
ELIZABETH VICE

THE INCLUSIVE ATRIUM

NEURODIVERSITY AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION

BRAVE SPACE INVITATION

BE BRAVE. SERVE THE WORK. TAKE GOOD CARE. CULTIVATE BELONGING.
CREATE BEAUTY AND EXCELLENCE IN ALL THINGS.





Session 2

Hi, I'm Neurodiverse
Church Response Options

Session 3

Nitty Gritty Talks
Nuts and Bolts

Anchor

I have come to give life with joy and life.

I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.

I have come that they may have life - life in all its fullness.

Compass

Love the Lord your God with all your Heart, Mind, Soul, and Strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.



Examples

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ADD/ADHD | Echolalia |
| Angesis/dysgenesis | Fetal alcohol syndrome |
| Anxiety | Hyperlexia |
| Aphasia | Intellectual disabilities |
| Apraxia | Meares-Irlen syndrome |
| Autism (ASD) | Multiple sclerosis |
| Auditory processing disorders | OCD |
| Bipolarity | Parkenson's |
| Cerebral Palsy | Prader-Willi syndrome |
| Depression | Sensory processing disorders |
| Developmental language disorders | Synesthesia |
| DiGorge syndrome | Trauma |
| Down syndrome | Non-specific |
| Dyspraxia | Foster care |
| Dyslexia | Abuse |
| Dyscalculia | Violence |
| Dysgraphia | Tourette's syndrome |
| Epilepsy | Williams syndrome |

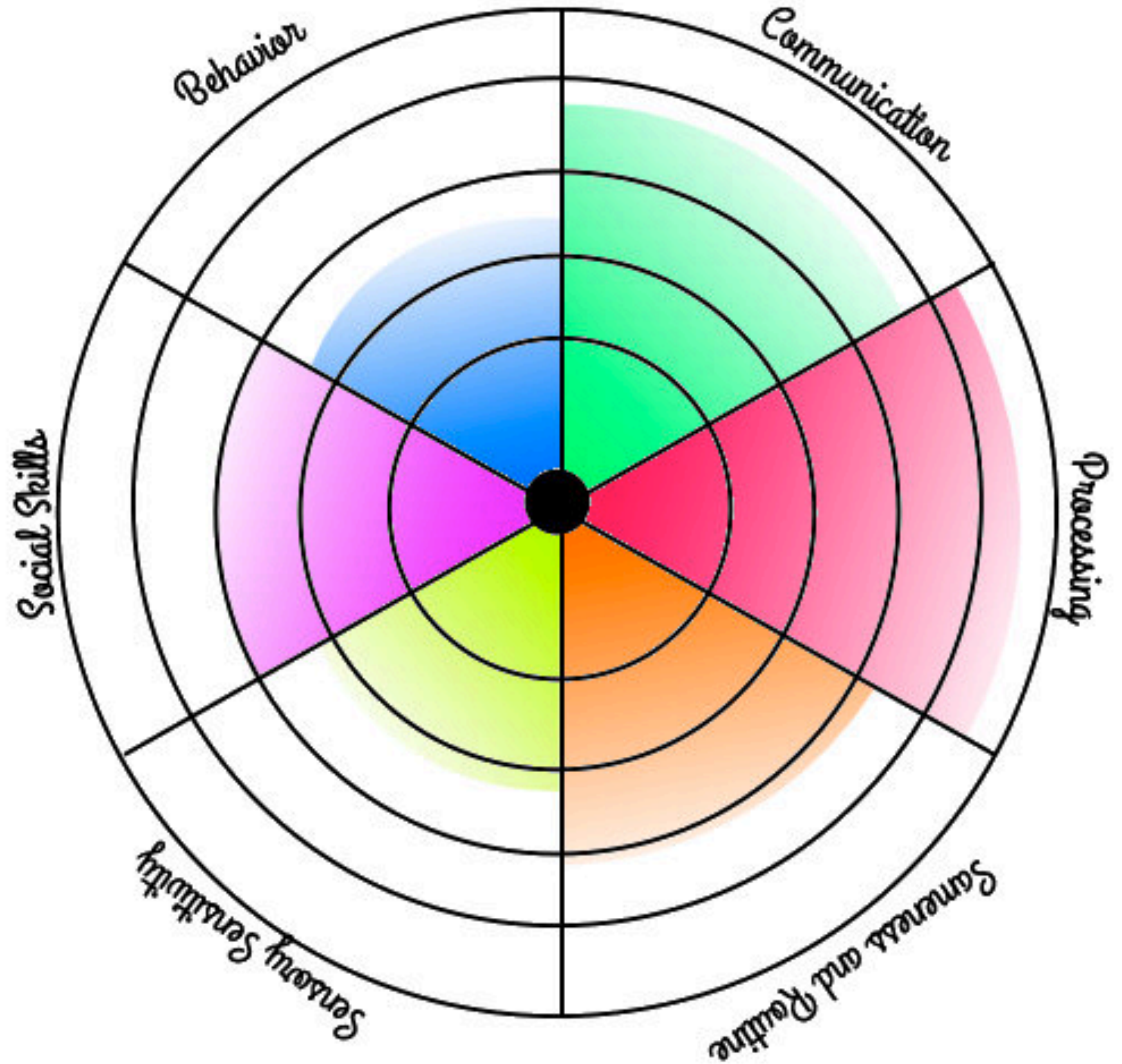
Spectrum

Goal: Building a scaffold to support but not confine.

What supports do you need?

Children and parents may not always know what supports are needed.

YOUR OBSERVATIONS ARE KEY.



Lily Grant Research

Questionnaire for
Autistics and their
caregivers.

