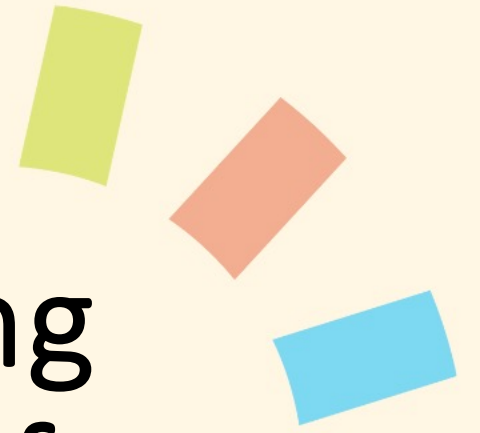




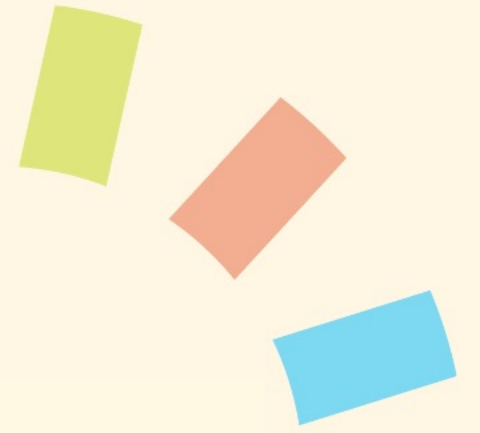
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Beyond the Visible: Crafting Inclusive WordPress Events for Those with Invisible Illnesses and Chronic Disabilities

by Birgit Olzem





When we think of accessibility at WordPress events, we often think of physical accommodations.

But what about those with invisible illnesses and chronic disabilities?

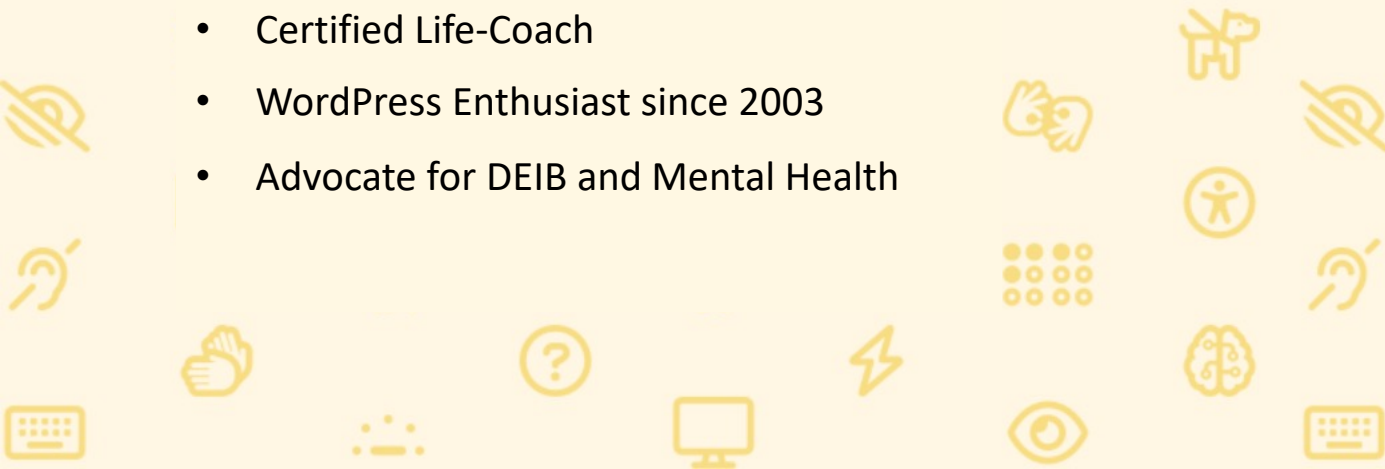


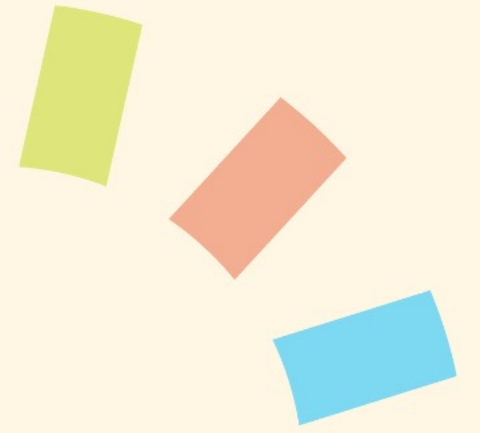


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About Birgit Olzem (she/her)

- Mom of five kids – grandmother of two
- Multi-passionate Entrepreneur
- Selfpublishing Book author
- Artist and Web Designer
- Certified Life-Coach
- WordPress Enthusiast since 2003
- Advocate for DEIB and Mental Health





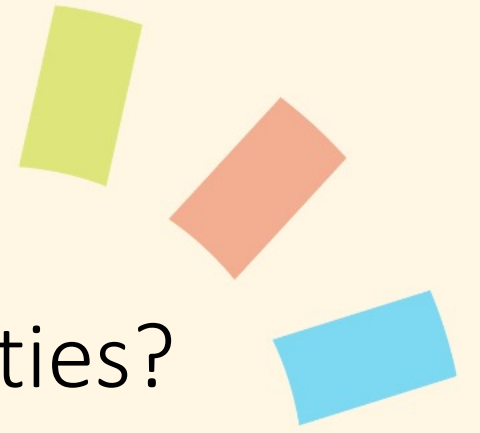
Understanding Invisible Illnesses and Chronic Disabilities

What are Invisible Illnesses and Chronic Disabilities?

How do these Conditions Impact Event Participation?

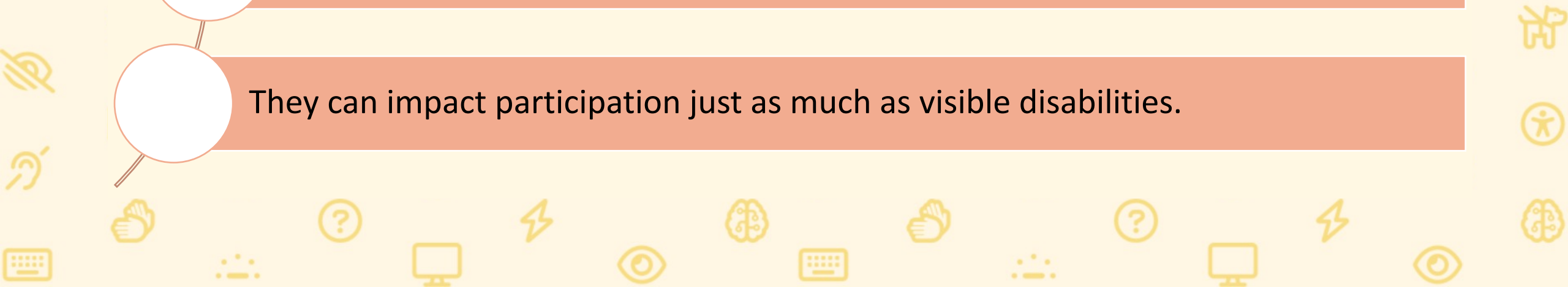
Why Visibility Matters!

