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Neurodiversity in Post-Secondary Education: Supporting Students

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WELCOME!

An invitation from your presenter

Please take these few quiet moments before we get started to do any (or all) of the following:

- turn off your phone and place it completely out of sight or reach
 - close all other tabs & applications besides Zoom
 - turn off your camera
 - grab a tall glass of water
 - stand up and do a few stretches
 - close your eyes for a minute or two
- 

ABOUT YOUR PRESENTER

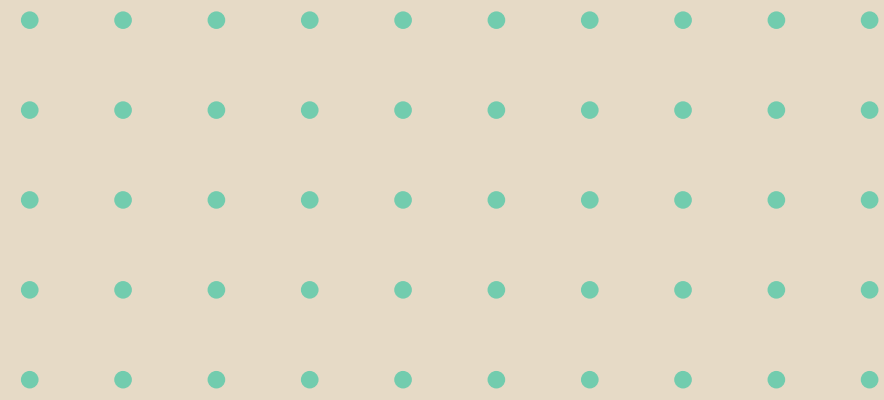


JENINE LILLIAN



Jenine Lillian is a neurodivergent consultant, educator, artist, writer, and librarian. For more than 20 years, Jenine has taught and presented in the public library sphere in the United States and Canada. Jenine has received national recognition for their advocacy and library work with teens.

Jenine lives in the Kootenays, British Columbia, Canada where they can be found making art, talking with folks on sidewalks, birdwatching, building community through volunteering, and practicing self-care.



NEURODIVERSITY IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Presented by Jenine Lillian
Neurodiversity Consultant



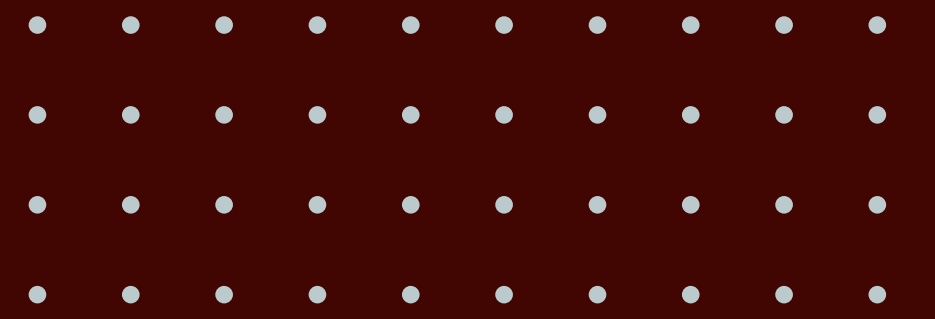


HELLO!

I'm Jenine.

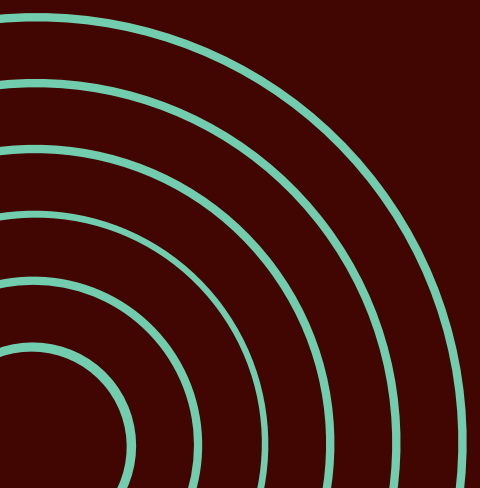
I'm autistic.





