The background features a light cream color with four large, overlapping, rounded shapes in pink, teal, purple, and orange. Each shape contains a black line-art illustration of a branch with leaves or buds. The pink shape is in the top left, teal in the top right, purple in the bottom left, and orange in the bottom right.

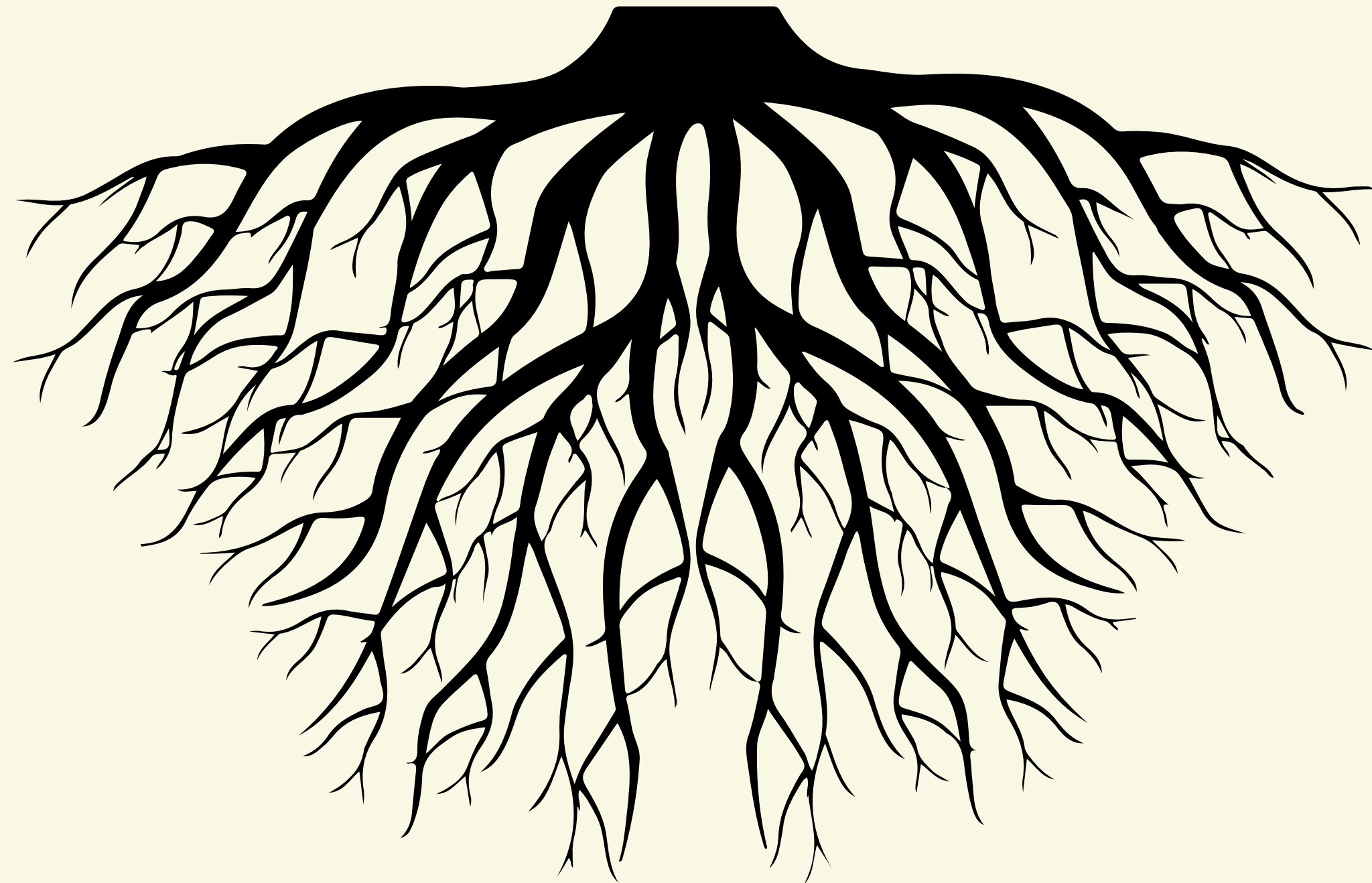
Moving Beyond Illness: Embracing Neurodiversity in the Homelessness Response System Through Lived Expertise