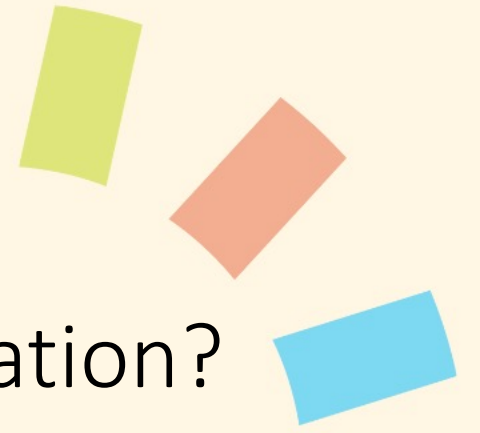




What are Invisible Illnesses and Chronic Disabilities?

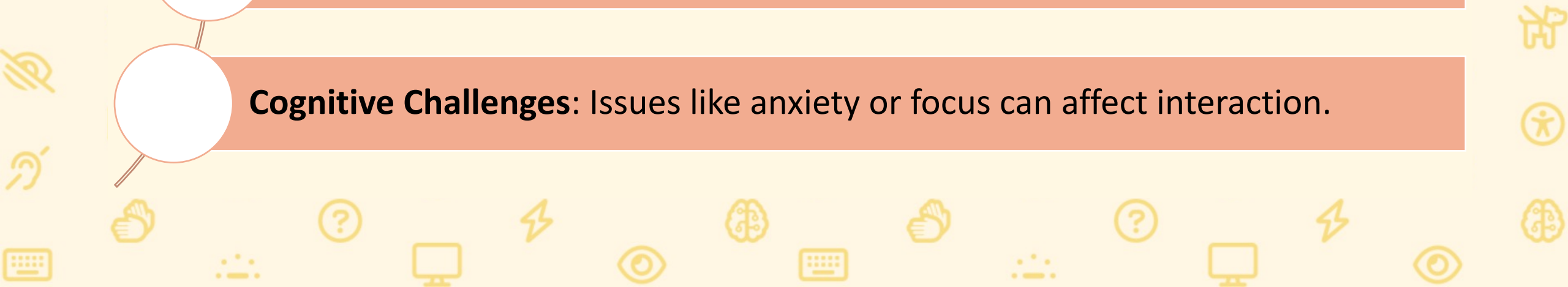
- Invisible disabilities are not immediately apparent.
- They include conditions like chronic fatigue, mental health disorders, neurological and autoimmune diseases.
- They can impact participation just as much as visible disabilities.

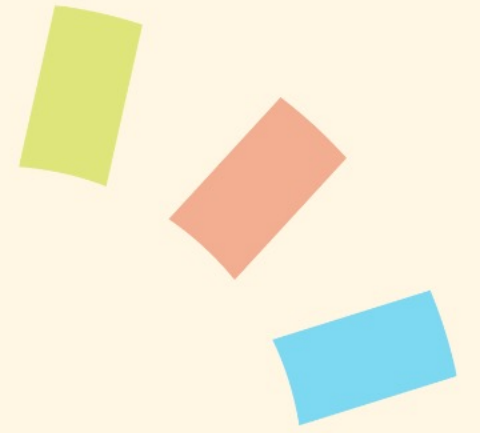




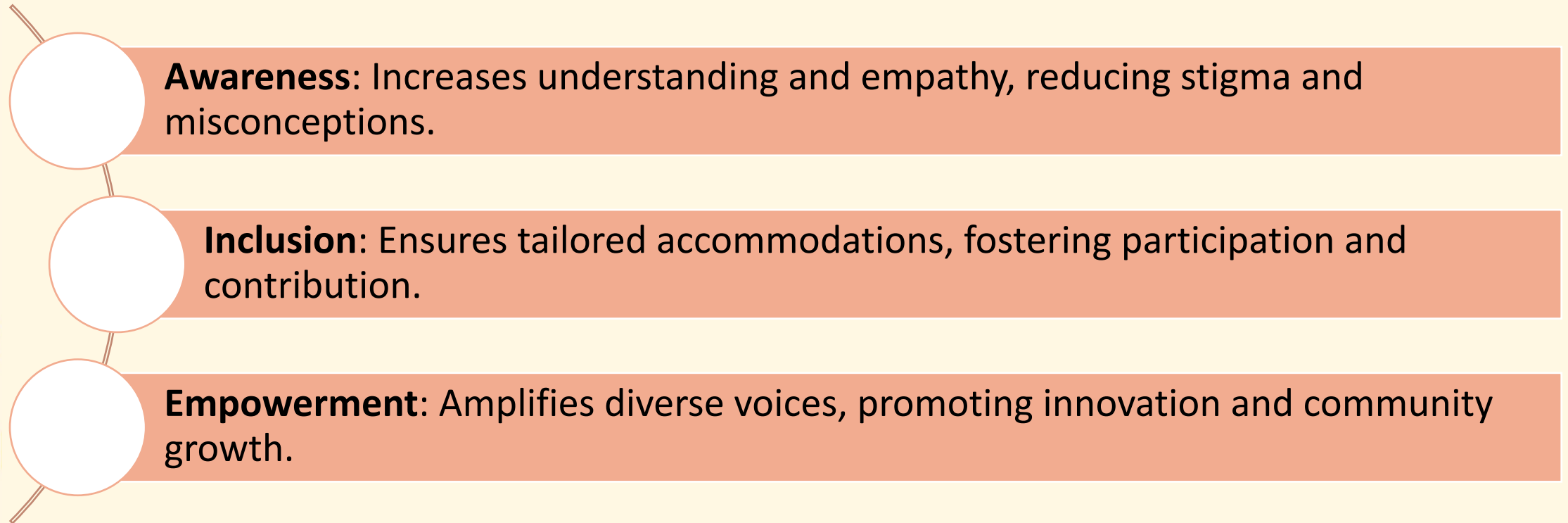
How do these Conditions Impact Event Participation?

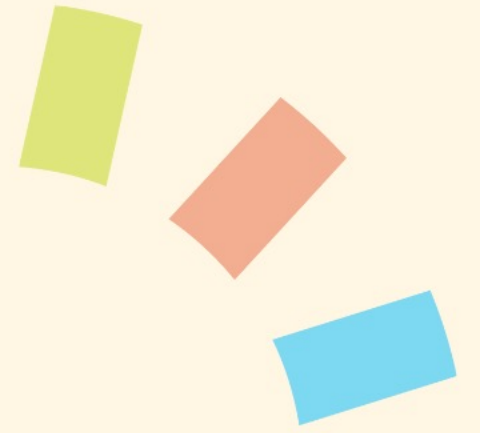
- **Energy Levels:** Fluctuating energy and fatigue can limit prolonged engagement.
- **Sensory Sensitivity:** Overload from lights or sounds
- **Cognitive Challenges:** Issues like anxiety or focus can affect interaction.



