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for AXIA PD SG 2026



AUTISM & IDENTITY

Knowing who you are and why that matters





01 why talk about identity

02 what is identity

03 Autistic identity

04 Making sense of your autistic self

05 Identity exploration tools

01

OUR IDENTITY SHAPES US



Stability, direction, self-awareness
Better quality of life & well-being
Fitting in and diagnosis



02

IDENTITY THEORIES

Each serves its purpose

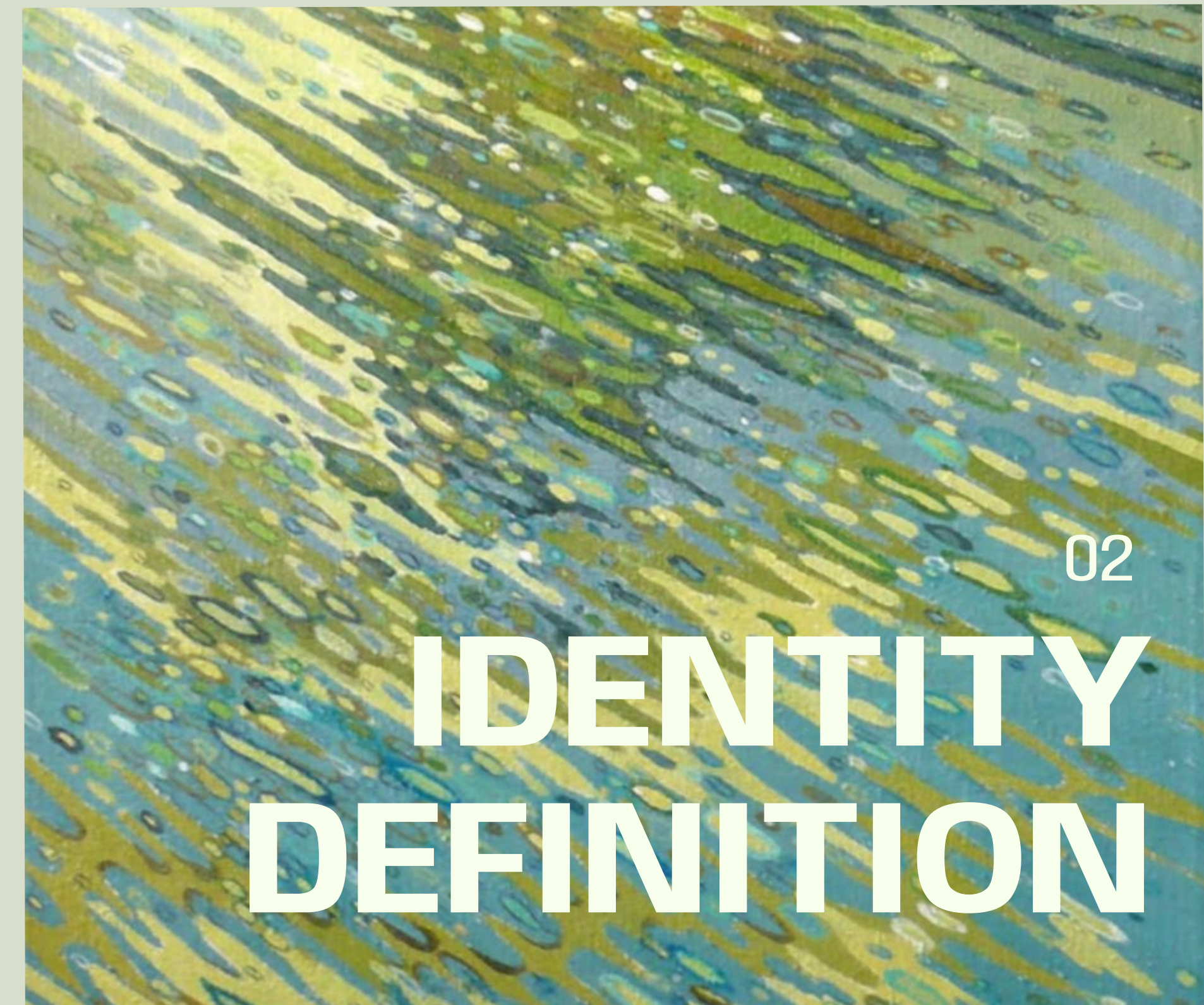
Personal
Social
Narrative
Occupational



*"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar.
This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice
replied, rather shyly, "I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I
know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have
been changed several times since then."*

