



Project article

GROUP PROCESS FOR SUPPORTING OCCUPATIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES & ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER: LESSONS LEARNED

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Colleagues, collaborators, students, and participants



Lab website

grat·i·tude: 

the quality of being thankful;
readiness to show appreciation
for and to return kindness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learning Objective 1: Review and reflect on skills needed for effective facilitation of group process with older adolescents and emerging adults as they transition into new adult roles and contexts.
- Learning Objective 2: Describe and discuss the knowledge, skill, and strategies used by college students with ADHD and/or learning disabilities in college contexts.
- Learning Objective 3: Identify and discuss pragmatic considerations in communicating, scheduling, and setting up psychoeducational group sessions for young people with ADHD and/or learning disabilities.



AT ISSUE...

ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD AS A PERIOD OF CHANGE AND OPPORTUNITY



PERIOD OF RAPID CHANGE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Cognitive Changes



Social Opportunities



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SYMPTOMATOLOGY

Learning disorders

Attention

Working memory

Inhibition (of irrelevant information)

Self-regulation:

- Monitoring & problem solving in the moment (on-line)

Mental flexibility (on-line)

Auditory attention & verbal WM

- **Temporal coding**

Varvara et al 2014

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00120>

ADHD

Attention

Working memory

Inhibitory control

Self-regulation of:

- Affect
- Motivation
- Arousal

Mental flexibility

Time perception

Barkley 1997

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.121.1.65>

Autism

Attention

Working memory

Self-regulation of:

- Emotion
- Monitoring

Mental flexibility

Craig et al 2016

<https://doi.org/10.2147/NDT.S104620>

Berkovits et al. 2017

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-016-2922-2>

Dijkhuis et al., 2017

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361316655525>

SCHOOL, SOCIAL & WORKPLACE IMPACTS

Workplace Impacts

- Difficulty **filtering & concentrating** in busy environments
- Requires **regular repetition** of the instructions

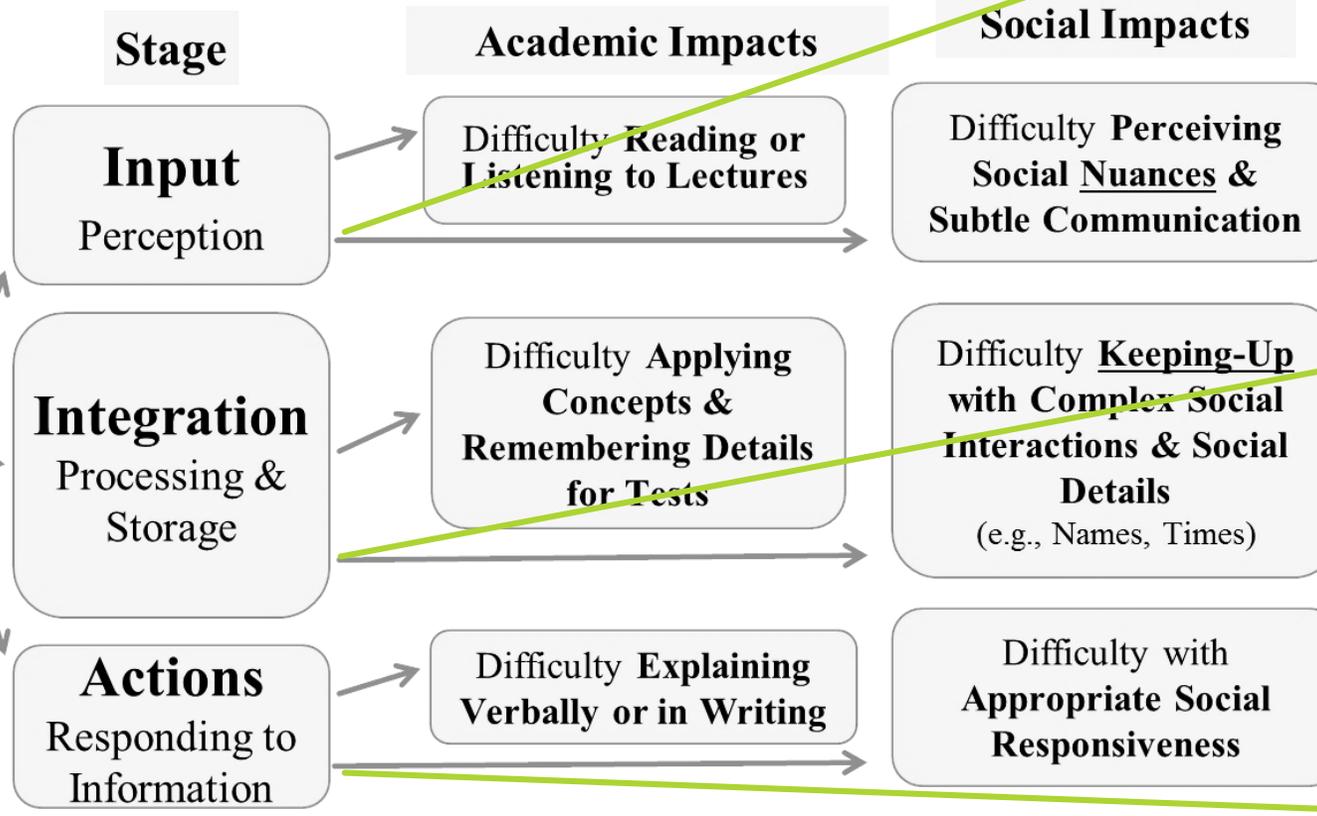
During meetings:

