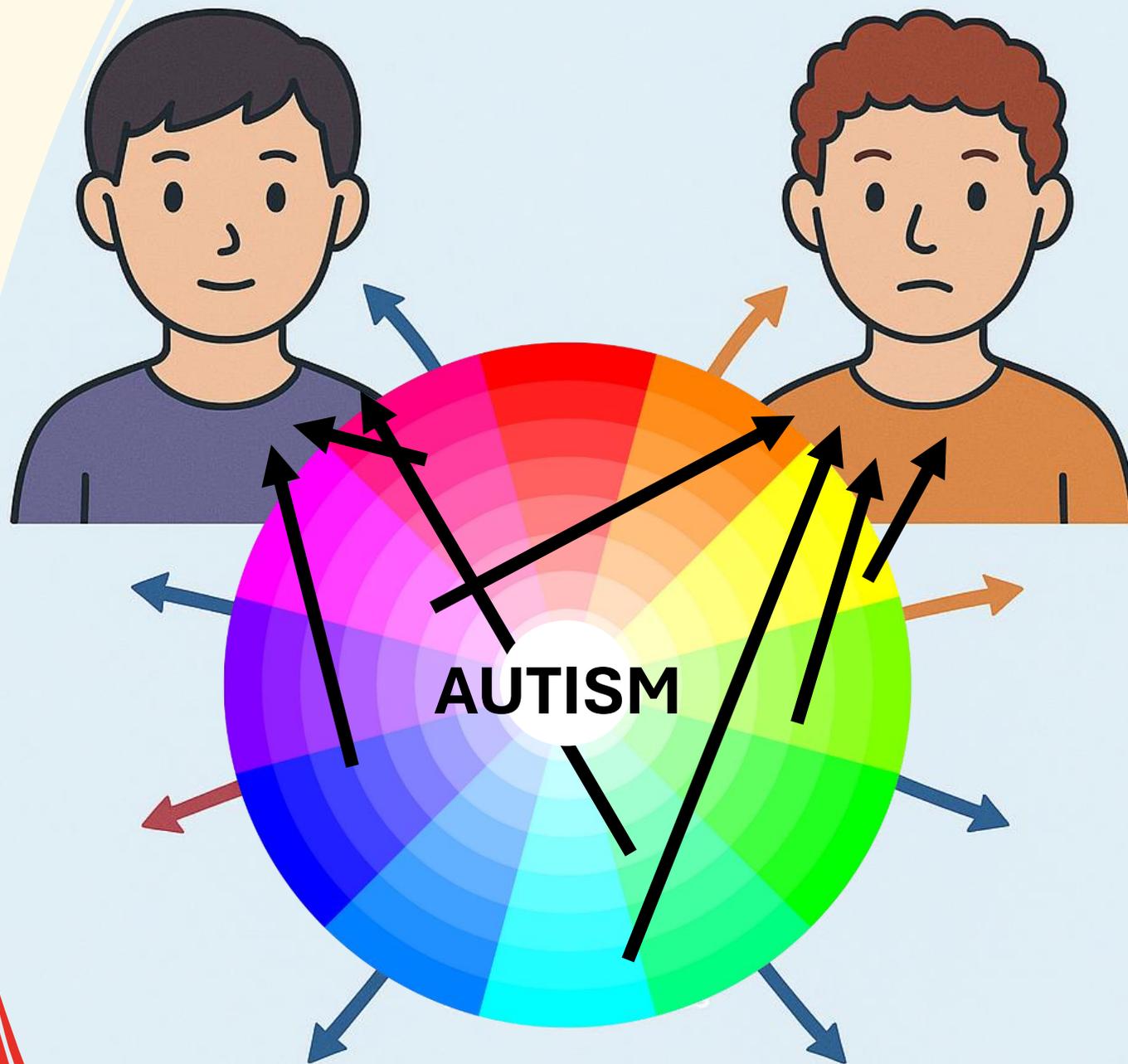
**Masking**



**Trouble sleeping**



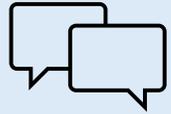
**Difficulties with  
communication &  
challenging behaviours**