*Lewis Carroll
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Complex
Dynamic and cumulative
Who am I vs Who I want to be



02

**IDENTITY
DEFINITION**



02 SOCIAL IDENTITY

**Who am I vs
Who I want to be vs
Who others see me to be**

Belonging, purpose,
identity development

02
**CONTEXT
CAKE**



Personal features

behaviour, gender,
communication style,
sensory needs...

Inherent features

nationality, genetics...



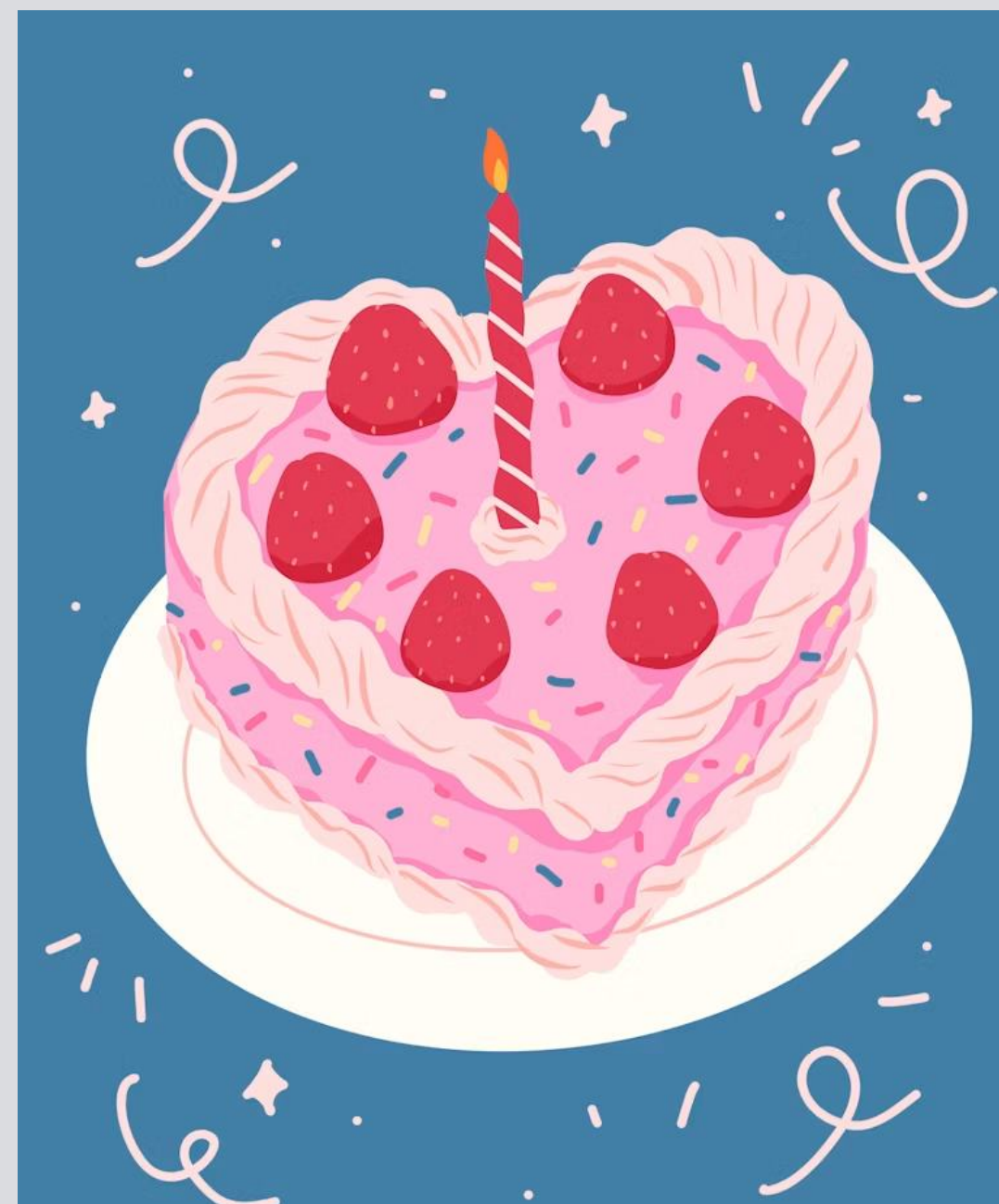
Micro

social, professional,
educational...

External environments

Macro

culture, government,
services...



Everyone's cake
is different ♡

03

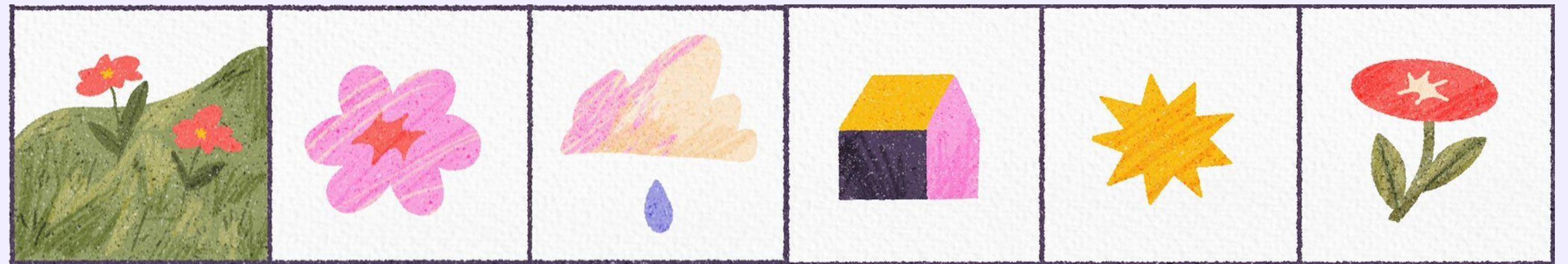
AUTISTIC IDENTITY

Is it different?



“ I've lived with myself for long enough to know I have got lots of advantages that other people haven't got ^[6]

Framework built on the majority neurotype
Who am I vs Who I want to be vs
Who others see me to be – different overlaps





Making choices from the choices we have:
choices and opportunities are rooted in privilege

03

MASKING

Suppressing self

Interfering with identity

Safety, avoiding judgement

“ it ends up being that you don't realize where your boundaries can be because no one has really taught you- you are allowed to set boundaries in certain places, and you don't have to do certain things with people ^[16]



UNMASKING

Not as straightforward

Who's responsible?