“If you've met one person with autism,
you've met one person with autism.”

~ Stephen Shore



WE ARE ALL THE SAME

+ you are not alone.

+ you are loved and you love.

+ your authentic self longs to be seen, heard and valued.

+ you have your own:

dreams fears desires strengths weaknesses

sensitivities goals learning style perspective

unique contribution to make wherever you go





WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT

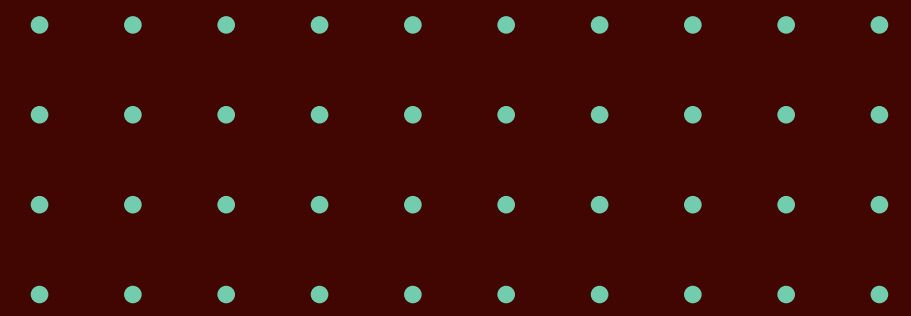
- + you have preferences for physical, emotional and mental stimulation.
- + you have special interests, hobbies, skills and abilities.
- + you have ways of expressing your thoughts and feelings.
- + you enjoy being recognized, included and appreciated in certain ways.

+ you have your own:

dreams fears desires strengths weaknesses

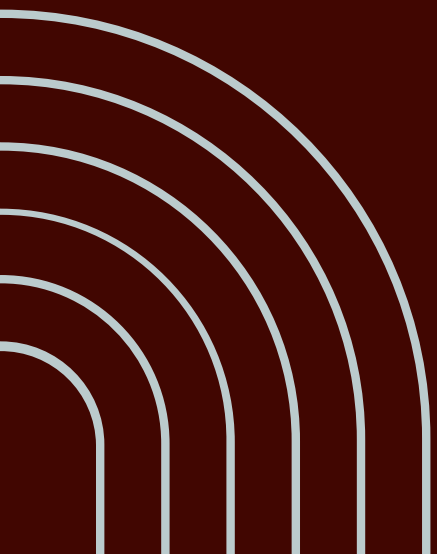
sensitivities goals learning style perspective

unique contribution to make wherever you go



“We see the world, not as it is,
but as we are – or,
as we are conditioned to see it.”

~ Steven R. Covey



THE FIVE IMPORTANT THINGS FOR TODAY



- 01. DEFINITIONS**
What neurodiversity is. (And, what it's not.)
- 02. HOW NEURODIVERSITY LOOKS**
How it shows up in life and at work.
- 03. WHY NEURODIVERSITY MATTERS**
Emerging discoveries and stories of experiences.
- 04. HOW TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS**
Increasing awareness and reducing stigma.
- 05. WHAT YOU ARE WONDERING ABOUT**
Questions, resources and connection.



NEURODIVERSITY KEY TERMS

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variations in how the brain processes and interprets information. It describes the idea that there is no one “right” way of experiencing and interacting with the world and that cognitive differences shouldn’t be viewed as deficient but embraced as an inherent part of human diversity.

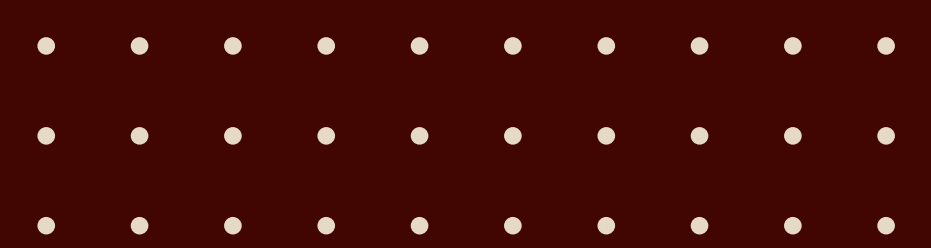
Neurodivergent (ND) describes an individual with cognitive differences.

