

A decorative pattern on the left side of the slide, consisting of a grid of overlapping circles. Each circle is divided into four quadrants by a vertical and a horizontal line, creating a stylized, geometric floral or leaf-like appearance. The pattern is rendered in a light gray color on a white background.

INTRODUCTION TO AUTISM AND NEURODIVERSITY

**PRESENTED BY THE: MID-
MICHIGAN AUTISM
ASSOCIATION**

WHAT IS THE MID-MICHIGAN AUTISM ASSOCIATION (MMAA)?

Founded in 2008

- Board of volunteers, including parents and providers, who wanted to better understand treatment options and local resources. Our current Board of Directors has 11 members.

Autism-Driven, not Autism-Specific

- Although we were founded around Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), we aim to support all families and individuals with developmental disabilities. No dues or membership fees to pay. Our sponsored events are always FREE and for all ages and abilities.

WHO AM I?

Cathy Blatnik, Current
Treasurer

MMAA Board Member
for 8 ½ years.

Mom to three, youngest
is 18 and was
diagnosed with ASD at
age 2 ½.

Other conditions:
ADHD and Generalized
Anxiety Disorder at age
3 and Complex Partial
Epilepsy at age 11.

WHO ARE YOU?

How many of you have a personal connection to ASD?

What is your previous experience with or training in supporting individuals with ASD?

What do you hope to learn from today's presentation?

THE PLAN FOR TODAY

Presentation Outline:

What we will cover:

- What ASD is
- What ASD is not
- Ways you can support families and individuals with ASD

Following this training:

You should be able to identify:

- Features associated with a diagnosis of ASD
- Common myths and misconceptions about ASD
- Strategies to support families and individuals

WHAT ARE NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS?

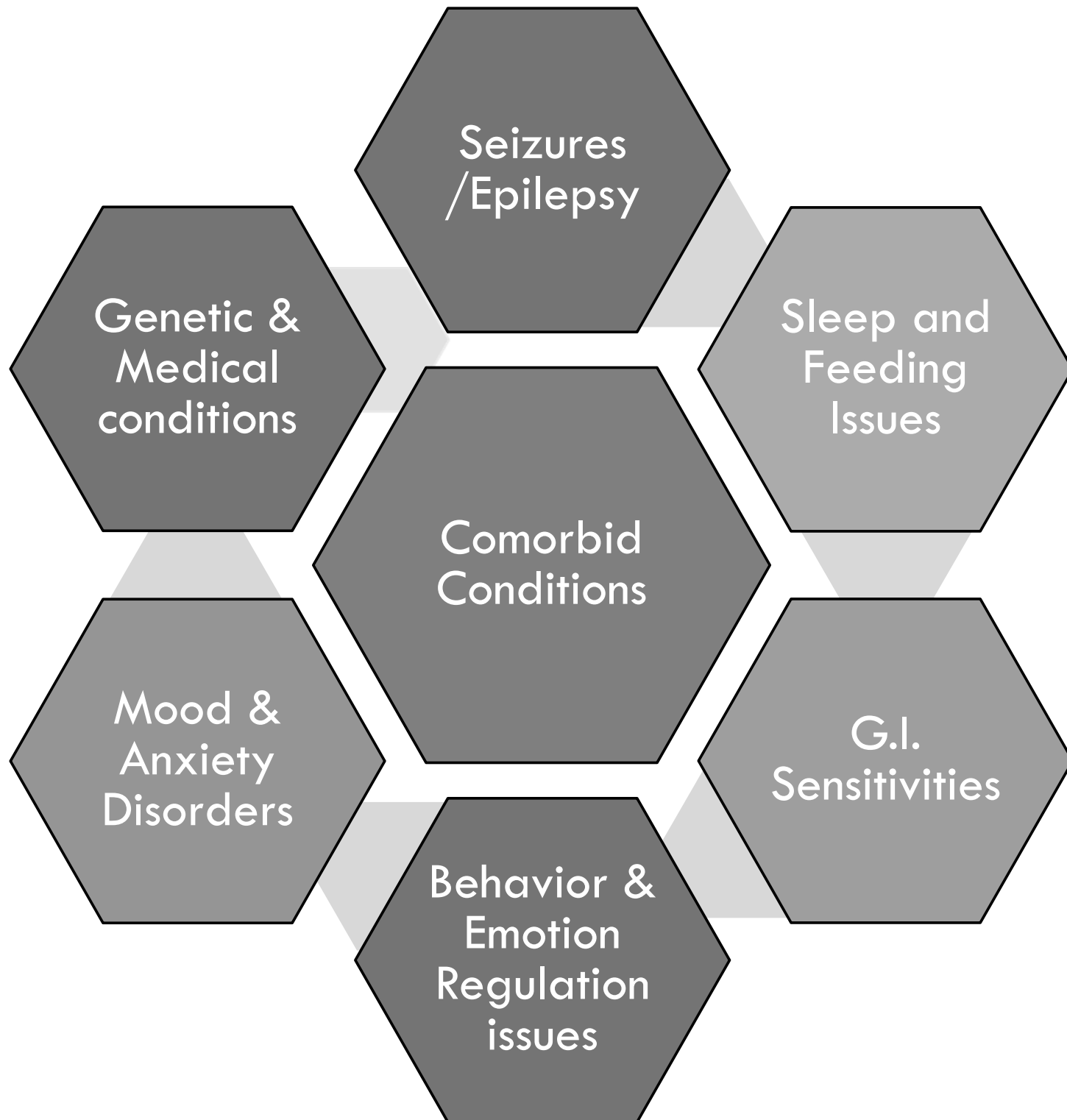
Neurodevelopmental disorders are a group of diagnoses related to impairments in growth and development of brain functioning.