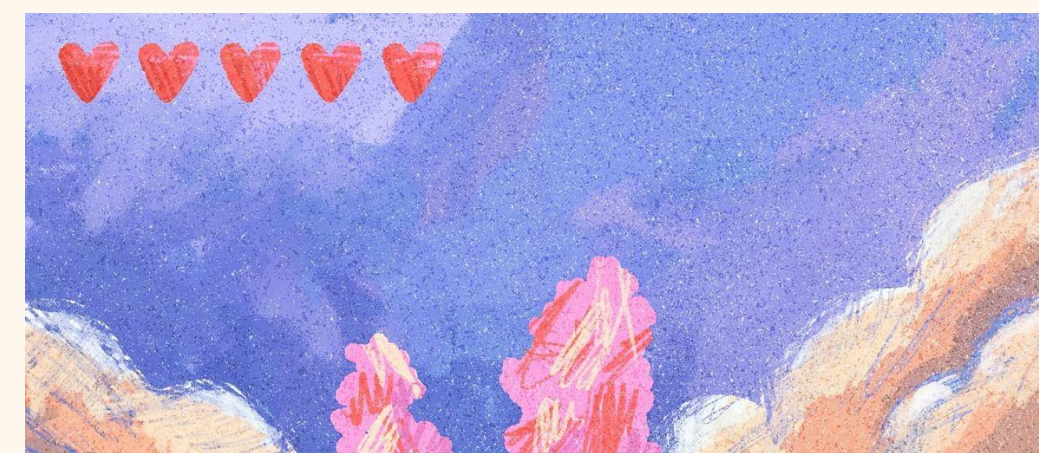
Mask as part of self

