



**Setting the Foundation**

**Promoting Mental  
Health in DHH Children  
from Diagnosis**

Amy Keslinke



# Objectives

## Participants will...


Recognize how a parent's views on deafness, hearing status, and communication can impact their child's mental health very early in life.

## Participants will...

Familiarize themselves with the medical and social models of deafness/disability and the ways each approach can impact the mental health of young DHH children.

## Participants will...

Leave with strategies to help promote healthy social and emotional development in DHH children from an early age.

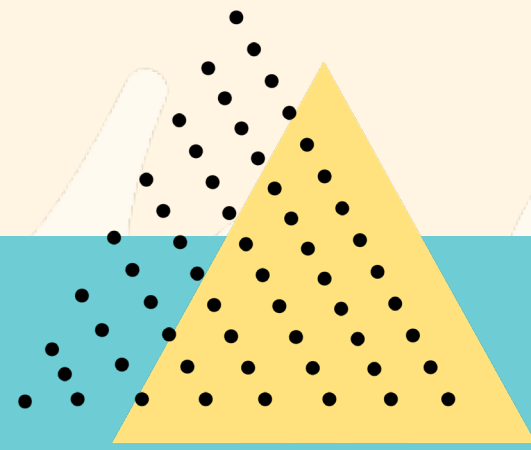




# Content Advisory

This presentation will briefly  
mention child abuse and  
sexual assault, without  
description. Please care for  
yourself accordingly.





# About Amy

Parent of a Deaf+ child

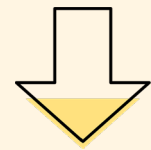
President of Illinois Hands & Voices

Educator with experience from third grade to adult education

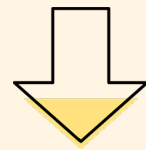
Masters of Social Work student



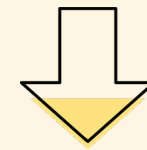
# What we will discuss...