All Neurodevelopmental disorders have impairments of personal, social, academic and/or occupational functioning.



Neurodevelopmental disorders often co-occur with each other and other disorders and have a lot of things in common.



WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)?

- Trouble with unpredictability or change in routine
- Unusual or intense interests
- Repetitive motor movements or language use

- Difficulty initiating or sustaining conversation
- Challenges with body language, gestures & facial expressions
- Differences in how individuals with ASD connect with others

- Sensory seeking
- Sensory aversions
- Lack of response to certain sensory experiences

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graph TD; A[Social Communication Deficits] -- "+" --> B[Repetitive Behaviors]; B -- "+" --> C[Sensory Sensitivities]; C --> D[Social, emotional and behavioral challenges];
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Social
Communication
Deficits



Repetitive
Behaviors



Sensory
Sensitivities



Social,
emotional and
behavioral
challenges

HOW MIGHT THIS COME UP IN YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH NEURODIVERSE INDIVIDUALS?

Variety of co-occurring challenges to consider

May lose control or become overwhelmed

Challenges getting needed information

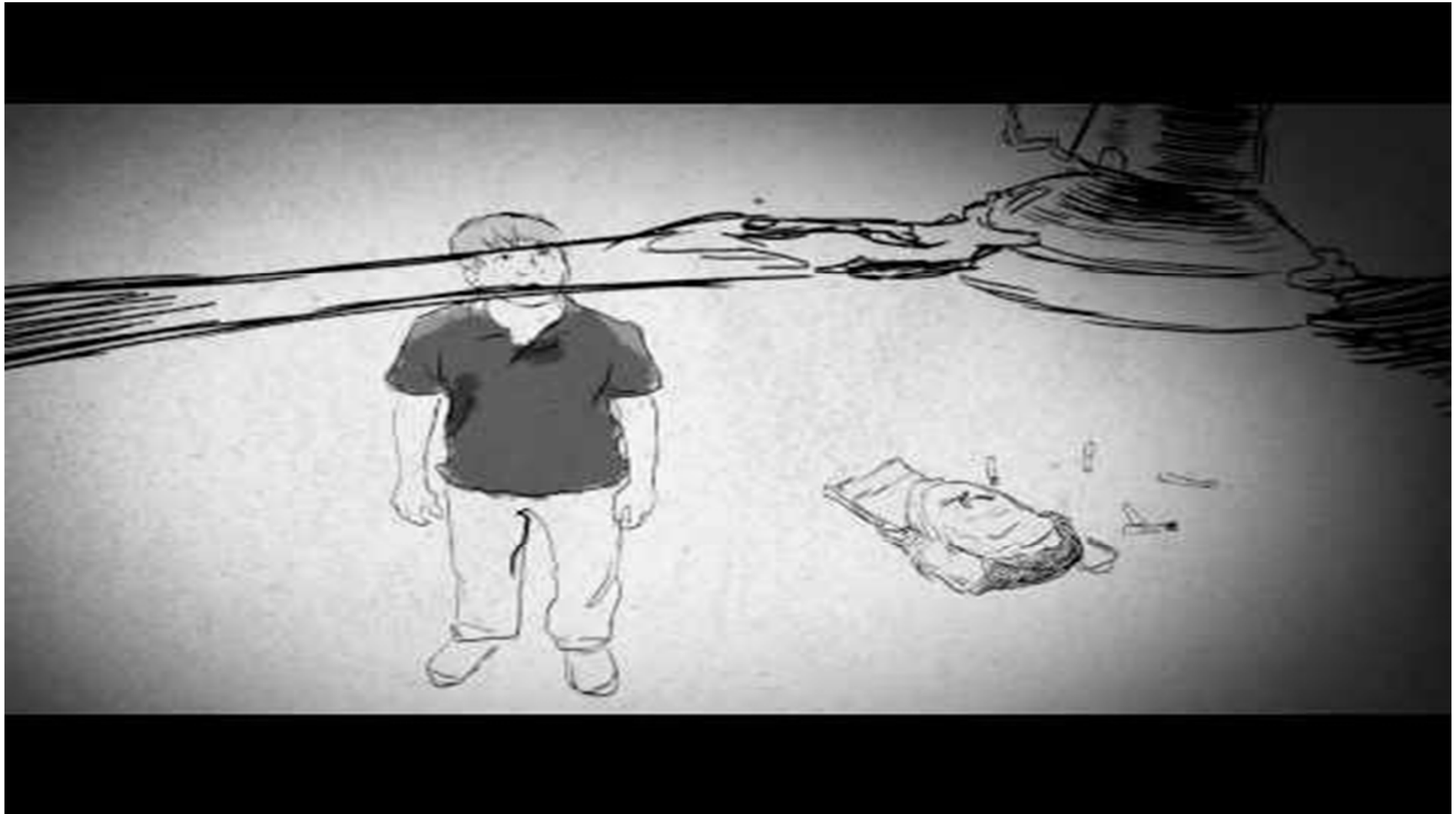
Sensory sensitivities and aversions

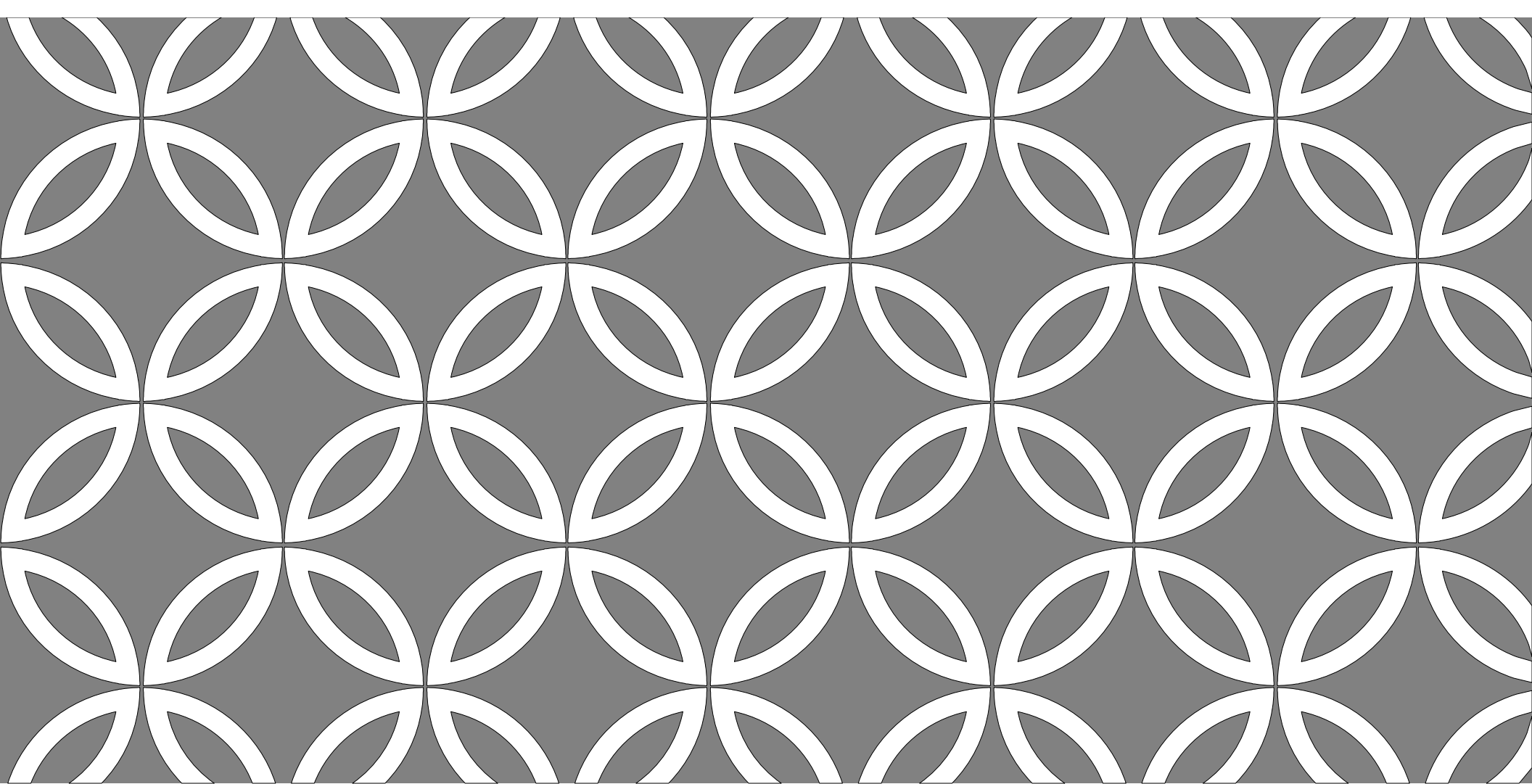
May resist help or interfere with others needing assistance.

???