Neurotypical (NT) describes an individual with a brain that functions in a typical way that more neatly “fits into” mainstream society.

Neurodiverse is used to describe a group of people who are neurodivergent.

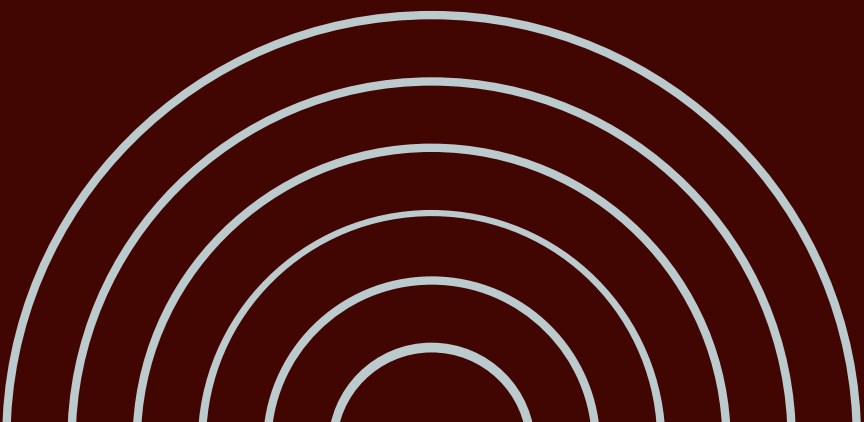
Source: <https://www.cultureamp.com/blog/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace>





“Neurodiversity is a natural, healthy, and important form of human biodiversity — a fundamental and vital characteristic of the human species, a crucial source of evolutionary and creative potential.”

~ Nick Walker



EXAMPLES OF NEURODIVERSITY

An estimated 1 in 5 adults in North America are neurodivergent. This estimate is low. You may have heard of some of these conditions & you likely know someone with:

- Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)/Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Bipolar Disorder
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Epilepsy
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Tourette's Syndrome



HOW NEURODIVERSITY SHOWS UP

Neurodiversity shows up in life, school & work in the following ways:

- Masking, camouflaging, scripting, mimicry and personas
- Anxiety
- Sensory sensitivities
- Learning differences
- Atypical communication style
- Difficulty with time management
- Desire for consistent schedule/routine

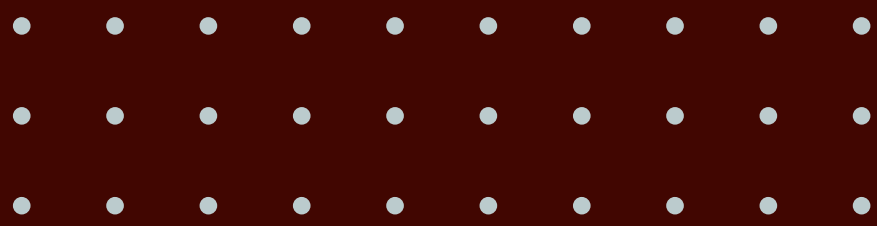
“Masking, sometimes referred to as “camouflaging,” occurs when someone attempts to hide their mental health symptoms in an effort to blend in with people around them.”

Source: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-masking-in-mental-health-6944532#:~:text=Masking%2C%20sometimes%20referred%20to%20as,or%20engage%20in%20compensatory%20behaviors.>

COMMON MANIFESTATIONS OF NEURODIVERSITY IN YOUNG ADULT STUDENTS

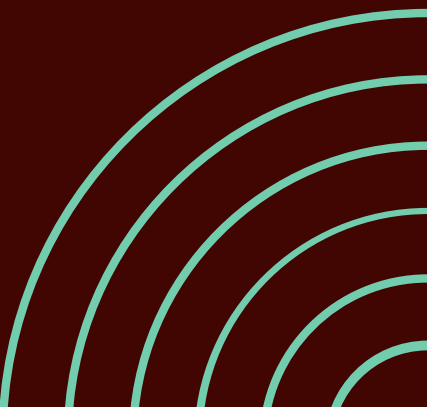
- + Differences in attention and focus
- + Unique social interaction styles
- + Sensory processing sensitivities
- + Varied executive functioning abilities
- + Alternative learning and information processing styles
- + Heightened creativity and problem-solving skills in specific areas





“Autists are the ultimate square pegs, and the problem with pounding a square peg into a round hole is not that the hammering is hard work. It’s that you’re destroying the peg.”