# The main characteristics are:



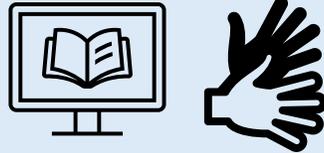
Differences in social communication and interaction



## Speech

Spoken words:

- tones,
- accents,
- pitch
- etc



## Language

(reading, writing, listening, speaking and gesturing)

- Receptive Language
- Expressive Language



## Non verbal communication

- eye contact,
- facial expressions,
- hand gestures,
- body language,
- vocal tones



## Echolalia & Scripting

# The main characteristics are:



Restricted, repetitive and/or obsessive behaviours or interests.

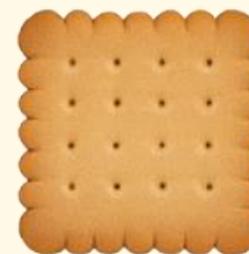
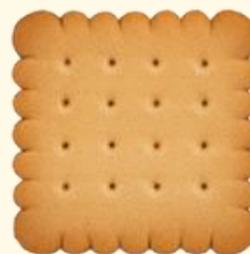
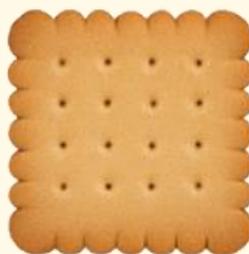
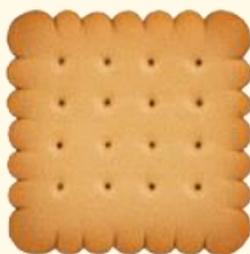
## Repetition and Routine

- Reduces anxiety
- Gives control in a chaotic world
- It's a coping mechanism that brings calm and self regulation to an otherwise anxious mind, body or place

When a sense of stability is fulfilled, it can become easier to handle other changes, that's why routine is essential.