- can become **flustered**
- **needs time to articulate thoughts**
- contributions **out of sequence**
- goes **off on tangents**
- **Repeatedly checks with colleagues**

Takes longer:

- **adopt** new processes
- **complete** tasks

Diagnoses such as **Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Auditory Processing Disorder**



RATIONALE & SIGNIFICANCE

- Pivotal developmental time point
 1. Changing social roles and expectations
 2. Changing requirements: health care & health/wellness
 3. Period of rapid skill development
 4. Critical period for brain development: frontal lobe/executive functioning

- Most interventions focus on:
 1. Childhood populations
 2. Core symptoms

OCCUPATIONAL CHALLENGES IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD

Older adolescents & young adults with developmental neuropsychological conditions must figure out the balance of how to:

1. Manage disability-related symptoms & challenges
2. Navigate new support systems and accommodations
3. Push beyond their disability-related difficulties to:
 - a. **Meet expectations** to achieve goals and work toward a meaningful career, and
 - b. Establish healthy **daily routines** and **interpersonal relationships**

CASE EXAMPLES-CASE I

ADHD IN ADOLESCENCE VS. ADULTHOOD



Background

- Client is a 16 year old female diagnosed with ADHD at age 10
- Presented with inattentive type of ADHD based on:
 - ❖ Not completing homework, difficulty sustaining attention in school and at home, problems with organization, easily distracted
- 504 accommodation plan put in place in 6th grade
 - ❖ Provided extra time for test and assignment completion
 - ❖ After school tutoring
- Otherwise intelligent (maintaining good grades) and no social difficulties noted
- Parents did not want her to be put on medication

Evaluation

- She was reevaluated at 16 years old. Results showed:
 - ❖ Strong intellectual skills, no major cognitive impairments
 - Mild difficulties in initial coding, learning information, inattentiveness, sustained attention, planning and organization
 - ❖ No significant psychoemotional issues noted
 - ❖ Supportive family and social situations
- Client was being adequately supported by 504 accommodation plan
 - ❖ Suggested use of this plan for the duration of her education
- Suggest the client contact the disability office when entering college
- Re-evaluation should be completed when the client is pursuing employment

CASE EXAMPLES-CASE 2

ADHD IN ADOLESCENCE VS. ADULTHOOD



Background

- Client is a 37 year old male diagnosed with ADHD-combined type as an adult
- Complex medical history including:
 - ❖ Probable learning disabilities as a child, substance abuse, legal offenses
 - ❖ Stopped attending school at 11th grade
 - ❖ Greater stability in late 20s
 - ❖ Drug free, got married, manual labor jobs
- Client received little formal intervention
 - ❖ Did get prescribed antidepressant

Evaluation

- Client wanted to return to school so he completed neuropsychological evaluation
 - ❖ Low-average IQ, 4th grade level in spelling and reading, weakness in complex and sustained attention, inattention, impulsivity, executive function difficulties, anxiety and depression
- Met criteria for ADHD-combined type and specific language-based learning disability
- Noted that ADHD was affecting his job performance
- Recommendation: remedial educational assistance for GED and tutoring, accommodations for work supports

CASE EXAMPLES-QUESTIONS

ADHD IN ADOLESCENCE VS. ADULTHOOD



- How are the two cases different in how their symptoms present?
- What suggestions would you have in helping the individuals presented in each case?
- Think about how leveraging the group process could positively impact each of these cases.



OUR SOLUTION

PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GROUP INTERVENTION



SOCIAL FUNCTIONING SELF-MANAGEMENT OF “ADULTING”

- Social Functioning means **living up to the expectations** that are made of an individual by that **person's own self**, by the **immediate social environment**, and by **society at large**.
- These expectations, or functions, include meeting one's own **basic needs** and the needs of **one's dependents** and making **positive contributions to society**.

PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GROUP CONTENT

Table 1. Instructive knowledge and refined topical areas from 30 undergraduate group meetings held over four academic years

Topic	Description	Subtopics
Campus resources	Information about available university resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom accommodations Support centers Assistive technology
Social supports	Reflection/discussion about social support impacts on college experiences and how to find supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipatory guidance from exemplars Supportive others Mentorship from graduate students
Mental health management	Information and discussion centered around how stress presents and coping strategies for managing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress management <i>Anxiety and depression symptom management*</i>
Stigma*	Information and discussion about what they wish others understood and strategies for understanding and coping with stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others understanding LD/ADHD differences Misconceptions from others Dealing with acceptance
Executive function in real life	Information about the cognitive process and strategies for situational appraisal, prioritization, and problem solving within everyday life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties with task switching <i>Time: planning, organizing, and managing*</i> Decision making Learning styles that work best
Awareness of LD/ADHD impacts*	Discussion about LD/ADHD symptoms, different cognitive styles, and personalized understandings of how symptoms may manifest in every day life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengths and challenges of LD/ADHD <i>Self-regulation strategies*</i> <i>Personalized definition of LD/ADHD*</i>
Communication and self-advocacy	Information and skills for communicating with people within their lives and how to promote a more disability friendly environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining LD/ADHD to others <i>Imparting wisdom for other students with LD/ADHD*</i> Self-confidence
Health management	Information and strategies for managing healthy behaviors and promoting healthy daily routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health literacy Health behaviors
Balancing multiple roles*	Strategies for anticipating future goals, managing increased roles within their everyday lives, and thinking ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Strategies for managing work/school/daily/social*</i> <i>Disability in the workforce*</i> <i>Managing transitions with changing roles & anticipated transition out of college*</i>

* Unexpected areas of needed supports; evolved from continuous improvement methods

Group meeting structure

- Topical content
- Group Structure
- Discussion questions
- Moderator/prompter
- Initially more emphases on psychoeducational material → shifted to more focused discussion & student desired topics



Project article

GUIDED DISCOVERY

WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

- Problem-solving therapy + Socratic method
- Help others to find their own solutions
- Promote client autonomy and self-guided action
- Systematic questions facilitate client's self-evaluation of different problems, goals, and coping efforts
- 5 main stages:
 1. Establish realistic and adaptive attitude toward problems
 2. Define problems in terms of specific and realistic goals
 3. Generate coping options
 4. Rationalize the options to choose the best one
 5. Implement the decided option and evaluate its effectiveness