**the  
problem**

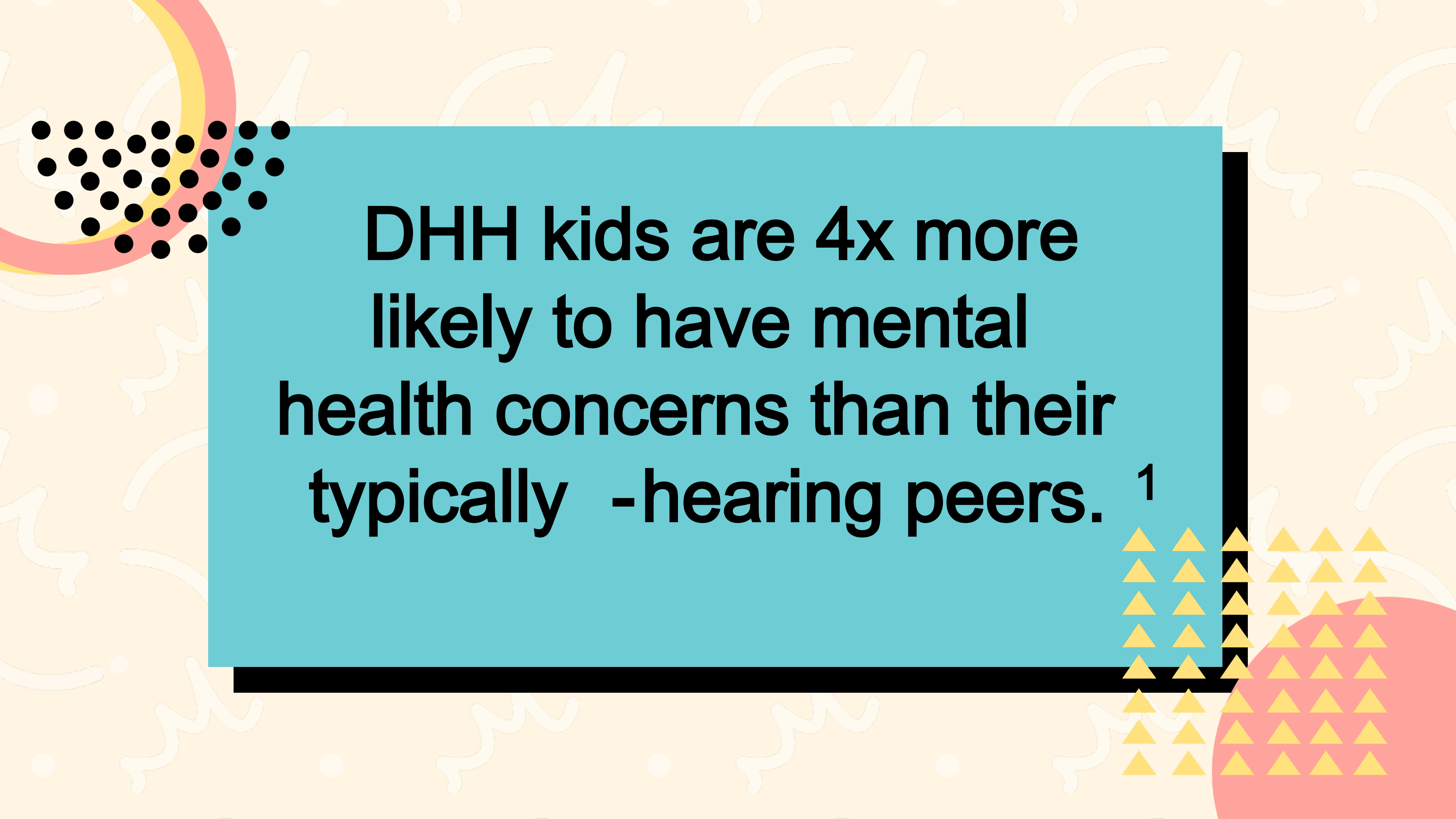


**the  
system**



**what you  
can do**

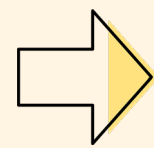




**DHH kids are 4x more  
likely to have mental  
health concerns than their  
typically -hearing peers. <sup>1</sup>**

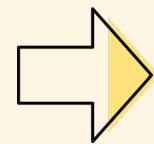
The background features a light beige color with various abstract elements. In the top left, there's a pink wavy line. In the top right, there's a large black circle containing a pink teardrop shape, with yellow concentric circles around it. Below this, there's a blue wavy shape. In the center right, there's a grid of black dots. In the bottom left, there's a blue shape with a pink and yellow circular border and a cluster of black dots. In the bottom right, there's a blue curved line.

# BUT HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?



## Language Limitations

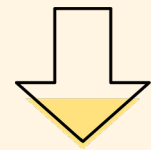
Impact across the life course  
Can create toxic stress



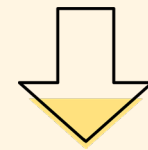
## Trauma Exposure

**81% of parents are unable to  
communicate effectively with their  
DHH children.<sup>10</sup>**

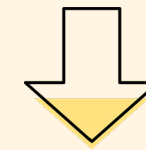
## **Toxic Stress Exposure**



**Extended,  
underlying  
levels of  
unmanaged  
stress**



**Can lead to  
serious  
behavioral  
difficulties and  
poor emotional  
regulation<sup>7</sup>**

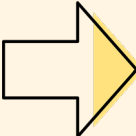


**Can happen to  
even the most  
well -meaning  
families**

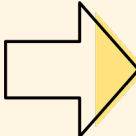




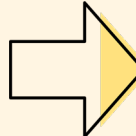
# TRAUMA EXPOSURE



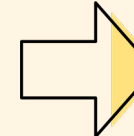
2X as likely as typically -hearing children to experience a traumatic event before 18. <sup>5, 9</sup>



76% of DHH college students reported instances of abuse & neglect in childhood. <sup>5</sup>



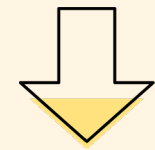
30-50% of DHH adults had experienced sexual abuse before the age of 17.<sup>8, 9</sup>