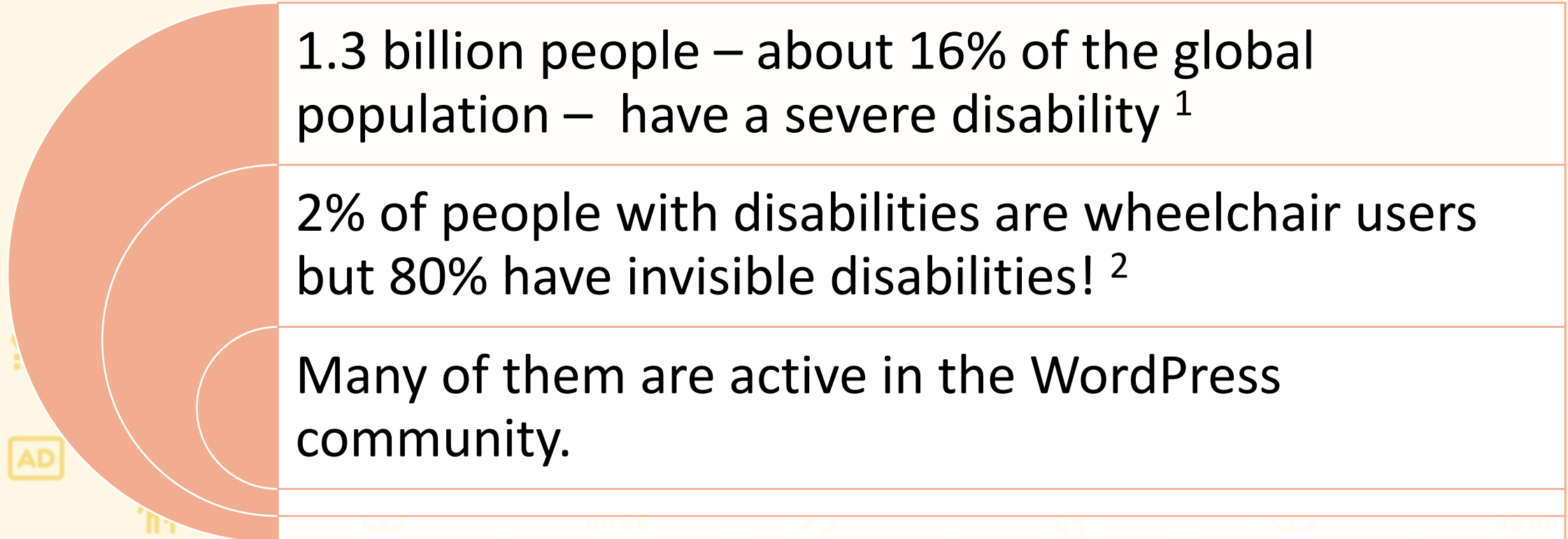


Why Visibility Matters!





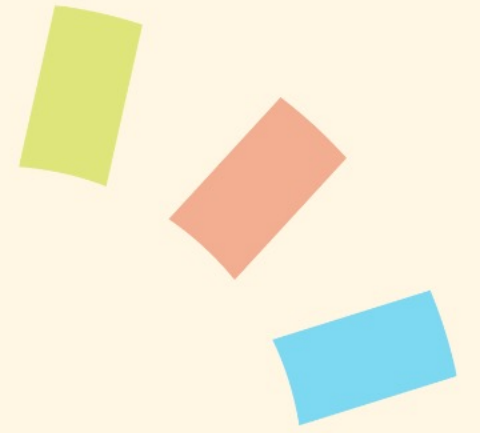
Statistics on Invisible Disabilities



1. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>
2. <https://www.inclusivecitymaker.com/invisible-disabilities-80-of-disabled-people-are-concerned/>



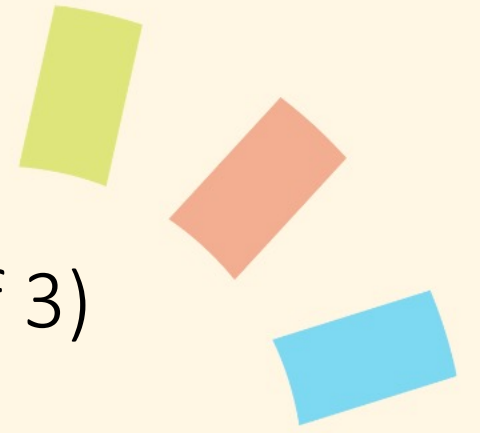
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Brief overview of the types of invisible health conditions

For example: ME/CFS, Long-COVID, CPTSD, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders





Types of invisible health conditions (1 of 3)

ME/CFS

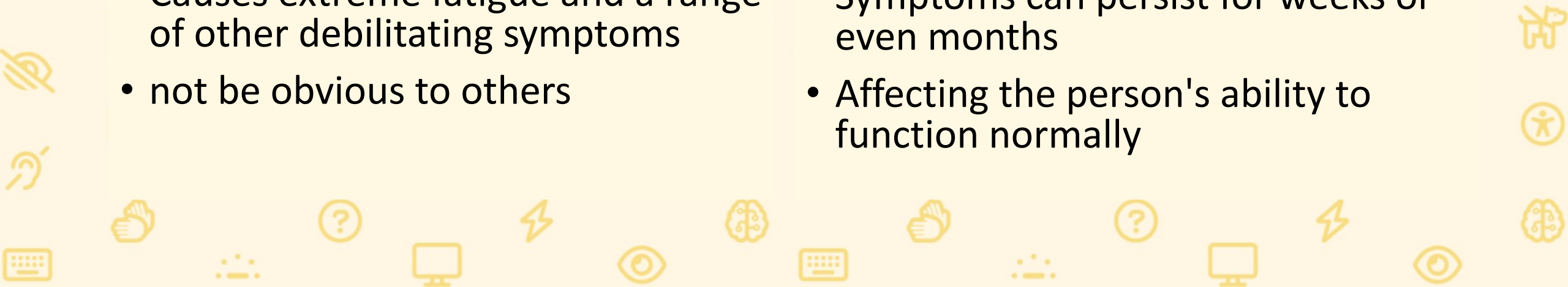
also known as Myalgic
Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue
Syndrome

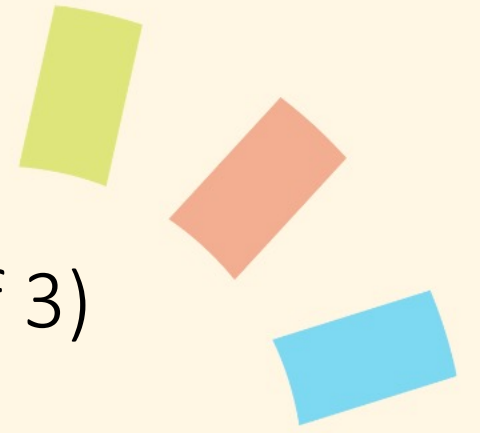
- Causes extreme fatigue and a range of other debilitating symptoms
- not be obvious to others

Long-COVID

refers to the long-lasting symptoms after
a COVID-19 infection.