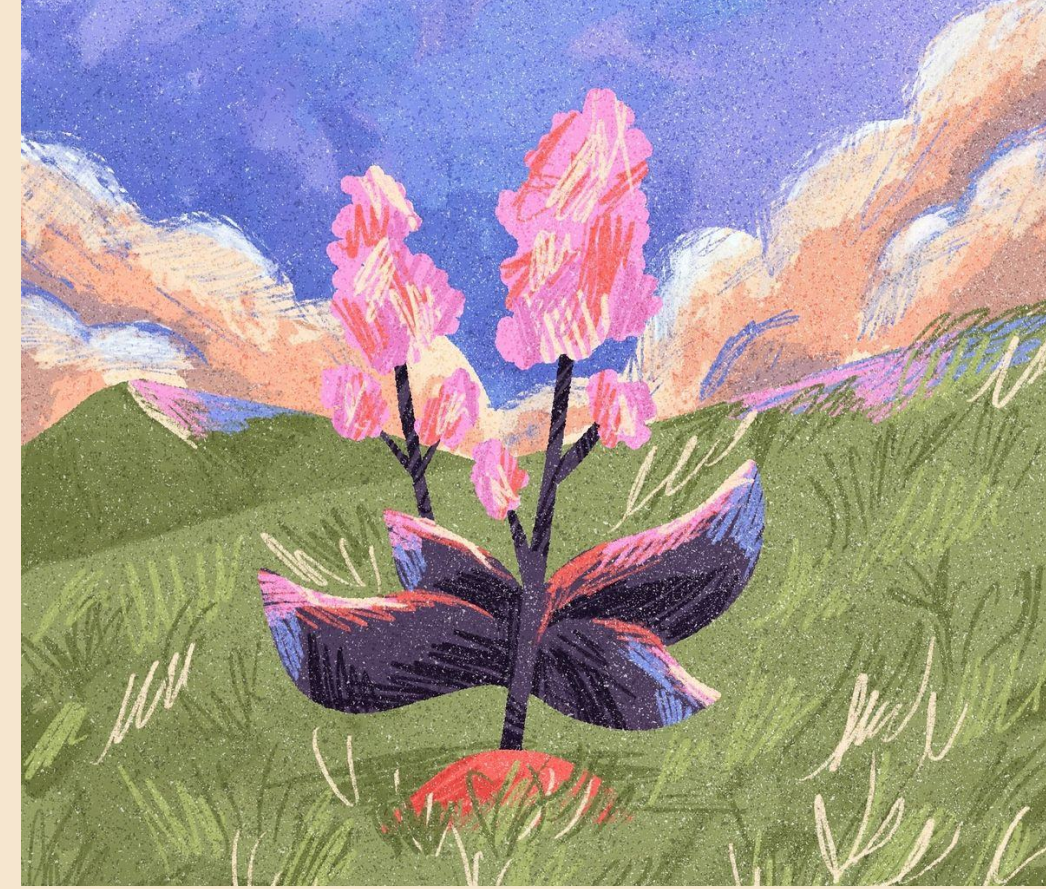
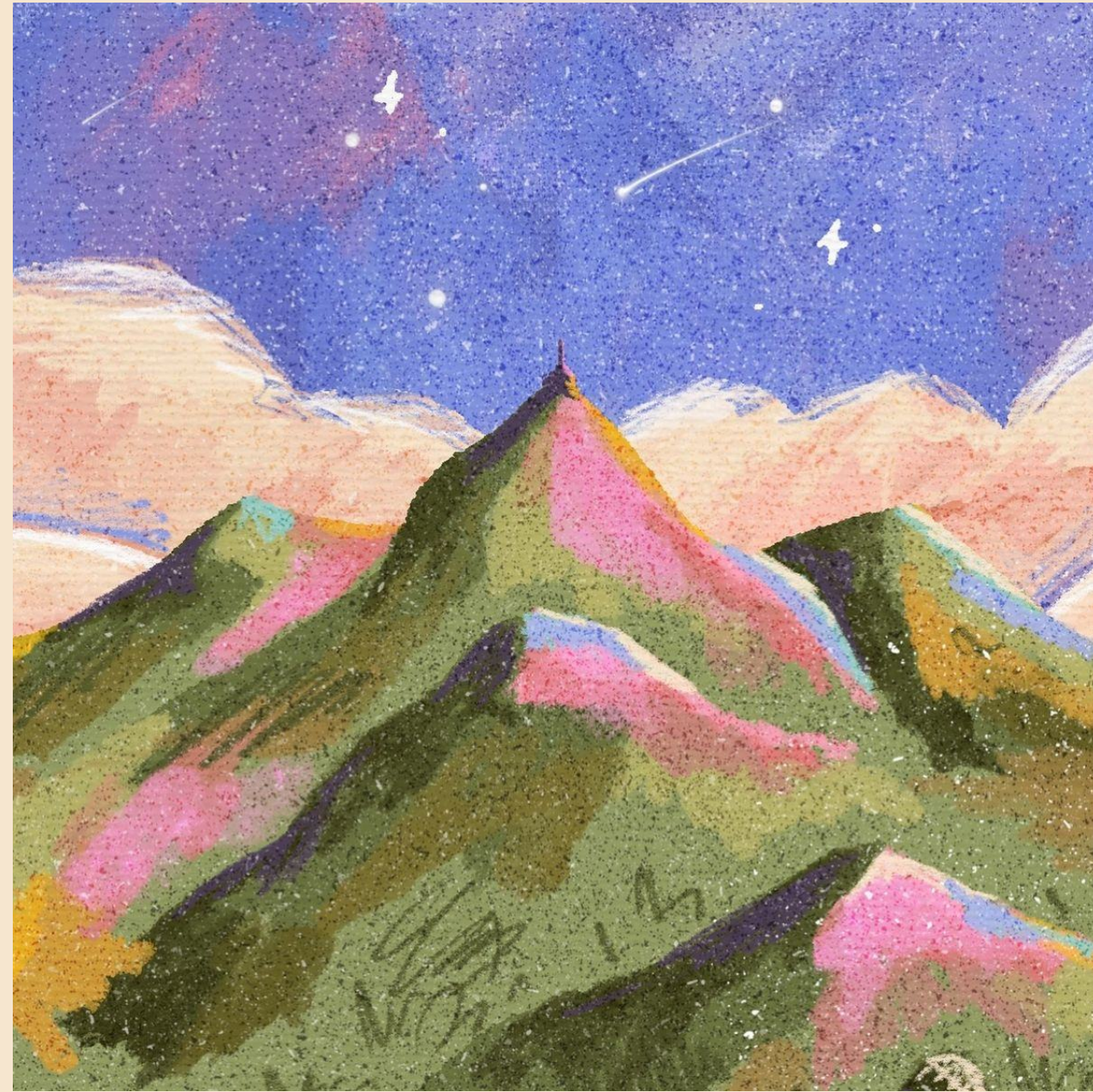