July 2024

Daniel Soucy

Research Analyst and Lived Expert

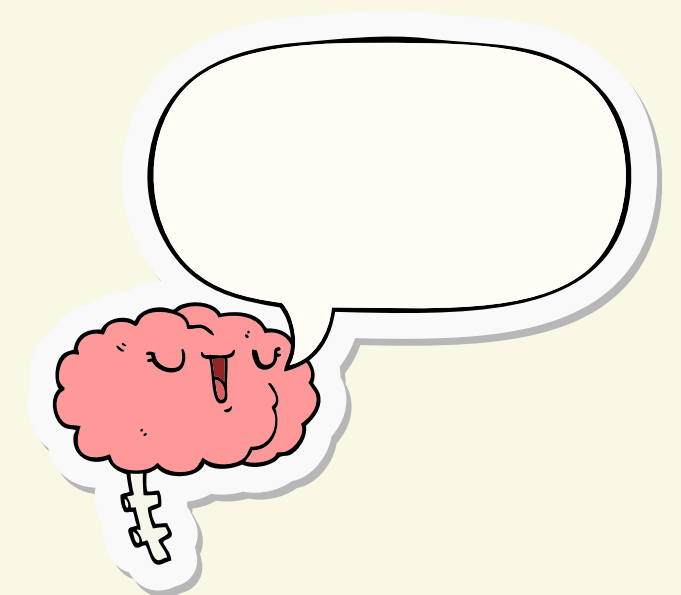
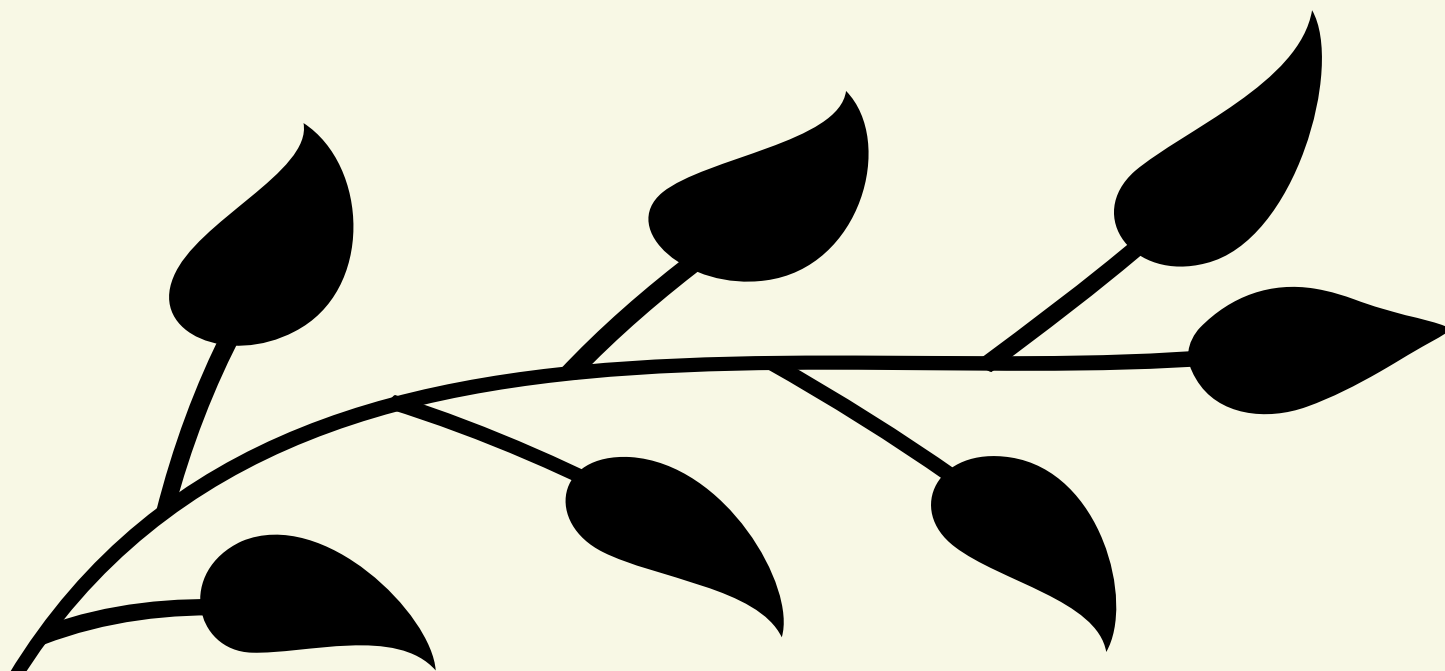
Where Am I Coming From?



