

Empowering neurodivergent people to advocate for their needs at work



Presenter: Kirsty Heap



*"The first step toward change is awareness.
The second step is acceptance."*

Nathaniel Branden

Why Self-Advocacy Matter?

- 1 in 5 people is neurodivergent (UK gov. estimate)
- Only 21% of autistic people are in any form of employment (NAS, 2024)
- Employees with supportive environments are 3x more likely to stay in their role (CIPD, 2022)



The Win-Win of Advocacy

Individual Benefits	Organisational Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reduced stress and burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Higher retention and engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Great job satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Improved team communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increased self-confidence and autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● More inclusive and innovative culture

What Makes Self-Advocacy Possible?

V	L	A	N	G	U	A	G	E	N	O	P	L	B	C	R	A	B
G	U	N	B	R	S	J	M	O	I	L	C	E	N	K	E	T	T
T	P	N	A	C	O	N	F	I	D	E	N	C	E	W	M	O	P
R	D	H	K	V	R	J	L	B	R	S	J	O	L	M	P	E	B
U	N	P	I	M	B	C	T	Y	S	N	I	D	X	A	A	Z	S
S	I	X	L	Y	C	O	U	R	A	G	E	V	E	I	T	H	X
T	K	H	B	F	J	C	W	K	O	M	R	X	I	P	H	V	W
X	I	J	G	T	C	D	A	R	B	K	U	E	V	N	Y	W	L
V	W	K	J	F	X	H	E	H	D	K	Y	V	E	R	R	C	M
S	E	L	F	-	U	N	D	E	R	S	T	A	N	D	I	N	G
Q	I	O	H	T	F	E	X	B	N	K	U	B	X	W	H	L	O
K	V	B	U	M	C	N	F	S	A	F	E	T	Y	A	K	F	Q