**Bitter Sweet Squishy Hard**



**Same taste, smell, colour, texture**

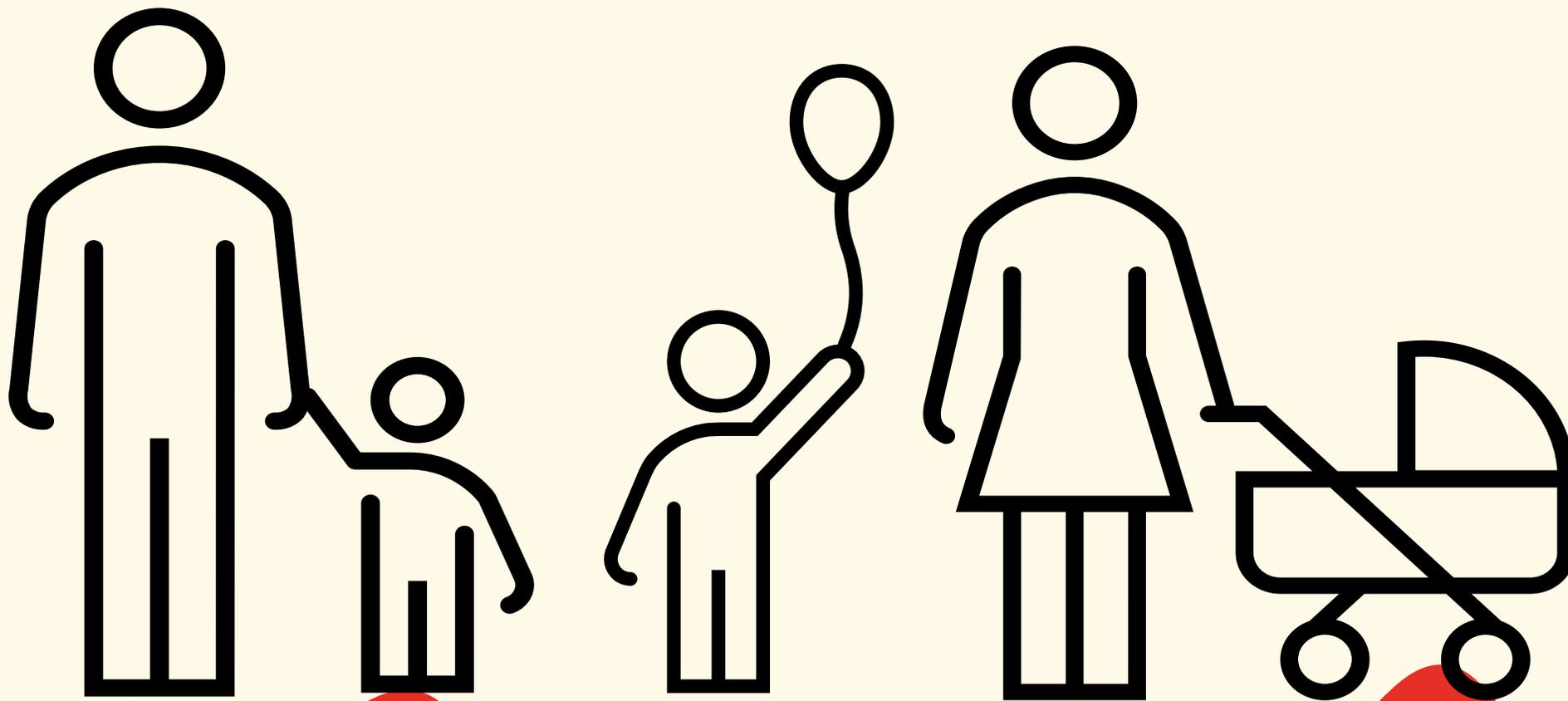


# Environment

**“When a flower doesn’t bloom,  
you fix the environment in which it grows,  