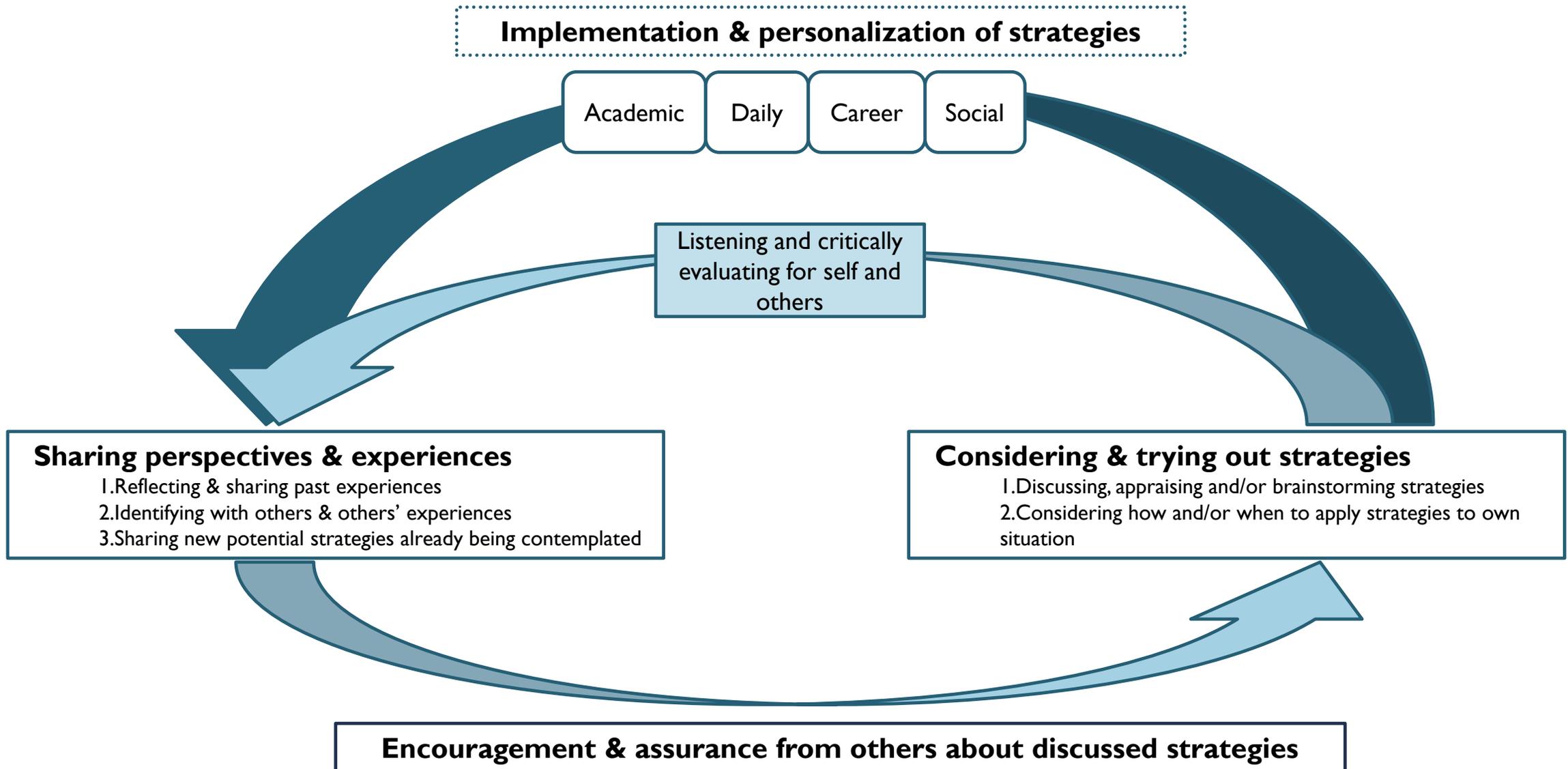
RESULTS – THE GROUP PROCESS



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

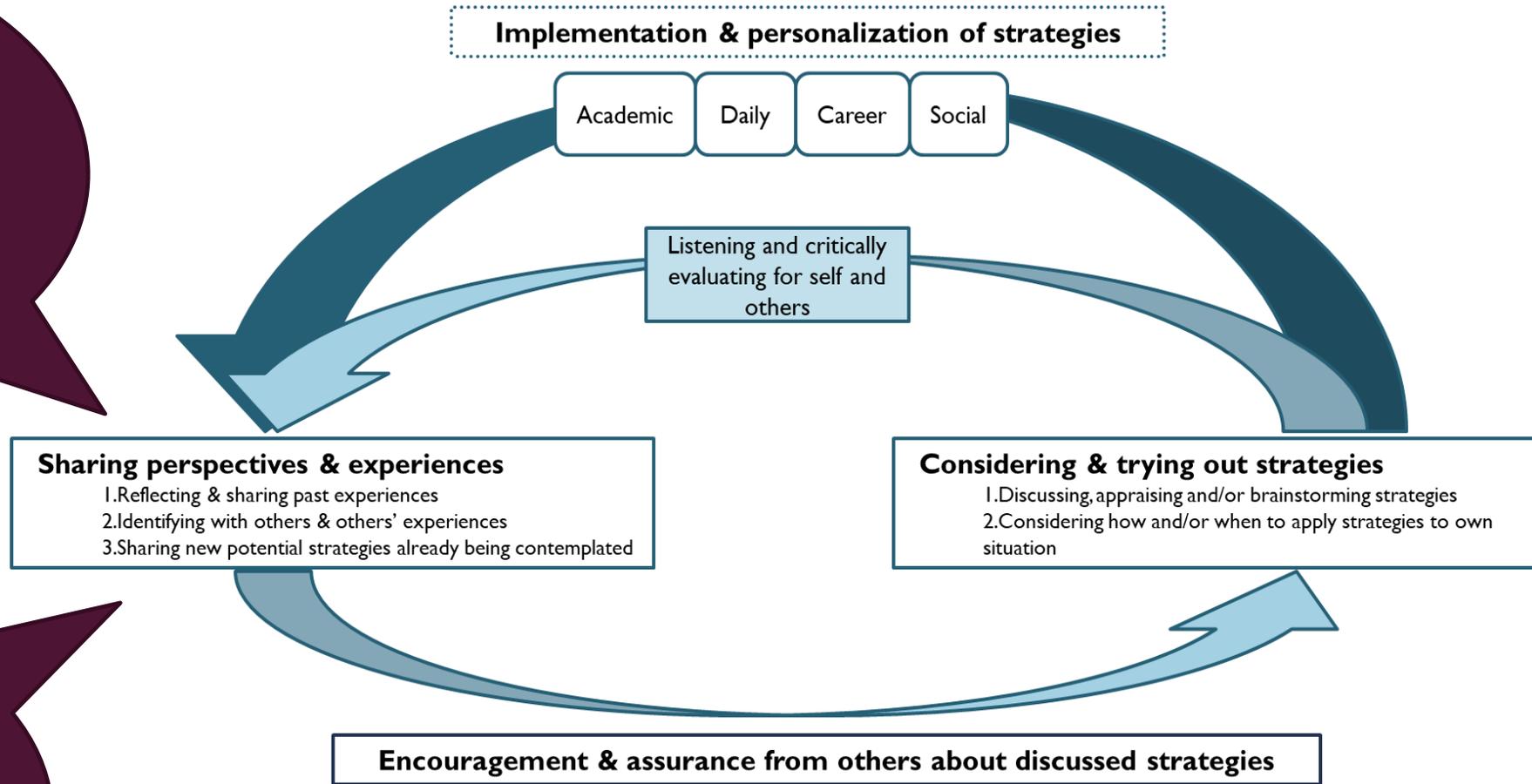
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FROM OUR RESEARCH: OUR GROUP PROCESS MODEL FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS



“I concur 100 percent ... that a lot of us struggle with that we have to spend [time] comprehending and reading.” [U21]

“I have the kind of dyslexia where you flip everything when you write ... so I feel like anything that requires handwriting ... I’ll probably just ask to use a computer.” [U49]



Implementation & personalization of strategies

- Academic
- Daily
- Career
- Social

Listening and critically evaluating for self and others

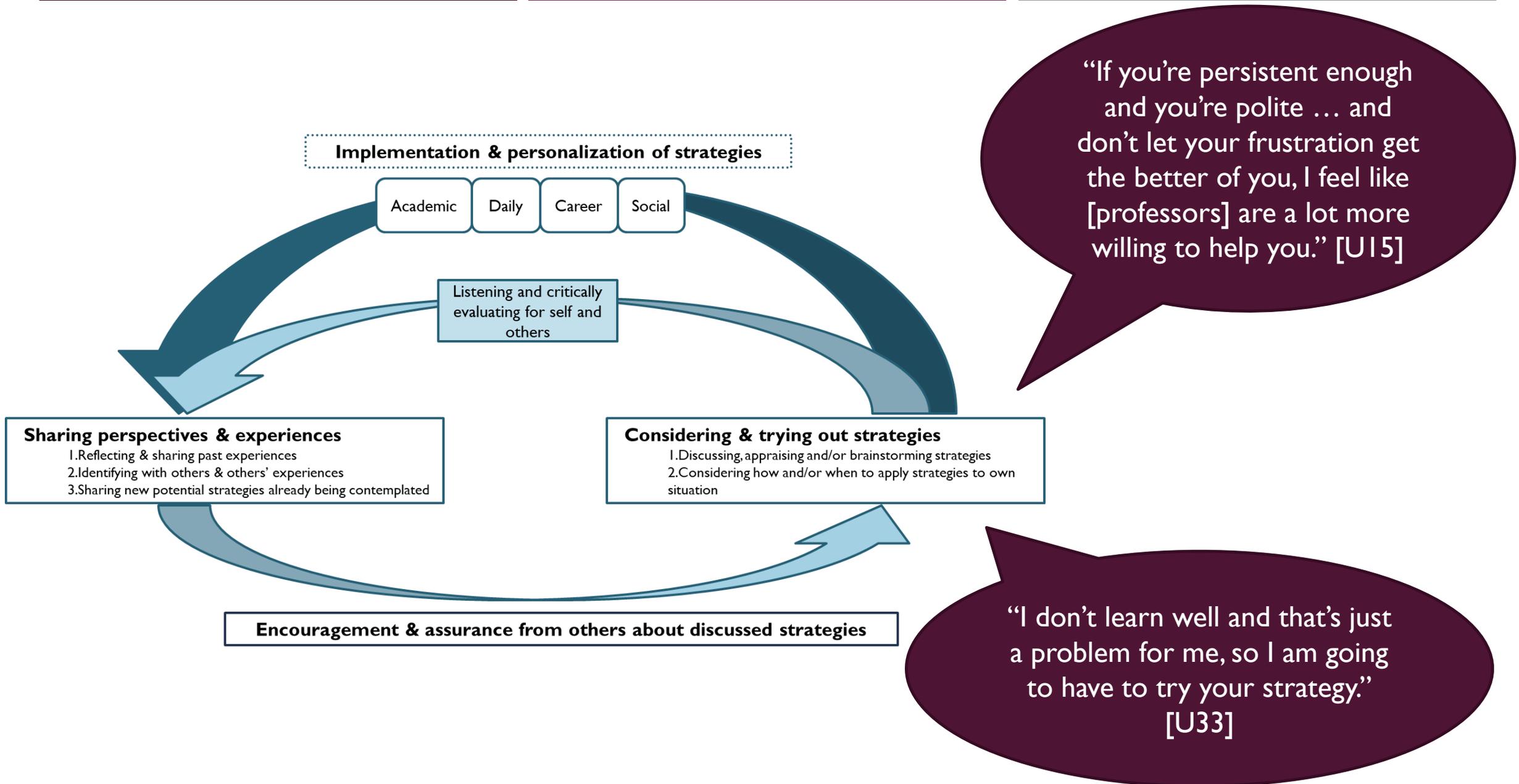
Sharing perspectives & experiences
1. Reflecting & sharing past experiences
2. Identifying with others & others' experiences
3. Sharing new potential strategies already being contemplated