~ Paul Collins



NEURODIVERSITY IN POSTSECONDARY SETTINGS

“Neurodivergent people are increasingly involved in postsecondary education, but they continue to face serious barriers and challenges on college campuses. These challenges are not only related to disability functional differences and accommodation needs, but also to stigma and prejudice toward neurodivergent people. Consequently, neurodivergent people are less successful than neurotypical peers; moreover, intersections between neurodivergence and other marginalized groups are associated with even greater inequities.”

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10024274/>





THE IMPORTANCE OF NEURODIVERSITY AWARENESS IN POSTSECONDARY SETTINGS

- **Inclusive Education** : Recognizing neurodiversity promotes a more inclusive educational environment for all students.
- **Improved Academic Outcomes** : Supporting neurodivergent students can lead to better academic performance and retention rates.
- **Preparation for Diverse Workforce** : Exposure to neurodiversity prepares all students for a diverse professional environment.
- **Innovation and Creativity** : Neurodivergent thinking can lead to unique solutions and innovations in academic research and projects.
- **Mental Health and Well-being** : Acceptance and support of neurodiversity can reduce stress and improve mental health outcomes for neurodivergent students.

NEURODIVERSITY MATTERS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

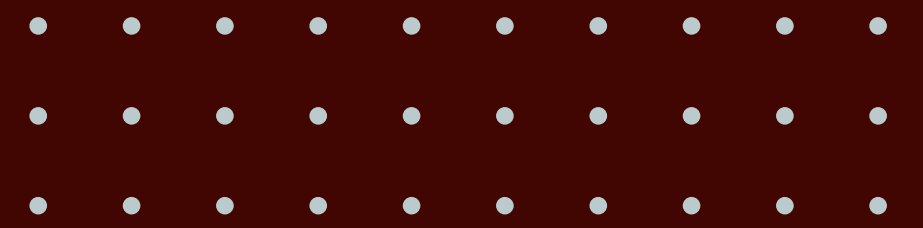
A Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is a brain-based disorder that affects an individual's ability to read, write, and do math (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia).

- 94% of students with SLDs received accommodations in K-12 education, **but only 17% received them in postsecondary education.**

Source: <https://nclid.org/join-the-movement/understand-the-issues/>

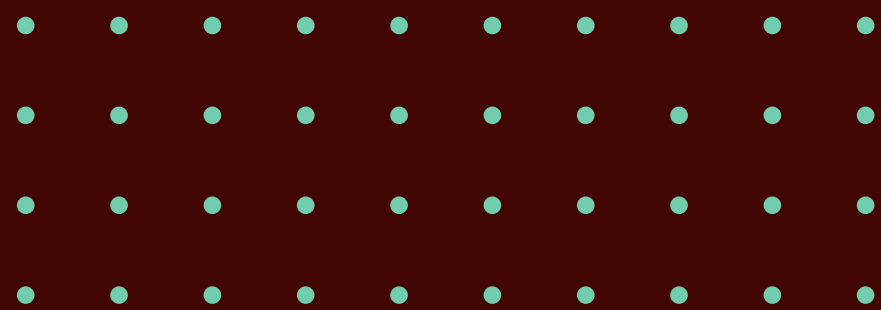
Why do you think this is the case?





“When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become wiser, more inclusive, and better as an organization.”

~ Pat Wadors



INCREASE NEURODIVERSITY INCLUSION

STEP1:: BUILD PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

As the foundation of any diversity and inclusion efforts, psychological safety is “The belief that you won’t be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. At work, it’s a shared expectation held by members of a team that teammates will not embarrass, reject, or punish them for sharing ideas, taking risks, or soliciting feedback.”