not the flower”.**

**(Alexander den Heijer)**





Welcoming

Safety

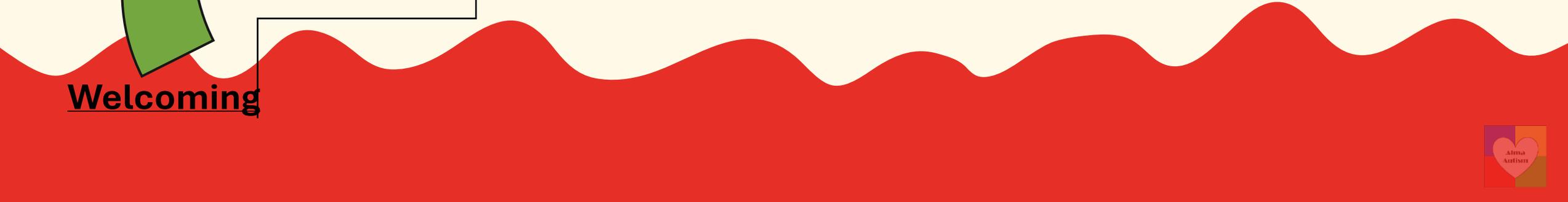
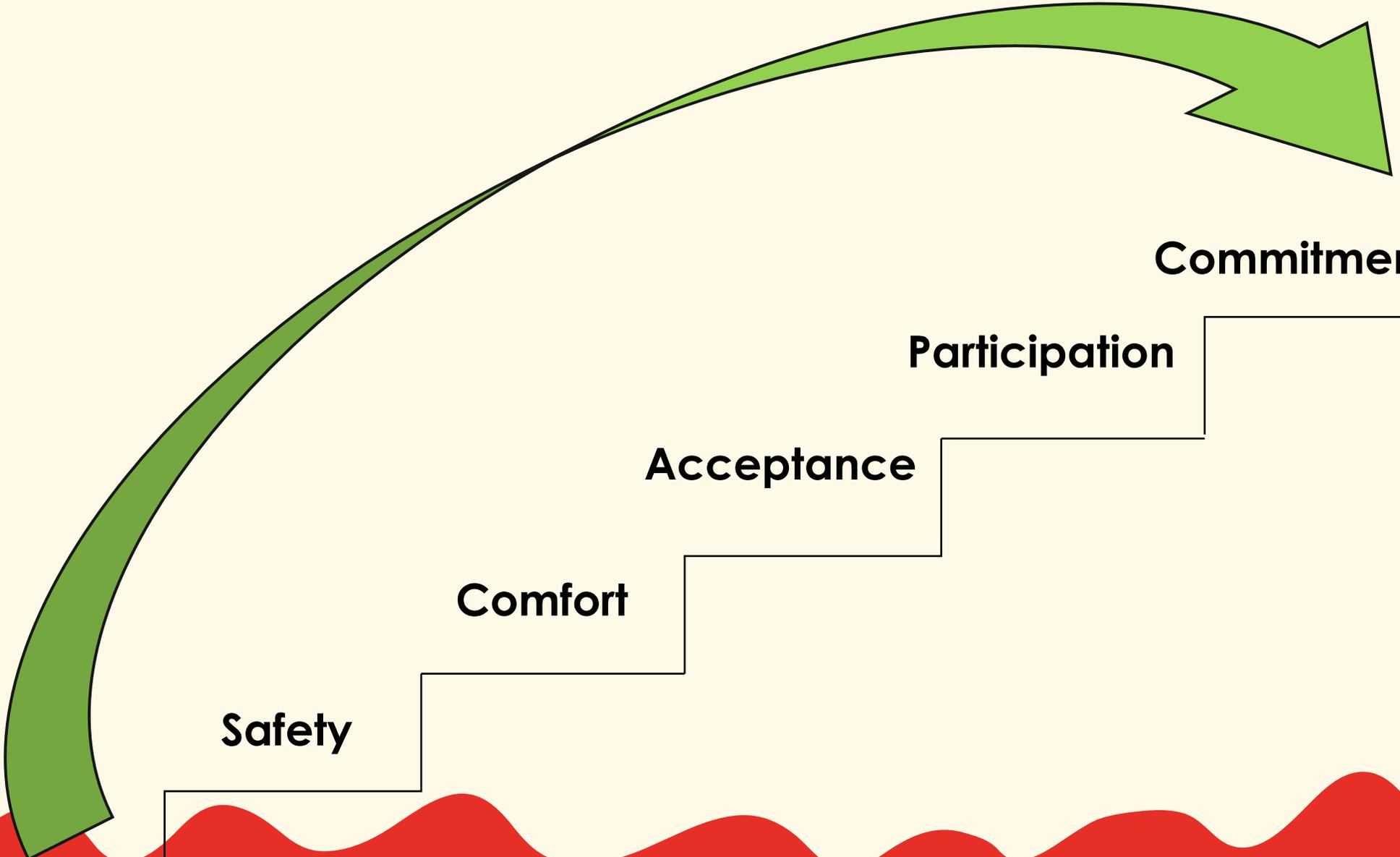
Comfort