Considering & trying out strategies
1. Discussing, appraising and/or brainstorming strategies
2. Considering how and/or when to apply strategies to own situation

Encouragement & assurance from others about discussed strategies

“I know that the DRC gives them (resources), and I know that they are also at the [CWC] ... they maybe take sort of different approaches to it, but I mean it gets you there.” [U8]

“I like to make to-do lists.” [U19]
“I do that. I think it’s one of the best things I think for me.” [U14]



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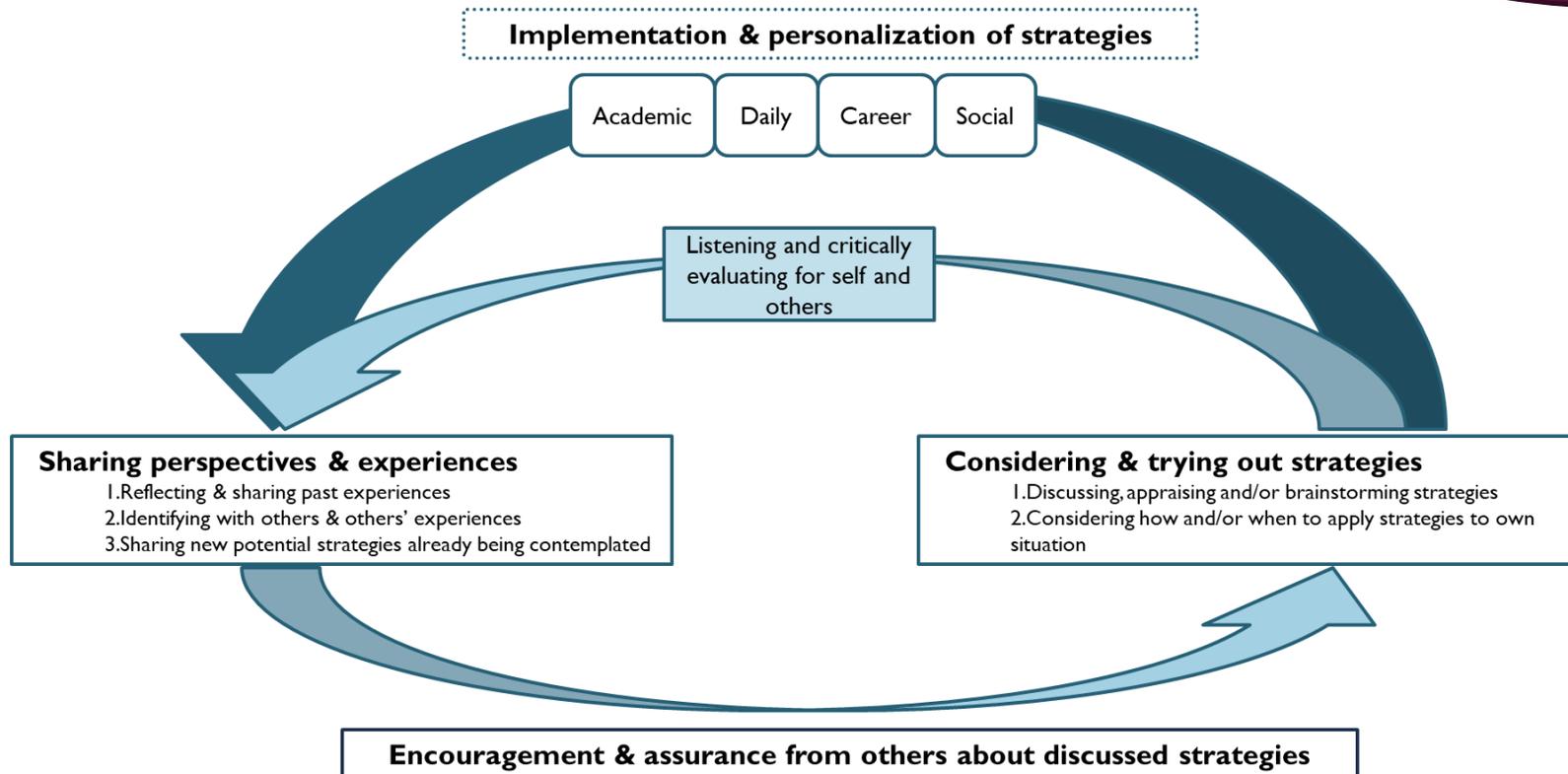
Encouragement & assurance from others about discussed strategies

“If you’re persistent enough and you’re polite ... and don’t let your frustration get the better of you, I feel like [professors] are a lot more willing to help you.” [U15]

“I don’t learn well and that’s just a problem for me, so I am going to have to try your strategy.” [U33]

“I usually block out when people ask questions and just talk about what’s on the course and then I’ll write it down, that’s all I need.” [U6]