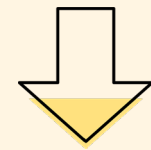
Many victims interviewed thought it was just part of being DHH.<sup>10</sup>



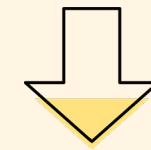
# Language Deprivation as a Trauma Experience



**Permanent  
Consequences**

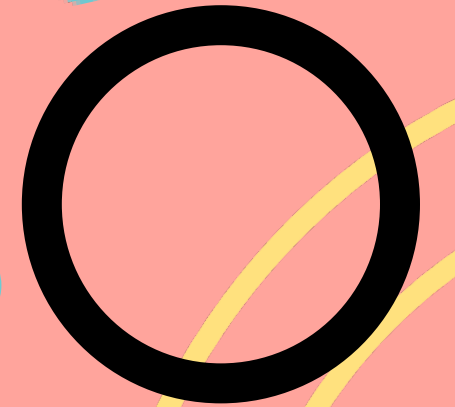


**DSM  
Diagnosis**



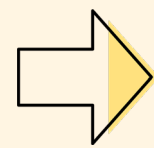
**ACEs  
& ACCEs<sup>7</sup>**

6

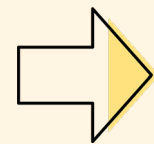




# Limited Use of Mental Health Resources

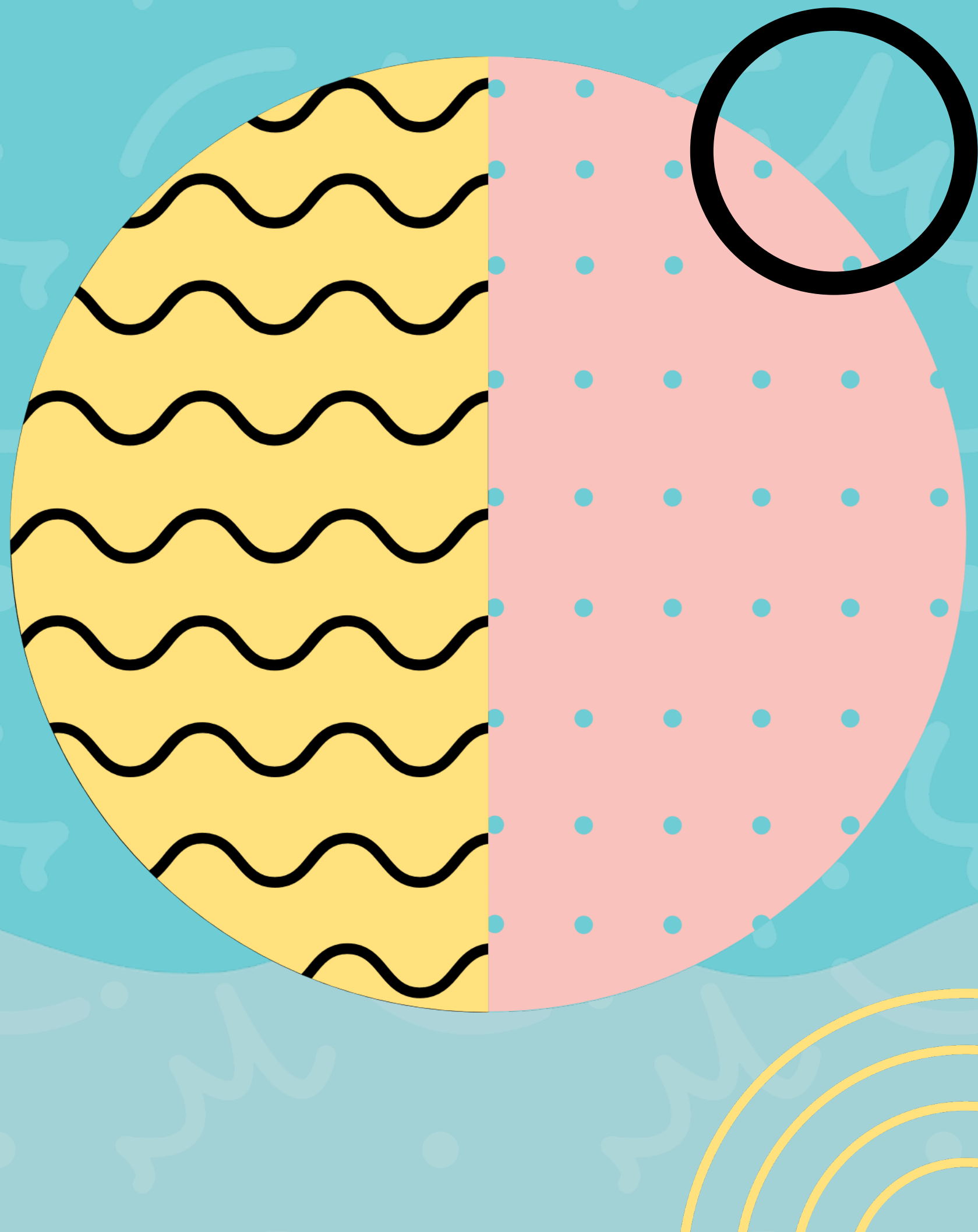


**Diagnostic Overshadowing** <sup>9</sup>



**Treatment Duration**

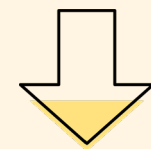
Average of 3x longer in treatment than typically hearing kids



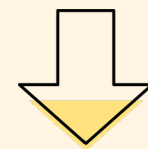
# A SYSTEMIC PROBLEM



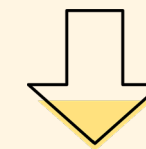
# BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL<sup>9</sup>



