

Depression in the Context of Autism

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Depression and autism:

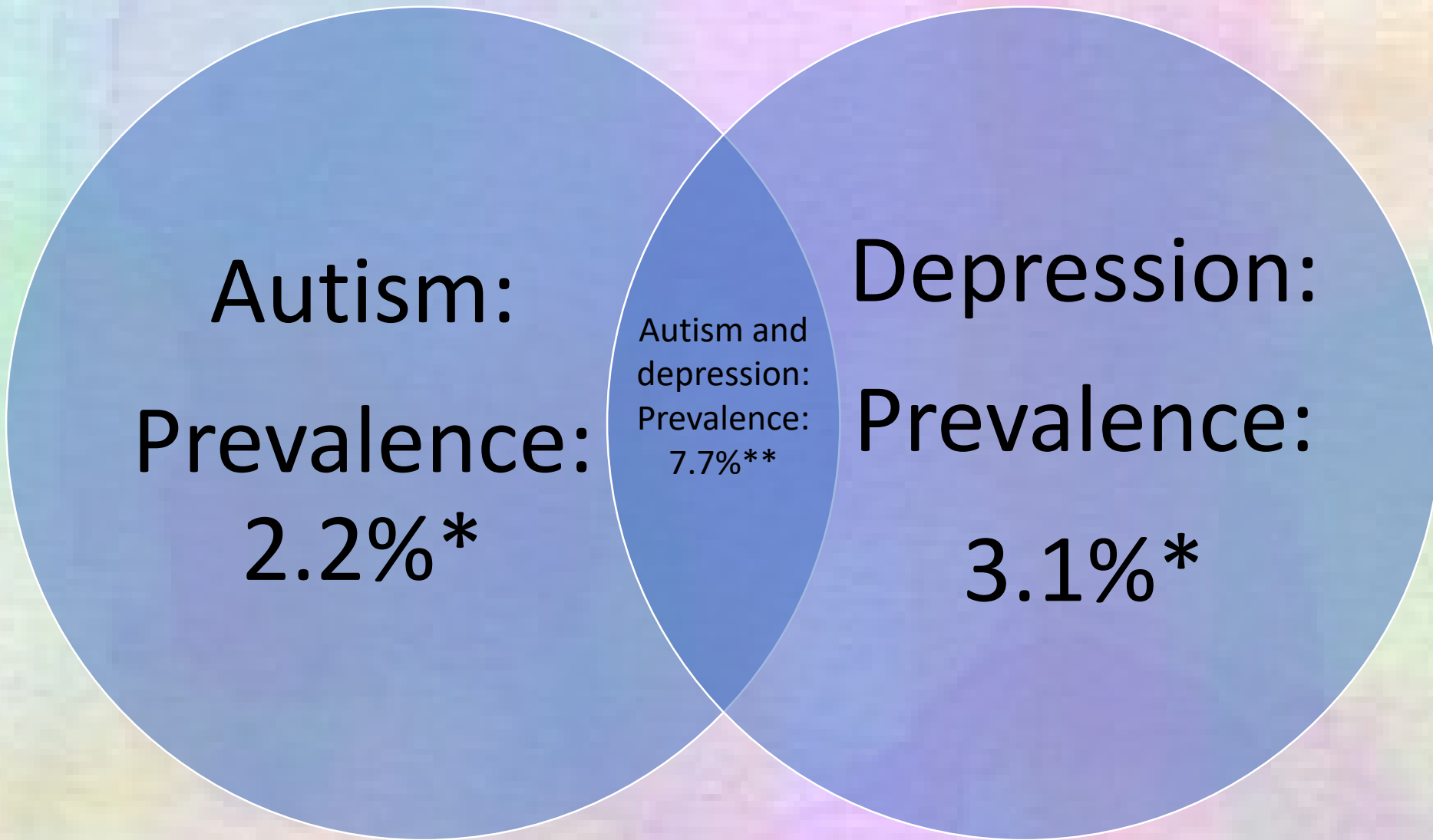
Prevalence

Similarities and differences

Difficulties in diagnosing

Treating/intervention

Questions



- *Per the Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- ** Hudson, C. C., Hall, L., & Harkness, K. L. (2019). Prevalence of depressive disorders in individuals with autism spectrum disorder: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 47(1), 165-175.

Criteria per the DSM5

Autism Criteria

- Social communication differences
 - Social reciprocity
 - Nonverbal communication
 - Developing, understanding, and maintaining relationships
- Restricted and repetitive behaviors
 - Repetitive speech, movements, use of objects
 - Insistence on sameness (rigidity)
 - Fixated or restricted areas of interest
 - Sensory processing differences

Depression Criteria

- Depressed mood and/or loss of interest or pleasure
- Fatigue/loss of energy
- Weight changes
- Psychomotor slowing
- Changes in sleep
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Difficulties with concentration
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation

Autism

- Neurodevelopmental
- Lifelong
- Understood to be an integral part of who that person is

✓ Behavioral

✓ Impacts
perception

Depression

- Mental health
- Episodic
- Experienced as negative, something to treat or get rid of

Difficulties diagnosing depression in the context of autism*



Observable signs of depression
look different



Autism features masking
depression symptoms



Lack of assessment tools
appropriate to this population

*Chandrasekhar, T., & Sikich, L. (2015). Challenges in the diagnosis and treatment of depression in autism spectrum disorders across the lifespan. *Dialogues in clinical neuroscience*, 17(2), 219.