“Now I’m actually able to reach out to other people not just in this group, but people who I found out also have LDs and we’re also able to talk about it as well.” [U34]





KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND STRATEGIES



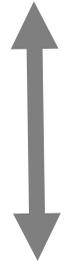
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FROM OUR RESEARCH: OUR MODEL FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

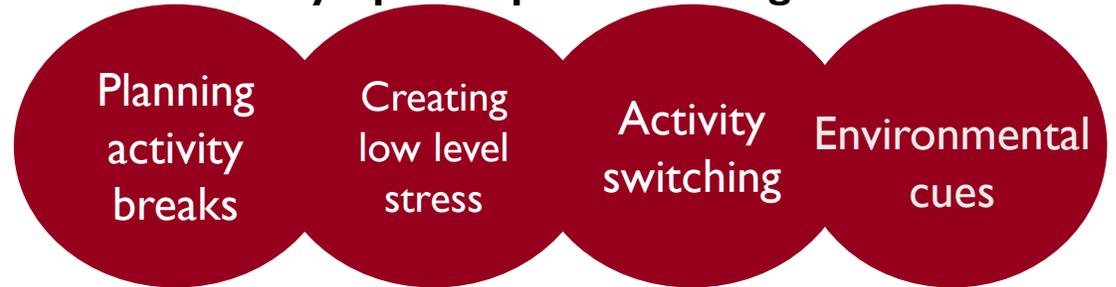
LD/ADHD **Knowledge**

Skills & attributes



Strategies

Symptom specific strategies



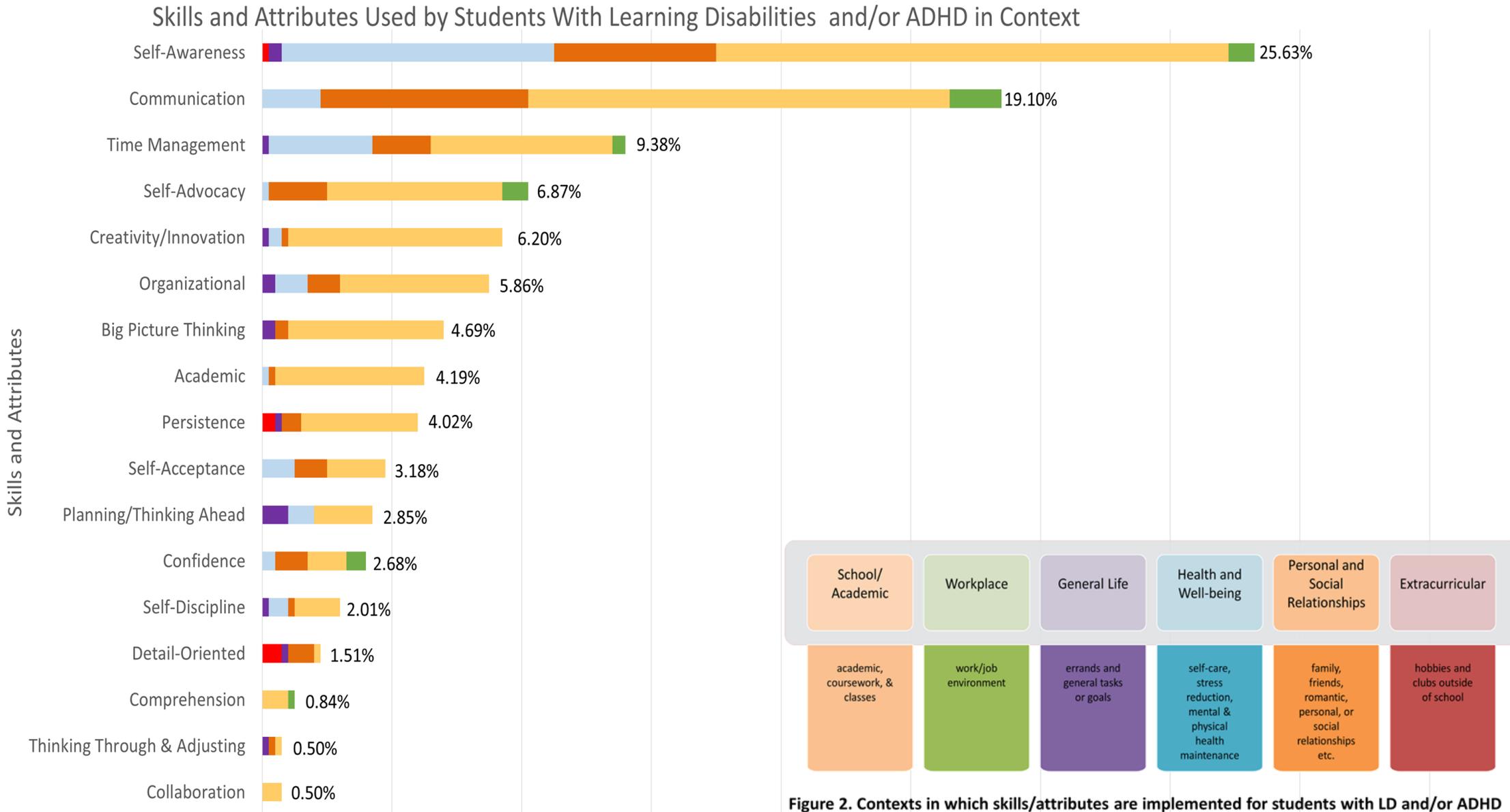
Reframing strategies

- Reframing for self and others
- Self-evaluation of:
 1. strengths & challenges
 2. learning style
 3. goals
 4. wellness