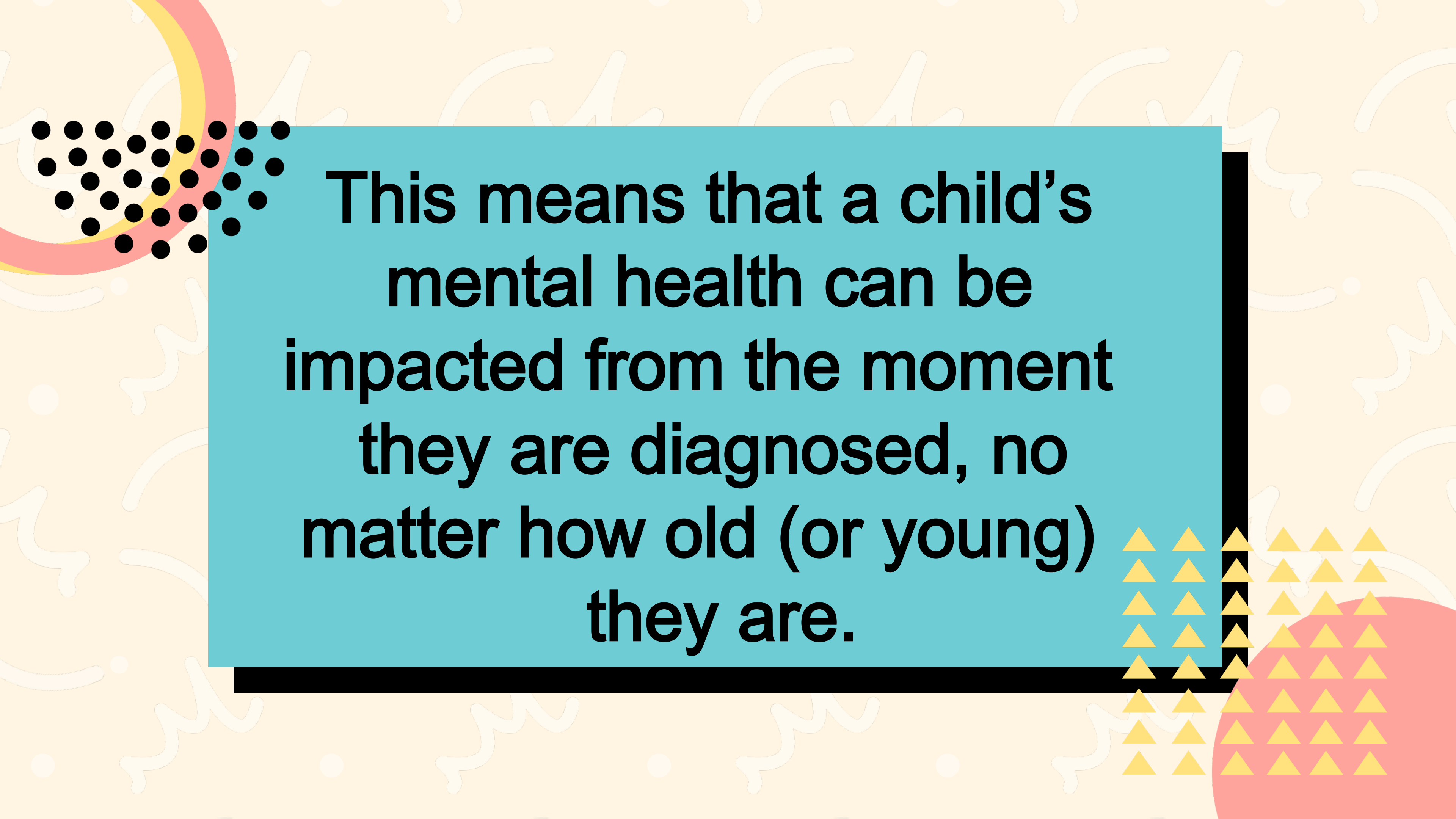
RELATIONSHIP  
WITH  
CAREGIVER