Building the Confidence to Speak Up



The Power of Mindset – Why It Matters

Fixed Mindset

I'll never be good at this

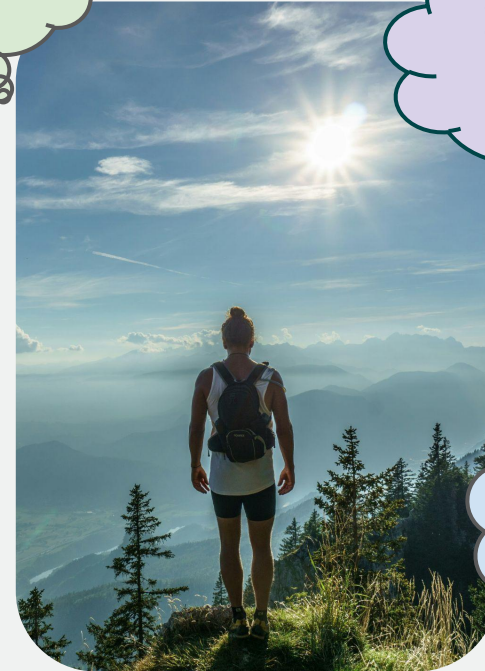


If I fail, I shouldn't try again

I'm just not good at this

Growth Mindset

I can learn

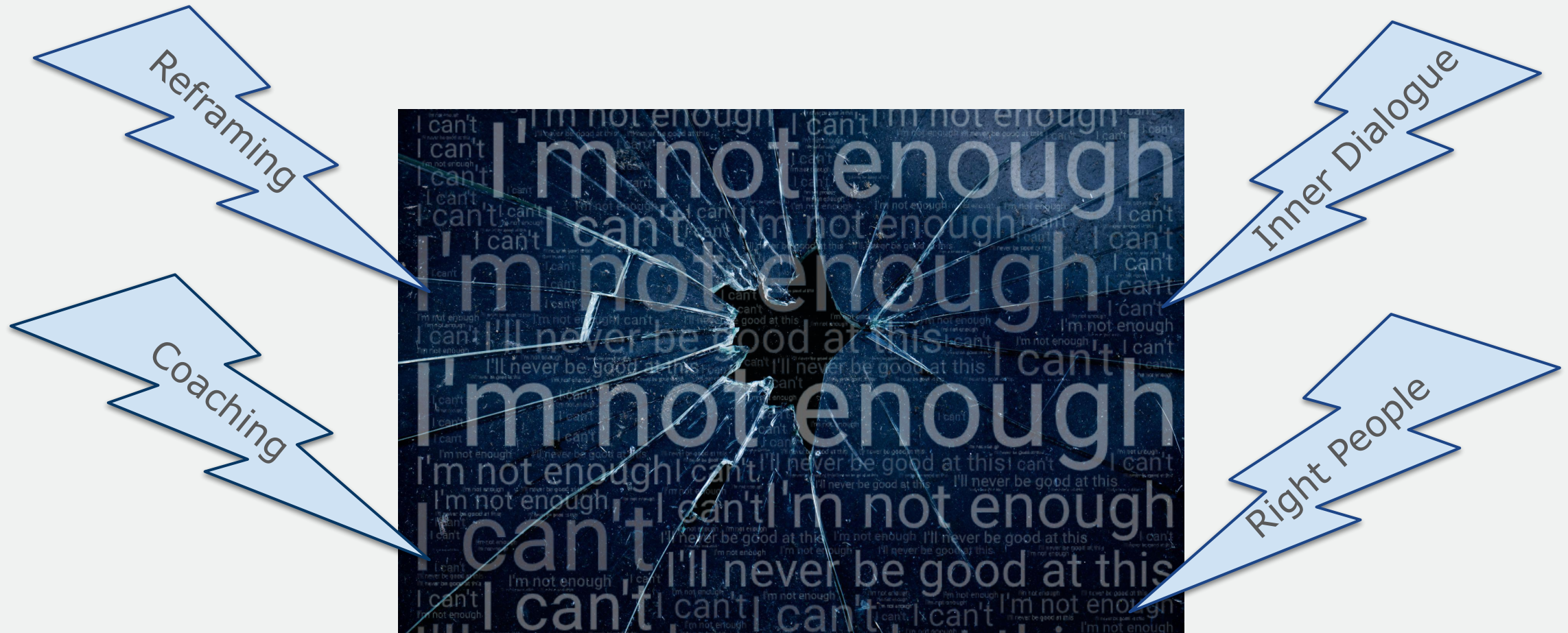


I'm not good at this...YET

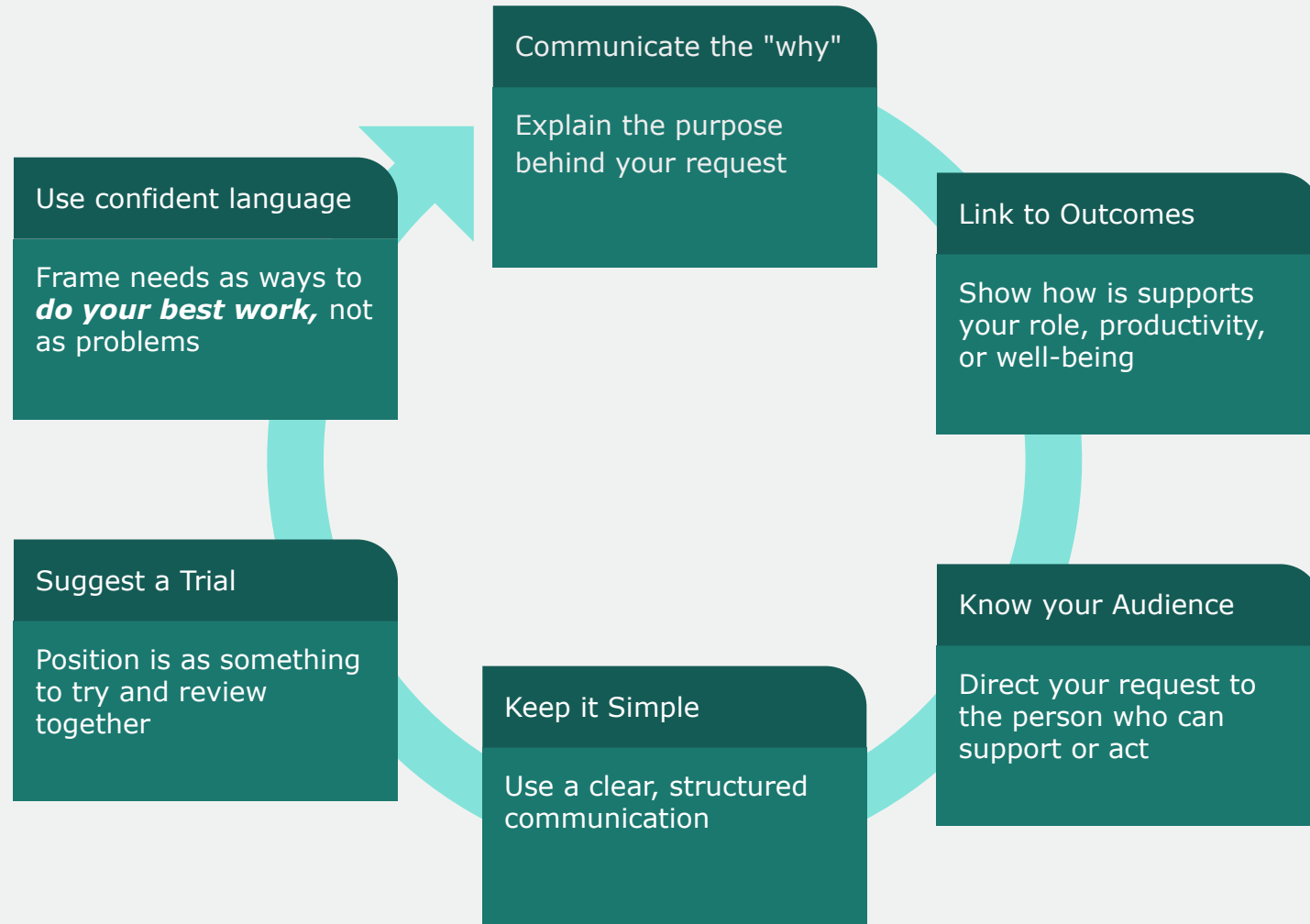
Failure is part of success

💡 What belief could you reframe?

How to Shift Your Mindset Today



Expressing Needs — So They're Heard



Strategies in Action

Software

Email
Signature

Colour Coding

Written
follow-up

Checklists or
Templates

Work
environment

Meeting
agendas in
advance



Creating Environments That Enable Advocacy

Inclusive Culture

Clear, Accessible Communication

Psychological Safety

Awareness & Training

Leadership Role-Modelling

ND Employee Networks



My 'self advocacy effect'



Opinion

What I learned navigating an HR career with dyslexia

My HR journey began in recruitment, driven by my passion for connecting with people. I became an HR generalist, conducting recruitment drives, capabilities and disciplinarys, and creating policies – it was this overarching view of the profession that made me want to develop environments where everyone can thrive.

Little did I know that my own neurodiversity would become an integral part of what I do today. My dyslexia has influenced how I navigated HR responsibilities at various career



Kirsty Heap is a neurodiversity coach

brought to the table and the meticulous attention to planning and organisation that my dyslexia compelled me to adopt. This experience fuelled my commitment to fostering a workplace culture that celebrates differences rather than viewing them as obstacles.

Here are some tips on how organisations can cultivate a supportive environment for neurodiverse staff:

- **Conduct awareness sessions:** this can help reduce stigma and show your neurodiverse staff you support them.
- **Check terminology:** look at the words you use on application forms around self disclosure. I often see this written in a negative way.



My Courageous Leap



What's One Thing You Can Say or Ask?



Your Freedom Starts Now



The only limits that exist are the ones we believe in.
Change your mindset, and you change your world.



Kirsty Heap Coaching



Tel: 07876568474

hello@kirstyheap.com

www.kirstyheap.co.uk