Habits and routines

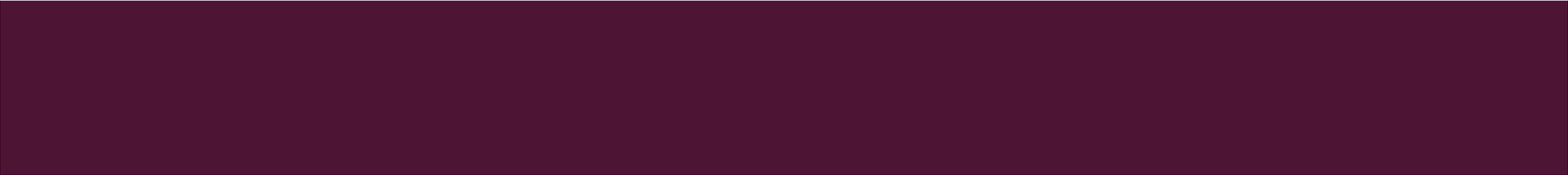
- Planning systems
- Prioritization
- Reminder systems
- Highly structured and productive morning routine

A CLOSER LOOK AT SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES AND CONTEXT





LOGISTICS

1. RUNNING GROUPS
 2. LD/ADHD CONSIDERATIONS
 3. DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE CONSIDERATIONS
- 

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RUNNING GROUPS

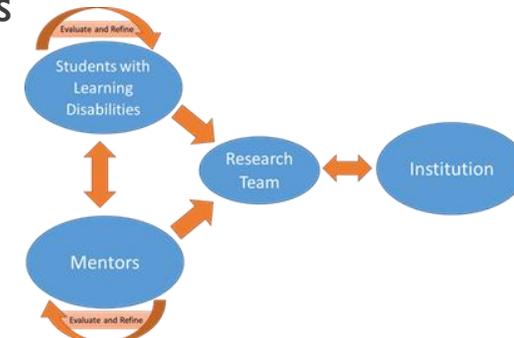
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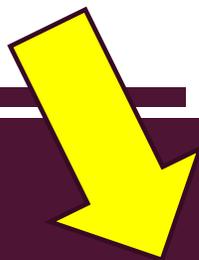
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WHAT WE DID – INSIDE VS. OUTSIDE

Logistics:

- Communicating in the same way
- Format discussion questions in written format
- Careful not to stigmatize
- Gripe session – careful not to let them complain and label
- Action focused – redirecting to actions that they can be taking
- Timing for psychoeducational instruction/resources vs. focused discussion

Therapeutic considerations:

- ✓ Allowing processing time in group – UDL
- ✓ Strength-based approach: purposefully lead discussion toward identification of strengths
- ✓ Guided discovery prompts

OUR GUIDED DISCOVERY: PROMPTS & GUIDING QUESTIONS

Strengths

1. Discover

How can understanding your strengths help you with life outside the classroom?

2. Understand

In what ways do you view your LD or ADHD as a potential strength?

3. Anticipate

Why should you share your strengths and areas of difficulty with your professors and/or friends and family?

4. Recognize the need for a strategy

What could you do...?





WHAT WE DID – INSIDE VS. OUTSIDE

- Communicating in the same way (texts vs. emails)
- **Scheduling** – open and consistent, alternatives to getting the work done (make-ups)
 - Frequent reminders through different methods
 - Working with mentors in supporting scheduling needs
- Careful not to stigmatize
- When students reached out being available to answer questions and provide resources
- Preparation for meetings: presentation and questions provided in a written format, visual formats, fidgets available, snacks
- **What we should of done: build in time for socializing**

Therapeutic consideration:

- ✓ Continuous improvement approach: student centered approach
- ✓ Leveraging outside supporters

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- Social functioning is required to establish group process
- The group process is an effective way to facilitate strategy sharing and utilization
 - Benefits of the group process
 - Encourages self-reflection
 - Increases sense of feeling empowered
 - Motivates students to try new ways to manage
- There are essential pragmatic and logistical aspects to consider when running group sessions that can enhance their effectiveness
 - Internally/externally
 - Logistical/therapeutic
 - Client-centered



Questions?



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Link to articles and conference presentations