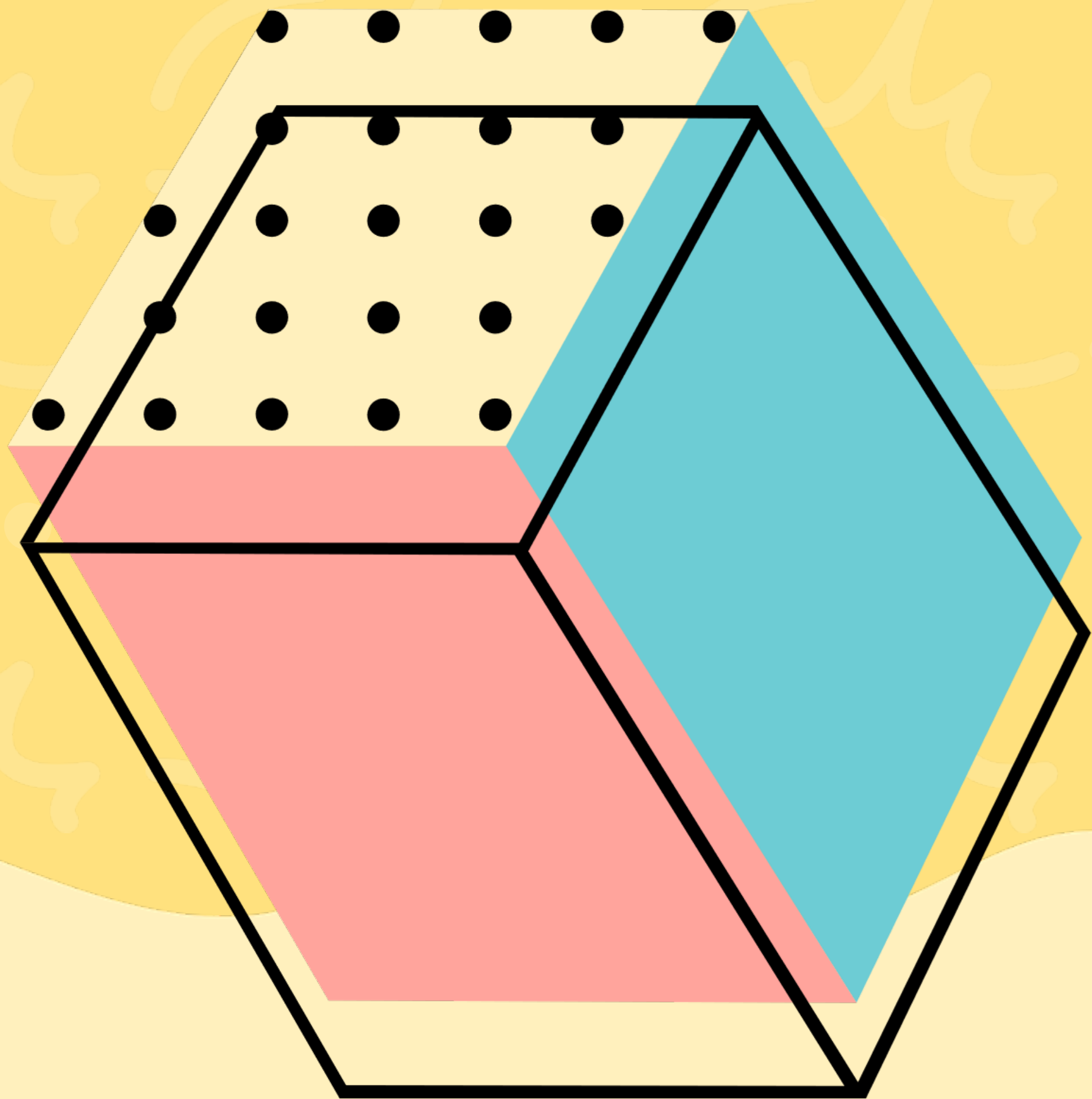
IMPACT OF  
EXTERNAL  
FACTORS ON  
CAREGIVER