SENSORY SENSITIVITIES AND INTERESTS

WARNING – LOUD NOISES/FLASHING LIGHTS

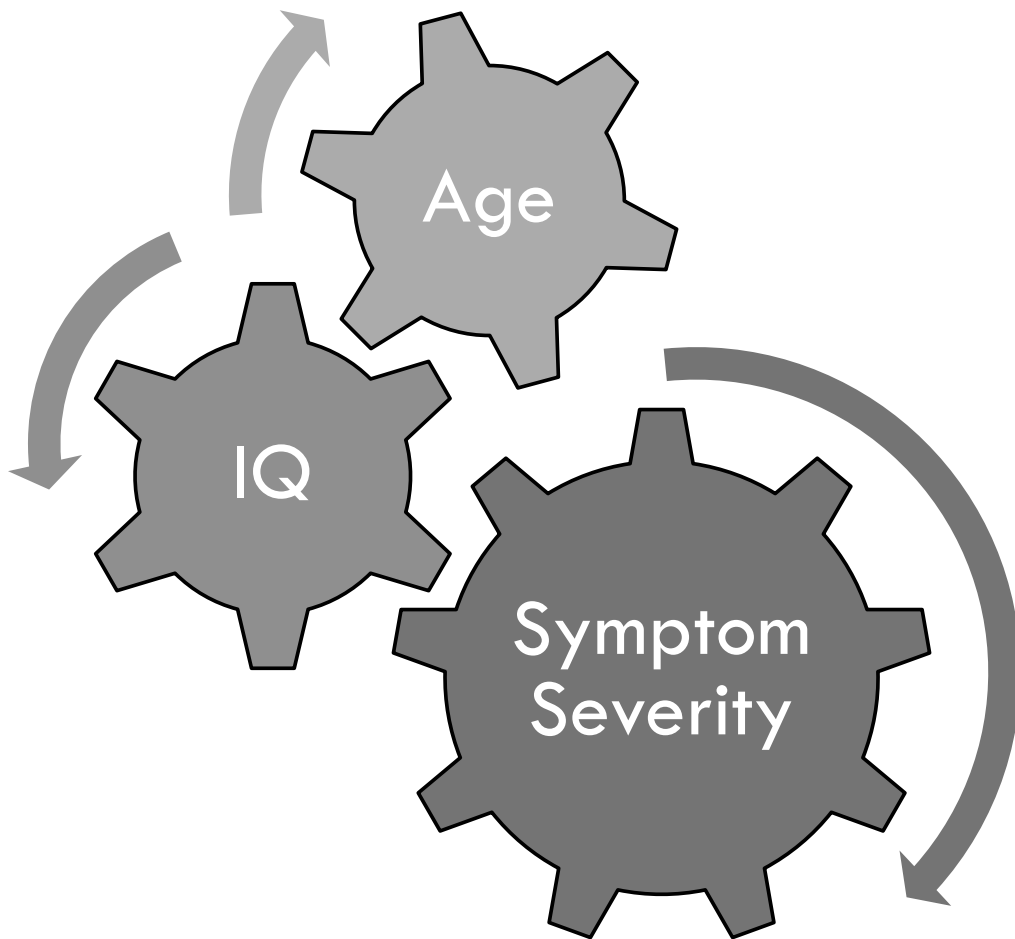





AUTISM **SPECTRUM** DISORDER



HOW ASD CAN DIFFER



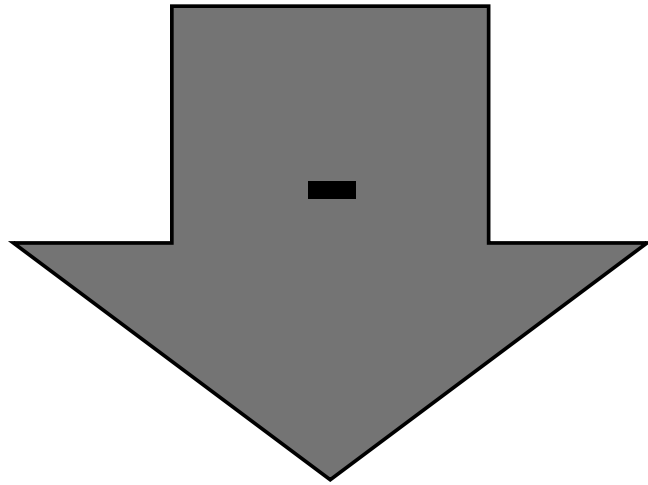
- ❖ ASD is diagnosed based on a set of behaviors and there are large amounts of individual differences in how symptoms of each are expressed
- ❖ ASD looks different in younger and older individuals
- ❖ IQ and language development are the strongest predictors of adult outcomes

A black and white photograph of a mountain range with a valley and a cloudy sky. The mountains are rugged and rocky, with some snow or light-colored patches visible in the valleys. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds. The overall mood is somber and majestic.