Source: <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/what-is-psychological-safety-at-work/>



INCREASE NEURODIVERSITY INCLUSION



STEP2 :: CURIOSITY& CONVERSATION

Just as we begin to dismantle bias by investigating our own views, we can increase the awareness of and inclusion of neurodiversity by becoming curious about our own preferences, learning styles, communication styles, personas and thought processes.

Share the inner workings of your mind with a few trusted sources. Then, ask them to share with you how they uniquely see the world and process information. This builds bonds in our brains and in our lives, regardless of the setting.



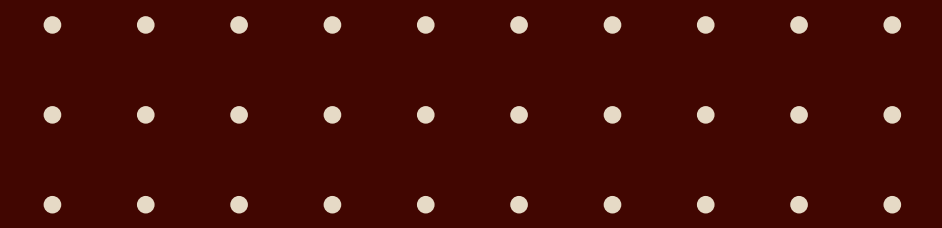
INCREASE NEURODIVERSITY INCLUSION

STEP3 :: FLEXIBILITY& COMPASSION

Assess how flexible your current practices are regarding the following:

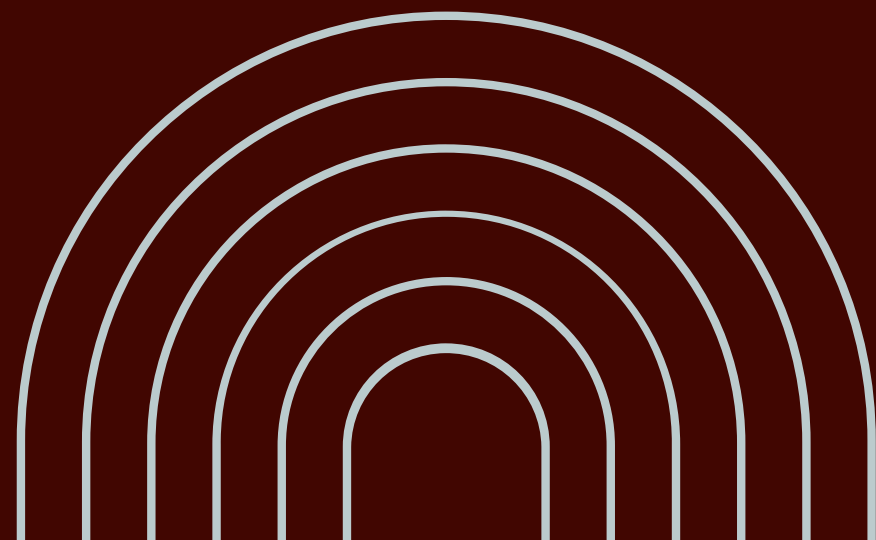
- scheduling and check-in points for assignments
- meeting structure, duration, back-to-back occurrences
- cameras in Zoom meetings
- authentic connection opportunities
- physical spaces, especially sensory experiences of the environment





“Diversity is getting a dinner invitation.
Inclusion is making sure everyone enjoys
the meal.”

~ Barasha Medhi



THREE IMMEDIATELY IMPLEMENTABLE STEPS TO SUPPORT YOUR NEURODIVERSE STUDENTS

- **Flexible Assignment Formats**

- Allow students to demonstrate their knowledge through various formats (e.g., written, oral, visual presentations).

- **Provide Clear Structure**

- Use visual schedules, explicit instructions, and consistent routines to support executive functioning.