*If you are comfortable, please share what
pictures/words/colors/sounds come to you
when you hear the word "Jesus"*

1. When I hear the word "Jesus", I think the word Jesus.
2. Golden sparkly purple.
3. A picture of Jesus, and a cross, church,
4. In the Bible, if you are talking about Jesus' time when he was born or when he died on the cross, I can picture it.
5. Sometimes I can hear His voice... like when we read parables.

Lily Grant Research

Questionnaire for
Autistics and their
caregivers.

*If you are comfortable, please share more
about what you like or don't like about the
music in your church.*

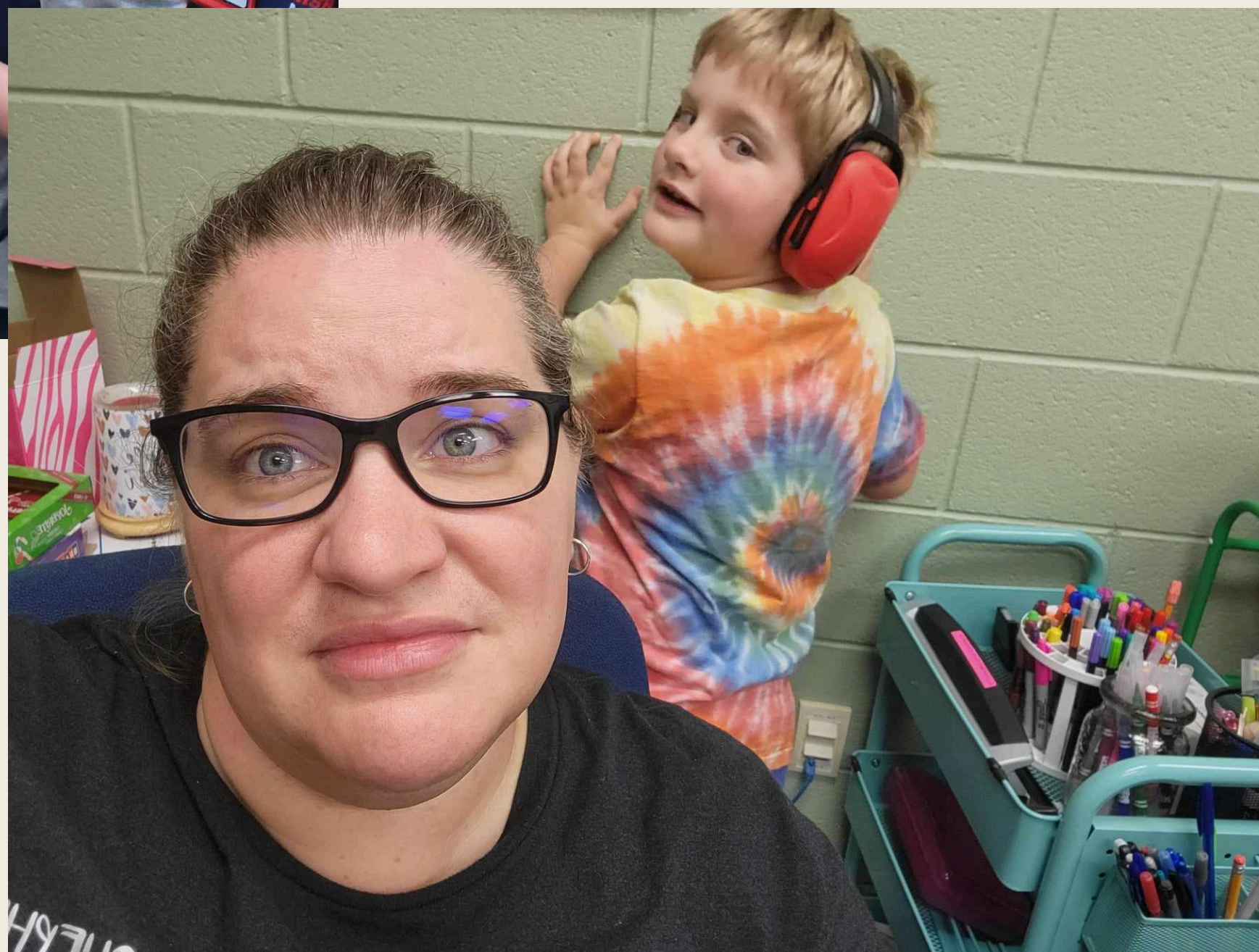
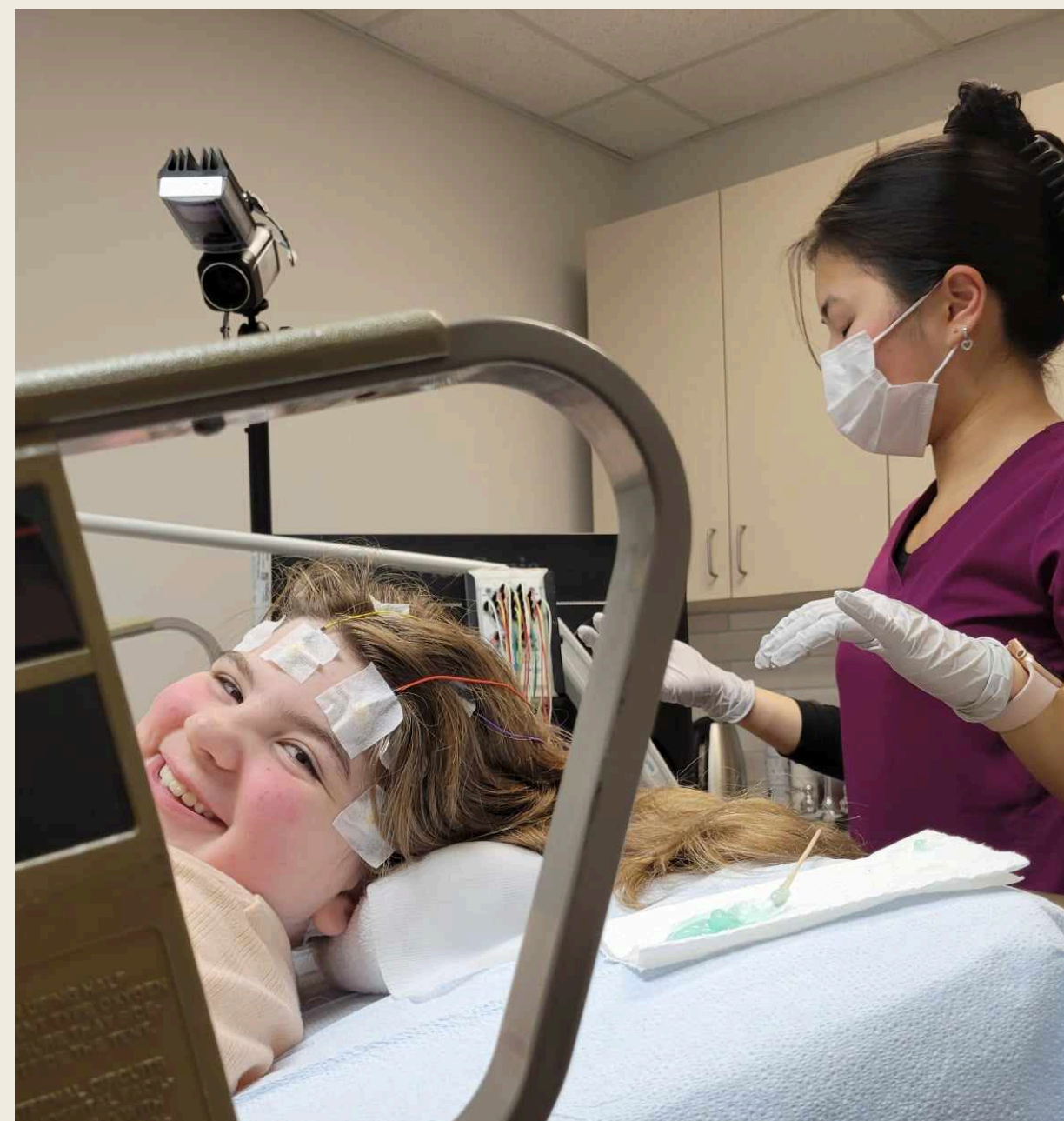
1. I don't find the organ at my current church to be annoying.
2. I like the music, I'm very into music and often dance to it in the pew.
3. I like nothing. That's why I skipped the question above.
4. I don't like the high-pitched singers' sounds. I don't like the guitar Masses. I like the songs at the 9 o'clock Mass. They know some people are grumpy in the morning so there aren't as many instruments and the music is quieter.