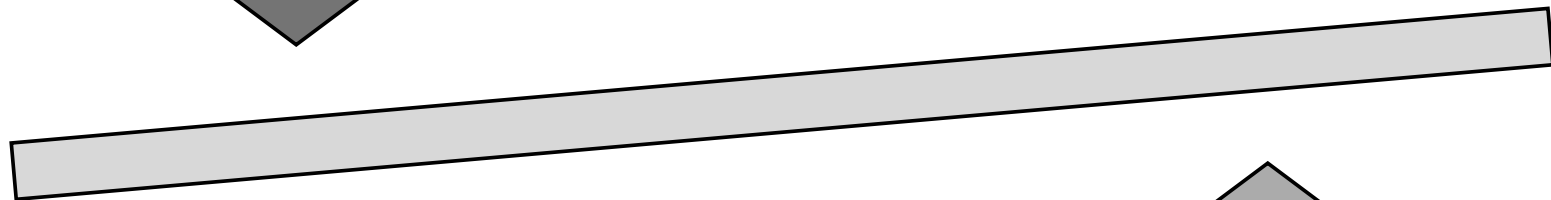
**If you've met one person
with autism, you've met
one person with autism.**

Stephen Shore

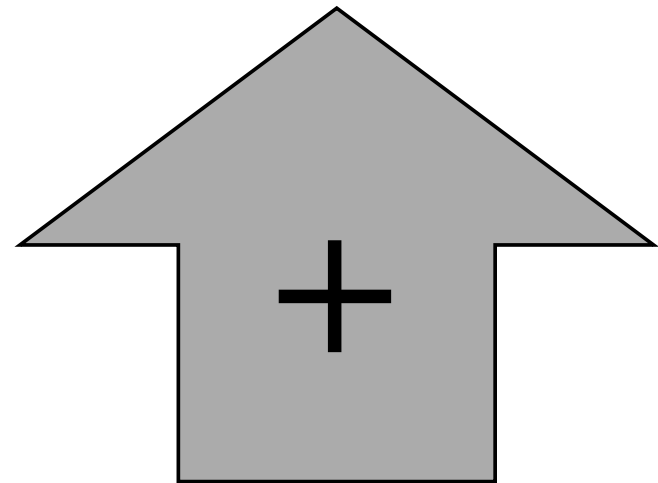
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES



- Regulating emotions and behavior
- Abstract communication
- Trouble getting the “big picture”
- Uneven set of skills
- Awareness of others



- Attention to detail
- Visual and spatial skills
- Strong areas of interest
- Independent thinking



FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH ASD

Parents of a child/adult with ASD are often their biggest advocates.

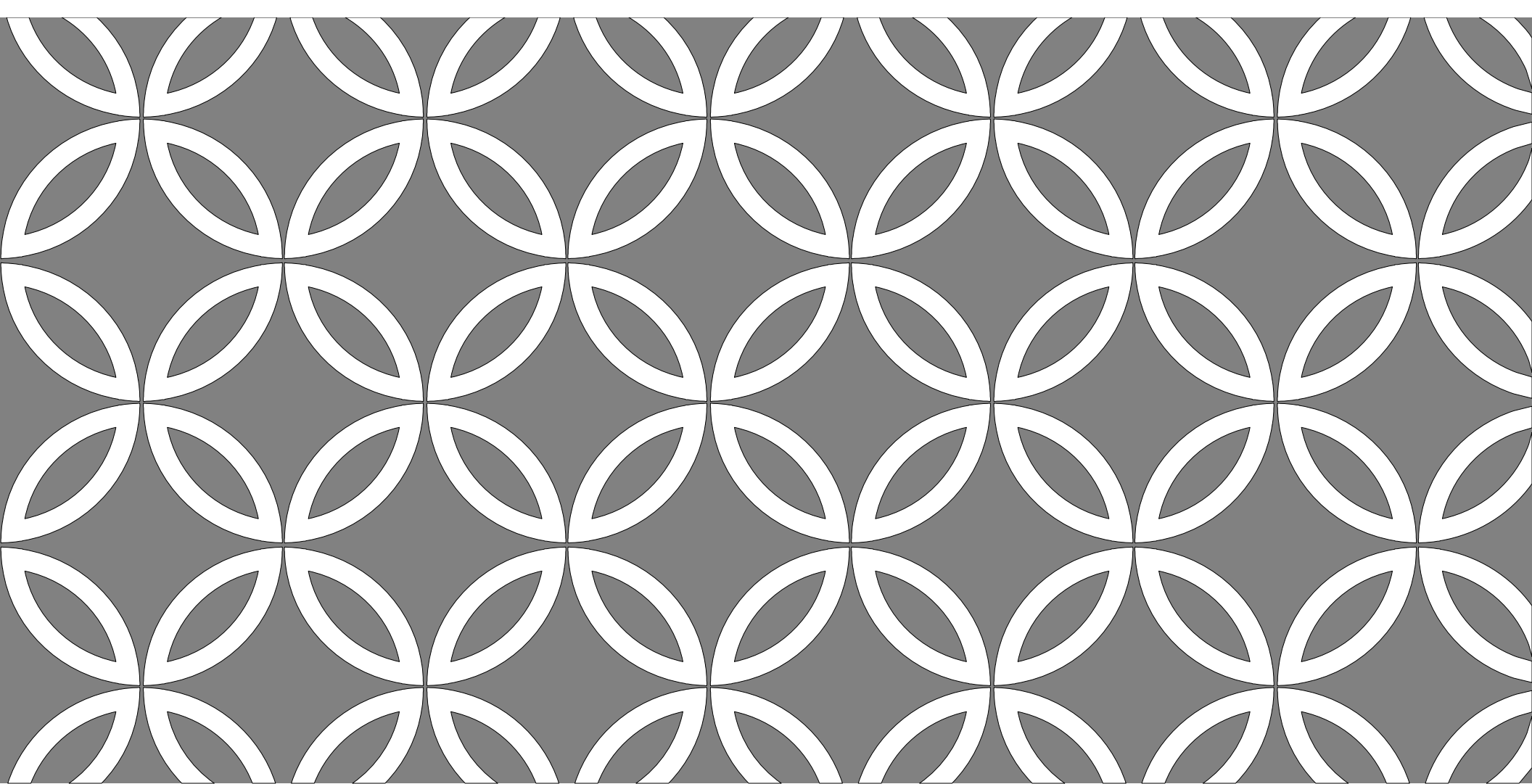
There are high rates of parenting stress, depression and perceived isolation in parents of a child or children with ASD for many reasons. Sometimes parents blame each other for their child or children having Autism.

