Anchor

>> Well, we're going to get started here since everybody has given up their Friday afternoon to participate. We have a few people walking in the room. We'll let them get seated.

And then you get an email saying I have a video recording. It's so cool. I love it. Right. So you're saving it in two places? In the Cloud? And then I can link to it from -- yeah, perfect.

All right, folks, I think we're going to get going here. Get yourself seated. You found that there's good snacks and beverages out there. [Laughs] Cookies are always good. And I'm sorry for the folks who are online and can't participate in the cookies here.

Oh, and I need the pointer, too.

Hi, folks. We are now officially recording our session. And I want to thank everyone for giving up their Friday afternoon for being here. This is really excited for me for two reasons. One it's always nice to be invited to come and speak. Secondly, it's always great to be invited to come and speak in a place like San Diego where I can take a little mini-vacation.

Thank you to Chuck. I don't know if you have any opening words here. I've got the microphone, that's why I'm just jumping in. But we're here to talk about vocational rehabilitation with neurodiverse clients -- a subject near and dear to me. I tend to be a fairly entertaining presenter. If you need a bio break or cookie, go for it for the folks who are local. For the people who have called in, if you have questions, I like to keep this a lively group. So feel free to pop up with any questions. If you want to ask a question throughout chat mode on Zoom, you can do that. Here locally I'm able to make eye contact so if it looks like they're dying to say something, I can get them to jump in.

And I'll try to repeat any questions so everybody can hear them. And, again, this session is being recorded and it will be up on the website sometime in the next few days so you can ponder over it and say, she was fabulous, what were those cool words she said? I'm teasing. Without further ado, we'll get started. And I first have to figure out how to use it.

First slide says something like hi, my name is Jan Johnston Tyler. We are a multidisciplinary agency. We have been in business now for 11 going on 12 years. And this is my sunset career. So I was in tech for about 20 years. And I got tired of it like many people do. And so I went back to school in my 40's to get my master's in counseling. And my goal at the time was to go into basically career counseling and helping people who were neurodiverse find a path for vocation. I had a kid with Asperger's.

So I decided I wanted to help solve the problem. Asperger's. So this was really going to become a challenge. I knew there was significant under employment and serial unemployment for those individuals.

So Evolibri provides private pay services for clients 14 and up. We don't work with little kids because there's tons of services of little kids. We work with them at their nastiest teenage life and help them get through high school and discover themselves.

We are seeing now also through high school students that, you know, and Chuck and I were talking about this there's this tendency to kick the can down the road. The middle school says he didn't have the right service but he'll get the services in high school, and then in college. And people who work in community colleges will laugh.

I've seen transition plans written that were basically complete IEP's and the high schools believed they could take those to college and get the services in college. These were trained teaches. That was part of the reason we wanted to sit on both sides because we wanted to understand how transition worked, where things are breaking and how to make that transition better.

Currently we're department of rehab renders in the Bay Area. We work in all the offices in 13 counties. We're also a non-public agency which means we are able to be hired by school districts to provide services directly to them.

So we do those two things. We are in the regional center vendors, which does not sit well with a lot of our clients. But the truth of the matter is DOR's terribly underfunded, regional centers even more so. So we have a problem and you probably have this down here, too where the minimum payment or reimbursement for services is actually lower than the minimum wage in several of our cities.

Doesn't work really well [Laughs]. Because if you hire people at that wage, you're actually breaking the law. Anyway, so we will get going here.

So what we're going to cover today is what neurodiverse is and why it's an air quote "thing." We're going to talk about general strategies for working with this population, specific barriers and how to work with them. What's on the horizon both good and bad news about hiring programs. And as you will find out about listening to me in the next couple hours, I was strong opinions on many things. It's usually a good thing, part of being an advocate. I'm going to talk about what some of the downsides are about the autism boom, if you will.

You may actually be in a position down the road to help a company that comes to you and says hey, I want to get into this but I have no idea how to do it. So we're going to talk about how to get an autism hiring program or neurodiverse program off the ground.

So what is neurodiversity and why is it a thing? So I use neurodiversity rather than ADHD, autism, learning disability because it's more neutral. It's language that's been around for quite some time. I like it because I think that frankly our dear friends in psychology and psychiatry haven't declared what autism is, what ADHD is, what mood disorders are. I think there's such huge overlap that we're in the dark. I'd rather call it neurodiversity and talk about the presenting challenges. I think that just makes more sense. Because that's what we do, right? We want to know what services does this individual need? And that's what we always do.

Typically the people that we serve in neurodiverse in general means does not include brain injuries, cognitive impairment or intellectual disorders, medical disorders, or physical challenges, right? So those tend to be lumped in different categories; however, neurodiversity in terms of learning disabilities, autistic-type presentations, mood challenges, learning differences in executive functioning or ADHD all tend to be co-morbid, right?

Likely if you have a person who's on the spectrum or a person with severe ADHD by the time they're 16 or 17 years old they almost always have depression and anxiety. And we're going to talk about why that is. And those oftentimes become the presenting challenges even though the underlying challenges might be autism.

So more on this, 1996 Asperger's syndrome was included in the DSM-IV this is the first time anything than what used to be known as autism came to the fore. In the next few days autism has gone through the roof. There's an epidemic, there's this and that. Just so you know, that language and sort of that mentality of their being an epidemic that we have to cure is very much taken personally to people on the spectrum.

They do not like being told that they need to be cured. I wonder why, right? So it's very demeaning to them. And you're going do see if you work closely with this population a lot of pushback. In truth, autism has been around forever. Again, as I mentioned earlier, I grew up in Silicon Valley. We were part -- I'm 59 years old, we moved to Silicon Valley when I was two years old -- we were part of the original forward-ho to the west for technology. All his friends worked at Stanford, etc. As I think back about his friends, so many of them were on the spectrum.

His friend built a little bird run through the inside of his house. And how his wife put up this I'm not quite sure. But as I look back at these people I think hmm. So there's no real big shock that there should be a clustering of people on the spectrum in Silicon Valley. We've drawn them there, right?

And we see the same clustering effect in Austin, Seattle, Boston, Research Triangle Park. And there's a reason, that's where all the geeks went. And they appropriated. And they have little geeklings. And that's why we're seeing more it. It's great and wonderful because they're really good in tech. It's been around for a long time and I think it's time to stop thinking about this as a new epidemic. I think it is on the rise because people are marrying and having kids with the same genetic traits as they had. But there's another chunk of this. And that is in 1996 when we did -- when Asperger's syndrome hit the DSM-IV, there were a lot people who moved from one column to another column, right?

They moved from intellectual disability to autistic. And that's part of that first uptick of autism, right? So it's a combination. I absolutely believe that it is on the rise, but I don't think it's quite as bad as people talk about it. And the other thing to be really conscious of, if we talk about an epidemic what we usually are talking about is stopping an epidemic.

That, then, kind of starts bordering on eugenics. Do we really want to kill off all the people with autism? I don't think. We want to help but not cure.

On top of that we see increasing diagnoses of ADHD, one in 11; learning disorders, one in 10; mood disorders, one in 11. We see overlap. Almost half of people incarcerated have a learning disability. That really says a little bit about where things are going wrong.

So the next question and I hear this from older people and since I'm older maybe I can say it, are kids really that messed up? What's gone up? What's happening with our youth of today? Everybody has a diagnosis, blah blah blah.

So is it really that bad? No, I don't think it is. Some of these things obviously were never diagnosed before. Why is it being diagnosed now? I hear this a lot from the school districts, just because I has difficulty sitting still, doesn't mean he has a diagnosis. My snappy comeback is that's great, don't make him sit still for seven hours. And if the kid gets up and needs to bounce in the back of the room, don't get mad at him. Because guess what? That's what he need. It's just normal now. If we think about the bell curve of behaviors, right, that normal used to be much wider of acceptable behavior. Certainly when I was a kid, in Palo Alto growing up that wide range was pretty wide. Now my kid living in a city right next door, that normal is very thin of what's acceptable behavior. And I think that that's really scary as a parent. And as a person work working people who now are depressed because they are not part of the .2% working in Silicon Valley as a executive vice-president or whatever.

So I think we've gotten less tolerant. This is part of the -- and we'll talk a little bit about this before -- that quirky and different people kind of stand out more. And we've gotten very into the heteronormative white males with 3.7GPA's I like to call it. I see this far more than you do here in Silicon Valley, right? All you have to do is look at the CEO's and most of them are in that mix.

So in short, I think this is oftentimes sort of the last diversity wall to break. Just like I'm an old woman and I believed in women's lib in the '60s and '70s, are we still having this conversation? Oh, yes we are. So we're going to still have this conversation just because that's how the snail's pace of society moves forward, right?

Any questions so far? Excellent.

So here are some general strategies -- maybe, there we will go. The first and most important thing to letter with working with people who are neurodiverse is they may not think like you do. This is different than people who don't speak the same language, who don't have the same background. This oftentimes goes right to the way they see the world -- cognitively, not through a cultural filter, not through an orientation filter but the actual way they think.

And it's interesting because these are oftentimes very intelligent people. So it's not like working with somebody, for example, who has an IQ of 60 or 70 who has Down's where you can figure out how to work with that person and reframe what you're asking to make it more acceptable.

The problem with working a quote higher functioning or normal or above normal IQ who thinks differently is sometimes it's really hard to figure out how to communicate with them. Because it can be clear that you're talking in almost like a different reality.

Their brains truly do work differently. There's more and more data that's coming out now that shows mapping of the responses of folks on the spectrum versus neurotypical people. The goal is not to make them think differently but find ways to communicate with them appropriately and help them find ways to use their very best talents to the very best effect in employment.

Come on in. Did you get cookies? There's cookies out there if you want cookies. Okay, just thought I'd let you know. I just want to make you feel welcome [Laughs]. And see, he left. I knew he would. That's right.

So we always want to frame our work with others on the premise of how others act is not necessarily rebellion, carelessness, or disinterest. Now, have you ever had any clients that kind of drove you nuts? We have all had them. I admit it. There's clients that drive me nuts, you know, where I just kind of have to kind of steel myself if I know they're coming in for whatever reason.

And when I think about it, it's because there's more work for me, right? And the typically because I'm working really hard to not only do the primary job of getting them a job or helping them be more successful in college or whatever it is, but there's all this back work that I'm also doing, right? Which is helping them find services that might help them, to help them learn how better to work with their college professor so they don't get kicked out of the class. So there's a lot of extra work. And I think that's what makes a more challenging client. But we have to remember they're not doing it on purpose. These people are not put on the face of the Earth to drive us wild -- or maybe they were and we deserve it. I don't know.

So here [Laughs] that got a laugh, yeah. So things we've heard and I've heard these from DOR counselors, I've heard these from college representatives in disability source centers, I've heard these from special education supervisors and directors, I've heard these things come out of the mouths of people whose jobs it is to actually help people.