“...before I was diagnosed, you have words thrown around like lazy or a fussy eater or delicate, shy, quiet... they're the sort of adjectives that assume I had a choice in that. I wasn't being fussy. I wasn't being lazy. I was exhausted. [16]

03 **DIAGNOSIS**

Explanation, making sense of self
New lens, clarity
Identity confusion





“ I feel more confident and comfortable in my own identity, which allows me to accept the things I have difficulty with, and appreciate the things I am good at [14]

When I got diagnosed, everything started to fall into place [4]





Knowledge & understanding
What matters & brings joy
Self-determination & acceptance

04 **MAKING SENSE OF YOUR AUTISTIC SELF**



ADVOCACY = disclosure + education + request

Disclosure ladder



I am autistic

I am neurodivergent

My brain processes information differently

I can miss hints or cues at times

I tend to take things literally

I struggle processing verbal instructions

I am sensitive to noise

I struggle with remembering details



⁰⁵ IDENTITY EXPLORATION TOOLS

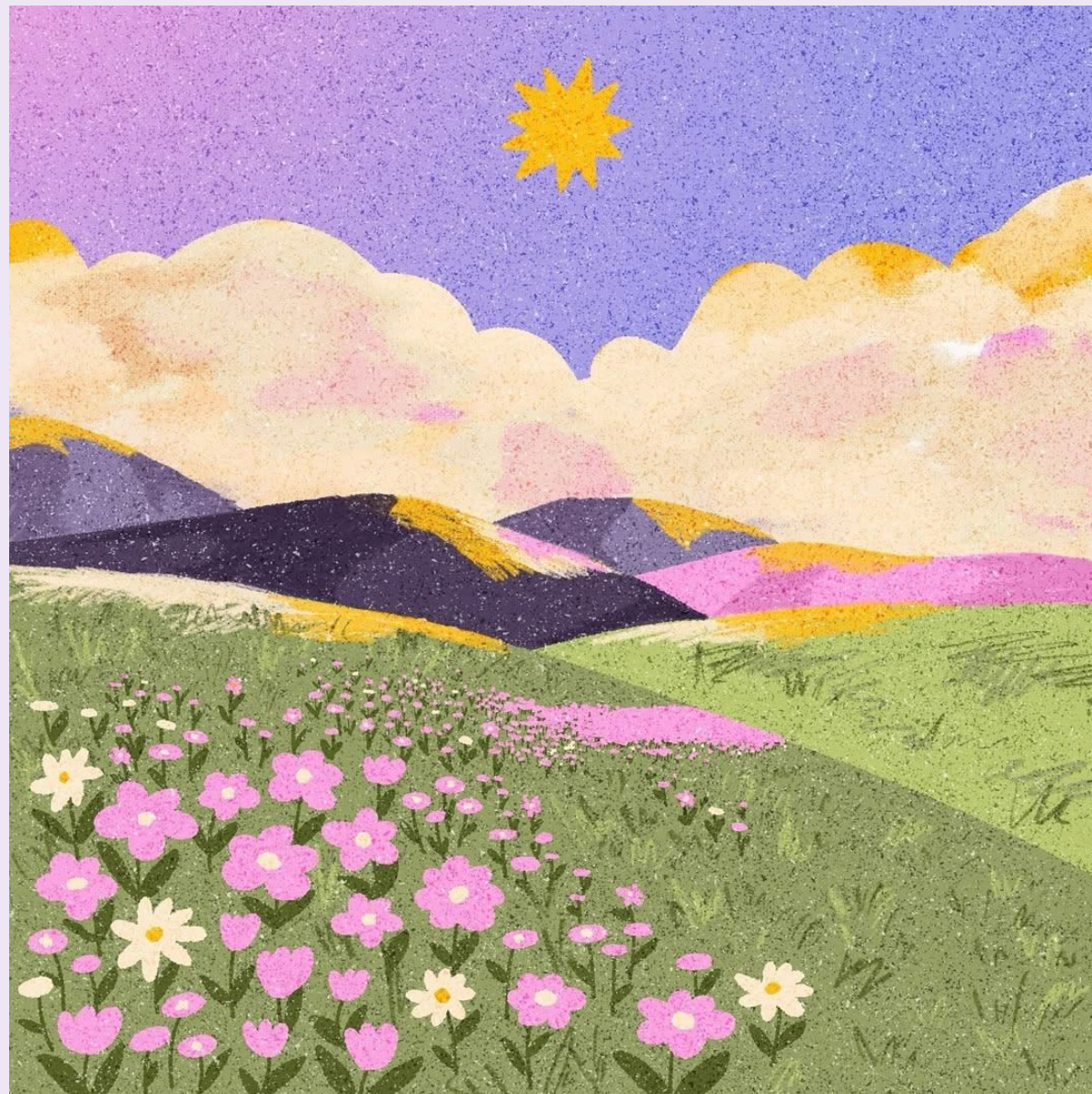
05

GET CURIOUS