DISHARMONY  
BETWEEN  
CAREGIVER  
AND CHILD



**This means that a child's  
mental health can be  
impacted from the moment  
they are diagnosed, no  
matter how old (or young)  
they are.**



**CONFLICTING  
THEORETICAL  
DEFINITIONS  
OF DEAFNESS/  
DISABILITY<sup>12</sup>**



## MEDICAL MODEL

A problem that needs to be  
fixed

Deafness as a personal tragedy

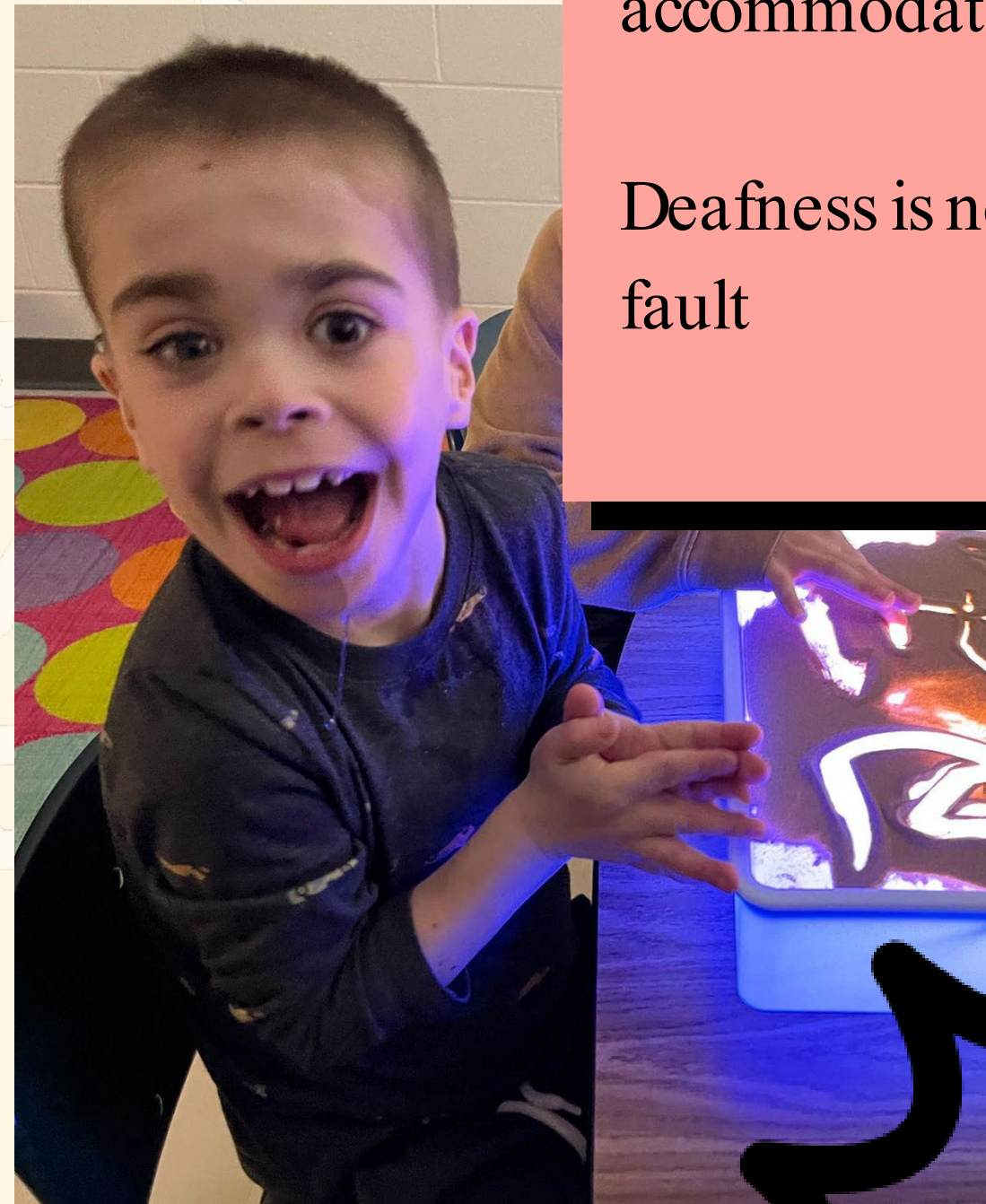
Emphasis on “passing for  
hearing”