Acceptance

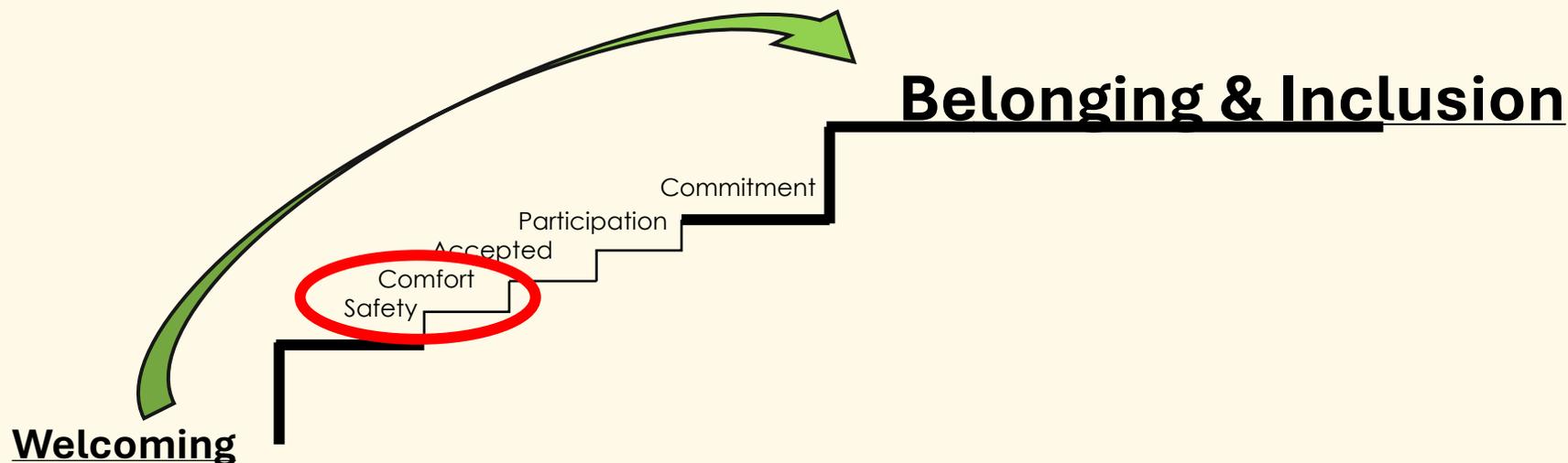
Participation

Commitment

Belonging



# What are practical ways to go beyond just welcoming to including?



- **Physical Safety** (sensory bags, chairs, etc)
- **Relational Safety** (say their name, being calm, buddies, consistency across the team)
- **Transition Safety** (countdowns, visuals, non-shouting reminders)



# PREPARE THE SOIL BEFORE PLANTING THE SEEDS



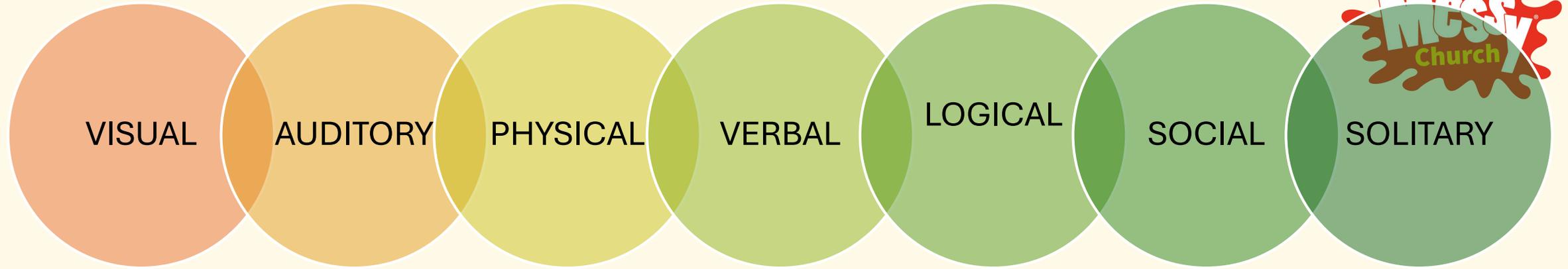
# SAFETY

To "fertilize the soil" means to add nutrients to the soil to improve its ability to support plant growth.