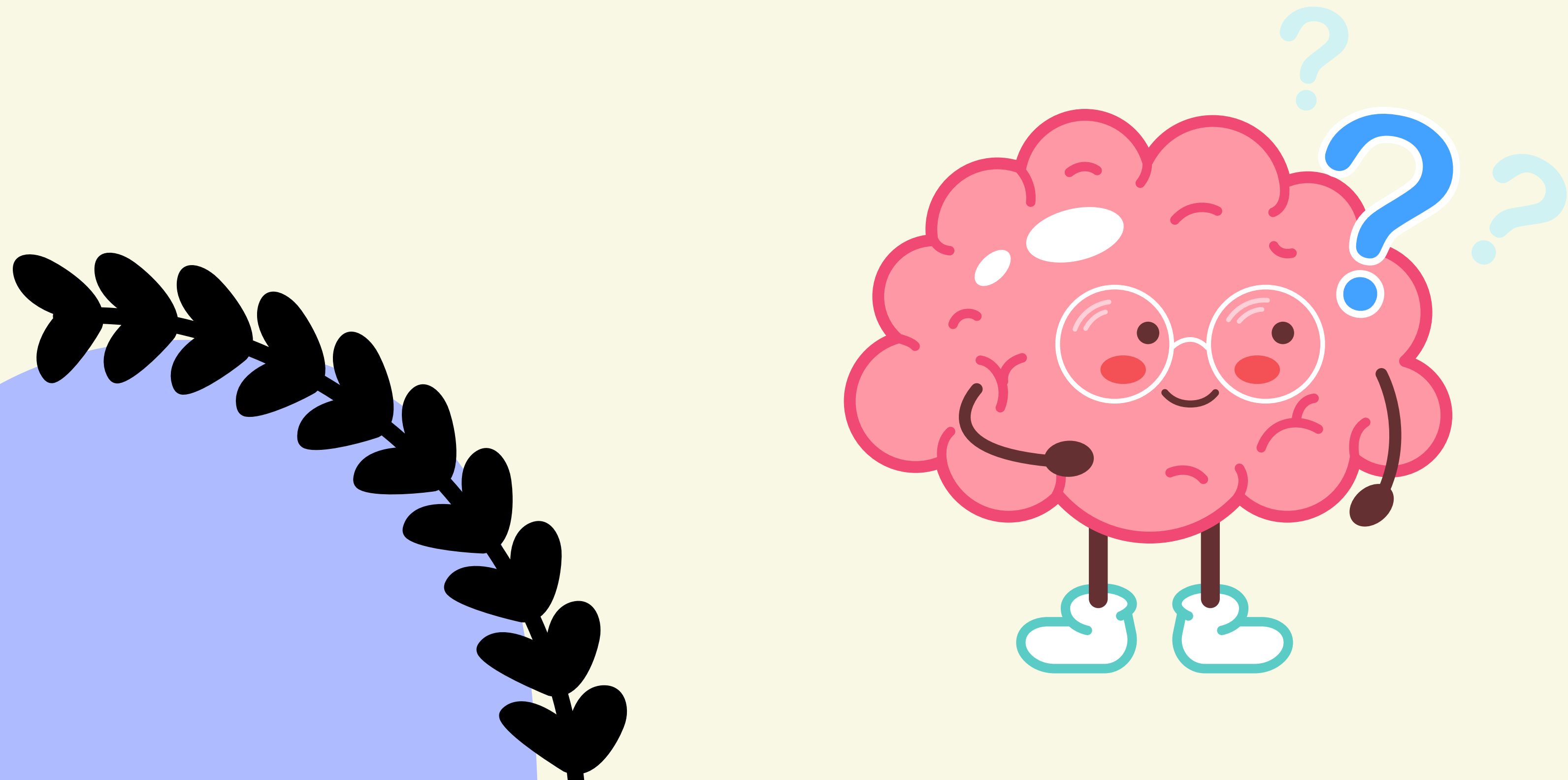
“Neurodiversity”

Who's Voices Do We Hear?