Difficulty understanding and accepting the diagnosis.

Identifying and accessing services.

Finding support from family and friends. Sometimes, family members aren't supportive or don't understand.

Planning for the future – huge concern!



HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

True or False
Test

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. The diagnosis of ASD has increased in the past 20 years.

2. If you have one child with ASD, you are more likely to have another.

3. ASD equally affects boys and girls.

4. Over half of individuals with a diagnosis of ASD are minimally verbal or completely non-verbal.

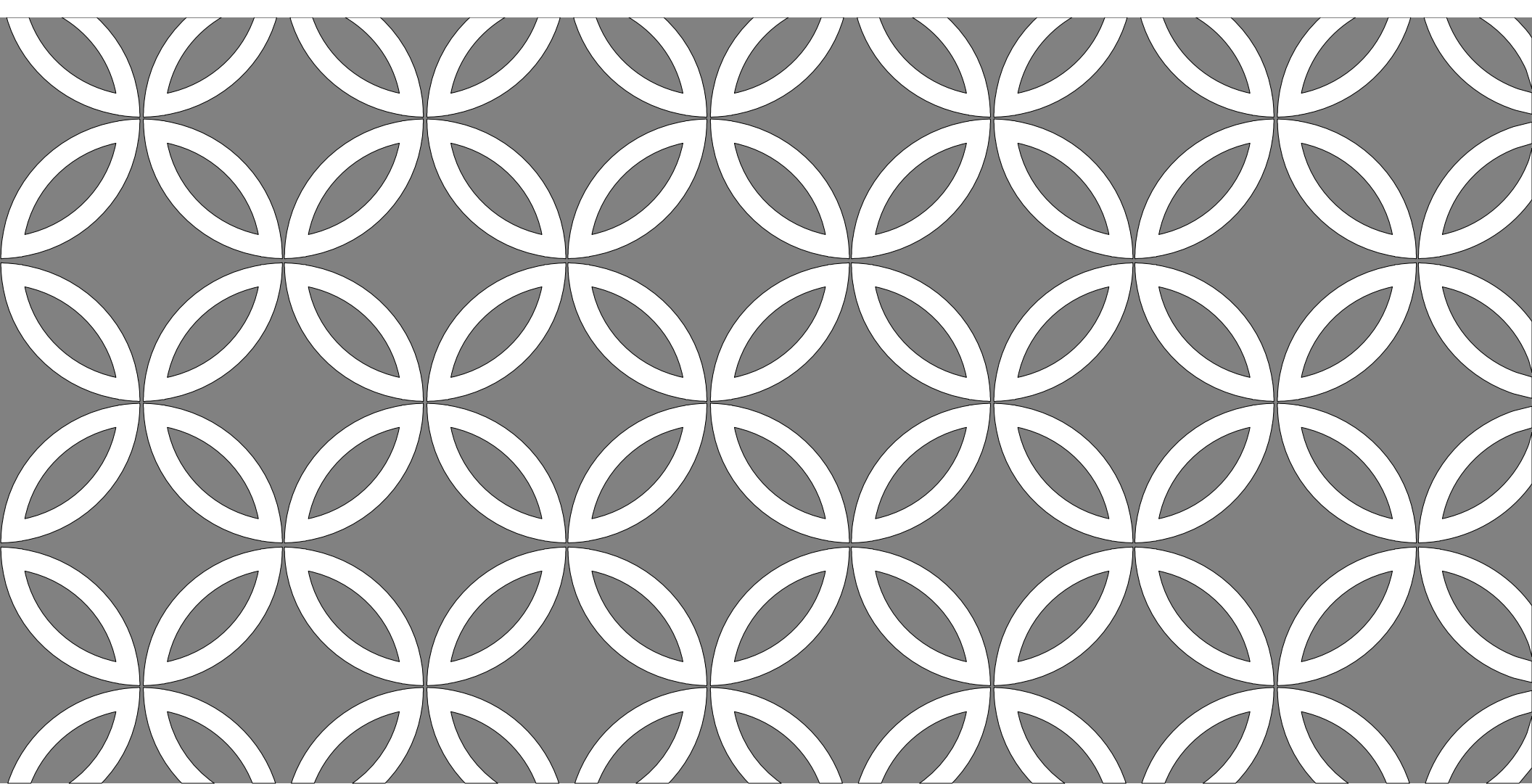
ANSWERS

1. **TRUE:** currently, ASD affects 1 in 44 children in the United States. In 2001, it was 1 in 150.