- Symptoms can persist for weeks or even months
- Affecting the person's ability to function normally





Types of invisible health conditions (2 of 3)

CPTSD

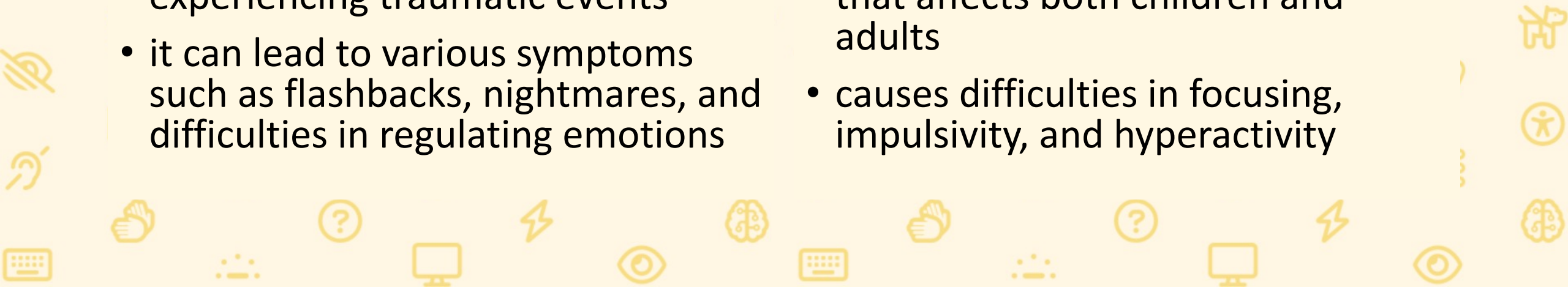
or Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

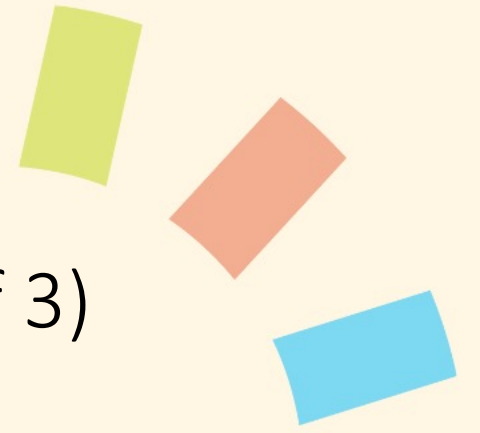
- a condition that develops after experiencing traumatic events
- it can lead to various symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, and difficulties in regulating emotions

ADHD

or Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

- a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects both children and adults
- causes difficulties in focusing, impulsivity, and hyperactivity



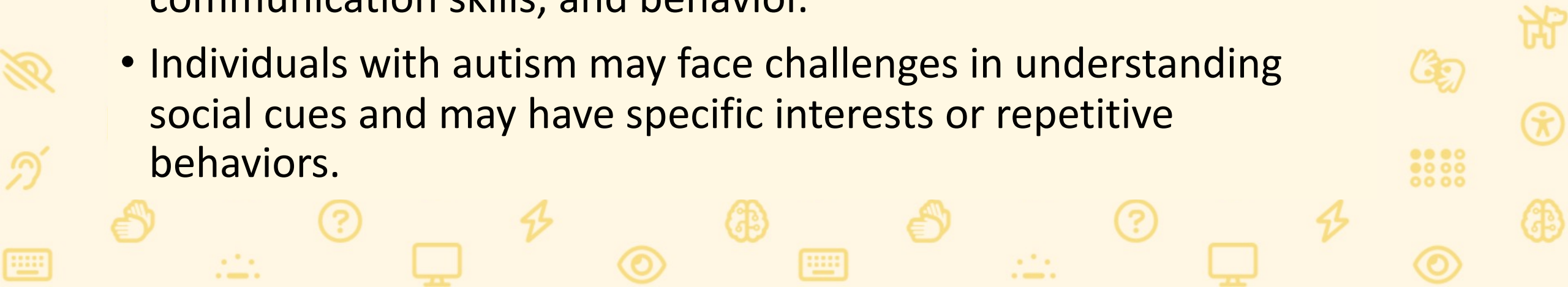


Types of invisible health conditions (3 of 3)

Autism spectrum disorders

also considered invisible illnesses

- Neurodevelopmental conditions that affect social interaction, communication skills, and behavior.
- Individuals with autism may face challenges in understanding social cues and may have specific interests or repetitive behaviors.





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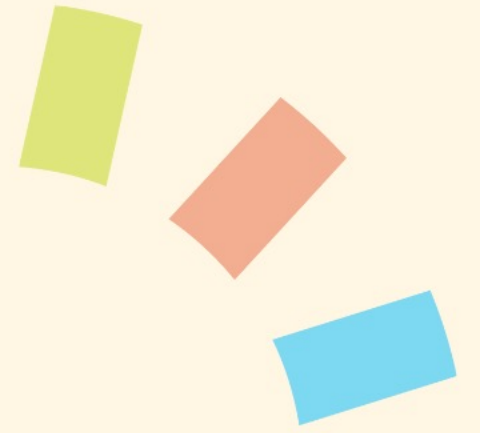
Challenges at WordPress Events

Embracing the unseen challenges,
illuminating the silent strengths,
and fostering a community where
every story, every journey, is
honored and celebrated.





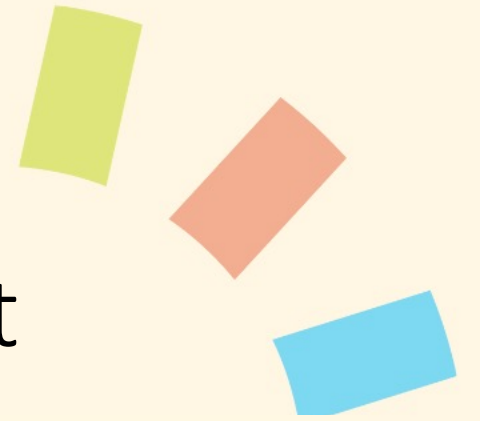
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Difficulty: Fatigue and Energy Management

Invisible condition involved: Chronic fatigue syndrome, lupus, fibromyalgia, etc.





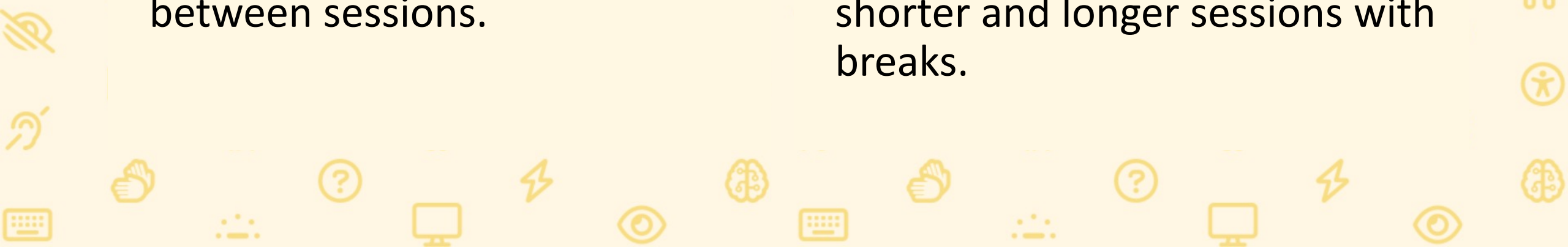
Difficulty: Fatigue and Energy Management

Virtual Event Accommodation

- **Record Sessions:** Allow attendees to watch sessions at their own pace.
- **Breaks:** Schedule regular breaks between sessions.