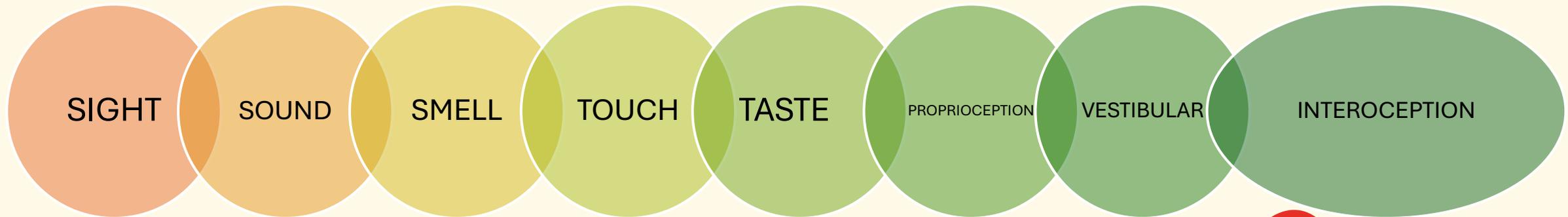
To prepare the soil in an SEN context, is to add safety before sowing the seeds.



# + LEARNING STYLES



# + SENSES



# + FAITH





**“Not everyone that comes to the table sits.  
Some lie on the floor underneath,  
some stim and flap nearby,  
some run around the table,  
some twirl and dance at the side.  
Everyone is valuable.**

**Even if you don't sit,  
you still deserve a place at the table”.**

**(Chrystal Venator)**







# "Prayer : Be still"

**God Loves the Autistic Mind: Prayer Guide for Those on the Spectrum and Those Who Love Us.**

Father Matthew P. Schneider





# Sensory Tents & Sensory Rooms



# Sensory Box/Bag or Tray



# Timers



# Chewies





Ear defenders



Exercise bands on chair legs



Picture Symbols



Trampoline / Swing



Screen / Powerpoint

Leaflets

Schedule / Routine

Seating

### Welcome

Hello and welcome to Christ Church Beckenham (CCB). It's a real joy for us to meet new people.

In this leaflet you will find out some information about where to find additional support if you would benefit from this during your time with us.

### Our Services

Our biggest service of the week is Sunday at 11am. Children and youth have their own time together in the church halls for CCBKids and Pathfinders (more information on our website). They run each week, except on the 1st Sunday of the month when we all stay together for All-Age service.

We'll invite you to sit or stand, if you are able to during moments of the service. Please do whatever suits you best and what you are comfortable with.

Ask us or look on our website for alternative services, quieter ones and other activities we run during the week.

Whichever service you come to, someone will be at the door to greet you and we will be happy to have you with us.

### Sensory Box

Ask one of our welcome team for the sensory box if this would support you / your child, during the service.

The sensory box has ear defenders, picture symbols and different fidget and sensory items which can be used to support your concentration and/or decrease feelings of anxiety.

Please let us know if there is anything else you would benefit from in this box.



### Quiet Space

If you feel overwhelmed and need a quiet space to go to, please ask one of our welcome team members to support you with this.

We hope our environment is a friendly one for you, but understand that you may need a separate space to self-regulate.

If a child needs this space, we ask that parents accompany their children at all times.

### Children and Families Minister

Kirstyn is our children and families minister and has great experience working with children and young people with additional needs, and supporting their families holistically.

Kirstyn is an advocate for raising awareness of autism within churches and has provided workshops and trainings on autism, sensory processing conditions, faith and belonging to church.

Kirstyn would love to hear from you and would love to hear of any additional things we, at CCB, can do to support you, your family member or friend with any additional needs, that will make your time with us more enjoyable and accessible.

Look out for Kirstyn, ask the welcome team where to find her or alternatively you can contact her by email:

[kirstyn@ccb.org.uk](mailto:kirstyn@ccb.org.uk)





The Lord's Prayer

# Story Telling using the senses.



Using different types of sensory input will widen your opportunities of being able to support an autistic child.

They will engage more because their sensory needs will be met.

You will be supporting to reduce their anxiety of the unknown.