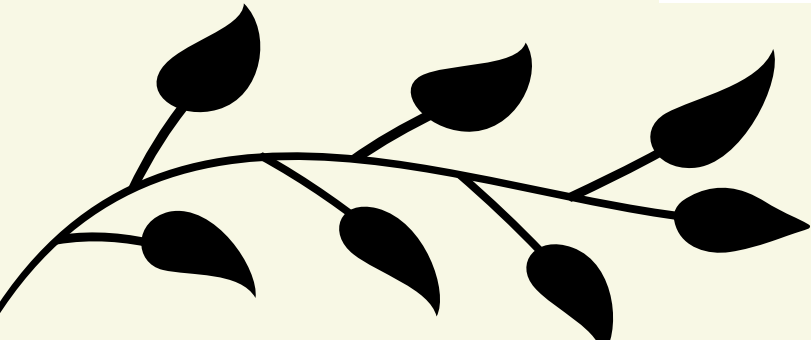
- 90% of news articles about homelessness in San Francisco quoted men as “experts.”
- 70% of quoted experts are white men.
- 39% of articles referenced lived expert's perspectives BUT ONLY 17% of direct quotes were their voices.
- Mental differences are consistently assumed to be disorders.
- Very little attention in media (14%) on successful outcomes or positive experiences of neurodiverse people.
- In reality, 95 percent of people with schizophrenia will not commit violence. They are 14x MORE likely to be the victim of a violent crime.



Why Does This Matter?