Lily Grant Research

Questionnaire for
Autistics and their
caregivers.

If you are comfortable, please share a time of someone misunderstood you at church.

1. When I was young, and everyone was patting me on the head and cooing.
2. When I was drawing my characters I got in trouble because it wasn't something about Jesus because it is fun and they reminded me about my grandpa.
3. Some times they get me and some times they don't. Ms. Michelle and Ms. Crista get me, but the older people don't get me.
4. *(Adult response)* He once said he did not wanted to be like Jesus... it was an unfair expectation being Jesus is an adult and him - a kid. Adults really didn't like that.



Nolan, Abbie, & Weiland

Cumming, GA

Nolan

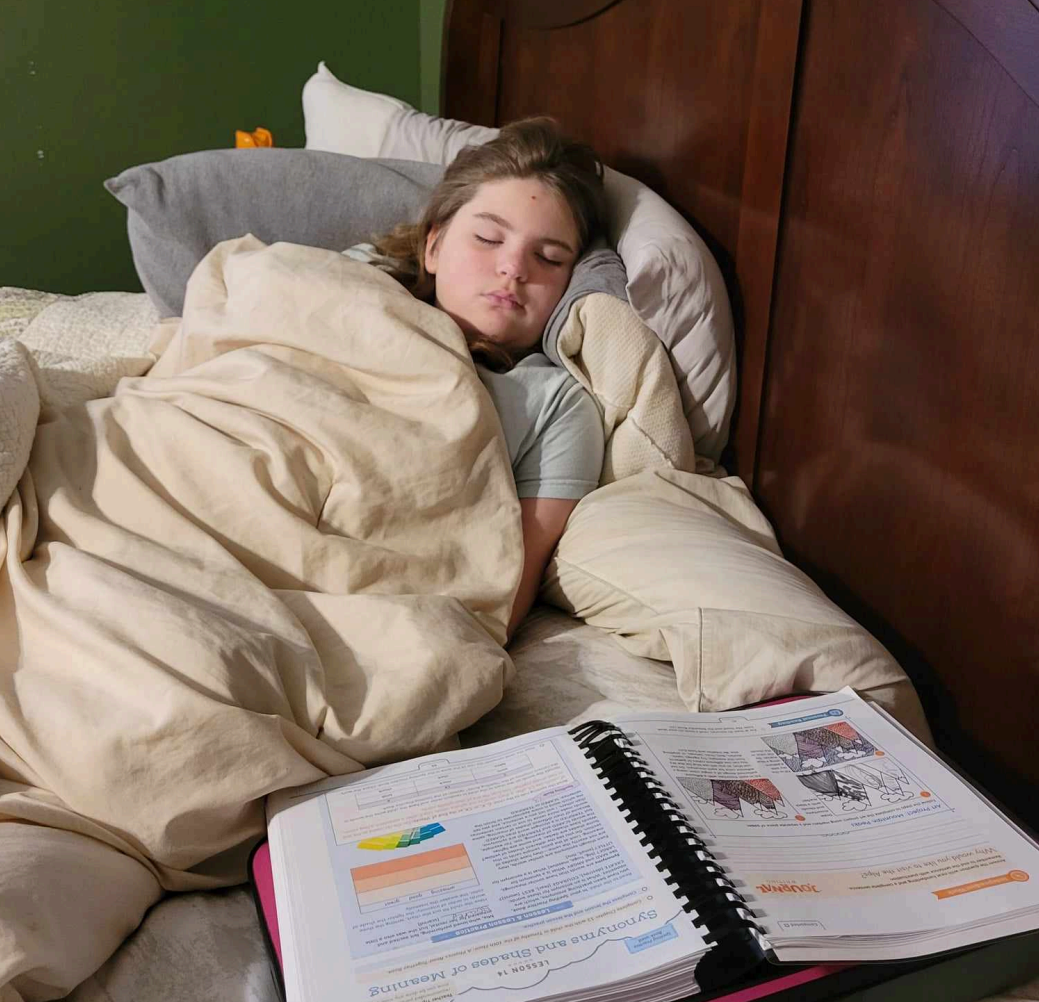
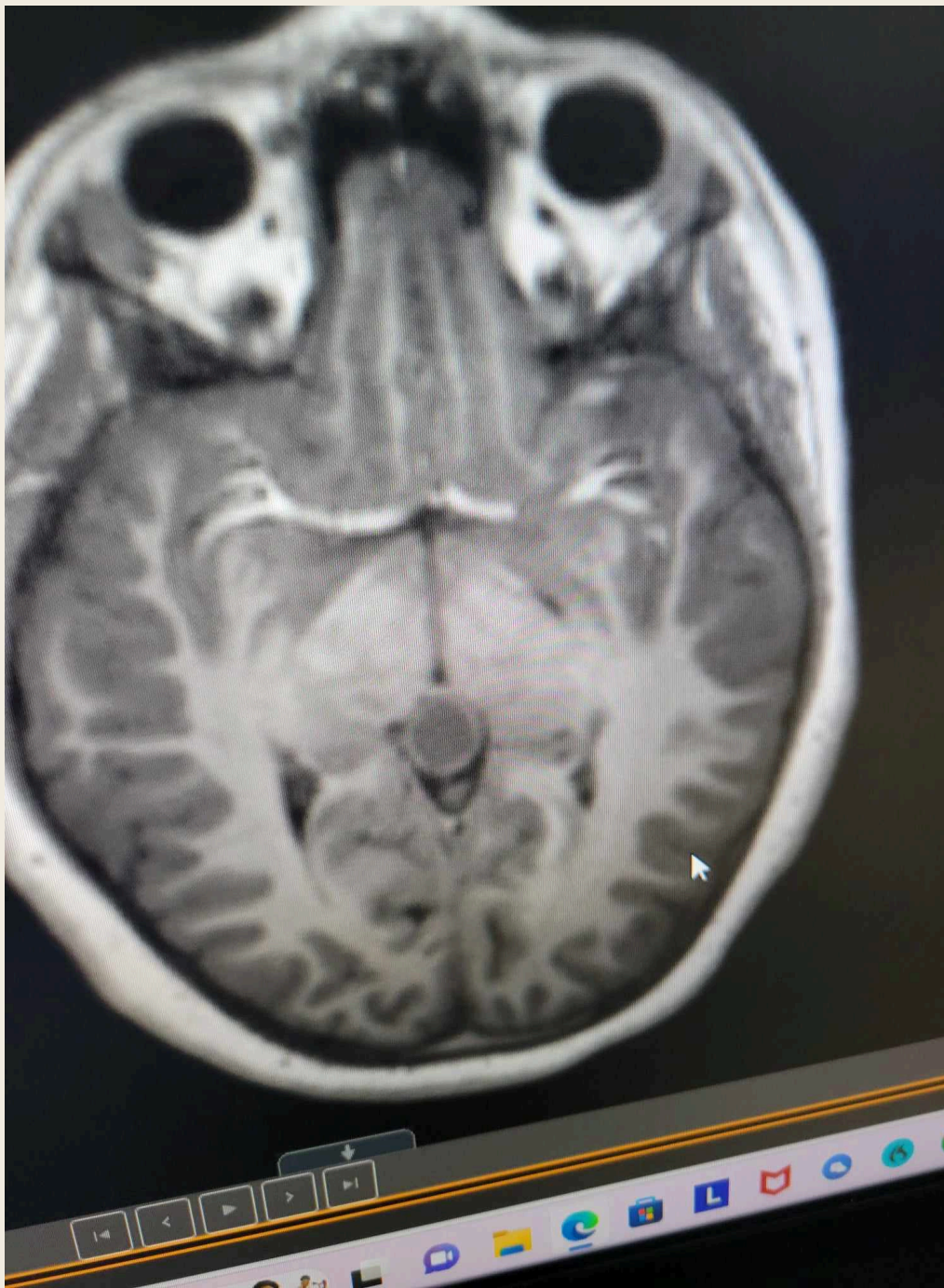
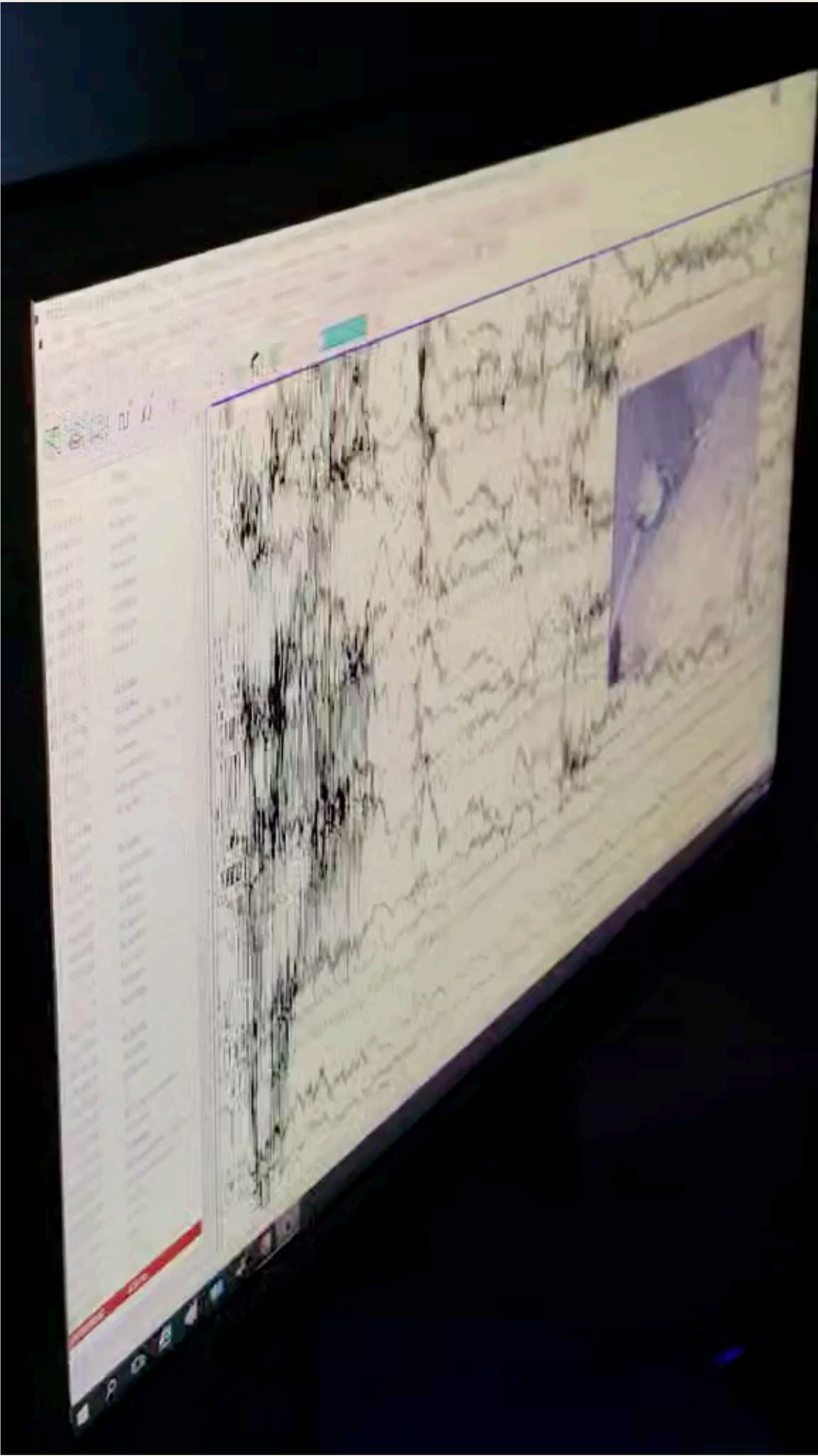
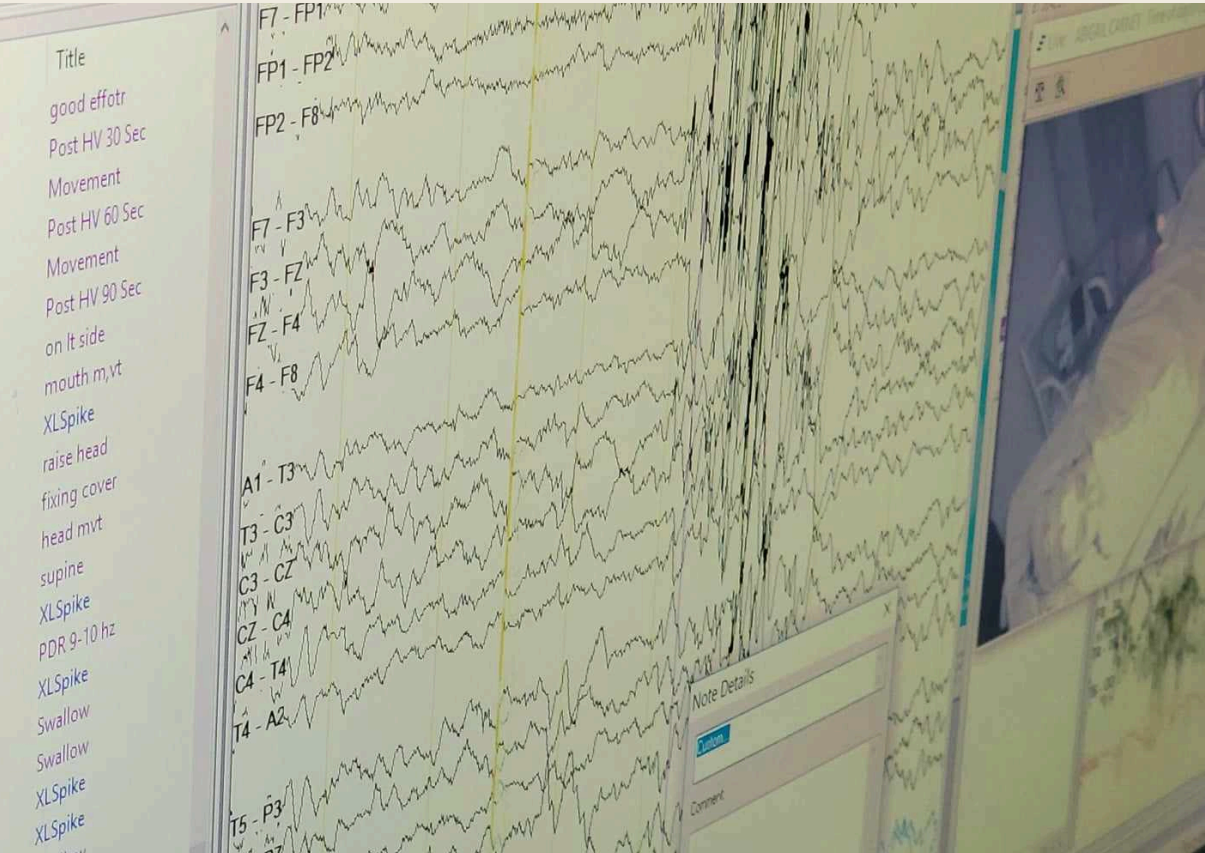
- Autistic, Echolalia, ADD, Dissociative
- Began homeschooling last year