We can't help him if he forgets another appointment. What disability is that? No, they actually will tell us or tell them. That's part of autism -- or can be. So he was told be happy, be pleasant. Well, he was really happy and he was so thrilled to have this job but his face didn't project that.

She needs to learn to listen. This was about a person who has auditory processing challenges. And so we asked for the accommodation that she was able to take notes on her clientele phone or on a clipboard, right? And the boss said well, know so we had a conversation about ADA and about what that all meant.

She's stubborn and doesn't do what we say. Now, this sound a little bit we have autism task. Well, the problem with this person is being highly logical autistic, wanted to ask the boss why he insisted on doing this particular task in a way that was obviously [inaudible] in terms of efficiency. And it turns out the kid was right but the boss didn't want to hear it, right?

So you need to learn better eye contact. It is really upsetting to us that she refuses to look at us. This was about a young woman working in a little chain boutique store who had pretty bad anxiety and pretty fairly deep autism who struggled making eye contact with her peers. She was not working with clients, she was working with peers. And a couple of the other young women who worked there said it totally creeped them out she wouldn't look at them.

He's just lazy and should be happy to have any job. We've heard that, too. Kind of makes you want to go home and have a drink.

So would we say it's really annoying his wheelchair takes up so much room? Hell to the no, you would never say that. Would you say his inability to hear is disruptive and upsetting about a deaf person? Would you say he's just slow and should be happy to have any job about a person with CP? Or would you say to a person he needs to write his reports without assistive tech about a blind person? No, you wouldn't say those things.

Let me put it this way, I think they're said less frequently -- and you're, right, they are -- but we as professional vocational rehab professionals, we would lose our jobs. I would also think people who work in educational setting, if they had any of this, I hope they would lose their jobs.

Now, people in employment, you're right, wild cards because they don't get training and as we have certainly witnessed in the last year plus there's a lot of really bigoted people out there. But I think as vocational rehabbers things said on the previous slide said about clients, again, it's relatively new, if you will. We haven't gotten as woke about it.

So this is the reality, though, of hidden disabilities. Because the disability is often not immediately apparent, the person is often shamed for the very challenges that he or she has, right? And that's really crux of the hidden disability that are not medical. I think even medical disabilities that are hidden are a little easier because they're not mental health. If you have diabetes or something like that which you can't see per se but if you explain that to your boss and explain what particular challenges or accommodations you might need in the workplace, that is understood.

If you have depression, forget it, right? Clearly I'm sure you read the news today, too just what a toll depression is taking on people right now. So we want to make sure we're not shaming people for the actual challenges they have. That's really counterproductive.

There we go. So we've all heard the term microaggression, I'm sure. And we're all guilty of microaggressions. I would love to tell you I'm so perfect in every way and never, ever said something I didn't regret. We all do it. I think really the best we can do is be mindful of the fact we do it and try not to and repair when we do.

But it's really important many of the outward behaviors you see coming into your office working with these clients particularly with hidden disabilities or high-functioning challenges, when you say that depression or anxiety or anger which you may see sometimes this is the result of years of being made fun of, being bullied, being shut down or rejected, of being told you're stupid or retarded or gay. And those words are constantly used still today in a schools. Being told you're not trying hard enough -- I hear that from teachers in high school and parents every single day.

Being told you're lazy, being told to cheer up or calm down or all in your head. That's damaging. It's really, really damaging. And this causes me to tell parents and educators by the time you're 18 years old, if you don't have depression or anxiety, you're doing something really right. Because all of this is happening every single day so I won't say a majority but a huge church of high school, middle school, elementary school kid and college students. And this is adding to their additional burden. Yeah?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Hey, folks, if you are calling in on your phone to listen in, please take the time now to mute yourself. Because we're getting a little bit of background noise. And thank you.

So we want to understand neurodiversity with fresh eyes. We want to understand like all people, neurodiverse people are complex, unique, and multifaceted. Again, you will certainly know my opinions bit end of today.

One of the things that kind of drives me wild is the discussion about how folks with autism make great software testers. You may have heard this. Now, it's true that there are some people with autism who do well as software testers. But for every person who walks into my office who has autism and is interested in computer science, I have two more people who walk into my office with autism who are interested in animals, who are interested in art, who are interested in childhood development.

So we have to be really careful about thinking that we're going to solve this with one program and we'll just jam everybody in and go about our merry way.

Because of that, there is no one way of how you air quote "feel" with this population because they're just as diverse as any other population, right? So it would be a little bit like what's the most common thing you could say about black people? We don't have enough black people working and black people are really good at this one thing. So we're going to have a huge hiring program for black people to do this one thing. I mean, we would all just cringe inside if we heard that, right? It's kind of the same thing.

So we have to be careful about creating a bucket and putting everybody in the bucket just because we're going to solve the problem. That doesn't work.

I want as you're working with clients, I want you to think about career development of the lifetime of the client. Not just what they're going to do today but can they do and career develop over time? It needs to be central to their needs and desires. What do they want to do? What careers excite them? What kind of skills does that person have?

We want to identify specific challenges present and can be overcome with additional training. We want to identify specific challenges that are present that cannot be changed and we shouldn't try, right?

This brings me to a little story about as part of my job I read a lot of what are known as transition plans, IED's under ADA. This is written in high school and defining their transition to whatever comes after. It will be the subject of my next book as soon as I get to writing it because so few people really understand what should be in these plans.

But I see such a huge problem with the client-centric whatever the student wants we'll just write it down without any real counseling or any investigation or any dialogue back and forth with a trained vocational professional and a high school student.

So I read one that came to me a year after the young person had graduated from high school. And whose transition plan said that -- and this is a person who has an IQ of about 75 -- that he was going to go to UC Davis and become a veterinarian or become a racecar driver. And that passed. This was a person who did not apply to college, really struggled to get through high school. As you probably know that school at UC Davis is one of the toughest in the country, highly selective. And at the risk of sounding mean, the chances of this young man ever getting in are slim to none. I called the school district and asked how this actually flew. And the director of special education said we have to go with what the client says. And I disagreed.

And I said without any comment? Without any, you know, basis in reality and without the damn plan of how that's going to happen? Well, we realized it was not likely. But it's what he wanted. And they just leave it.

Meanwhile, this kid in the interim year since he graduated high school went and took one class at a local community college -- in the Central Valley -- it was a theatre class. He was asked to leave the third week for being too destructive.

So here's a kid who got special education in high school, got his transition plan to the school district could check all the appropriate boxes. Never talked to DOR, regional center, sent him off to community college, one class, dropped out. No hope for this kid moving forward, right?

So we have to be aware there are some things we cannot change in our clients. I at 59, overweight and with really bad knees am not going to be a prima ballerina. It's okay for someone to say that to me. You know, I understand you really like ballet. What can we do considering how rigorous that would be and frankly I don't think you're going to make it, what can we do to help you express your love of ballet?

We have to think more broadly. Yes, we want to help people find their passion but not to the point my job's done, I told them what they wanted to hear and walk away. Doesn't work that way.

So general rules of the road. First stop, before I continue here, how many people in the room sitting here work currently with neurodiverse clients? Awesome. And I am going to guess that there's lots of people on the line, too who also work with neurodiverse clients. I'm going to take a little poll locally because it's a little easier, what are the hardest things about working with these clients from your perspective? You can be honest. Yes?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Got it. Got it. Yep. Anybody else? Yes? [ Inaudible ] I resemble that remark. Right.

[ Inaudible ]

>> Got it.

[ Inaudible ]

>> So the two questions for the people on the phone, yes, really good, the first is difficulty with interviewing when we have flat affect and we have poor eye contact. And then other is mommy. Mommy issues. So parents are really used to being all up in their kids' junk because in elementary, high school, that's the only way they got services, right?

And it's really hard, you know, there's no switch that we get to flip either for parents or kids that at age 18 suddenly the relationship changes, right?

So here's some rules of the road, but then I'm going to go back specifically to both of these. The first is be direct. If someone walks into your office and they smell, you need to be prepared to tell them that. Again, you do it with loving kindness, right? You make eye contact, you're not yelling at them, you're not furrowing your brow, you're not being mean.

I tend to use a lot of humor because that works pretty well and my humor is pretty broad and kids get it when I'm making a joke. You have to be able to be pretty blunt.

The people I work with on the spectrum and I do coaching with engineers at Google and Microsoft and Facebook and people making three times as much money as I ever make, they appreciate that bluntness. I'm not going to dance around the bush with them. I tell them and they like it. Cut to the chase. Be prepared to be direct.

And if that's hard for you, find somebody else to work with that client, right?

And this may sometimes, you know, kind of border into areas that make you uncomfortable, right?

You may see somebody who is got their hand in their pockets quite a lot. And you wonder what they're doing. You need to be honest with them and say, "When I see your hands in your pockets near your genitals and you're moving your hands around, it makes me uncomfortable." And, of course, at the end of that day you're going to go home and hug your pillow and rock on the couch because those are hard days.

Be concrete. If someone's having trouble getting to a job interview, show them explicitly how to get there. You don't want to say you can just take Lit. Whip out that cell phone, I want to see that you have Lift installed and you have a credit card that is active that is attached to that Lift account. I want to know you have the address and what time of day you're going to ask for it so you can be there in time. You have to be really concrete and walk them through each and every step until they get it.

They may say I use it all the time, I can leave at 1:00 o'clock. Have them check in so you know they know how they're going to get there.

Be forward-thinking. This is another one. Kids on the spectrum, individuals on the spectrum have a tendency to get stuck at places that are sometimes surprising to neurotypicals. So they may hit a barrier that you and I might just figure out even if we've never had that barrier how quickly to resolve it -- they may not be able to, right?

So, for example, if somebody's taking a bus and you guys figured out how many stops it was by the time they got on the bus and the time they're going to get off and there's five stops and they knew the stop they were supposed to get off by the bus driver skips one of the stops because there's a road work, there might cause a rise of panic. There's only four stops, but this is the stop I get off on, right? What do I do? Hopefully they'll actually get off the bus. They probably will, but it might cause them to be really panicky because something was different they hadn't thought through.

We're going talk about that with method of loci, doing a walk-through.

Be kind. This person's already been through hell. Especially in DOR, vocational, rehabbers, they've been through hell. Smiling, comforting, encouraging, go a long way to help that person. I remind my staff yours may be the only smile they get all day long, right? That's important.

You know, you can be kind and warm and loving to person, that might be the height of their week, right? We have in my office and as a private pay I can do this, no rules against it, but I have bowls of Fireballs and Lemon Heads and baskets of fruit and chips, water, coffee, I want my office to feel welcoming. I want people to come in and feel like I can relax here.

And so if you can, no matter where you work or how you work, if you can make your little moment with people to have that same kind of feel, that's lovely, right? Because these people, you know, just they don't get enough good in their lives.

Let me look, audience member, thank you. Interviewing not eye contact, overinvolved, thank you and hardest thing what you said. Individuals come with unrealistic plans.

DOR's bearer of bad news. And truth of UC Davis. Yeah, really not useful. So I promise I'd go back over a couple of these things.