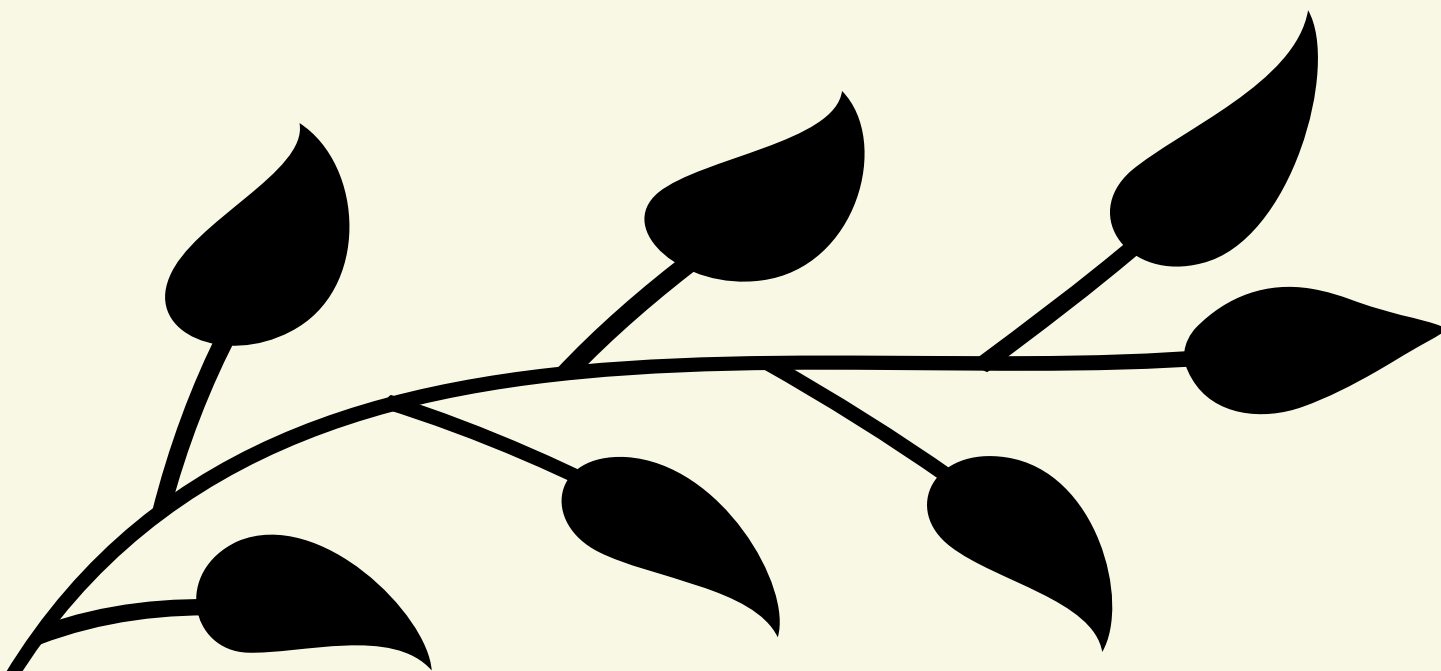


There is A LOT of complexity in how people think about and frame their own experiences of mental....



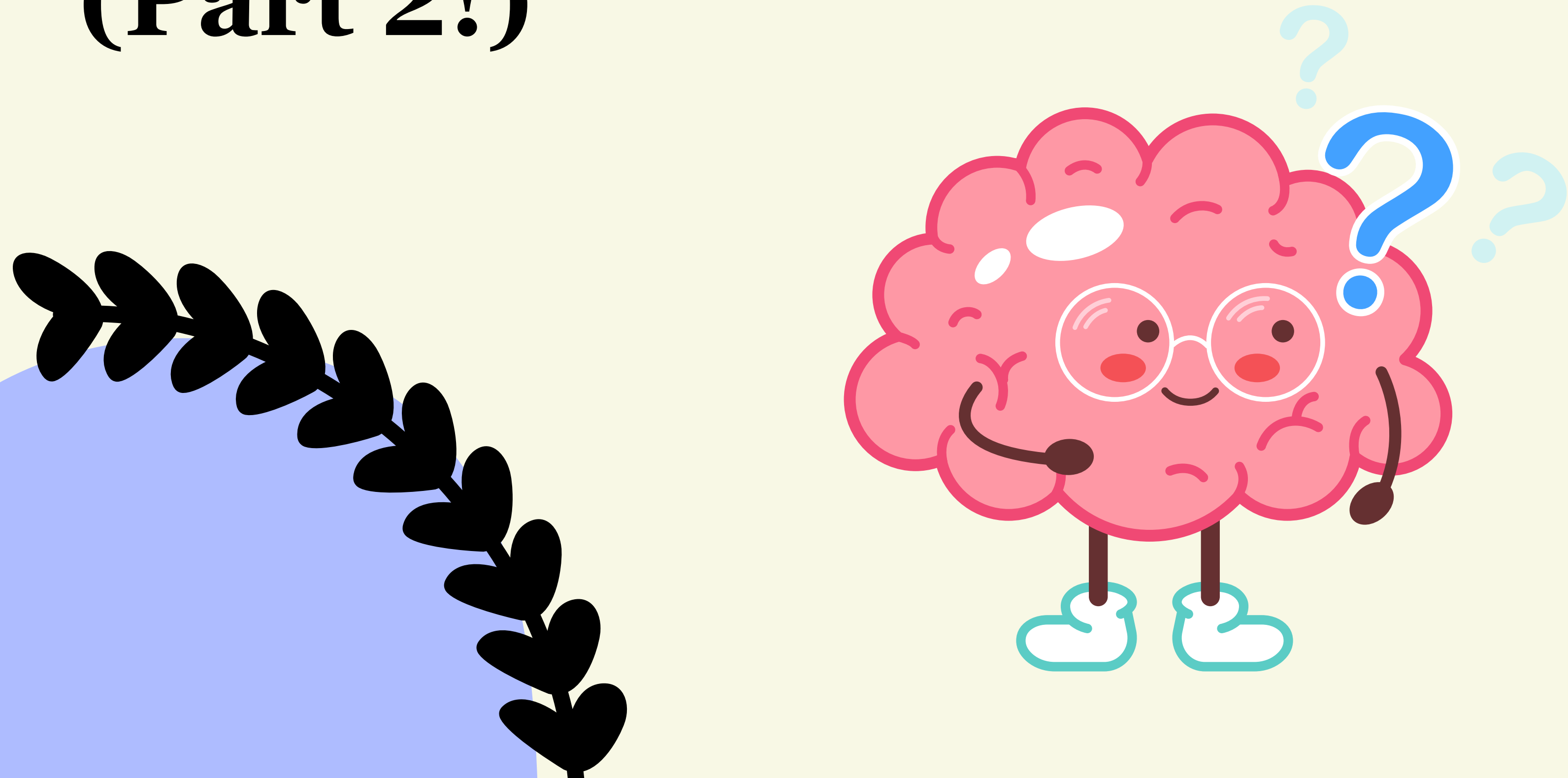
There have been widespread increases in public acceptance of treating mental differences as biological and expanding treatment,