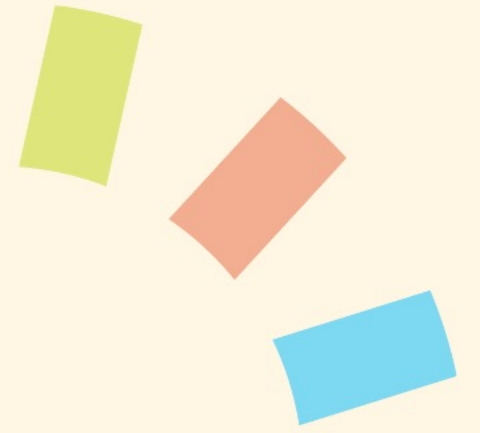
In-Person Event Accommodation

- **Rest Areas:** Provide quiet, comfortable spaces for attendees to rest.
- **Flexible Schedule:** Offer a mix of shorter and longer sessions with breaks.





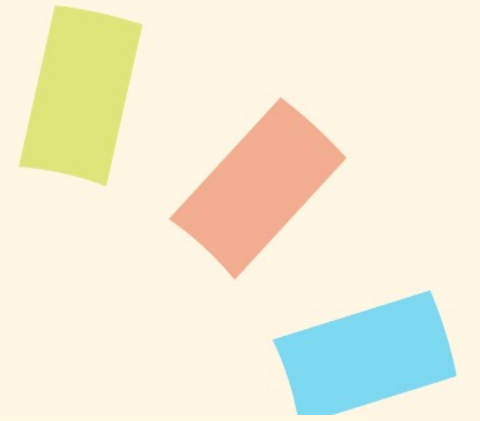
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Difficulty: Cognitive Overload

Invisible condition involved: ADHD, autism, PTSD, etc.





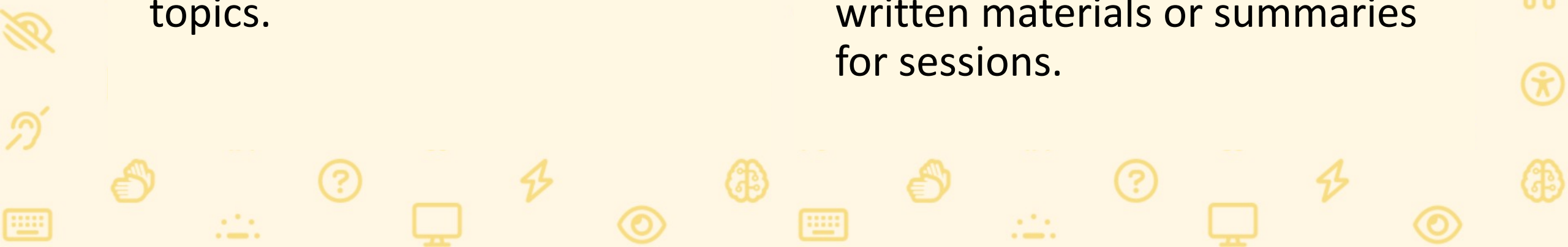
Difficulty: Cognitive Overload

Virtual Event Accommodation

- **Clear Agendas:** Provide clear, concise agendas ahead of time.
- **Visual Aids:** Use visual aids and infographics to simplify complex topics.

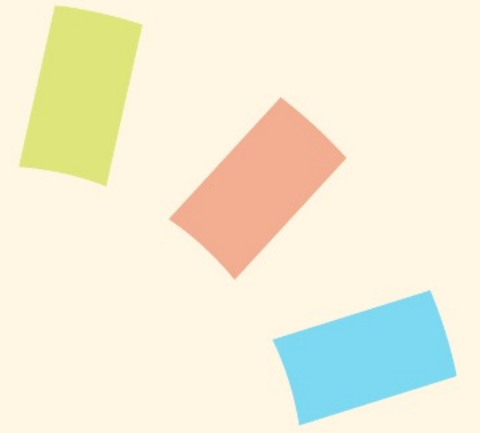
In-Person Event Accommodation

- **Quiet Rooms:** Offer rooms where attendees can take a break from sensory overload.
- **Written Materials:** Provide written materials or summaries for sessions.





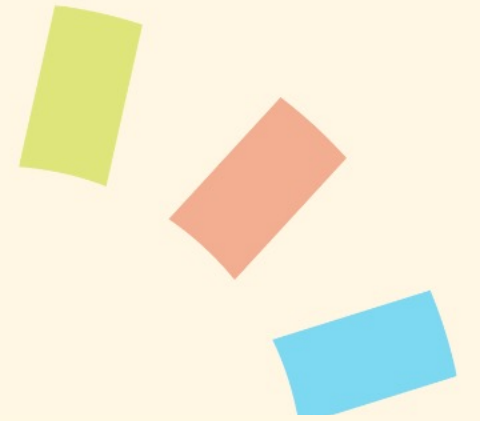
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Difficulty: Social Anxiety

Invisible condition involved: Social anxiety disorder, some autism spectrum disorders, etc.





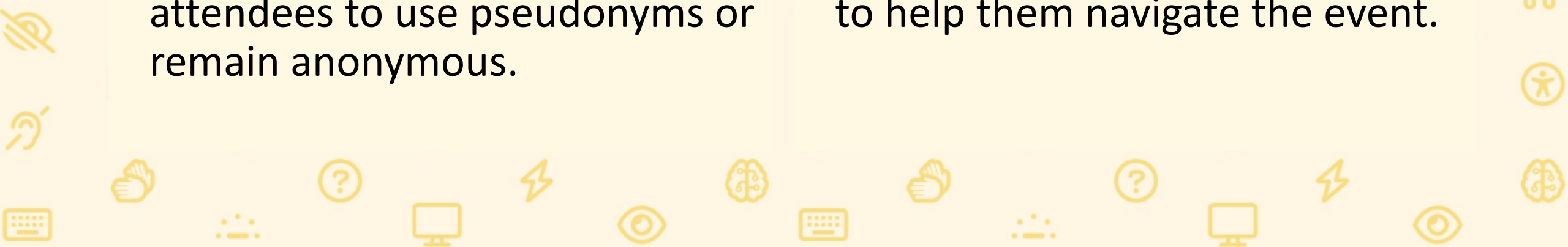
Difficulty: Social Anxiety

Virtual Event Accommodation

- **Chat Options:** Allow attendees to participate via chat instead of video.
- **Anonymous Participation:** Allow attendees to use pseudonyms or remain anonymous.