With regards to the interviewing, this is hard for a lot of the people. And I'll tell you kids on or off the spectrum graduating high school don't know about eye contact. So we've got some rules of the road.

I brought today a program that we develop called Workplace Adaptability Program. And we developed this curriculum about five years ago when we became Department of Rehab vendors. We'd already been working with the population for quite some time and we knew there were groupings or clusters of challenges that kept popping up. So we thought rather than saying the same thing over and over, we should run this as a group. We've been running this for several years.

This is available to you all. I'm doing my share [inaudible] you can't see me on the line. This is available on Amazon. This is a leader-led class. It's got an instructor guide and student guide. And it talks through many of the soft skill challenges this population has.

It's 14 modules. And it's very interactive.

What it works best for, for the interviewing skills it's practice, practice, practice. And it's really best to practice in a group setting if at all possible. Because we want people to be -- it's what I call a threshold experience, right? Anything's hard to do the first time. You do it the first time, those always kind of make us clench and you do it enough times it's not scary anymore. We get better and we can speak better, and don't panic as much.

With the interviewing skills I would say that is practice, practice, practice. We do mock interview. We interview on Zoom because now there's a lot of telephone interviews. We can it anyway we can. They get better at it.

The eye contact thing I want to briefly talk about that. Part of the challenge with eye contact, if we break it down, deconstruct it, people on the spectrum in particular have difficulty reading social cues from faces and bodies.

When they are trying to talk to somebody and they're trying to discern the hidden language of facial expressions, they become overwhelmed. Too much information. It's like blasting the TV.

So what they're essentially doing by looking away, they're turning the volume down. So they can't, it's really difficult at first for them to make eye, read all the social cues -- she raised her eyebrows, looks like she's falling asleep -- all that other stuff that's coming in and try to formulate an answer. They can get better. Everybody can get better.

What we often suggest is we have them practice. When we talk to them we say look at us, look away. Look at us, look away. And if it's too hard to make eye contact, it's bridge of the nose or chin. We practice it. It doesn't have to be perfect. I would say regarding that is disclosure. Whether we disclose to the person who is doing the interviewing ahead of time -- by the way, this person has autism and they note they don't make great eye contact but they should be fine in the interview. Which is scary to do that for all kinds of reasons, right?

Or you can coach your client how to disclose during the interview which is also really hard to do but a really, really strong skill to have in terms of self-advocacy. And we, again, like to use a little bit of humor.

You may notice that I have difficulty making eye contact. It's just that little autism thing that I have. I'm really sorry. It's not that I'm not listening, right? And if they say that with a smile on their face and they try to make eye contact, it's usually so endearing to the interviewer. It's like Whoa, okay, that's good to know. And you will also find more and more companies are now asking ahead of time before they even set up the interview if the person needs accommodations in the interview.

That's your in. No accommodations needed, just want to forewarn you this person may not make great eye contact.

And, again, it's going to take a while before that becomes so prevalent we don't have to worry about them just being overlooked but I think we have to start, right?

With regards to the mommy issue, I kick them out. With a smile on my face, right? Love you mom, you're not going to go to the job with him or her. So I'll let them come in for the first session so I can get a full picture, right? Tell me what's happening and sometimes the kid doesn't remember some of the issues that came up in high school. I just won't tolerate it. Oftentimes the parents want to follow up but we CC the client which drives the parents nuts. We keep holding that boundary and eventually they give up.

Or, again, I can [inaudible]. You guys if you're working for DOR you can't, the parent's not going to go to the job. And we have to make sure that the parents understand that. You know, it's great that they're advocating for their kid; we want the kid to learn to advocate for him or herself.

We have somebody's who's not muted. Please mute your cell phone. Excellent.

Any questions so far? Yes, sir?

It is. The Workplace Adaptability Program available on Amazon. And this is a brief little aside. The department of rehab state level did an RFP for training earlier this year, actually late last year. I don't know if you're ever done an RFP with the DOR, they're interesting. This basically said the people that were going to be doing -- for training -- that you had to have two people with master's degrees who are willing to go anywhere in the State of California for a full day of training and include the cost of any materials that you're going to be providing and it cannot exceed $3,000.

It's really hard to do, right? Really hard to do. Two people whole day travel anywhere in the state, all the materials. Anyway, because this is so important to me I went ahead and filed the RFP and we weren't accepted. So it's sort of like fine, I didn't want to go anyway [Laughs].

But here's my plea: You want to help this, help learn how to do this if you want to help fund people like me, please buy this. If you have funding for training, take a look at this and see if it makes sense for you to run this kind of programming down here.

This is a great program for kids about 16 up and teaches them what they need to do to be employable in terms of the soft skills. And let's pass this around. Unfortunately to folks online, you can go to Amazon and I think it's got a look inside so you can at least see what it looks like.

Okay. Do we need a break after an hour? Is everybody okay? I'm looking, people seem like they'll go a little longer? Okay.

So let's talk about some of the specific or typical barriers we see with neurodiverse clients and how to help them.

Presenting barriers to employment. Broadly speaking, these are some of the barriers you're typically going to see with neurodiverse clients. And there's about 150,000 ways to sorts these, I just picked one to sort them out in these three categories of executive functioning, social communication, and emotional regulation as three likely buckets, okay?

So first off, does anybody have any idea are there any up here that you think would be extraordinarily difficult to help? And people online, you can write it up in the chat bar, is there anything you see harder than others to work on?

Sensory sensitivity comes up. We will go through these. Ambiguity is one of the biggest.

This is just my fort on helping. The easiest one might be sensory. Executive functioning might be easier.

So sensory issues. How many people in this room have sensory integration issues? You're all lying. Each and every one of you has a sensory integration challenge at some point or another. This is why we tap our feet. This is why we twist our hair, see, you did it. It's true, all of us have some way of trying to keep our senses in balance, to keep us alert, right?

If you're ever sitting sit for long enough, you will need some kind of sensory input to keep your body and mind focused, right? We all do this. People doodle, people chew gum, people cross their legs, uncross their legs. We all do this kind of sensory input, right?

We also, most of us, will have times in our lives when we're sensory defensive. You're driving in the car with the radio on, suddenly you realize you're lost. What's the first thing you do? Turn the radio down. What does that have to do with being lost. It's suddenly your brain goes alert alert alert. That's sensory defensiveness, right? We all do it, we're just not aware. Some of them are more typically than others.

But these are actually pretty easy to contact date mostly. In a workplace these lights drive a lot of people crazy. These are CFM's. These are okay. But some florescent lights, they have that buzz and also the color, they make people cranky.

Well, if you have a person with that issue, you get a full-spectrum light which is easy to do.

Noise is another one, right? In general.

Some people are highly distractible and especially when we're tired or not feeling well, we tend to -- our filters are more impaired. So if that door opens, I will turn to see who it is. That's being distractible. If you have a person who's distracted, we tend to scream. We can't stop people from walking in the room. Instead we have noise-canceling headphones. We can look to something like Simply Sound on their laptop which has a beautiful sound emulator. And they have the white noise, pink noise, and brown noise with a modulator. It's very cool. They can listen to sea shore sound. All of that is possible.

When you think about sensory and there's lots that's written on sensory issues. If you have somebody who needs a screen a sensory defensive, you can't make things go away but you can put away a wall of pleasant sound to overcome the uncomfortable sound. And in terms of lighting, you can typically do something around that.

We also like people to have fidgets at their desktop. Some people need to have standing desks. And a lot of these are pretty Now. So you want to find out from your client if they know what kind of sensory issues challenge them and think creativity about what you can do.

There's several books on sensory integration challenges. One of my favorite websites is called therapyshoppe.com. And it's an occupational therapy site. All kind of fun things to play with and fidget. That's pretty easy. Now we'll get into ones that are harder.

Next one, executive functioning and you're going to hear this a lot more as it gets prevalent. It's the core of what ADHD people struggle with. This is all our prefrontal cortex which we know doesn't actually solidify or fully mature until age 25. This is the CPU, RAM, and cache of your brain. This is impulsivity, this is better decision making, this is the ability to filter. It's the ability to start and finish tasks.

And most people we see will have problems around time management either thinking that typically they think something's going to take less time than it actually does or time escapes them, oh gosh I'm so sorry I looked all the my watch and next thing I knew it was 4:00 o'clock.

Hyper and hypofocus. People with gaming and gambling addictions. Hyperfocus, if you're a software developer, kind of a nifty thing to have. Because they will work and work and work until they're done. However, you have to take bio breaks every now and again. But hyperfocus can be a problem because if you're working on something and the fire alarm's going off and you refuse to leave the building or more likely your boss wants you to come to a meeting and you refuse to go because you can't transition, that's a problem.

Hypofocus is sort of that hyperactivity we sort of hear about in ADHD. So this is the inability to focus for any length of time on something. We kind of bepop. It's like I can't just, like, sit down and finish something.

So those are difficult. But, again, all of these -- you can remedy all of these and you can build these skills just like we can build any other skill.

Social skills and self-advocacy I put this in the middle because it takes time. You cannot struck anybody whether they're a horrible bigot or someone who can't interview well on the proper way to behave to accept it and change overnight. Social communication is deeply embed in our brain and how we react to people around us.

Even if the person does want to change and doesn't want to behave that way, it takes a long time to really learn it. So we have to practice with them. The areas are poor eye gaze, chitchat, water cool talk we sometimes call it. Receiving feedback and giving appropriate feedback.

If you've never had your soul crushed by somebody on the autistic spectrum, you've never experienced it. It's cutting to the quick. You'll go home and cry.

And receiving feedback. It can be very difficult. Again, they've received too much feedback over their lifetime so anything that sounds like a negative that may hit really hard.

Communication skills. And communication skills we're talking about appropriate communication. We're talking about writing an email instead of screaming at somebody, this kind of thing.

Imperiousness. I didn't make this word up but it's my go-to. How many of you here in the room or online worked with people on the spectrum who come across as very snobby, very much know it all? My son has been very imperious throughout his 25 years and mama continuously smacks him down when he behaves that way.

Part of it oftentimes what's true to somebody on the spectrum is True with a capital T. And if you can't see it as well clearly, there is something wrong with you. And so that's a tough one to challenge, right? And it's sort of that Spockian, brain, that is highly illogical. That's tough because you may get into a back and forth with somebody with what's true and not true.

My son once told me when he was seven years old and we shared it with him because I thought he needed to know and he told me again when he was seven, "Never argue with someone with autism because you will always lose." And it's true.

Next one is emotional regulation. Here we're talking about being easily overwhelmed which sometimes is sensory and sensory plus anxiety response. Difficulty being in groups of people, giving and receiving feedback as above, and all of these -- and then just kind of core anxiety and depression.

And all of these really merit therapy with well-qualified therapists who understand these clients, right? I'm big on therapy, I'm big on the mental health for anyone neurodiverse. If I had a magic wand, everybody would have a therapist. Yes?