- **Encourage Self-Advocacy**

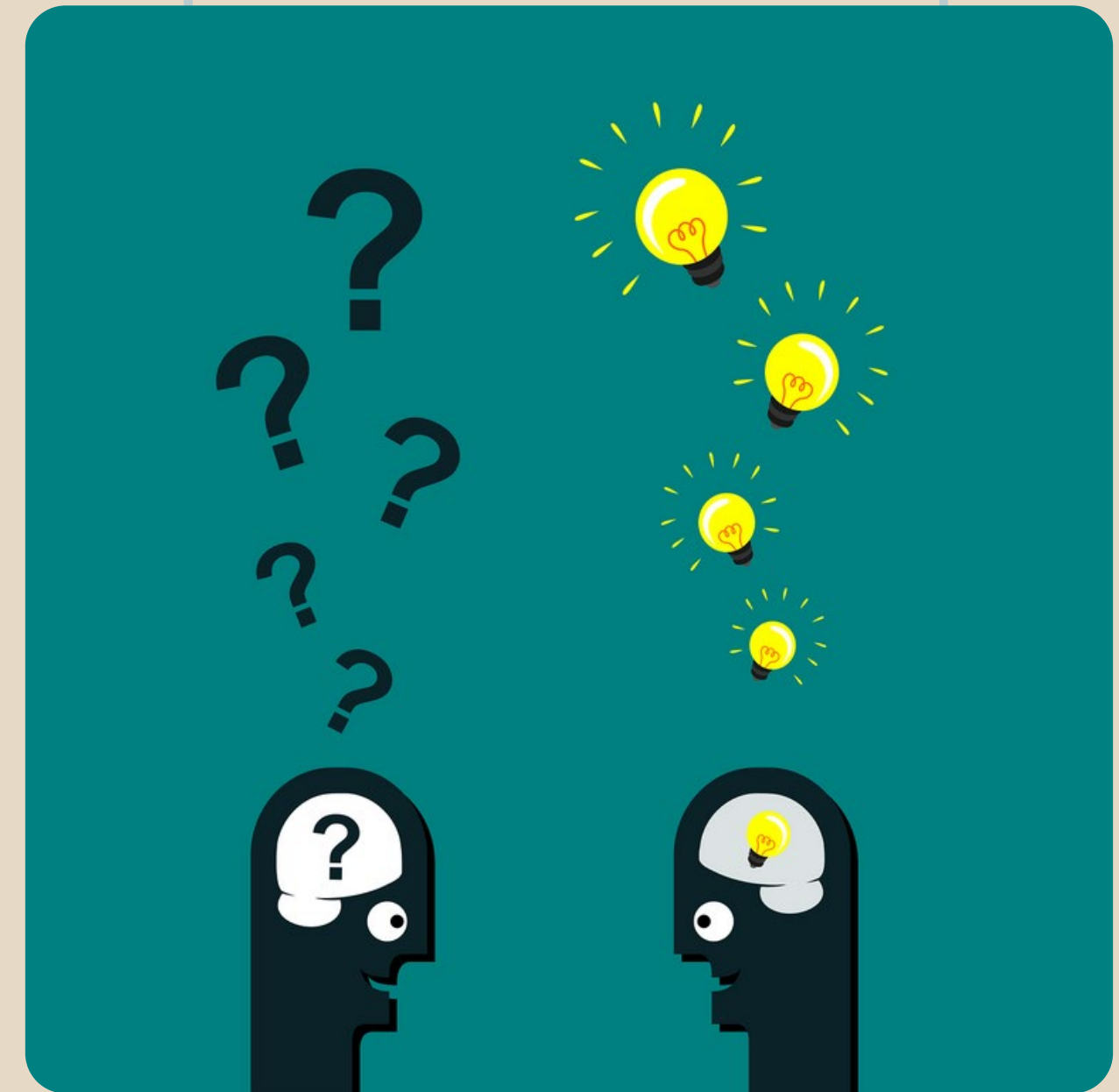
- Create an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their needs and preferences.



PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Please feel free to share your thoughts and ask questions to explore what you're wondering about.

If you'd prefer to reach out after you've had time to ponder things, you can email info@jeninelillian.com





THANK YOU!

Let's connect.

info@jeninelillian.com