Abbie

- Autistic, ADHD, Epilepsy, Depression, Anxiety, OCD/Scrupulosity, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia
- Began homeschooling last year

Weiland

- Autistic, ARFID, Cognitive Delays, Developmental Speech Disorders, Dyspraxia, ADHD, Selective Mutism
- Began homeschooling this year





Charlie

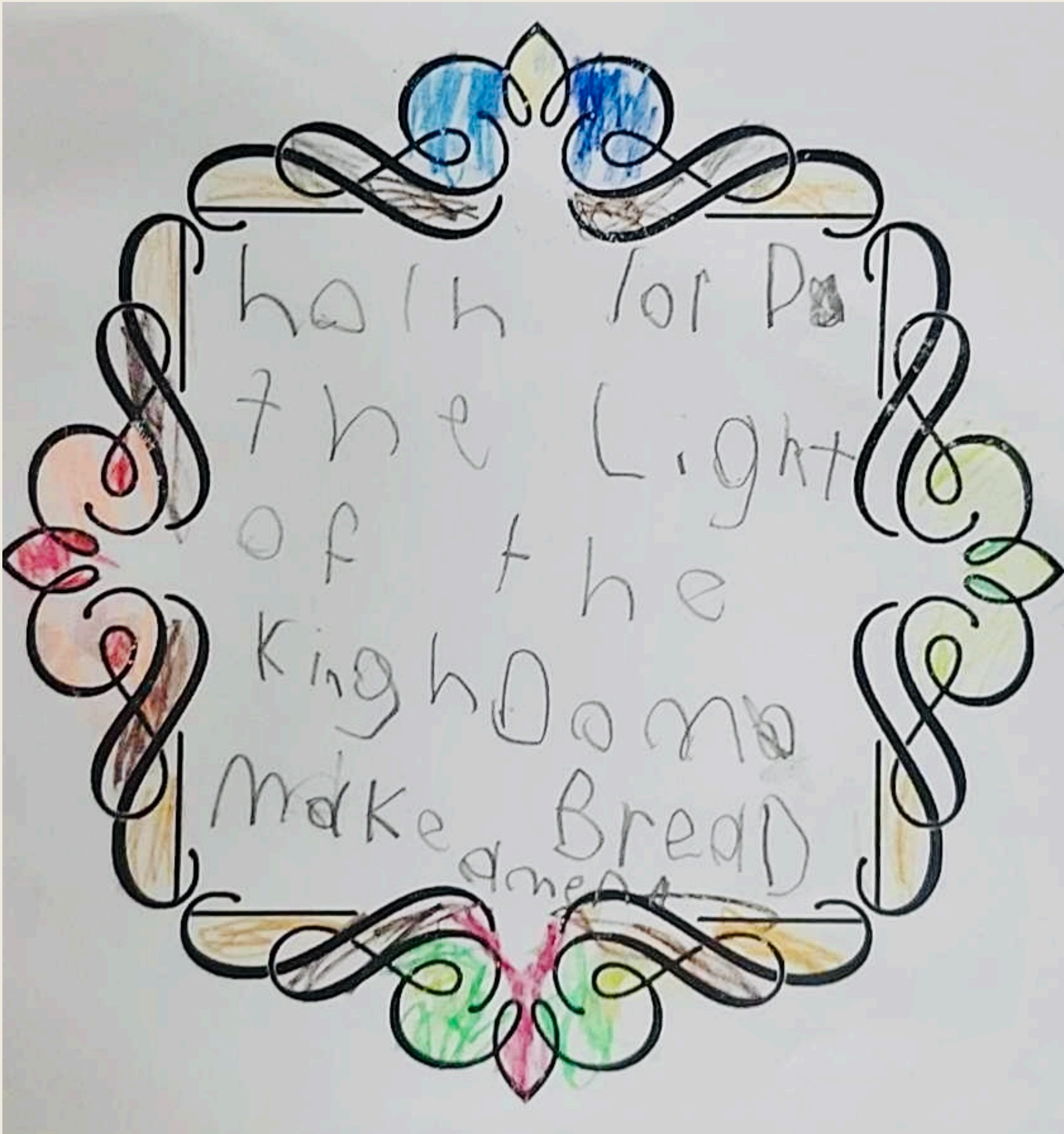
Parkside Church, Charleston, SC

- Thrice Neurodiverse
- Montessori Child
- Fifth year in the atrium
- Level 1 guide