>> Do you find mental health clinicians are able to work with this population? Have you found [inaudible]?

>> There are. They're hard to find. And there's a lot in our area. I would imagine you'd have a lot down here, too, because you have good schools and universities. And wherever you see good schools and universities, you tend to see good clinicians, right?

I know in LA, UCLA is excellent. I think part of it also is as it becomes more of a thing, more people are studying it. I think also as more people have kids on the spectrum, you're seeing more people go into these types professions because they do see the lack of resources. And so they're trying to help fix that.

The best way FYI, if you're look for a good therapist, one of the best ways believe it or not is Psychological Today. They have a great website therapist finder. And you put in whatever you're look for and it will pop up in a geographic location. And when you go and look at all the people who profess to working with autism, look at their sites and be very leery of people who work with everything including autism.

Instead, you want to look for people with a narrow focus because that means they're focused. They're really committed and probably pretty good.

Okay. Theory of mind. So if you don't know or understand sort of how autism works, I'm not going to give you a dissertation right now. But it has to do with the way that people on the spectrum cannot guess what other people are thinking by inference. That's sort of it.

And it's something we as neurotypicals do all the time and we do it pretty well for the most part. Folks on the spectrum really struggle with this. We can learn and get better at it, but it is challenging.

And this kind of goes to several challenges that you will see frequently with folks on the spectrum. The first was ambiguity as Chuck had said. Maybe that one is hard. It is dealing with ambiguity. Because if you have somebody who's a very concrete thinker and somebody who kinds of like life black and white and cut and dry, everything being thrown up in the air for any length of time is hugely uncomfortable.

So I have a client that I'm working with and he has always allowed me to talk about him in public which is very nice of him. Works at SAP. He is a brilliant networking guy. Never went to college. But he is, you know, close to being a savant on certain networking issues. And he was homeless when he was first interviewed at SAP. Long, sad story about how he got there.

And he's lovely. He's an absolutely lovely human being. And he's really high-functioning autistic but he has some challenges.

He's been at SAP for three and a half years, recently nominated to be a fellow which is huge, right? This is a really, really big deal. And right after he was nominated for this fellowship, the whole company reorganized. And now he is working with a manager, floor manager, who necessary nothing about autism, nothing about him, who really has in idea how many different projects this man has his fingers in which is pretty much the entire networking backbone of the company which nobody seems to know except two or three people.

And he's been told he will be getting a new project sometime soon but just keep working on whatever he's working on -- this is absolutely decompensating him. This has been going on for three weeks. And I mean, he is absolutely falling apart because he doesn't know what's going to happen, doesn't know where he's going to be. And he's just spinning.

And so I have to meet with him twice a week to let him spin and tell hims going to be okay. Worst case scenario, I could get him a job at any can be in Silicon Valley. There's been conversations about cooking, what can you focus on?

It's been really hard for him.

Black and white thinking is difficult for this population -- can be difficult for this population. They tend to be yes/no, on/off. Truth with a capital T, there has to be one way. Remember all those ethics questions that get asked in high school? Would you save the priest or the baby? Those kinds of questions that are really horrible [Laughs]? Those are the kinds of questions that make autistic people's heads explode. And they'll usually come back with the priest, by the way, forget the baby. The one you typically would think would be the winner, they'll have a really good argument about why it wouldn't be.

But it's really difficult for them to see areas of gray. And that's a really important thing to teach people -- anybody who's very black or white or literal thing is thinking about things in gray. But there's rarely, you know, a right or a wrong. Very difficult for them to predict other people's behavior or intent. So back to another -- a little anecdote. My son is a big kid. He is now a fully grown six foot three and pretty burly. When he was in elementary school he was kind of baby Huey I don't know if some of you are old enough to remember that. He was a big kid. When the recess bell rang he would get in line with his backpack and he would turn around. And he would almost always hit the kit in front of him as he turned around. He would swing his backpack which would always irritate the kid in front of him. And I would see this time and time and then and I would tell him you have to apologize. You just smacked Joe. And he could never understand why that was important to do. I was like, why don't you understand it's important to apologize? He says, mom, he knows I didn't do it on purpose. I said no, he sees you're smacking with your backpack. And even if you did do it accidentally, you still need to apologize because you broke a social rule.

So you're going to see some of that as well, difficulty with the intent and how to make sure you understand other people and they understand you.

Difficulty with non-literal language, humor, imagery. We'll see less so as adults but more so as younger kids where they have difficulty with humor or, you know, what do you mean it's raining cats and dogs? There are no cats and dogs lying out in the street. And if you think about this language, if you've ever had a good friend who didn't speak English as the first language, it's the same problem.

And if you've ever heard translated idioms from other languages, it's funny. You may get that. Or they'll simply tell you that's a dumb thing. Where does that come from? Anyway.

And we see this a lot in high school lit classes. Oh my God. Writing those papers with kids on the spectrum, they don't understand things -- they don't understand all the non-literal language, the metaphor. It's really tough because lit classes are all about that.

And here's another one that's kind of difficult, too. And this is difficulty generalizing lessons learned. So most of us, when we learn a lesson we not only learn the lesson in that context but we're able to apply what we've learned potentially to other contexts as well.

That we've learned oh, well, if it was true over here, it probably is going to be true over here, too. So I can probably act this way and that's the appropriate reaction. Folks on the spectrum may not have that ability. We see folks in the workplace get in trouble for this.

Sensory issues, how do we deal with them? We love hyposensitivity, this our sensory-seeking to stay alert and calm. Fidgets, music, sound machines, brisk walks. I saved many engineers' careers by taking a walk between 1:00 and 2:00. It excretes cortisol and there's something about that wool gathering when you're disconnected from the actual work and you're still processing and thinking as you're doing something else.

Hypersensitivity we talked about this. This is pretty much what we talked about. Go a little bit deeper into time management. I'm big on calendaring. Google Calendar with most of my clients because they can share it with me. And we sync their phones. They have an alarm that always reminds them the time to leave for the appointment, the time the appointment is, reminders to call their dentists. We all have these things in our pockets and a great way to teach executive functioning.

Method of loci is a great way to walk through the day. Or whatever is scary or causing them to kind of clam up.

This is a good way to do not only a visualization technique, you know, you'll walk into the office and there's probably going to be somebody at the desk, you're going to walk up. There may be a paper you sign your name. You're going do introduce yourself, let's practice that. Great, now after that you're going to be seated at a waiting area until the counselor comes out to meet you.

So you just walk through it. So the can see it in his or her mind, right?

Now, again, most neurotypicals do this. We do this ourselves. We've learned that ability. But as I said on the spectrum or neurodiverse people may not have figured this out. This also allows us to do whatever the worst thing ever? They almost come up is the worst thing that can happen is I get hit by a bus or aliens attack. They'll always come up with something astronomically horrible.

Then possibilities versus probability. Is there a good chance on your way to the DOR office that aliens are going to attack? What do you think the probability is? And usually they'll say none. Okay, good, so we can take that off. Now, realistically what kind of challenges will you have, right? That's a really good one to use with people with anxiety is the possible versus the probable. Because anxiety is usually nothing more than projected ourself into the future and being fearful about what's going to happen.

Task breakdown. Dependencies and sequencing. And this is the CEO of Self and Executive Functioning Handbook. It's going used in a lot of community colleges in those resources class where they have kids with ADHD struggling with executive functioning. We talk about project management skills of break down tasks to a chunkable level.

Many people have a black box syndrome. This means if you tell a kid to go clean their room, they can't break that task down. That is a black box that they'll simply go into their room and they'll look at how messy it is and they will sit on their bed and they will cry. And then mom will come in and go, I told you to clean this mess up. They don't know how.

So you have to break the task down. And task of something like this, and this is a simple one: First pick up all your dirty clothes and put them in the hamper; then pick up all your books off the floor and put them in the book shelf; put all your dirty dishes away; throw the garbage away; then start cleaning desk.

It has to do with the overwhelm, too. It's obviously multi-step and it becomes so overwhelming that the person doesn't know how. And they're immediately overwhelmed by doing it. Right? So we have to teach people who have this challenge how to break down tasks. And it's not that hard. And, again, we all do it. If you are a list maker, I'm often breaking down tasks to the actual doable level so I can actually make progress.

Estimating, nobody knows how to estimate time and nobody is taught these skills. And yet this is one of the most important things to be able to do is estimate how long something will take you.

Now, by the time you're my age, you're pretty damn good at estimating because you've been doing it for a long time. But we never really teach people how to do it. I like to teach people how long is this going to take and follow up and see how long did it take. And see how to normalize it.

Attentional and motivational strategies, these are also important how to stay on task. There's lots written on attention and motivation strategies.

We went through most of this, interviewing skills, chitchat skills, what's appropriate and inappropriate. Appropriate communication in the workplace, what can you talk about and never talk about? Appropriate self-advocacy -- how to stand up for yourself, when you should and should not, and how to appropriately raise an issue with management and peers. It's all in workplace adaptability.

Emotional regulation, if depression or anxiety is present, must be seeing a well-qualified therapist to work on skills building around self-regulation. Also ask for accommodations to take breaks as necessary. Work from home twice a week go that's possible. Attend meetings remotely especially for people who have a difficult time being in a large group of people. And make sure they get adequate time off for therapy which is a medical requirement.

Most of these I talked through, the theory of mind challenges, not a native way to think, there's rules-based, difficulty with ambiguity brings anxiety, confusion, not everyone, can you imagine a time when are good ways to think about it so it's more gray. Rigidity and rules-based. We had one client working as a dental hygienist. There were people in the office that weren't terribly nice and always came in late from lunch. They were testing her, you could tell. Because they'd always come in, "Oh, we're a little bit late." And our client was always on time.

And he would kind of taunt her and really what they were trying to do was to rat on them to the boss. Because the boss always came in half an hour later. They were supposed to be there doing things. And it drove our client nuts. This poor young woman was so wrapped around the axle about, you know, they're always late. I can't believe they're late. They should be in trouble.

And it took us a really long time to calm her down and tell her it's not your problem. I know that's really hard but the best thing to do and get their goat is pretend you don't care. And that's what we worked on and it did, it drove them nuts.

They suddenly started showing up on time because they couldn't get her to rat on them. Jerks.

Second problems with predicting other behavior, you can talk about how others might see things or react. Can you imagine what theymight think if you whack them with your backpack? They may think I'm doing it on purpose. That's right.

Again, with the non-literal language, humor and imagery, talk about what it's like for a non-native speaker. Irony and teasing is especially hard. You have to be especially careful with your clients. I use a lot of irony and humor and teasing, but I tend to make it so broad and over the top that they can't possibly miss I'm joking.

And if I think even with my broad humor they might have missed, it I tell them I'm joking and I'm sorry if that wasn't apparent, right?

And again, difficulty with the generalizing. This can be learned but it takes a while. I used to tell my son's therapist that, you know, what takes a neurotypical kid being told two or three times, you might have to tell a neurodiverse kid 20 or 30 times but don't give up.