## SOCIAL MODEL

Requires society to adjust to  
accommodate everyone

Deafness is not a personal  
fault







**Many parents of DHH children are  
disproportionately exposed to the  
medical model.** <sup>12</sup>

The medical model can  
unintentionally  
perpetuate the stigma  
of deafness as a tragedy.

<sup>11</sup>

Conflict over device use can  
lead to experiences of  
trauma and dangerous  
confusion about bodily

autonomy. <sup>11</sup>

Bilingualism is shown to  
benefit adjustment and overall  
mental health<sup>11</sup>, but is still  
discouraged under the medical  
model.



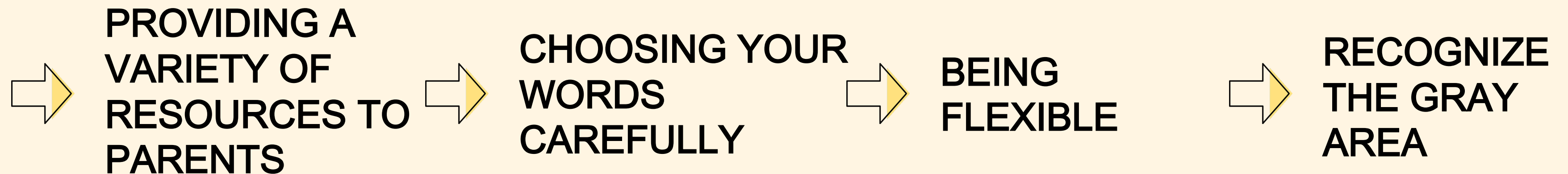
**SO, WHAT CAN  
WE DO?**

# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Communication is key <sup>1</sup>	Bilingualism <sup>5, 11</sup>
Early Intervention <sup>1, 7</sup>	Prioritize self-esteem & confidence <sub>10</sub>
Parent support <sup>1</sup>	Early peer relationships <sup>3</sup>
Exposure to Deaf Culture <sup>11</sup>	Education