Values and beliefs

Interests

Who you're not



DOING

What I do to regulate,
express, restore

BEING

Autistic ways of thinking,
feeling, sensing

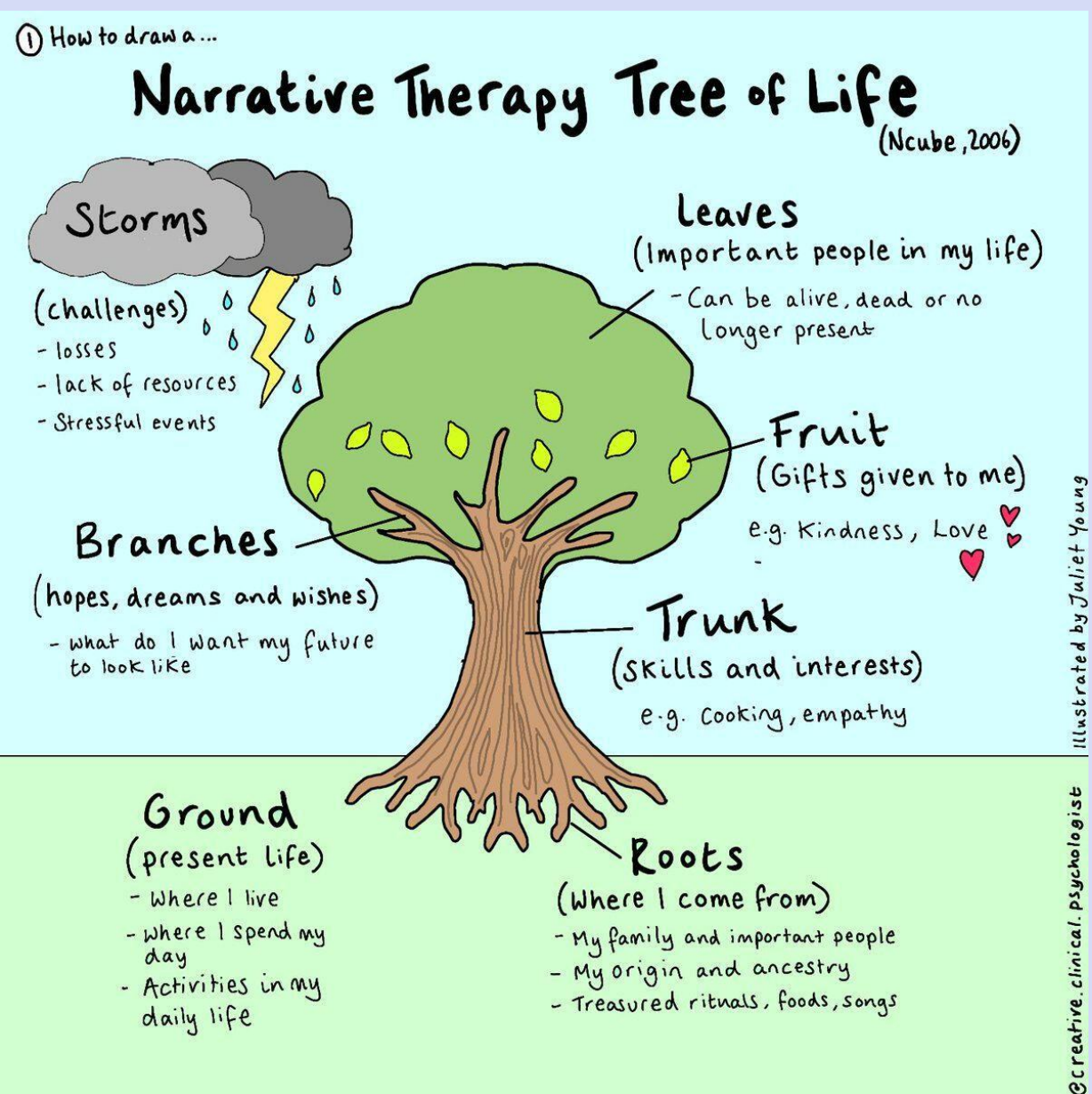
BELONGING

Chosen circle,
right environment

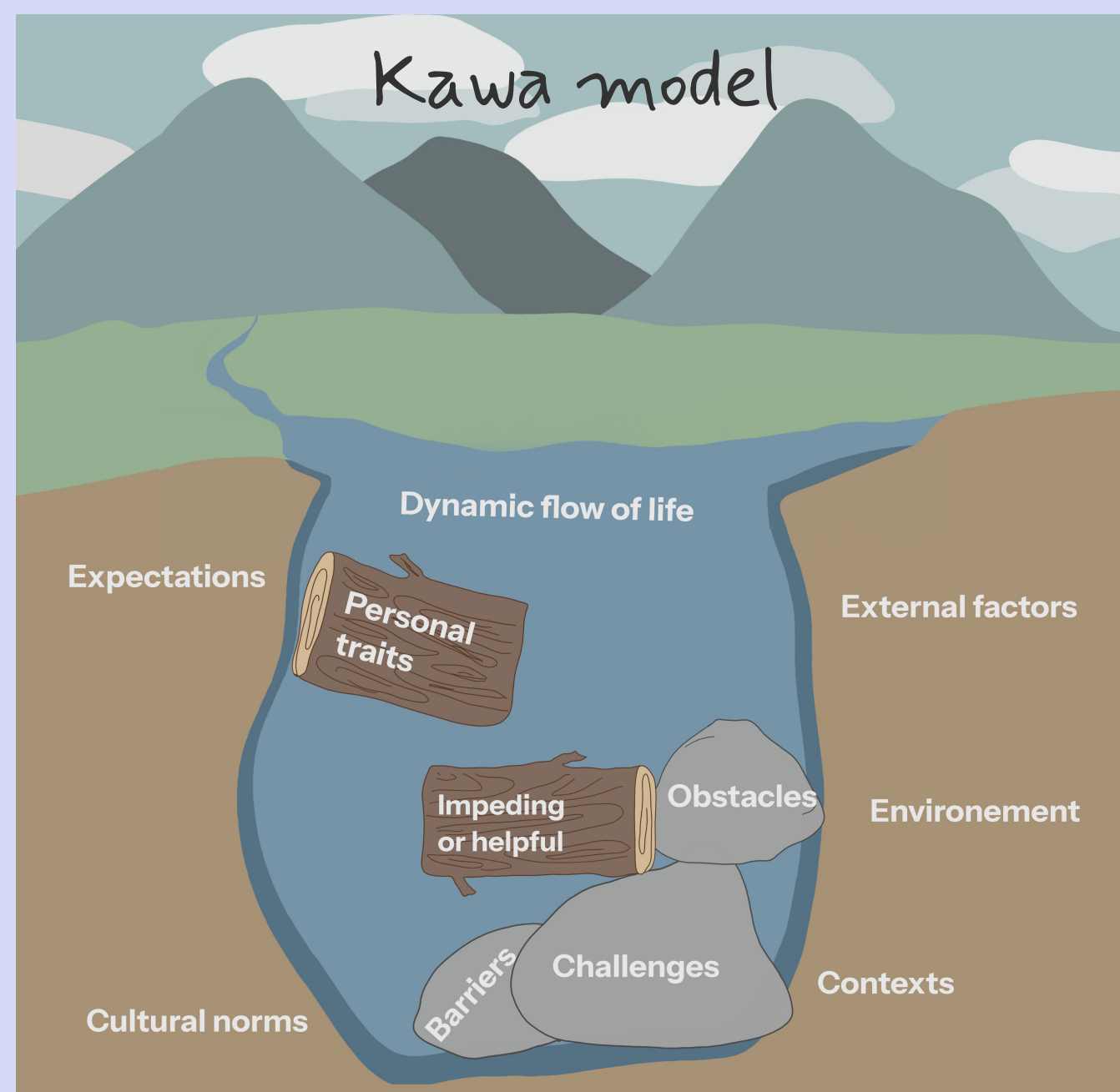
BECOMING

Authentic growth
without pressure





05 GET CREATIVE CREATIVE



05

STEAL

like an artist





Final thoughts

Change is inevitable

What do you need

Minimise pressure on yourself

Permission to go at your own pace



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