

# My Internship with Neurodiversity at Work

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# About Me

- M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology at Univ. of Maryland
- From Jacksonville, FL
- DMA Singing Voice Pedagogy
- Neurodiversity Intersectionality
  - Parent of 2 neurodiverse children
  - Neurodiverse
  - Speech-language pathologist



Center for Autism and Related Disorders  
at Kennedy Krieger Institute



Kennedy Krieger Institute  
NEURODIVERSITY AT WORK

## **Neurodiversity at Work Community Connections**

- Autism Assessment
- Life Skills groups for teens
- Jump Start/first diagnosis speech-language therapy

- Project SEARCH
- Daily Professional Development Sessions
- In-person, on the job coaching
- Development of enhanced employee visual supports

CLINICAL

RESEARCH

KENNEDY KRIEGER  
INSTITUTE INTERNSHIP

# CLINICAL

## Neurodiverse Employment

- Pre-employment preparation
- Self-advocacy

# RESEARCH

Double Empathy Problem (Milton, 2013)

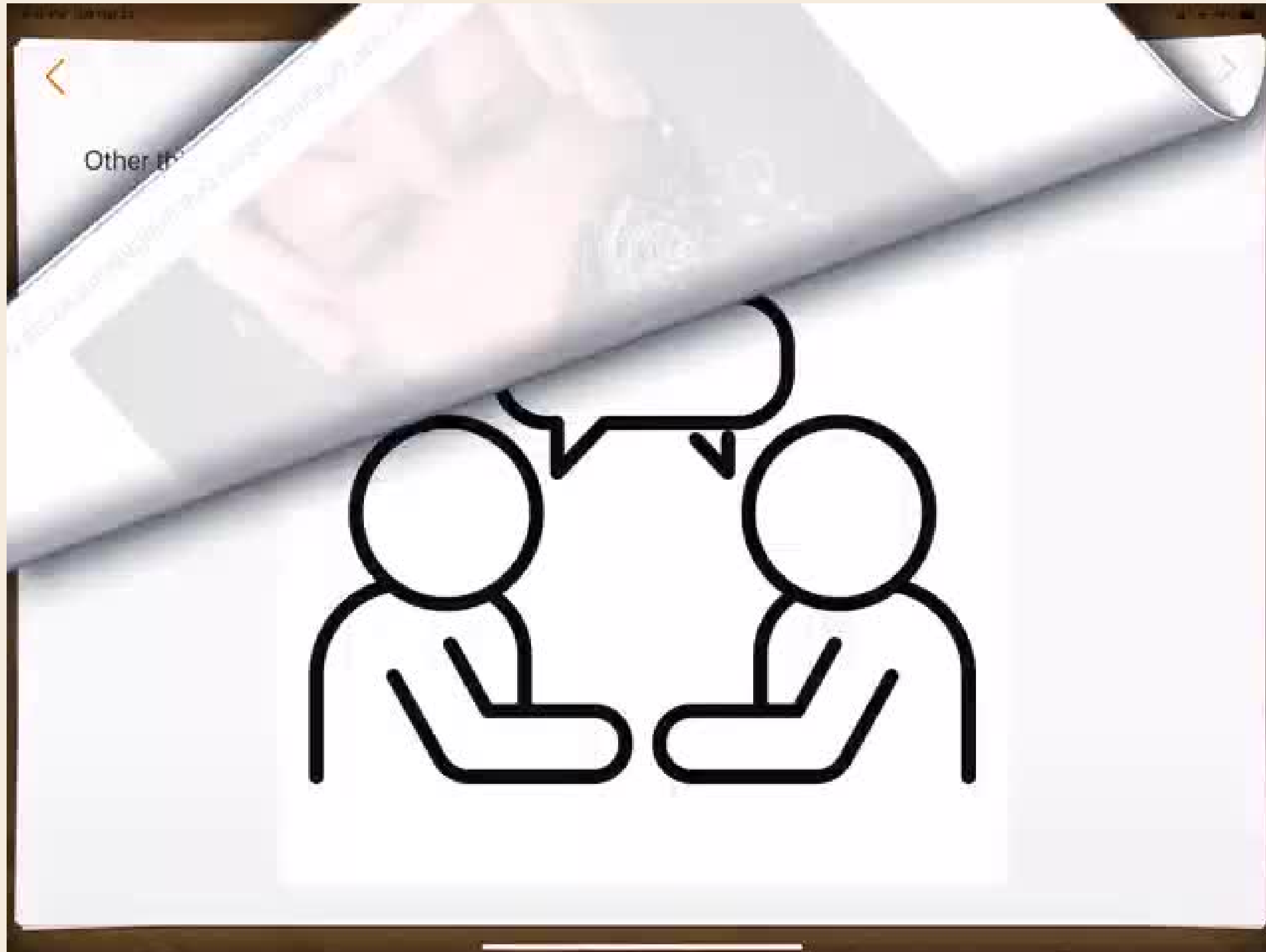
"Thin Slice Judgements" (Sasson, Morrison, etc.)



# *This is Me*

- User-friendly story creation app
- In their own words/with their own voice
  - *About me*
  - *How to Talk to Me*
  - *How I Talk to You*
  - *How I Interact*
  - *Speaking Up for myself*
  - *Tools to help me remember*
- Designed for IDD
  - Potentially applicable for other neurotypes

# *This is Me! sample video*



# My Interview with Parth Patel



- **Education:** Kennedy Krieger High School graduate
- **Project SEARCH** alumnus
- **CORE Foundations** community member
- **Current employment:** Meals on Wheels
- **Dream job:** Data entry at *Lockheed Martin*
- **Favorite restaurant:** Olive Garden
- **Talent:** Telling jokes
- **Pet peeve:** people who are impatient when he is communicating
- **Best experience at Kennedy Krieger:** being in the community, socializing with other members



# My Interview with Ben Brazel



- **Education:** Howard High School
- **Current Project SEARCH** Intern
- **Current employment:** Special Olympics, Security Office, Nutrition
- **Dream job:** Forest Ranger (educate people & protect animals)
- **Fun fact:** Loves to talk to a diverse range of people
- **Pet peeve:** people who think false things about him and ignore him because he communicates differently
- **Impact of Project SEARCH**
  - Community integration
  - Confidence, fulfillment, self-worth
  - Anxiety reduction, helped him trust people again
  - Security staff encouraged him to keep going, how to cope with stress, realize that people have a good side

# My Interview with Susan Brazel

- **Parent** of current Project SEARCH Intern
- Family has received services with Kennedy Krieger Institute for almost 2 decades
- **Project SEARCH** has been "life-changing"
  - Difficult times during COVID
  - Project SEARCH gave their son a "sense of belonging"
  - Staff is always available to the interns, not only work-related matters
  - Staff accepting everyone where they are and for who they are (individualized support)

# What I have learned

- It is never too soon to begin focusing on building pre-employment skills in neurodiverse individuals
  - Self-determinism
  - Fading support (K-12 education)
  - Self-advocacy
  - Age-appropriate chores, problem-solving
  - Anxiety-reduction strategies

# What I have learned

- Neurodiverse young adults are eager to work and engage with their communities
- **Meaningful Community Services** is meeting many needs of neurodiverse young adults



## The Neurodiversity at Work team

meaningful employment

communities connections