Are they good employees? After all this, why would anybody hire them? Because they have superior problem-solving skills. They'll think, outwit, outlast just about any neurotypical. They're able to think outside the box. And they are not afraid to speak their mind.

I really wish Mark Zuckerberg would hire an autistic person as his right-hand person because somebody would say, "Yo, dude, you can't do that and here's why, are you aware?" They have no problem being -- higher order conceptual thinking they can also like science and data science and mathematics and chemistry and in medicine, they can think in huge ways that we can't, especially those who see the world in a visual architecture.

It's phenomenal. I have been absolutely stunned and awed talking to some people who are autistic and trying to understand how their brains work and how damn intelligent they are. It's awesome. There is great value there.

They're going to see challenges that other people might miss, right? They are going to be the one that says, I bet you didn't think about this, which is important. Another thing is retention. They are hugely loyal. Not all of them, of course. That's a very broad brush stroke. But remember, they don't like transition much. They kind of like to be in one place and stay put. Because change is hard. And they'll be there every single day. They have low demands once their needs are met and they're being treated well and fairly and compensated, these are ideal employees. Because they want to be there. They want to work hard and they don't want to make drama typically, right?

And retention alone should be reason alone to hire them. We're going to do a vignette and we're going to take a break. Camille is a 19-year-old graduate who is interested in vocational training. Her challenges a around emotional regulation. She gets flusterrerred when receiving sharp criticism or when people are unhappy.

And she does exceptional well when she received positive feedback. So the question for all of you to spend a couple minutes thinking about: How do you approach career development with her? What sort of jobs would be a bad fit for her? So think about this. And folks who are online, please take the time to use the group chat to put up your ideas -- what would be hard for her, what would be a good fit for her?

All things being equal.

ideas?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Now, what kind of -- because there's lots of jobs where you're around people, right? So can you narrow it down a little bit more?

[ Inaudible ]

>> What kind of job?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Okay. Anybody else?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Customer service.

>> Yep.

[ Inaudible ]

>> Right. And like I say, all things being equal. So we don't really know what her interests are. Okay. Anything else?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Very good. Very, very good. Anything else?

>> Child development.

>> Let's see, customer service on-call center would be difficulty. Yes, it absolutely would. That would be soul-crushing probably to her. Child development's really good. We're seeing a lot of people on the spectrum who are interested in early childhood development.

So ideally, Camille would be trained in vocation where customer contact is helping role in a happy environment. Possibly lab work, clerical role, possibly clerk, early childhood development -- we're seeing more people on the spectrum. And that's a pretty low bar.

You know it's about 12 months, 14 months to get your ECE. That's a great role. Doesn't pay a lot but a good way to enter the workforce, grow up and mature a little bit to see if they want to go to school to get a degree in education.

I would not put them in med tech why? People coming in medical offices are generally not happy. They're in pain, grumpy, scared. That would be hard for her, right? Vet tech. This I see so often, we all want to work with animals. But you do not want to work with people who are coming in with a wounded doing ever dog who's been hit by a car.

You could work at a pet hotel. You could work for Petco at doggy daycare. That would be fun. But you have to be really careful about how you navigate that. Not customer support on phone or exchange desk because you get somebody like me to make their life a living hell. We want to make sure these people have jobs where they don't have to do hard customer interface. Some people can do it, but not everyone can be a 911 dispatch officer. We're going to take a break now. We are at 20 to 3:00. And folks on the phone, let us take 15 minutes. So that gives people enough time to check their voicemail, check email.

So we will regroup at about 5 to 3:00ish.

[ Please stand by for captioning ]

>> Okay. So we're coming back online, everyone. I'm sorry we couldn't share our cookies with those people afar.

And as we get back together, I see a comment from Chris Canavari who I know who says I might start the vocational counseling starting more about her hobbies and interests. What I was going for was there's certain areas we definitely do not want to put people who have emotional regulation issues.

Okay, folks. Local, we got to rather than up our conversation. Sorry to be a task mistress. Got my whip here.

[ Inaudible ]

>> Isn't that fun? I love that store. They have so much cool stuff. I -- yeah.

There's instruments of learning. Okay. So moving -- probably, yeah -- moving along. And we may close out before 5:00 p.m.. I know that will break everyone's heart. Now, I could remind you of when I was at grad school at Santa Clara University and we had a teacher there and I don't even remember the theory that she promoted. It was some kind of real obscure psychological theory that she adhered to. She was first off a crappy instructor. The theory was kind of edgy crack pot. But she ended and most of these classes were evening classes and typically started around 6:00 and ran to 8:30 or 9:00. But one class she only had enough material for about an hour, hour and a half. Part of this theory was the therapeutic frame and included always included a full 50 minutes of therapeutic session regardless. Even if the person got up and ran out of the room, she would sit there and stare at the chair because it was really important to keep the integrity of the timeframe. After the material, she informed us grad students we would be sitting in our chairs for the additional two hours because that was part of the two-hour frame.

So I'm big on I don't believe in therapeutic frames. Thank you very much.

So an the horizon. So we're going to talk about some of the hiring programs. Are there any autistic programs in the area or neurodiversity programs in Southern California that you're aware of?

>> I'm not.

>> Somebody else.

>> What do you mean, labeling?

>> Why, yes they are.

>> Chicago has some.

>> Yes, there's some in Chicago. There's some in New York. And there's a whole bunch starting up in Silicon Valley. But what I'm hearing from folks locally is there's not a lot down here that you're finding yet.

[ Inaudible ]

>> But also I can't think of they contract and hire a lot of engineers for -- on that spectrum.

>> So we're talking about an IT training program is one and then another one is the Navy is hiring people with computer science degrees? Because they've oftentimes will have no problem getting DOD clearance, smiley face. [Laughs]

So that's a plus. And we're going to see that as a side note. What was the name of it?

[ Inaudible ]

>> They are hiring a lot of our engineers that are on the spectrum.

>> Great, great. And that may especially for the DOD contracts or anybody who's not federal contracts, California and Colorado are in interesting positions aren't we, smiley face where it is now legal to smoke marijuana and related products, however that will bar you from getting DOD clearance.

So the people on the spectrum tend not to imbibe in alcohol and recreational materials so they also tend to be people who will be able to handle that stringent DO-J and DOD background clearance. There's a few in the bay area. We're going at that talk about what they look like. Oh, crud. It's frozen again. I don't

So we are experiencing technical difficulties. Please hold on. We're going to talk about -- let's see what I might be able to do -- oh, I'm so sorry, guys. We will get to this in just a second. Yes, we have a question. Fill the time [Laughs].

[ Inaudible ]

>> So the question is about mock interviewing, are there any good websites? I don't know of any. I'll be brutally honest, I'm sure there's some out there and I'm unaware. We tend to do a mix in our mock interviewing of straight up, you know, tell me about yourself kind of questions and tell me about what's on your resume-type questions. And we will also ask the behavioral interviewing questions.

And we explain to people the reason why behavioral interviewing questions are particularly difficult for people who are new job seekers are -- thank you, okay the magic has occurred. May [inaudible] making a sound, Ivan. Sorry [Laughs].

So the behavioral interviewing questions are hard because what they are dependent on is what did you do in the past? Well, if this is your first damn job, you don't have that past, right? So it's really difficult we teach kids what you can do is if they asking tell me about a time you met a significant challenge and you had to tell your boss you were about to fail or tell me about a time you were really stuck in school and you were not going to make a final.

So we help them translate and always, always, always ask the questions tell me about your biggest weakness. Right? Because that is always, you know, and I hate that people ask that question. But here's how we do it just so you know. We do the strengths/weakness blip that most strengths can also be seen as a weakness. So my strength is here's one, for example, is I will work doggedly on something until I'm finished -- that can be a weakness because sometimes it's hard for me to let go and say boom, it's done. So that's the kind of thing we typically look at and, again, lots of practice.

>> I thought of one person and they asked where do you see yourself in five years? He said not here [Laughs].

>> So that's a filtering issue. That's a filtering. And honestly, wouldn't most of us think that?

>> Yeah. Really.

>> Well, hell not here. And that's what exactly popped out of his mouth.

[ Inaudible ]

>> Exactly. Yes, I want to be working at McDonald's drive-thru window for the rest of my days.

So you probably heard that there are several programs up and coming of autism at work. So SAP which is a multinational software company in the ERP area which is employee -- see, I need more caffeine, this is the problem. Now I'm worried about that. So SAP, huge international company has an autism at work program. They're probably the first and biggest to do this.

And it came about because one of the kids of the COO in Germany is autistic. And so at a very high level they saw this challenge and they started working on it.

Microsoft and --^\* -- have started -- Visa, Walgreens, Google, Salesforce. The whole point of this is a couple things. One and we're going to talk about and see the underside of this and I think part of it is optics, right? Most companies in Silicon Valley certainly have a challenge with diversity smiley face. And so this is a way that we can say we may be totally screwed by not having any females in the board room but we're hiring a bunch of autistic people.

But at the same time, again, there are some real pros, right? We need to have a really diverse workforce. Everybody should be sitting at the table because we all bring something different. And Michael with his training today is to help you understand what people who are neurodiverse bring to the table.

So disability is probably the last ceiling to crack after religion, race, gender, sexual orientation. There are no quick-fixes because of all of this will rely on normalizing non-homogeny. We need to hire more women -- does that mean women fire fighters don't have the same standards as men? Well, if women are going to be in the workplace does that women can breast feed in board rooms? I don't know, does it?

What I'm saying here every conversation means there's 10 more, 20 more, 30 more until we've answered all the questions, right?

So why are people doing this? There are three reasons that I think people are starting to go into this autism at work-type programming. One is the pipeline and opportunity, the second is parents, and the third is optics.

Sorry.

Okay. So pipeline and opportunity. So this is frequently the public-facing side of the story, right? And what we hear first off. We realize that we could keep our open jobs filled as the company by training and hiring neurodiverse folks who are loyal and hard workers, right?

We see that we have open jobs, we see people who are really smart who want to come fill those jobs. We realize that they were really great employees that we were missing because of our interviewing and screening challenges. Because oftentimes these are people who may not do well in an interview and so we were discount them and that was a mistake.

So both of these are legitimate reasons to have an autism at work program. But there are potential challenges here as well.

So we want to think about the company's overall culture of inclusion. Is there potential for abuse?

Now, in our area -- and this may or may not be true down here -- there are a lot of jobs for people who are DOR clients at Safe way as courtesy clerks. If you've ever shopped at Safeway you've seen and you may have placed people.

On the surface there's nothing wrong with that. Yay, there's a job and benefits. There is a potential for abuse, though, most of us will realize. First off, they can be bullied. Their union reps often won't help them. It's very difficult for them to transfer to another department or to get more than 20 hours a week. So that they actually can earn enough income to live independently.

They are not trained on any other careers that might be open to other people who are not neurodiverse.