Table 1.

Symptom presentation of depression in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Prototypical depression symptoms that commonly mark depression in ASD	Depression symptoms that may be more specific to ASD
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depressed and/or irritable mood• Loss of pleasure in previously enjoyed activities• Hopelessness and tearfulness• Negative beliefs about oneself• Feelings of failure or worthlessness• Constricted affect• (Increased) Social withdrawal• Change in appetite (increased or decreased)• (Increased) Sleep problems• Poor concentration abilities• Lack of motivation• Thoughts about death or suicidal ideation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased irritability• Changes in circumscribed interests (CI):<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Decreased pleasure in■ Increased intensity■ Change to darker/morbid content• Increased repetitive behaviors• Increased anxiety or insistence on sameness• Increase in aggression or self-injury• Regressive behavior• Decline in self-care

Pezzimenti, F., Han, G. T., Vasa, R. A., & Gotham, K. (2019). Depression in youth with autism spectrum disorder. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics*, 28(3), 397-409.



On what's DIFFERENT

Understand what has changed for that person

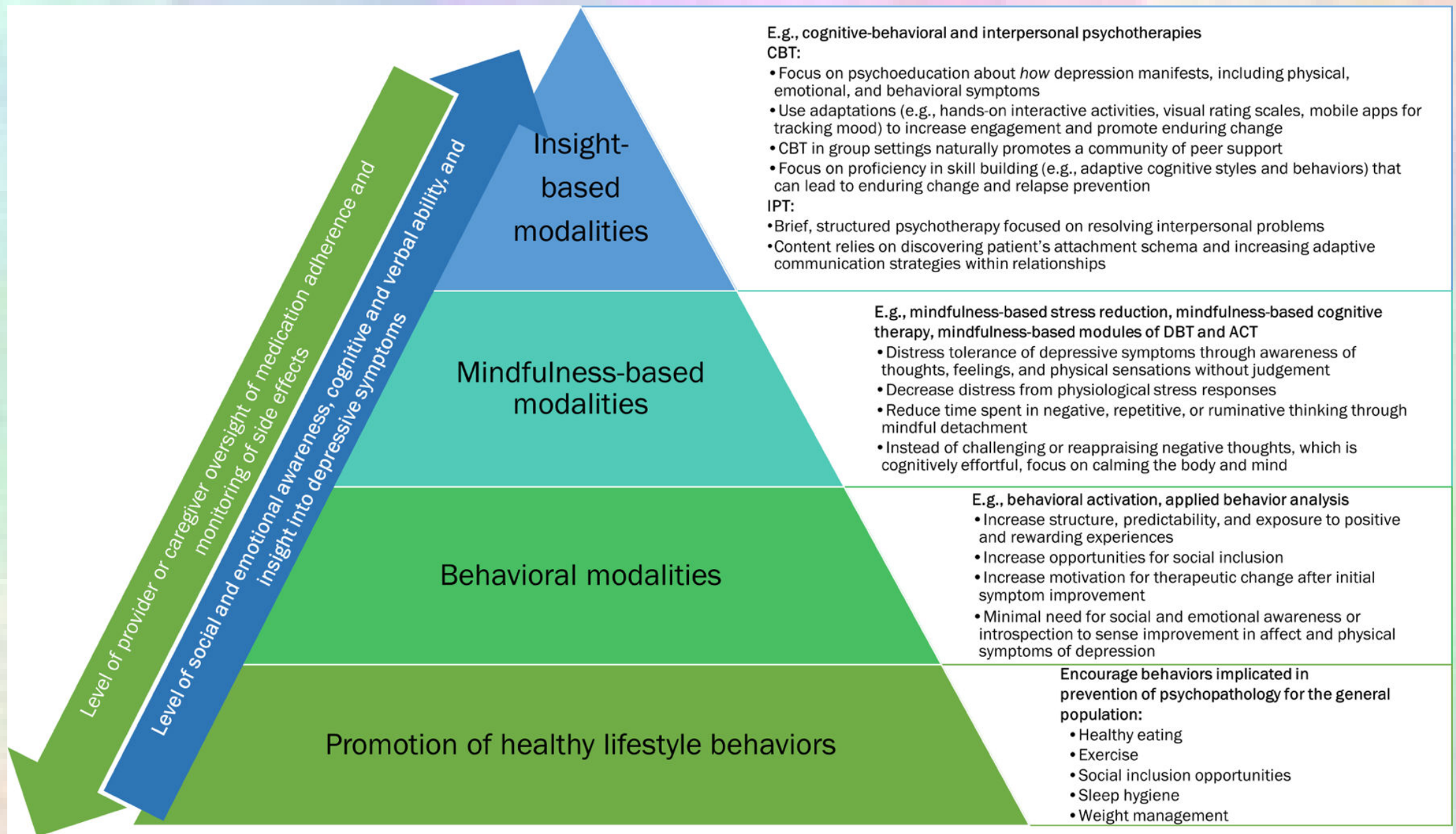
Treatment Options

Medications

- Antidepressants

Therapeutic interventions

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Mindfulness
- Social skills or vocational training



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Questions??



Thank you so much for joining this morning!!