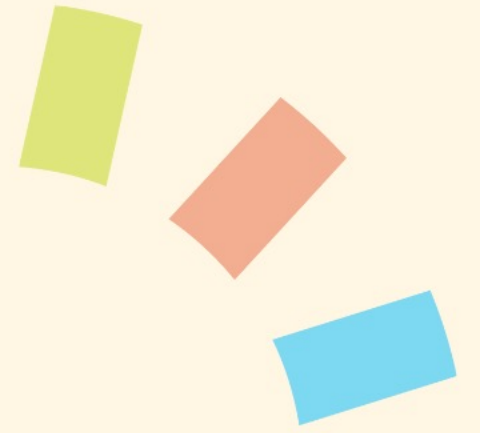
In-Person Event Accommodation

- **Introvert Zones:** Designate areas where attendees can network in smaller groups.
- **Buddy System:** Pair up attendees to help them navigate the event.





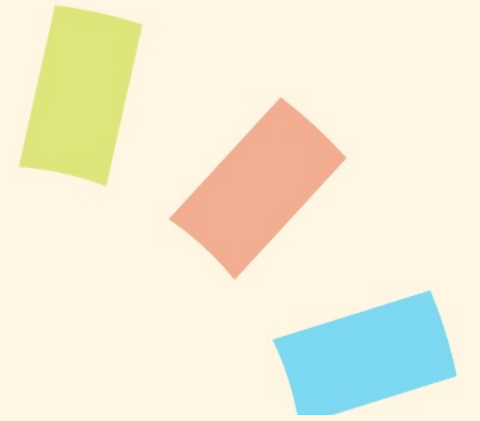
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Difficulty: Dietary Restrictions

Invisible condition involved: Celiac disease, Crohn's disease, food allergies, etc.





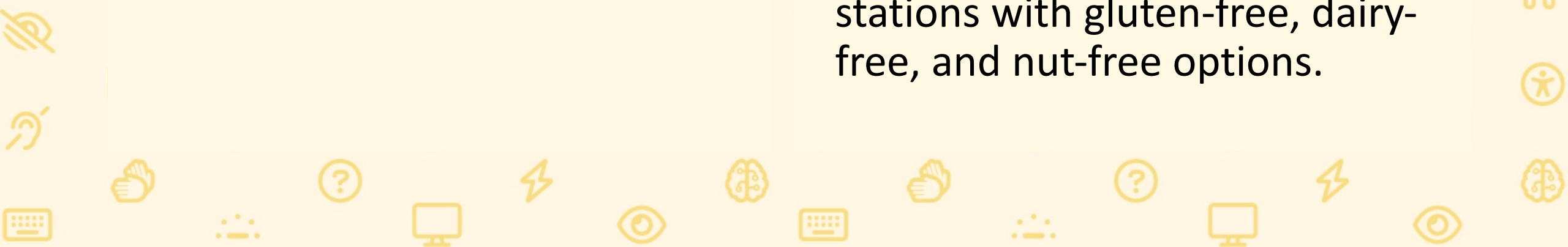
Difficulty: Dietary Restrictions

Virtual Event Accommodation

- **Virtual Lunch:** If hosting a virtual lunch, share recipes or food ideas that cater to various dietary needs.

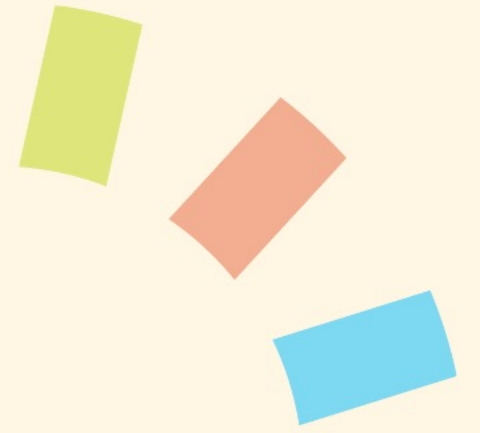
In-Person Event Accommodation

- **Menu Options:** Offer a diverse menu with clear labels for allergens.
- **Snack Stations:** Provide snack stations with gluten-free, dairy-free, and nut-free options.





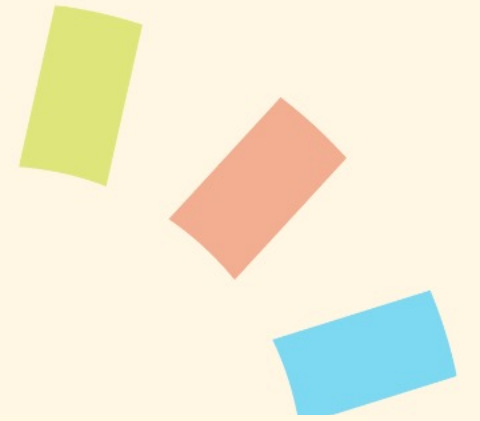
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Difficulty: Pain and Discomfort

Invisible condition involved: Endometriosis, migraines, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia etc.





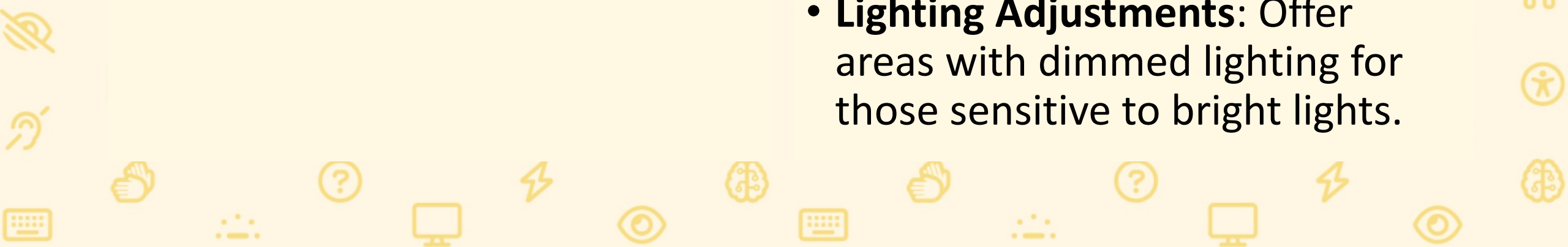
Difficulty: Pain and Discomfort

Virtual Event Accommodation

- **Comfort Reminders:** Remind attendees to adjust their seating, lighting, or take medication.

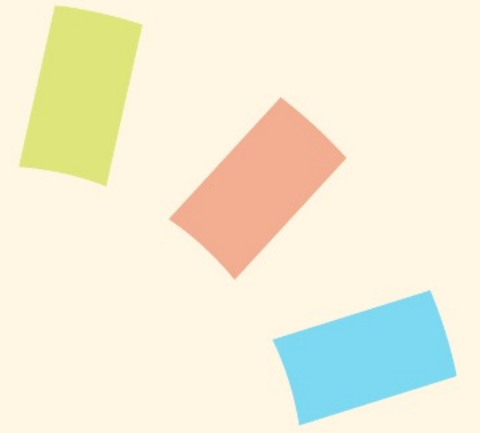
In-Person Event Accommodation

- **Seating Options:** Provide a variety of seating options, including chairs with cushions, standing desks, etc.
- **Lighting Adjustments:** Offer areas with dimmed lighting for those sensitive to bright lights.