2. **TRUE:** if you have one child with ASD, you are 14 times more likely to have another due to a strong genetic component.

3. **FALSE:** ASD is about 4 times more common among boys than among girls.

4. **FALSE:** Only about 30% of individuals with ASD are minimally verbal/non-verbal.



WHAT IS “AUTISM FRIENDLY” BEHAVIOR?

According to
parents!

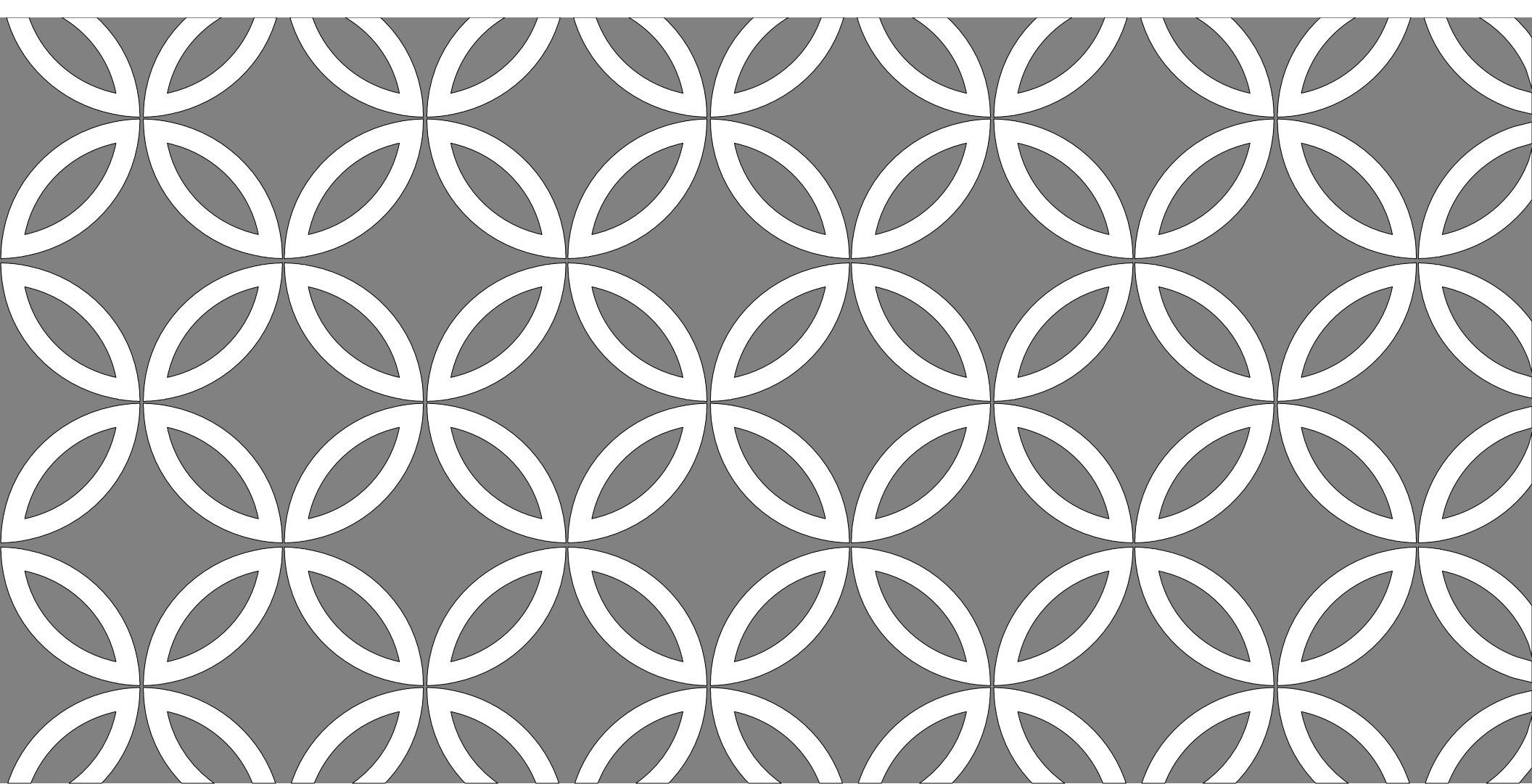
“Being tolerant of my child when he is having a meltdown or other challenging behaviors.”

"Businesses need to be willing to listen, understand and consider alternatives for allowing people access to whatever the facility or activity presents."

"Do not try to physically intervene, even if that looks like the right thing to do. Touching a child in a melt-down can trigger a dangerous cascade of behaviors."

“If more employees/community members were aware of the characteristics, my hope is we would have more support and less stares.”

**“Patience, understanding,
and flexibility.”**



HOW CAN MMAA HELP?