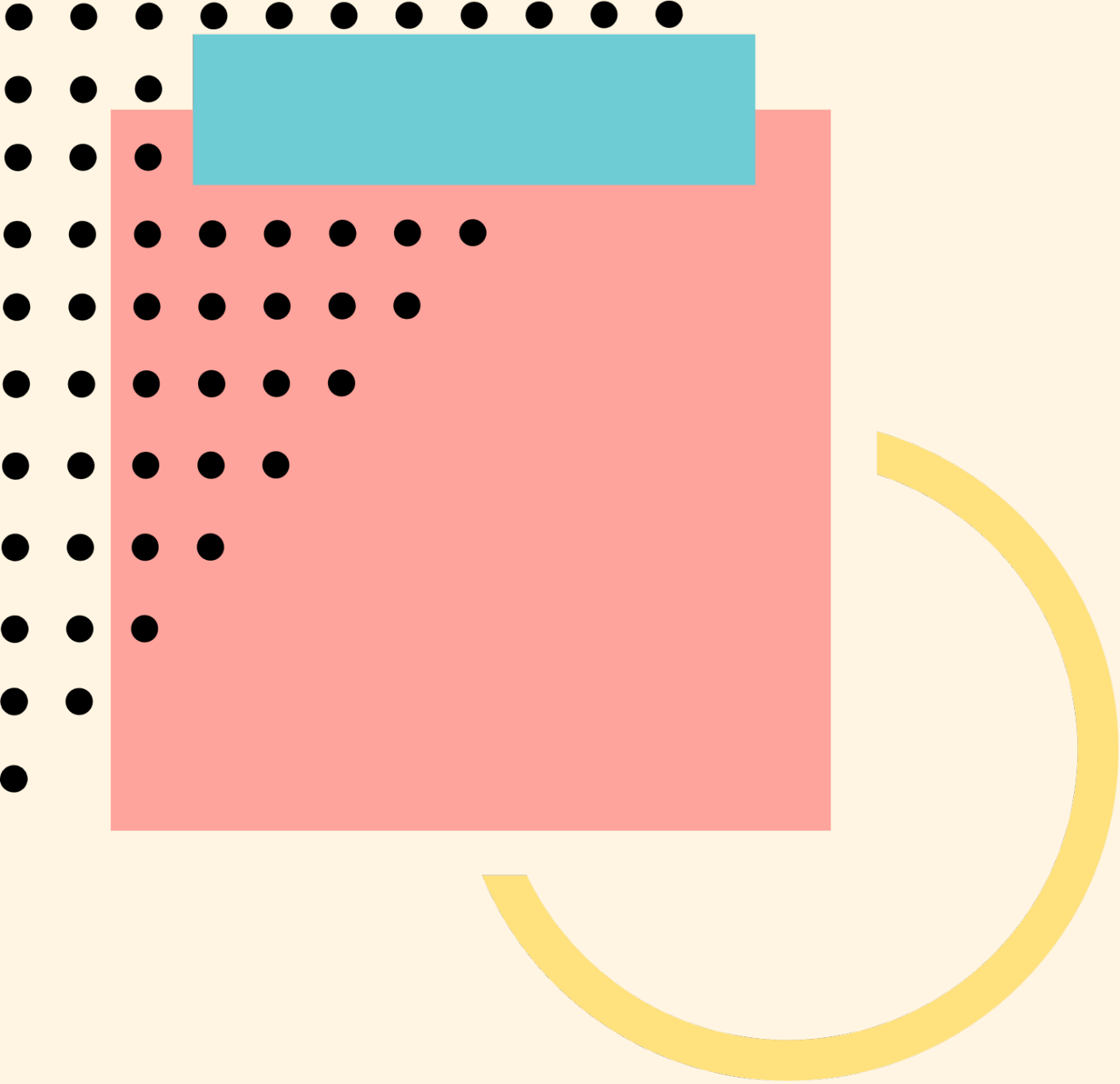
# WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?







**RELATIONSHIPS**  
**MUST ALWAYS**  
**COMEFIRST**



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# THANK YOU!

I'm happy to share my paper and  
welcome any feedback!

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**Amy Keslinke, IL Hands & Voices**

# References

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