BUT, there has been no reduction in public stigma (2010).



Why Does This Matter?

(Part 2!)



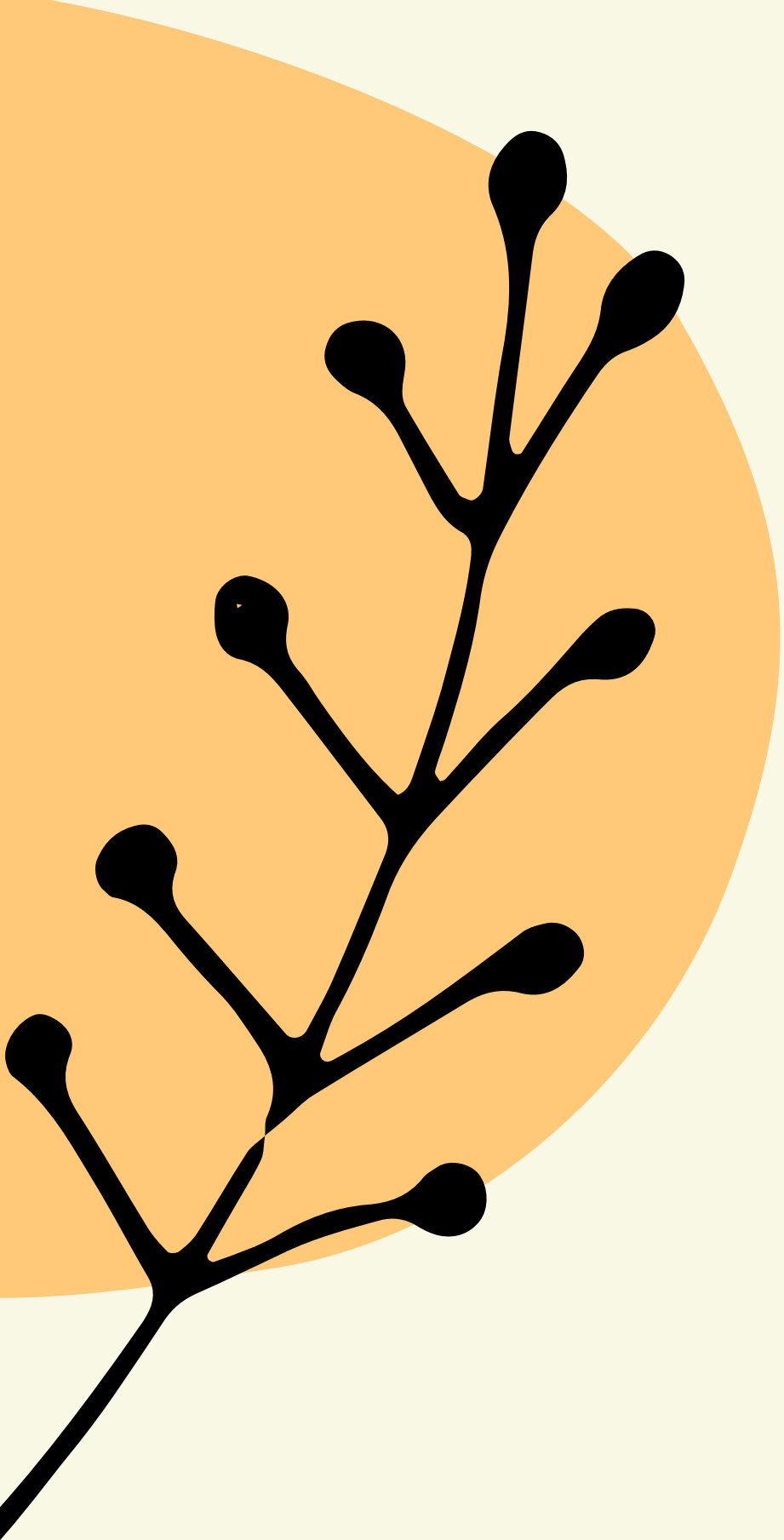
**“Disorder is a construct. This
doesn’t mean that it isn’t real, or
that the overwhelming pain and
anguish... are fictional.**