So, again, this is that discussion -- yay, job; hmm, not much of a career. So we want to be a little bit careful that we're not placing people nor the long haul in their first job especially if the company isn't going do look at them as an employee worthy of developing. Does that make sense?

I think that's one of the problems. Also the lack of promotion, lower salaries segmented kind of make me wince.

Parental pressure we talked about earlier. This is often an under current for the push to have these types of programs. This was the undercurrent at SAP. This is definitely part of the undercurrent at Google because let me tell you, there are a lot of people neurodiverse who work there as engineers and guess what? They're having kids who are also neurodiverse. They're seeing this as really a challenge.

Parents have kids, kids are neurodiverse. Parents are struggling. You find a way for them to struggle and they advocate within their own organizations. They're really trying to champion some of these programs. Again, this is a legitimate push, right? This is good. We want our parents to really champion and kind of, you know, have difficult conversations with their people in human resources and have difficult conversations with their C-level staff. But are there potential challenges?

So part of the challenge we've seen and we saw this in a couple companies up in Silicon Valley that there's two essential challenges. One is how much of the ocean are they trying to boil? What I mean by that is my company focuses very consciously on higher-functioning folks. The reason I did that is because I knew if I tried to serve everybody with autism with what we did, I would not be able to do any of it well because it's just too much of a bit -- too big of a chunk. I focused on what I knew, high-functioning autism and related challenges.

We've seen this in one company where they really sold a high-functioning autism program but then there were parents who had moderate-functioning autistic kids they wanted to get into the program and they didn't have the skills. They weren't able to work independently, they needed more hand over hand, more supported employment-type work -- not competitive employment.

Because the parents and company weren't vocational specialists, they didn't understand the difference between supportive employment models and competitive employment model. And because of that they wanted to have a hiring model where everybody could join in and it blew up. And I have to tell you, no matter what segment of what population you pick, someone will be mad at you. I guarantee it.

I get it all the time. I try to be smiling and happy about it, but it kind of breaks my heart. If I could fix it for everybody, I would. We have to make sure they fit into the proposed model. What kind of supports will be needed. What is this program going to look like?

Do these individuals need one-on-one long-term job coaching or light mentoring which you might see in something like competitive employment groups? And are the parents' vision in alignment with reality? Sometimes it isn't possible, right, given the laws of physics. There's not enough time in the day to make all that happen.

Any questions about this? Optics. Deep breath. As I've said before, I'm an old woman. I have been involved in tech for many, many years. I kind of know how this all works.

This one is the most troubling to me. There are several companies who have put a great effort in social media, travel, personnel to what essentially boils down to a couple dozen jobs across the country not just one location, right?

But they want to celebrate. Look, we hired 12 people on the spectrum, aren't we fabulous? We did such a great job and promise we're going to do more.

So the question I have, you know, is would you be saying those same words if you managed to hire 12 vets across the entire United States and you're a huge multinational company? Wouldn't that be a little embarrassing? Or if you managed to hire 12 people of color or 12 women, right? There's no parody. And so I get a little bit concerned that people -- oops, sorry about that -- people online, I just smushed the microphone. We have to be careful about how much celebrating we do and how much patting ourselves on the back and gee, aren't we swell? It's not to say we shouldn't celebrate every inroad, right? But we have to be careful about resting on our laurels.

Another challenge is that companies are often not so good at supporting and including these employees once they're hired. So there's not enough cultural shift in the organization to really be inclusive. And we certainly have seen this with people of color and with women, right?

I was in involved in engineering in the late '80s, early 90's in tech and very common for me to be the only woman in the room. I was written up on a performance review because I swore too much. Now, I walked into my manager's office and said look me in the eye and tell me I swear more than men. And he said no. And I said take this out of my effing review, right? And he did. But that really offended me.

So we've got a lot of work to do here, there's no doubt. And, again, I'm not saying these aren't good things and we shouldn't be doing them, but we have to be careful about saying we're there when we're not.

It will also or could also backfire. So we're not talking about hiring people who are lowering functioning who never read the newspaper, who don't spend every waking moment on Reddit, right? We're talking about really intelligent people and they know because we've taught them how to advocate.

So what I'm starting to see now and I have warned people leading these autism programs, I think they're being cajoled into celebrating too early and I've warned at last potential for backlash and we're starting to see it.

There was recently an online hiring event hosted by a well-known software company and it wasn't handled well. I think that's probably the easiest way to describe it. It wasn't well thought out, there was a lot of thrash and a lot of people logged in and were deeply disappointed.

And I went and told a couple people I think next time you need a little bit more thought about how you're going to run this because a lot of people felt really disenfranchised. And sure as heck a couple of weeks later there were a couple articles posted why this is why I don't support so-and-so's hiring initiative and you shouldn't either, right?

So there is going to be backlash. They have to be well-thought. You know, you have to do these well and you have to keep being humble and say we know there's more to do and we're working hard. Come join us.

There also have to be enough jobs, right? So this is one of the things we see as these program kick off and we have five jobs. That's really not going to do much of anything great on those five jobs -- yay, we'll help you get people in. Where's the next five and 15? We've got a lot of work to catch up.

So let's talk a little bit about the benefits of neurodiversity hiring. First off -- companies already there -- one in five employees has some sort of hidden disability. Do you think that's only in California or United States? That's a world health statistic. That's international, one out of five people. So needless to say it's probably higher in certain pockets [Laughs]. We might say it's one out of three, we could do duck, duck, goose and figure out how many people may have a disability. But it's clearly prevalent.

So companies are already dealing with it albeit badly if they don't understand what they're doing. And the people who may be neurodiverse may be the most loyal and best producers in the company. And companies we know are overlooking or losing some of the best talent out there if they're not aware of these challenges and dismissing these jumps and they often are jumps because of initial presentation or easily accommodated challenges as we talked about earlier.

And I believe that, again, this is at the heart of diversity and inclusion. And really what they should be saying is stop hiring yourself. Stop hiring people who look, talk, dress, and think like you. You need to hire people who are different.

We know the best teams and there is so much literature in this in organizational psychological, the very best teams are made up of people who are not all socially depth, heteronormative white men. And, again, in my neck of the woods that tends to be who you see and they went to Ivy League schools.

To Apple's point, think different is a model we should all embrace across the board for our companies to not only survive but thrive. That's the competitive edge is be highly diverse. They're really looking below the surface and looking at the talent not just the objects or the surface value.

So why should companies care? Because neurodiverse employees tend to have excellent retention, creative mind, low drama, also can meet 7% of our federal goals trying to do that. Also securing state funding which DOR can talk about. Also good optics.

And with additional support still in excellent return on investment. So some of these programs especially at the multinational company level do cost headcount, do cost real dollars to promote; but at the same time if you have a company in tech, for example, in the typical length of a person staying is two years and we know that in tech it costs anywhere from $70,000 to $150,000 real money to replace an individual, the company saves that money if the employee stays an additional two years. This is how ROI's are developed. So here's another vignette.

>> Arnav is a 23-year-old college graduate with a degree in computer science from UC Irvine. His social skills are not strong, he has difficulty with interviews and social skills and seem to be anxious. So the question is how do you approach job development with him, what do you recommend, what sort of job would you place him in, and be prepared to explain your rationale. And go ahead and think.

Somebody here made the snarky comment she would hand him off to her employment specialist, to Ashley.

All right, any ideas besides handing to Ashley?

Hot potato Ashley. So what kind of programs do you have available here in your reach? And every one of you might have different kind of programs. How might you handle this? You can see this person's potential, right? What would you do?

[ Inaudible ]

>> True, let's say networking just for giggles.

[ Inaudible ]

>> Poor Ashley. So we're talking about schedule A type jobs, government jobs. And tell me how you would work with him. Would you contact the interviewers and explain what the challenges are ahead of time? Or would you just hope and pray because of the State of California or the federal government that they don't care?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Right.

[ Inaudible ]

>> Fair enough. Do you think that it's possible that his poor social skills might get him in trouble down the road?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Put a job where he's not working with a bunch of other people.

>> Okay. Not where he's working with a bunch of other people so he can do most of his communication maybe in email or some other way. Yes?

>> Have that relationship with the employer but you can propose it's more of a [inaudible] kind of interview hands on.

>> That's a good idea. So maybe even give him, like, a small test where he had to demonstrate his programming skills or something like that? Excellent. Or come up with a network diagram? Yes?

[ Inaudible ]

>> So independent web developer. You mean so contract work?

>> Yes. For [inaudible] really well when he performs a job to create websites for people and [inaudible].

>> Okay. So one option would be an independent contractor working from home like on Up Work where he's selling his wares as an independent consultant. Let's see. So from that, we have I would work one-on-one with him on interviewing skills and talk to him about the job he likes. Finally, I would reach out to employers after working with him and getting him to the point where he's ready to meet the employer with a live mock interview. That's wonderful. One more comment.

Right, pitch an OJT, on-the-job training, right? So here's my answer. And, again, this is just with my experience, it's not necessarily the only way to go. Ideally he should be placed in a job that matches his education. So the first thing I won't want to do is say because he has poor social skills, all he can do is customer service. They overlook the computer background and say you'll be lucky to get any job.

Placing him in a lower level job will mean no way to support himself. He's never going to earn enough money. Likelihood of bored and poor work performance. He's not going to last there very long. And he's going to be a serial DOR client. He's the one who going to come in every couple years complaining about his horrible job maybe not without reason.

The longer he's away from that college degree and longer he's in customer service, the less likely he's going to get into computer science. He needs more social skills. And, you know, I don't know how this might pan out here but I would look for social skill classes for adults. You have really good universities which is always where I look. We run in our area a curriculum out of UCLA called PEERS. And we run it for young adults. It teaches people how to interact socially but all of those skills help them in every aspect of their working life. And again, Workplace Adaptable Program has a lot of information. Because it's run in a group we're helping lift the social skills up.

Because we want our people in those jobs, but at the same time we don't want them to fail out. And you're absolutely right, we can help them be successful by giving the employer, you know, some heads up, this is a person who has some difficulty with social communication -- I would still remediate. If possible, we want to build skills. We may not be able to cover it in terms of DOR funding, but we can certainly acknowledge that need exist just as if the person had severe depression, DOR would acknowledge that this person needs therapeutic help. So it's the same kind of thing. You had a comment, sir.

[ Inaudible ]

>> Absolutely. So the comment was about an internship or some low-barrier, low-stress kind of work. Absolutely. Because we really want the person to feel comfortable if at all possible. We love internships, they're great. The problem now with the tax code law, it's changed -- they must demonstrate educational benefit which means by and large, internships must happen before the end of your senior year. There are no legally internships past graduation.

So if you didn't happen to do that internship before you graduated, you're kind of SOL, which is unfortunate. There's one additional internship where they have to be paid. I'm not sure how it works. A lot of interns are slave labor, right? They are not getting paid, working really long hours. They weren't learning anything, just posting on Facebook constantly. And the IRS got a little [inaudible] about that so they stepped in.