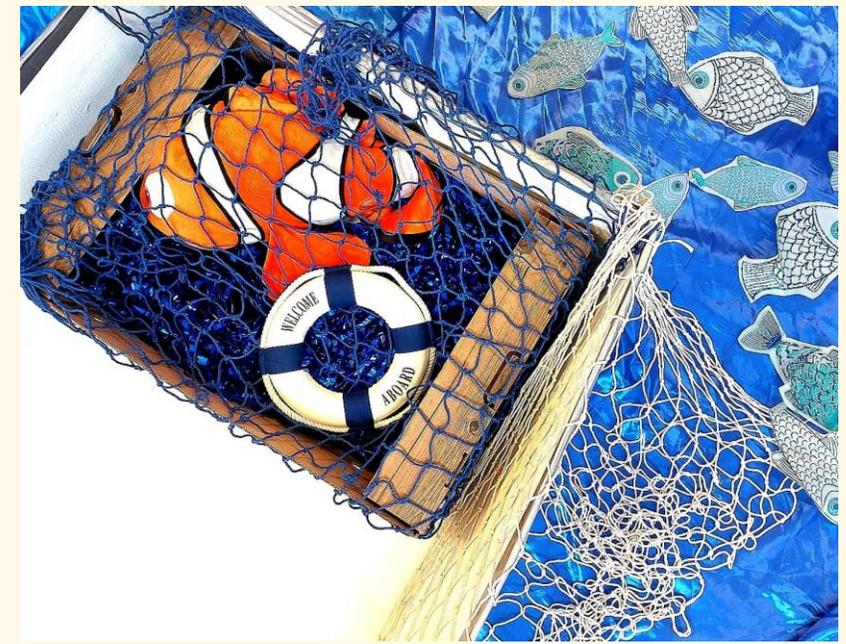


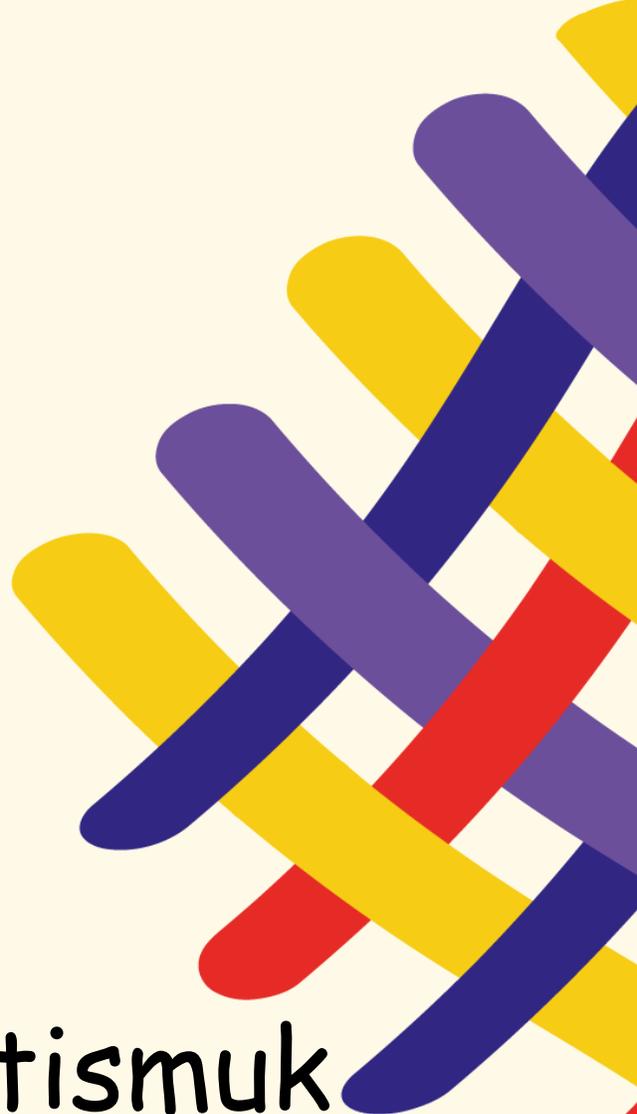






# Sensory Bible Stories





[www.almaautism.uk](http://www.almaautism.uk)

@almaautismuk



Ministries



To find out more, please visit  
[messychurch.org.uk](https://messychurch.org.uk)

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