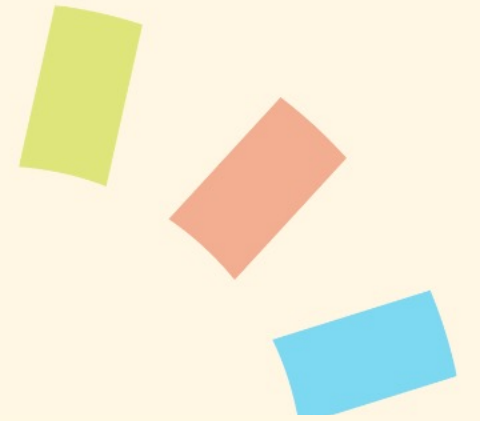
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Difficulty: Medication and Treatment Management

Invisible condition involved: Diabetes, multiple sclerosis, stoma care, mental health disorders requiring medication, etc.





Difficulty: Medication / Treatment Management

Virtual Event Accommodation

- **Reminders:** Send out general reminders for attendees to take breaks, eat, or take medications.

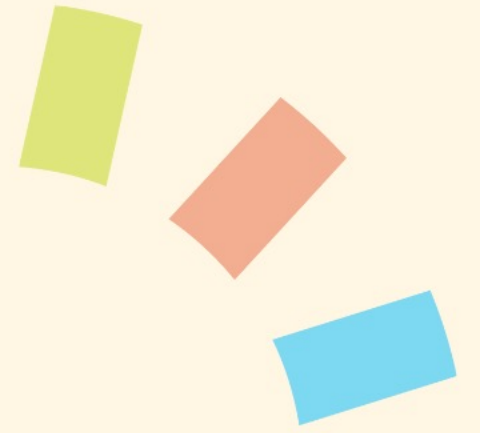
In-Person Event Accommodation

- **Private Areas:** Offer private areas for attendees to administer medication.
- **Refrigeration:** Provide refrigeration options for medications that need it.





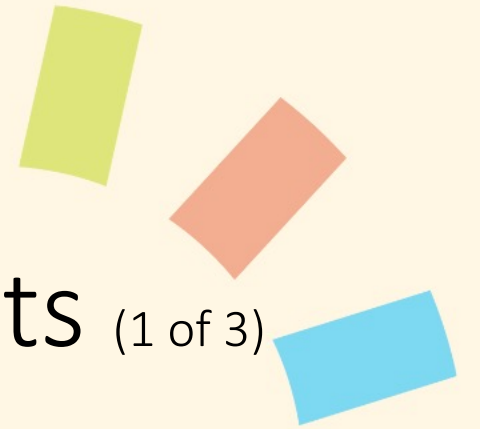
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Creating Inclusive and Accessible WordPress Events

Practical strategies for making WordPress events more inclusive and accessible, from planning to execution.





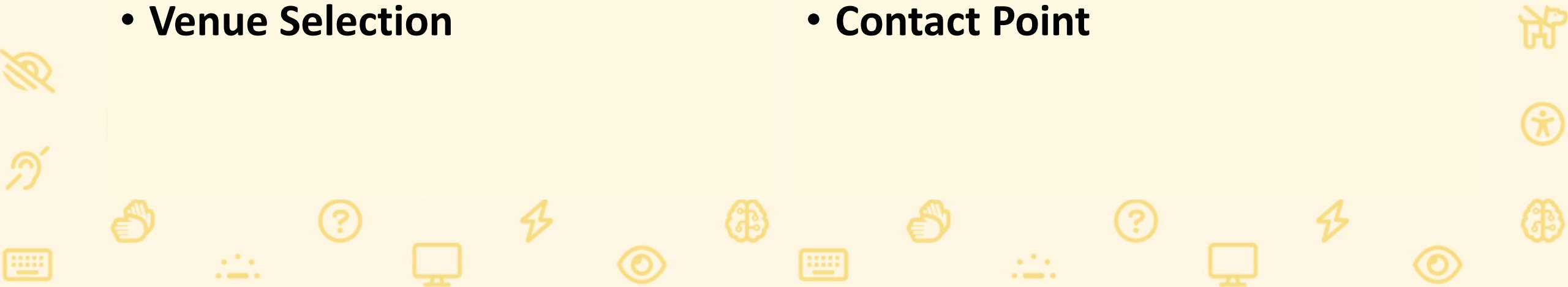
Practical strategies for WordPress events (1 of 3)

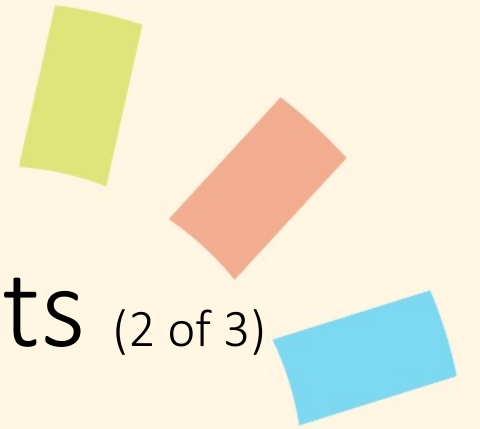
Planning Phase

- **Surveys & Feedback**
- **Diverse Planning Committee**
- **Venue Selection**

Communication

- **Clear Information**
- **Accessibility Features**
- **Contact Point**





Practical strategies for WordPress events (2 of 3)

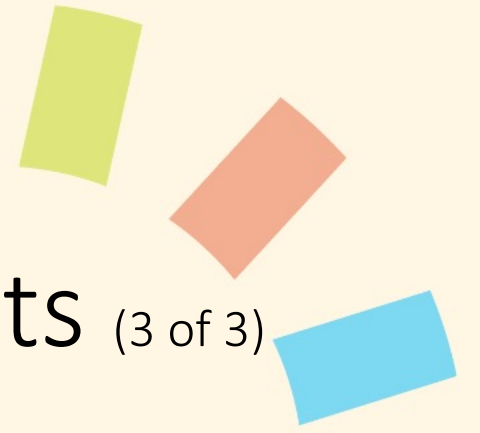
During the Event (Virtual)

- **Tech Support**
- **Captioning & Sign Language**
- **Recordings**

During the Event (In-Person)

- **Physical Accommodations**
- **Quiet Zones**
- **Food & Drink**





Practical strategies for WordPress events (3 of 3)