So again -- yes?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Awesome. So those youth organizations are what's known as transition-aged youth organizations. Oftentimes will have skills-building classes. I know in the Bay Area there's several, lots of training opportunities. It means you have to look and stay in touch. Because these organizations come and go, they change, they morph, this kind of thing. But I would always say if you have some in's with people who you know work with this population, to always worth it I don't care how old a person is we can always learn more. And the social communication piece can be such a barrier that I don't think any of us really stop working on social communication whether we're neurodiverse or in your opinion.

>> The DOR has changed its mind through the years I've seen. And now we have the thought process it used to be get them a job, close them out, 90 days [inaudible]. But if someone came to me with this, if that's his goal, then that's my goal. So I think the DOR now has that $20 2020, make $20 an hour by 2020. So you would embrace that degree and goal and get him exactly what he wants.

>> So $20 2020 and that's the first time I've ever heard of that.

>> A couple years ago.

>> First time I've ever heard of it.

>> We're trying to get them a good job -- not a job, a career. Like I said, the old thought was get them a job and get them out.

>> I think there's areas in the state where that's not as prevalent as others. It also has to do with job markets. They're different in different parts of the state. In one area it might be much easier to get him in a real career where in others places it would be difficult.

I would totally agree and that's what I'm promoting is absolutely, my greatest joy is when somebody walks out of my office hopefully for the last time -- not that I don't want to see them again -- but I want to know they're successful and we launched them and they're on their way and have the skills they need to be successful.

So we're coming up 20 minutes to 4:00 p.m. and I just want to let everybody know looks like we are going to finish up soon or early -- not soon, I don't want you to get too excited here. But, again, if you have any questions or people want me to hang out and answer questions, I'm happy to do that.

So it's next section I want to go through, it is entirely possible as we move forward in the several years that you as professionals in this space may be asked to help a company start a program, right? And if you are asked that question, I want you to have at least a little bit of information so you know what you're looking at. Does that seem reasonable?

So helping new companies start. This next section just so you know is stripped somewhat from a presentation that I gave last month to the National Human Resources Association which is the big daddy of the human resources. People in HR are looking to start this programming. But it really works both ways. Doesn't matter who's starting the programs, it's essentially the same steps.

The first is to make an intentional commitment. So this means the company or a good segment of it is making an intentional commitment to hire neurodiverse individuals.

And the second step would be to connect with other companies so they're already there, already doing it.

The third is to find local partners of whom one of them should be vocation rehab.

Next step is to design or reuse onboarding and support models.

And the last step is to designate multiple pipelines for recruitment, not just DOR and I'll explain why because you'll miss some of those kids who are straight out of college and other really highly talented people. DOR's great but it's not the entire world.

So the first is to make an intentional commitment. This typically back in the days of change management when we were introducing all kinds of whacky new programming in tech, you always want to find an executive sponsor. So this is somebody usually at the C level or vice-president level at the minimum who will champion your effort. Somebody who will have your back. It's not skunk works, not under the radar. But typically something that if you are air quote "found out" to be doing it, you will be allowed to continue.

The problem with doing things without permission is there's too many people involved and could get hurt. Do everything above board. Usually a program like this would come out of diversity and inclusion but it could also be a business unit or geographical location.

The other thing to be conscious of is the small companies can do this. A little tiny mom and pop shop can have a neurodiversity program.

Some of the best successes are with small organizations. And there are hundreds of them. You were talking about the ones in Chicago -- most of those in Chicago are these same kind of small organizations.

So here's a case study of one that we just recently started. So there's this phenomenal store up in Berkeley called Berkeley Bowl. You know about it, there you go. It's a boutique organic grocery store. They have 27 different kinds of pears. It's overwhelming, it's so beautiful.

So the COO has an autistic son. And he's getting up there and will retire soon. And wants to do something really meaningful with his life. He's going to take this on and champion. He had a retention problem. The city next to Berkeley, Emeryville has a higher minimum wage by two bucks an hour than Berkeley. so Berkeley Bowl would hire and train people and they would go to the other city.

They kept losing their entry-level employees even though they had really great full benefits, a great company, great culture of inclusion -- after all it's Berkeley. They were really struggling. We worked with them and in five months we placed people from inception to getting the program up and running, five months, five people and we should have three more in the next few months. It's one a month. That's huge. As far as numbers go, that's not that great but it's one small company. Eight people?

I think the total number of people they have working there is 350 and that's everybody. It's a good chunk.

How did that happen? The dad reached out to me and heard about somebody well placed. We met with HR, explained the program, we did the training on the soft skills. Some of these were one-on-one, some were group and we on boarded and retained them as normal intake placement retention services.

And we are after the fact once these people are through retention, we're able to Berkeley Bowl as private consultants if they need, right?

So it's been really simple kind of in and out. It didn't take a lot of work. We had the programming in place. These are using all the things that are happening with DOR anyway. We put this together, got the right clients, did a little bit of training. And they're happy. They can have a career now.

There are people at Berkeley Bowl who have worked there for decades, moved up the ladder and they're happy.

Connect with others. This is one we see more than you will ever see only because in Silicon Valley there is this thing known as not invented here syndrome. And this means that every company feels that it is their absolute birth right to reinvent every flipping wheel that ever has to be produced. Oh really?

So Google, you know, won't talk to Facebook and Facebook's not talking to Microsoft. So hopefully over a period of time they'll start to realize how stupid they're behaving and they will actually start talking to one another. We encourage that, right?

Because even if you're going to do something very, very different, at least find out what the other guys are doing. At least learn from their mistakes. At least realize this is the kind of connections we should be making. Because there's lots to learn.

So there's a new consortium that has just started and here is the URL. And this consortium was actually started by S AP at Microsoft who are at the forefront.

So they are starting this, they've got HP, Ernst and Young. It's a group where they hope to have meetings once a year. And they're also available for online consultation. So if you join this group, if you follow this link, there's another link to email them, they'll reach out and help you, help companies with figuring out how to do this.

They also have put up a web page, much to their credit to all the companies who have these programs. And you can find out what kind of jobs are being hired for in all these different companies.

So this resource is probably better for the big boys, meaning the bigger companies. Sorry.

>> You talked earlier about sometimes companies, large companies may do [inaudible] have a certain kind of public image. But, like, when you think about this consortium, is it around an economic advantage that companies need more hiring or do you see they're more motivated by public image? What do you think's behind it?

>> Who knows what evil lurks? [Laughs] It's a hard question to answer. I'm an optimist but I know the world's going to hell but it will probably work out. It's hard for me to know.

I think in corporate life there's give and take. You have to walk a fine line. We can't have huge amounts of funding. There has to be a benefit and return on investment. I would like to believe and I think it's true, all of these people's hearts are in the right place. If I had to make one across the board comment, I would say I think they're a little naive in terms of some of the things that should be put in place and some of the long-term issues they may face, right?

And I just keep sitting around and, you know, as they learn one new thing that I told them a couple years ago, I get a phone call, oh, you were right. I just have to learn patience. It's hard sometimes. But no, they all have the absolute best intentions. And they making a difference, they really truly are. So I would say it doesn't hurt. It absolutely doesn't hurt to align yourself with these folks and so work with them and find out what they doing always.

Find local partners. So this is another huge part. We know DOR is great for funding, pipeline, and possibly training. DOR can fund some of these programs. They have in the past. And hopefully they will continue to do so in the future.

I am not sure of the mechanisms of how that happens, but there is magic apparently that sometimes happens at the certainly well above my pay grade level that some of these programs actually get some funding to run these programs.

So I would say always, if you're not part of DOR, you want to engage DOR.

Local neurodiversity experts. So this is one of those things where I think people were a little bit naive, this they didn't have local experts that they could count on in their geographic location who were available for whether it's therapy or coaching or other types of expertise, I think you always need to have some people in the area.

So, for example, if you were working with people who were visually impaired and you didn't know where you could find assistive tech, how can you serve that population? You can't. You have to know the local experts, right? Or at least know where to find them. So this is kind of that same thing, you have to understand what support services are around that population. Did that answer the question? Okay.

Also, the local neurodiversity experts can help companies find qualified candidates because they're receiving services from them, right? As well establish specialized agencies are a good source of information that companies may need down the road. Colleges and universities may be very good programs particularly for embedded programs. Cal State East Bay has their autism program. It's embedded for autistic students. First you have to apply and get accepted to the universities, and then for additional fee and it's not all that much you have your housing and every else including things like executive functions and socializing in a special setting -- a dormitory -- for these autistic students. So they're getting all kinds of additional supports and those kids hopefully will transfer right out into neurodiversity hiring program. That would be ideal.

What I would love to see happen is Cal State East Bay linking up to an organization like consortium, there should be a feed, direct line to make it easy for everybody. It's a good place to find potential employees.

So why no one organization can do it all? DOR does not have soup to nuts services. And it's not meant to, right? That's really not DOR's goal.

You know, DOR can have therapists on staff. I don't know if they do down here. There are certain types of services that are always going to be outside, though. And so DOR should be able to be one of the pipelines but have should be others as well.

Local experts may not have expertise. I've seen this where we have people who are absolutely specialists and highly acknowledgeable about autism and neurodiversity but have no idea how business works, how hard it is to get a job. They expert on understanding autistic clients, they don't know how to get them jobs.

Colleges and universities in my opinion don't typically have a handle on how to get autistic students jobs.

Colleges are great feeders, but they do not understand oftentimes what companies need -- that's a huge breakdown, by the way.

Did you know -- side note -- colleges comp science programs in colleges do not teach program management at all? Program management, which is one of the fundamental things you need to do as a software development person, you need to understand how you get through a project. It's not taught anyplace that I could find even at the top universities. And yet you're expected to somehow magically learn that on your own.

Distance learning programs, there's a few of fees, Line connect is one Google's using. Even if they're nonprofit, they're still very expensive. Which means that, you know, nonprofit's one of those things you can kind of jiggle with. Somebody's making a lot of money. And people may or may not be getting jobs, I don't know.

Create a -- yes?

>> Career centers for doing that kind of job, they would be good partners for the whole program and the [inaudible] on-the-job training [inaudible] certain -- we had a program breaking barriers San Diego which [inaudible] disabilities and getting them jobs, things like that.

>> Awesome.

>> There are programs [inaudible] initiatives we have that in our office, too. So our whole focus in the career center is a broad approach -- getting all the potential job seekers and matched up with employers.

>> That's awesome. And that's really what it's going to take is many, many, many different programs to get people employed so this becomes less of a challenge overall. That's excellent. And then he has to leave. Thank you so much. Nice meeting you.

All right. So creating an onboarding or [inaudible] model. So some organizations like SAP and Microsoft have developed really extensive training programs. SAP has a six-week program. They offer it most frequently in the Pennsylvania area outside of Philadelphia. And this program is designed to teach autistic college graduates how to be in the workplace and the SAP business environments.

People may go through this, DOR sometimes pays for it, the local vocational rehab pays for it, sometimes you can get people from California out to that program. The thing that's really interesting to me is that this six-week program there's no guarantee of employment at the end.