Family

- 1 Sibling - Sam, almost five
- Private school - supporting creative thinkers and makes space for neurodiversity





How to Speak about Neurodiversity

Identity-first language

Accommodation (scaffolding)

Assistance

Spectrum

Hight vs Low functioning

Teaching to be normal

Aspergers, Hyper, Defiant

Abelism

Sample Daily Report Card

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Stayed in my area | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ |
| Hands to self | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ |
| Used kind words | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ |
| Complied with teacher directives | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ | Yes ____ No ____ |

<https://herviewfromhome.com/10-ways-to-guarantee-your-child-will-behave-in-church-equiping-yourself-not-playing-on-your-phone-not-falling-asleep-not-...>
10 Ways to Guarantee Your Child Will Behave in Church
1. Sit Near the Front of Church – This is a great tip, as it gives your children a front row view. There's no looking at the back of ...

<https://articles.earthlingshandbook.org/2015/02/10/how-to-get-kids-to-behave-in-church-the-earthling's-...>
How to Get Kids to Behave in Church - The Earthling's ...
Feb 10, 2015 — Hold your child by the shoulders, look into his eyes, and speak calmly but firmly about the right way to behave in church. If you feel he might ...

<https://ministry-to-children.com/how-to-get-kids-to-b-...>
How to Get Kids to Behave in Church - Ministry-To-Children
Oct 3, 2011 — Give your child a good meal before church so hunger pangs don't encourage bad behavior. Avoid giving kids candy, like chocolate or sugary drinks ...

<https://www.themodestmomblog.com/5-ways-to-help-...>
5 Ways To Help Your Child Sit Still In Church - The Modest ...
Oct 11, 2017 — Encourage the Positive Behavior. If you are teaching an older child to sit still make sure you encourage the positive behavior instead of just ...

Supporting

- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Play therapy
- Strength-based assessments
- Perspective taking
- Sensory integration without tolerance

Helpful therapies help children discover advocacy skills, respect them as individuals, help them discover communication avenues which work best for them, & try accommodations to see what is best.

The therapy should never be aimed at “_____” neurodiversity. Because you can not FIX a neurodiversity.

Unhelpful therapies prioritize looking normal or doing “age appropriate” activities. They often use rewards and punishments to force communication. They teach your child to ignore their own way of communicating. It's not valid.

Prioritizes complains and indistinguishability. This make children vulnerable to abuse. This teaches the child that what is really important is to appear “normal” even if it hurts.

Therapeutic Supports

Goals

What is the desired outcome?

Build skills
Make connections

Neurodiversity can't
be fixed or cured.

Communication

Auditory-processing

Visual-processing

Kenesethetic-processing

Literal

Communication tools:

signs

communication pacing

check-lists

Ipod/headphones with scripture books

communication tools



Cueing

Color coding

Visible clock

Deescalation signs or code words

Demonstrate social skills

Emotional temperature check card

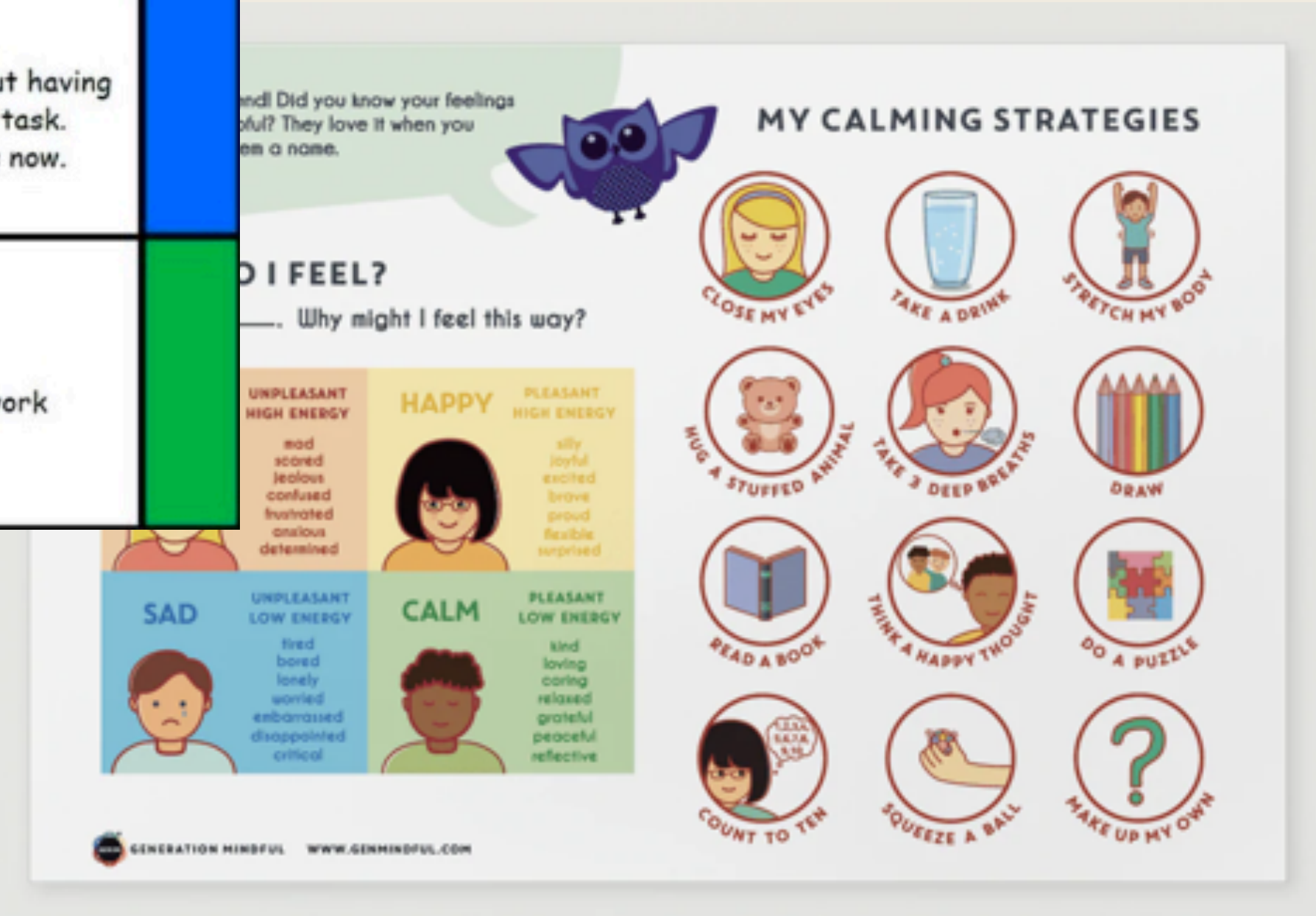
Task initiation

Sign language

List of extension/response ideas

5 minute warning

| | |
|---|---|
| 5 |  <div>Angry I've lost control. I'm not listening anymore. I could hit, kick or bite. I need a quiet place to calm down.</div> |
| 4 |  <div>Overwhelmed Everything is too hard. I'm losing control and need to leave the environment I'm in. Give me space.</div> |
| 3 |  <div>Frustrated I'm not getting it, I'm showing signs of stress. I should take a break now.</div> |
| 2 |  <div>Anxious Trying to stay focused, but having a hard time staying on task. Use calming strategies now.</div> |
| 1 |  <div>Happy Ready and willing to work</div> |



Lowering Stressors

- Working alone at own pace
- Sufficient downtime/transition time
- Need to have information due to uncertainty
- Movement/puttering
- Stemming
- Gross motor moment
- Finding ways for participation that don't expose areas of high support needs.
- Calming area
- No florescent lighting, low lighting
- Low noise level/no sudden sounds

Calming Basket

1. Finger labyrinths
2. Marble lap maze
3. Liquid motion timer
4. Ear defenders
5. Lacing frames
6. Popper square

Thinking Supports

1. Pacing area
2. Rocking board
3. Balance board
4. Wobble chair
5. Sheepskin brushing
6. Finger chaining/yarn ball rolling

Calming Corner

1. Comfortable - soft pillow
2. Low lighting
3. Lava lamp or sensory bottles
4. Bubble tubes
5. Weighted blanket
6. Sound machine (soothing)

Grounding Corner

1. Compression swing
2. Gym mats (off gassing)
3. Kinetic sand
4. Touch lights
5. Trampoline
6. Monkey bars
7. Gel pad tiles
8. Harkala sensory chair

Setting the Tone

- Be upfront with your abilities
 - What can your space manage
 - What can your staff manage
 - Asking staff if there are any OT or PT folks in the congregation
 - Deciding when a child needs a shadow to be safe
- Ask questions in registration
- Don't diagnose
- Don't talk about child to adults in front of the child
- Make sure to have books with neurodiverse children - this is grace and courtesy work

[illegible]

Observe - Sensory Seeking & Sensory Avoiding Moments

- **Tactile**

- Touching a specific texture type
- Refusing to touch glue or tape
- Really loving glue's feel
- Being into water works
- Taking off shoes, socks
- Fidgeting with cloth or objects (must touch)
- Keeping on a heavy coat
- Pinching, head banging, skin picking, hair pulling

- **Visual**

- Observing items with light behind it
- Saying it's too bright
- Saying it's too dark
- Waving hands in front of eyes
- Moving or spinning object for shadow, reflection, or shininess
- Being really into patterns
- Avoids eye contact

- **Oral**

- Things in the mouth
- Chewing on clothing or materials
- Sucking thumb/fingers
- Licking things
- Grinding teeth or Spitting

- **Smell**

- Declaring an emphatic opinion on your hand lotion or chrism oil
- Smells things you don't
- Reacts to new materials, rugs, or detergent smells

Auditory

- Tapping items
- Bumping items together
- Saying it's too loud
- Finger snapping or clapping
- Repetitive sounds
- Hearing electricity
- Startled by loud noises



Proprioception

- Deliberately bumping into things.
- Pushing into another person or hugging very tightly
- Pushing hard into you
- Not wanting to be touched
- Overreacting after bumping something
- Wearing a heavy coat indoors
- Tapping on their face
- Standing too close
- Moving loudly
- Flapping

Spatial/Vestibular

- Standing on a ledge or wall
- Climbing
- Hanging
- Jumping
- Swinging
- Leaning back in chair
- Being upside down
- Leaping from a height
- Spinning
- “Zooming”
- Don't want to swing or “play” outside
- Limpness/flopyness

Contact Elizabeth

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Elizabeth loves to have conversations about encouraging children to thrive in their Christian development - cultural inclusion in the atrium, home-bound children, neurodivergent children, faith-seeking families, and pondering how catechists can adapt our expectations and norms to provide ways for Jesus to profoundly meet with the children and adults whom may challenge our preconceptions.