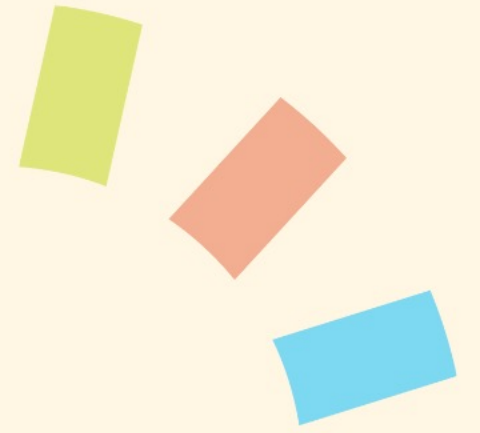
Presenters & Speakers

- **Diverse Voices**
- **Training**

Post-Event

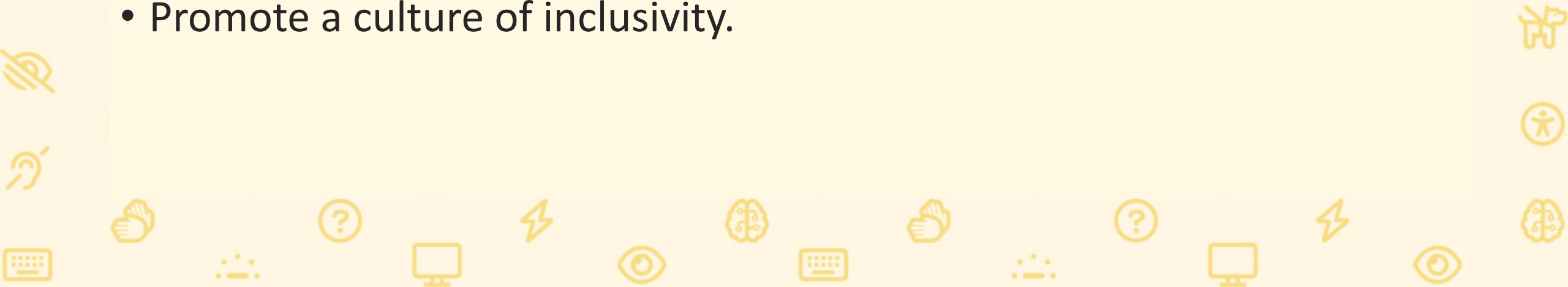
- **Feedback**
- **Follow-Up Resources**





Tips for Attendees and Volunteers

- Be patient and understanding
- Ask before offering help.
- Educate yourself about invisible disabilities.
- Promote a culture of inclusivity.





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Analogy: A Diverse Orchestra

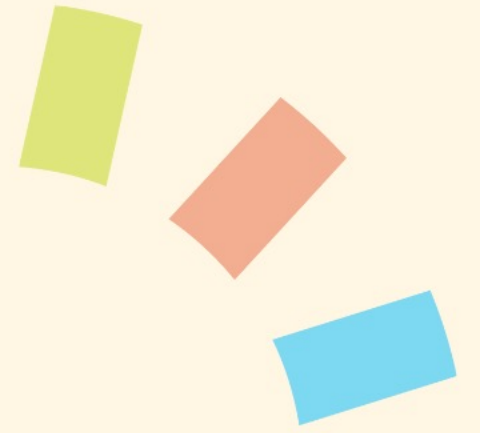
Think of the WordPress community as an orchestra. Each member, whether their challenges are visible or not, plays a vital role.

Recognizing and accommodating each member is key to a harmonious performance.



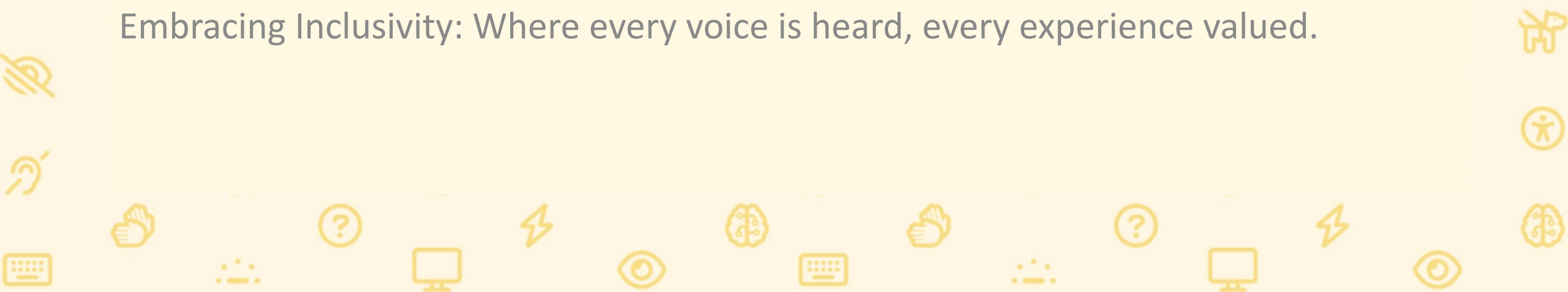


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Universal Benefits of Inclusive WordPress Events

Embracing Inclusivity: Where every voice is heard, every experience valued.

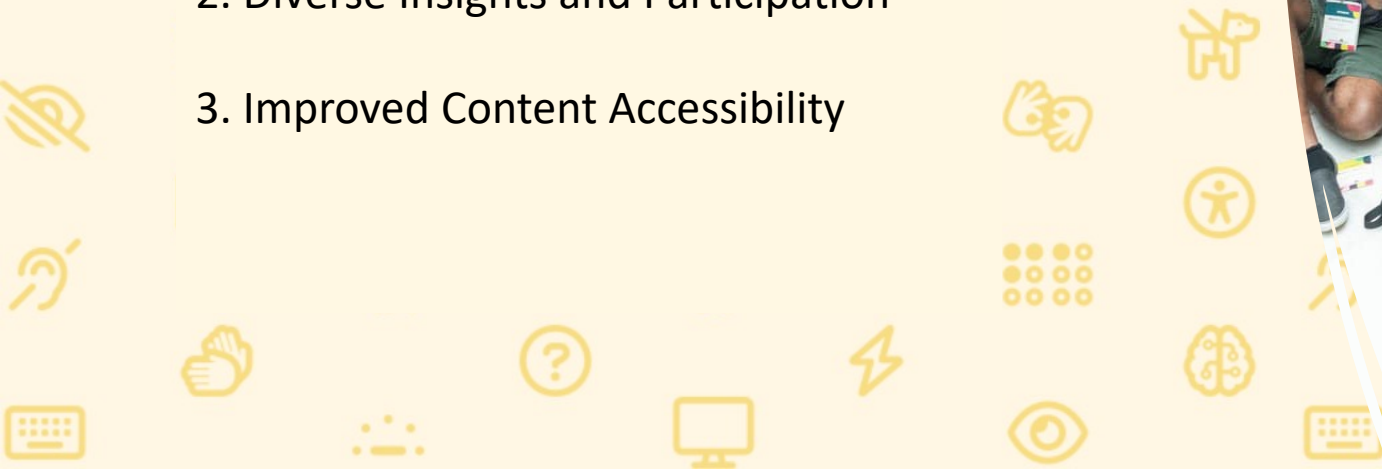




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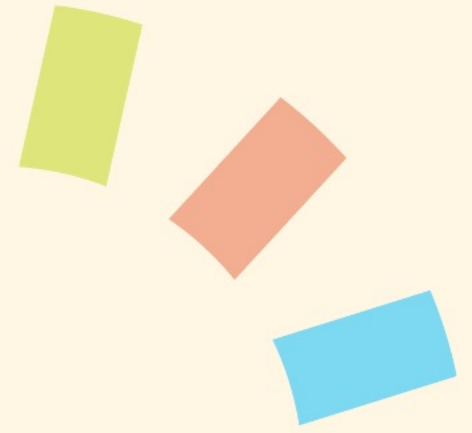
Accessibility benefits everyone

1. Enhanced Experience and Comfort
2. Diverse Insights and Participation
3. Improved Content Accessibility





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Thank you!



Let's connect – find me online

@CoachBirgit on social sites / Slack
or on my hub site coachbirgit.com

Thanks for being a good human!