**Rather, it means that the concept
is shared by the social world, that
it is hard to define and that its
boundaries are murky and
unstable.”**

**- Micha Frazer-
Carroll**



What Do We Need to Emphasize?

- 
- Neurodiverse and disabled people not only *can* contribute to society but their input is *necessary*.
 - Housing, healthcare, community environments, nutrition, financial stability (holistic support) work - NOT stigma and punishment.
 - People Are Unique: Mental Differences Are Too!

How Do Embrace This?

- **In Emergency Housing: What Do People Need to Thrive?**
 - Do not assume.
 - When MANY People with lived expertise drive advocacy and change: review laws, funding mechanisms and policies in your region, ‘solutions’ will reflect their needs.
- **Involuntary Commitment is Not a Solution.**
 - **Ask:** what prevents people from voluntarily enrolling in the services they want/need? Aspire to a world where involuntary commitment is never considered.
- **Fight for Economic Justice.**
- **Fight For Recognition and Give Space.**

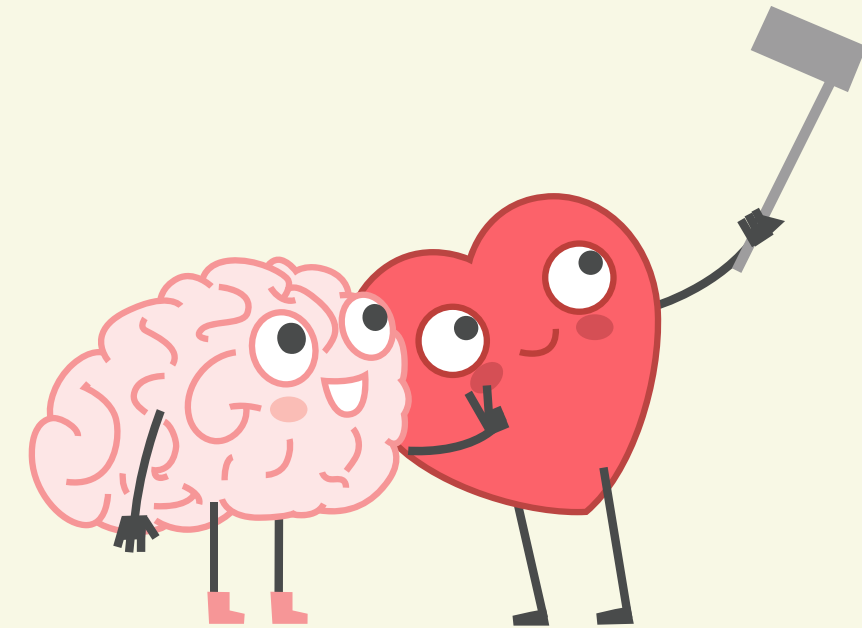
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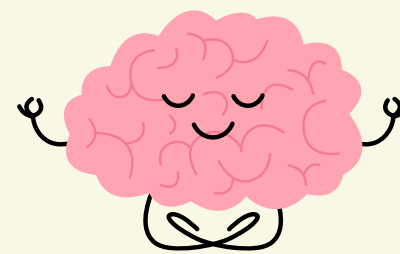


Something Nice...



THANK YOU!

dsoucy@naeh.org



A Great Listen!

Episode 7 of the Lost Patients Podcast:

<https://www.npr.org/2026/01/01/1245024221/disease-without-knowledge>