**Patience,
Understanding,
and Flexibility!**

HOW TO SUPPORT COMMUNICATION

Be clear and concise
Limit your language and be direct – many with Autism take things literally.

Don't overwhelm the individual.
Individuals may process information more slowly or need additional time to form a response.

Remember that one part of Autism is an impairment in language 'pragmatics.' May not look at you while talking. May only respond to direct questions. May not understand idioms/non-verbal cues.

USE PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

Labels can reinforce stereotypes

- Don't use them if it's not relevant!

Person-first versus identity-first language

- Shows respect for the individual
- Highlights a person's value, individuality and capability

Some individuals may prefer identity-first language (i.e., autistic person, not person with autism)

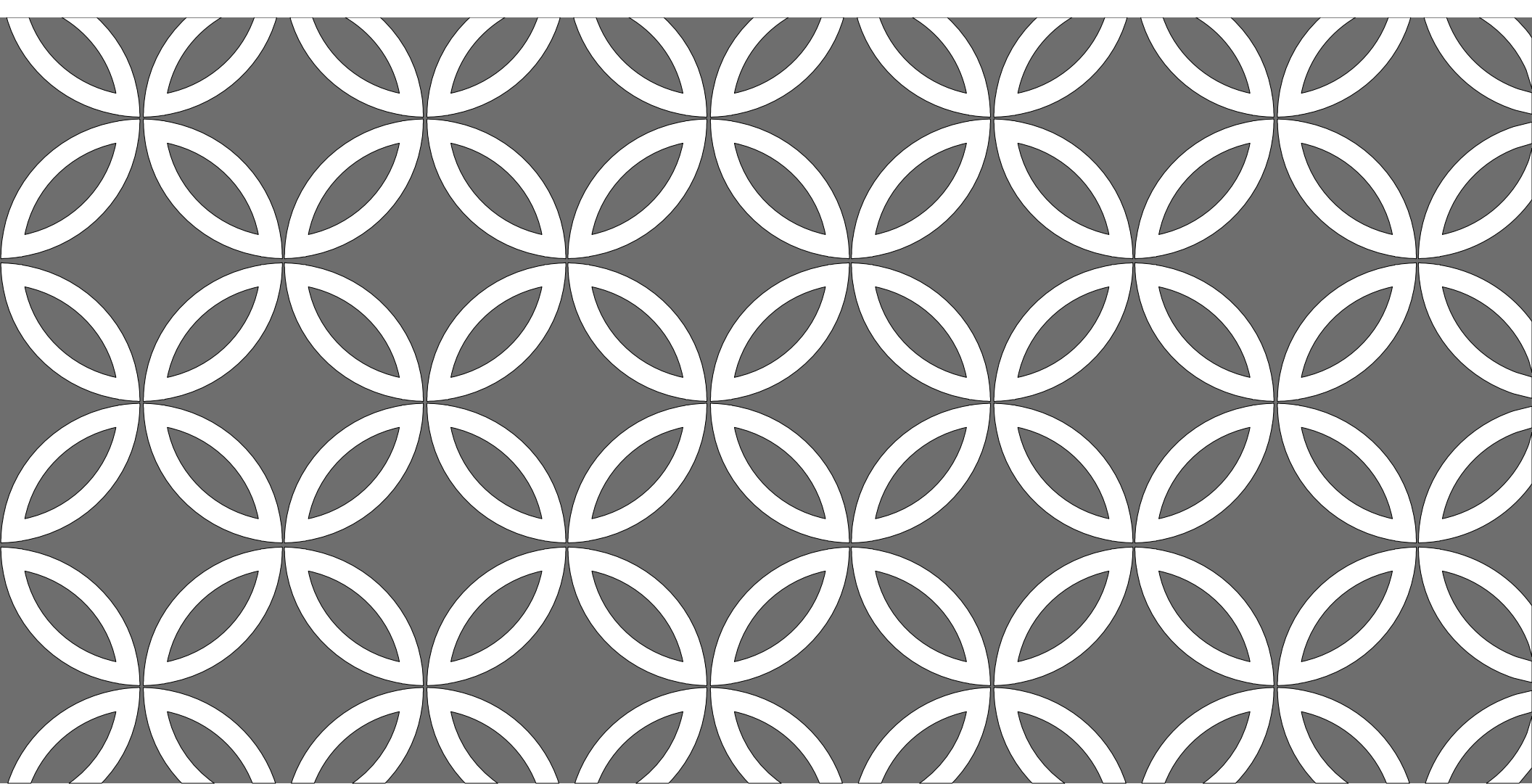
- If so, go with that person's preference

SPECIFIC ADVICE FROM PARENTS

"Look to parent for coaching on what might be helpful - as simply as possible, because their mind is already in freak out - like "how may I help?" or "can I help?"

"Meltdowns are tough. If it were me, I'd like the most graceful exit possible, an exit to remove the sensory overload and allow space to decompress."

"Dispersing any on lookers from a tantrum site is helpful. The gaping crowd only makes it worse."



ANY QUESTIONS?
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