So you go through this huge training and potentially get a job but not necessarily.

There is a couple programs like this, Microsoft also has one. I believe there's is three weeks that you can go through. And you may be offered a job at the end. Mostly they offer that in Seattle. There's one locally in Silicon Valley through Expandability Good Will. And I believe it is four week, I can't exactly remember. Four weeks. And it training on, again, presentation skills, Excel skills, data science skills. People go through this program and the goal is that expandability will find them a job, help them find a job.

If they find a job within two years, then the client ends up paying back part of the funding to Expandability.

So if you're a DOR client and entering into this program -- let me get this straight -- yes, if you're entering into this as a DOR client, then you will pay once you get employed $4,500 over a period of two years after hire.

If you come in off the street, you will pay an additional $4,500 to participate in the programming and then also pay $4,500 after hire.

So some of these get a little bit in my mind little bit touchy about how they being funded. Sometimes companies who are taking on these clients will also pay, like, a finder's fee as well.

So I'll keep my opinions to myself on that.

But, you know, people are looking at different models on how to fund them. And larger organizations are looking for bigger chunks, I think.

>> A lot of up-front money?

>> It's a lot of up-front money. On top of that, one of the challenges I have is even if you find your own job in those two years, you will still owe that $4,500.

[ Inaudible ]

>> I agree. Agree. Yeah, I think we have to be careful, right? I think we have to be careful. That's my point. Because some of these, you know, that's not good optics to me. And, you know, I want to believe and I want to see the jobs, you know? And I want people to make so much money that's a pittance and they don't care. At the same time it is expensive. .

I'll be brutally honest, we have been a DOR vendor for five years, I've lost $300,000 just on DOR.

>> What do you mean lost?

>> By funding a full-time employee and, you know, her rate is her rate plus a half again as much for the overhead, right? So we call that a fully burdened cost. So if I pay her $50,000, she's actually costing the company $75,000. That's a fully burdened cost. So the amount of money I've put out in terms of salary versus the amount of money I've brought in.

That's a lot of a donation to the State of California. A lot of money. Over, you know, five years.

So I do it because it's important to me, but it is very expensive to run this kind of programming especially in a place like San Diego, especially in, you know, some of the high-cost areas. It's big bucks.

So, you know, that's part of the reason people feel compelled to generate income, but at the same time it can backfire, right?

So the support. What kind of support can the company provide? Employee resource groups, outside agencies, vendor benefits. One of the things we've recently signed with Microsoft is we're actually a vendor to Microsoft. So anybody's who's having challenges who's neurodiverse in the San Francisco area can be referred to us and Microsoft will pay for our services, for therapy, coaching. Which is great. We're in the process of getting the same thing in place with SAP because they need specialized services in plain old coaching. Just in therapy they know they can make a call and get help quickly.

Not all companies are good fits for this type of program. You really have to think it through. It really must be an inclusive company or the employee may be bullied. And this does happen, it happens with anybody, right? People get bullied at work -- women, people of color, autistic people get bullied. We're not always nice people, sadly.

So you want to make sure the company you're dealing with really is that kind of yes, we're doing our best and we'll probably screw up and that's okay because we'll keep trying harder.

Employees will have new managers over time. We've seen this with SAP. One person had a great manager but then he got reorged and the new manager had no idea what he was talking about. Can they get training?

>> Parent mentors are not always good fits. My kids got autism, I'd make a great mentor. Just because you have an 8-year-old with autism, doesn't mean you'll be good working with a 26-year-old. In fact, it be belittled to a 26-year-old. You have to be a little bit careful with that.

Onboarding and employee resource groups are really important ways for autistic people to find each other. They can great little groups of people to hang out.

HR must understand that these individuals may need different types of support than regular employees assistant programs. That was also something I heard we have EA P's -- have any of you ever accessed services through an employee assistance program? How was it?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Okay. It's not very -- exactly. So navigating the system is challenging, that's number one. Number two and this sound kind of brutal but I think sometimes it's true but some of the people who offer resources are not always the greatest clinicians. I've had -- keep my thoughts to myself usually -- I've run into a couple people who did EAP's, they were less than helpful; they were damaging. I would really want to be careful sending somebody to someone who wasn't really qualified.

Designate multiple pipelines. Suddenly everybody hears about it and they're overwhelmed.

I think that's what happened with that virtual hiring event, they didn't realize so many people were going to log in. The moderators kept saying send your resume here. There's pent up need, huge demand. I recommend one email address. Don't have multiple people answer or you're going to have inconsistencies in the answers.

Recommend having an FAQ on your website. If you're going to do this, it needs to really be present. And you need to have an FAQ how do people get a hold of you. So we want to make sure that people are really consistent about making sure everybody has access.

And the pipeline, again, should be a mix of vocational rehab, local agencies, local colleges and universities.

Why not one pipeline? Diversity. And I really think there is no one pipeline that works in every situation. Facebook just recently had a hiring event up in Silicon Valley. And they had decided this they were only going to take clients from department of rehab who were current DOR clients.

Well, one of the offices in our area, some of the clients had been waiting over nine months to get in. And these are people who might be perfect for those jobs. Plus, they're clients who for whatever reason decided not to become DOR clients. One of them was my son and I could not put him up for this job. And it was really frustrating. It's like is that how this should work? I don't think so.

And I understand that this was one program and they were trying to get, you know, these positions filled. But, you know, it can be difficult.

There's too many people who won't get in, you know? That's really the bottom line. I think it's a disservice to the company. Because really at the end of the day it's not just about filling DOR slots, it's about getting the right people for the job into the company so we can maintain that relationship over time, right?

And the -- yes?

>> [ Inaudible ] help pay for the accommodation [inaudible] to share the cost.

>> That's true. That's very true.

[ Inaudible ]

>> We'll get some funding. Good point. The autistic community is a community. And this is really important. Optics are important for families and for adults on the spectrum. There will be backlash, again, if this isn't handled well. Not for us, without us is a common statement made by people on the spectrum -- must be an open door policy.

>> What do you mean by open door?

>> I mean open door in that people on the spectrum want to be part of the larger discussion, right? They don't want necessarily -- and who would -- for people on the outside to come in and set up a special program just for them that they have no input into. Right?

I mean, it really should -- yeah. We're going to pass this. Because we're all tired. I'm tired.

So I'm going to get to the additional resources. So you all know about the Job Accommodation Network I'm sure you all have it bookmarked 15 different ways. They really have good information. I love it.

I actually give -- this is funny, Kim will appreciate this -- when I hear from teachers in universities about how we're spoiling kids with accommodations and you'll never get those in the workplace, I love to print these out and say this is actually an ADA [Laughs] so kids can get these in the workplace so you can stop complaining now and let him have extra time for a test.

Another one that I think is really important is the autistic self-advocacy network. Has anybody here heard of this one? This is the go-to. So I love this organization. This is where not for us, without us comes from. And I think it's really important.

This is a very thoughtful and kind of radical group of people. All of whom are autistic. And I don't say people are autism, that I refer to autistic people. That is because ANSAN says call us autistic, not people with autism. And I have taken no small amount of grief in writing papers for using that language because that is not the language that's preferred by those in counseling and PhD's whereas people with, they want to be called autistic people. So by God, I'm going to call them autistic people. But that's a really good organization.

I like Autism Society. They focus more on younger kids. They have interesting stuff and are all over the country.

You'll note Autism Speaks and for a reason because they have been somewhat controversial in the autistic community, mainly because of what I had said earlier today about this is the epidemic we need to fix it. That is really wrangled folks on the spectrum. They do not like that messaging. Autism Speaks is trying in some small fashion so rectify and remedy that. They have at least one person on their board who is autistic. But the damage goes pretty deep. And they do have some good resources.

>> A lot of parallels with deaf culture.

>> Oh gosh, yes, absolutely. And I've been told that. And yeah, it's very much -- it's very much the same thing.

>> Where are we going?

>> You had a comment? Sorry [Laughs]. Yes ma'am, you had a comment?

[ Inaudible ]

>> If possible, yes. I mean, absolutely -- that's the ideal is that we would want to see that the training actually isn't just the onboarding for the folks on the spectrum but it should be part of the diversity inclusion programming that I hope that every employee gets before they start working at a company about this is our culture of inclusion and this is how we treat people, and this is how we behave in this company. Right?

And you will see people in our company who are LGBTQ who are, you know, who have physical disabilities, who may have mental health issues, I want all of that on the table. And, you know, this is who we are, we believe in this. And I think especially with the inclusion or the diversity training, having that training goes so much further than anything else a company can do is to normalize it.

Here's a person who has turrets syndrome. And to be able to talk about it. And, like, make it normal. You know? So if John who has turrets comes into a meeting and his tic's get distracting says I got to go and everybody knows that's okay. We have to have this conversation and really make them part of the culture, that's really key.

So resources on Amazon. CEO of Self, Executive Functioning Workbook. Workplace Adaptabilities Program. It's meant to run in groups, that's why I published it. We're only one tiny agency in one tiny niche in the country. I believe this is valuable information. I'd love to see DOR and programs in colleges and maybe even in high schools running this if they have enough people on the spectrum who are neurodiverse. I think it's worth it, right, to help people learn these skills early on.

We also have another program which is LifeLaunch, independent living skills training. Very similar. Everything from how to fill out a W2 to how to keep your pantry stocked so you're never starving, things we hope every 18-year-old would know but they don't.

We tend to see some of our clients fall apart at work because their home life is falling apart because they don't know how to organize themselves, they keep forgetting to pay their bills, no food at home.

And then PEERS available for purchase through UCLA. You could be running these programs in an educational setting, DOR setting, wherever, to really pull this together and help these people.

And if you need soothing words, there's my email.

There's another paper here that I published earlier this year. We got some funding through the EDD to help write this. And this was sort of a microstudy of neurodiverse people and how they were being addressed. Canaries in the Coal mine. And that's it. How many words was that? All right, any questions from our dear folks still online? Thank you first for hanging in there. 21 of you still logged in. Holy cow.

Thank you, folks. So fabulous. Thank you. Awesome, thank you. You guys are lovely. Thank you so much for participating. All of this is going to be on their site here in the next couple -- we'll probably not sooner than Monday. Yeah, probably a couple of days to do that. Couple days.

Anyhow, thank you, everyone, for logging in. If you need anything, that's my boss -- hi, Shawna. If you need anything, let me know. I will not be manning my email. I plan on making full use of San Diego's beautiful beaches.

>> I really appreciate you giving the presentation. Again, she did this on her own money and time. I really appreciate all this information. It's really helpful for everyone here in San Diego.

>> You're very welcome. Why do we do this work? Do we do it to get work? No, we do it because we love it and we want to make a difference. And that's why I do it, obviously. Yeah, it would be nice to retire someday [Laughs] but in the meantime like I say, had you guys been in Fresno, I wouldn't be here. There's nothing fun to do there. San Diego has fabulous beaches.

Thank you guys.