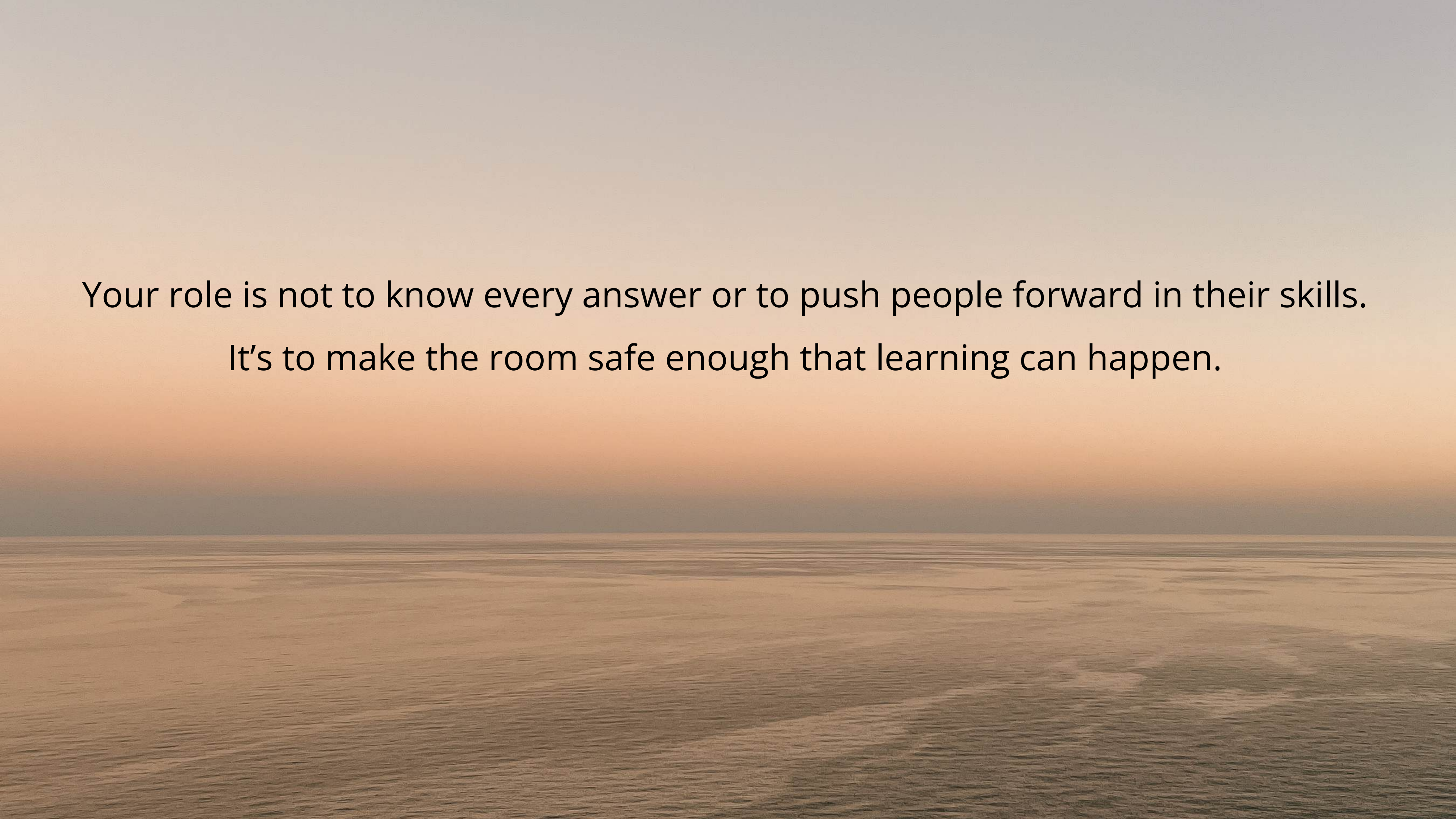


Volunteer Onboarding



Your role is not to know every answer or to push people forward in their skills.
It's to make the room safe enough that learning can happen.



Mission and Mandate

The Centre Edge Society is a queer-led nonprofit reclaiming creativity as a source of **agency, connection, and joy.**

We create accessible, inclusive spaces to learn and practice hands-on skills in textile arts, paper crafts, and other forms of making.

Our programs centre the act of creation as an expression of identity, resistance, and community care.

Objectives:

1. Reclaim Creativity as a Right
2. Accessible Participation
3. Skill-Building for Expression
4. Community Connection and Care
5. Affirmation of Identity



Guiding Values:

Belonging:

Everyone deserves a place where they're not just included, but centred.

Agency:

Reclaiming personal power and choice. it's about centering decision making.

Sustainability:

- environmental
- personal
- joy
- community

Culture:

A space where people can show up stressed, tired, or unsure

A space where bodies, identities, and skill levels are not up for comment

A space where curiosity and pacing matter more than getting it right or getting it done.



What does this make you feel?

1. Strategies for Teaching Adults

2. Body Dysmorphia, Gender Dysphoria, and Neurodivergence

3. Norms & Boundaries for Interactions

4. Support & Additional Resources

Strategies for teaching adults

1. Beginner struggle is not a personal failure

- Normalize confusion, repetition, and slow progress. Many adults carry shame from past learning experiences.

2. Anchor new skills to existing knowledge

- Connect sewing steps to things they already know or have already done on another project.

3. Ask questions that put understanding ownership on you, not the individual

- Replace “Does that make sense?” with
- “Did I explain that clearly, or should I try another way?”

Strategies for teaching adults

4. Consent before contact

- Always ask before touching bodies, garments, or projects.

5. Stay with emotion, don't manage it

- Don't correct negative self-talk or rush feelings. Presence is more regulating than fixing.

6. Celebrate effort, not outcomes

- Even when the result looks great, name persistence, curiosity, or patience first.



Ways Adults Learn:

Auditory:

Start by explaining it in words, speaking a little bit slower than your average conversation speed

Visual:

Demonstrate it for them without augmenting their project

Kinesthetic:

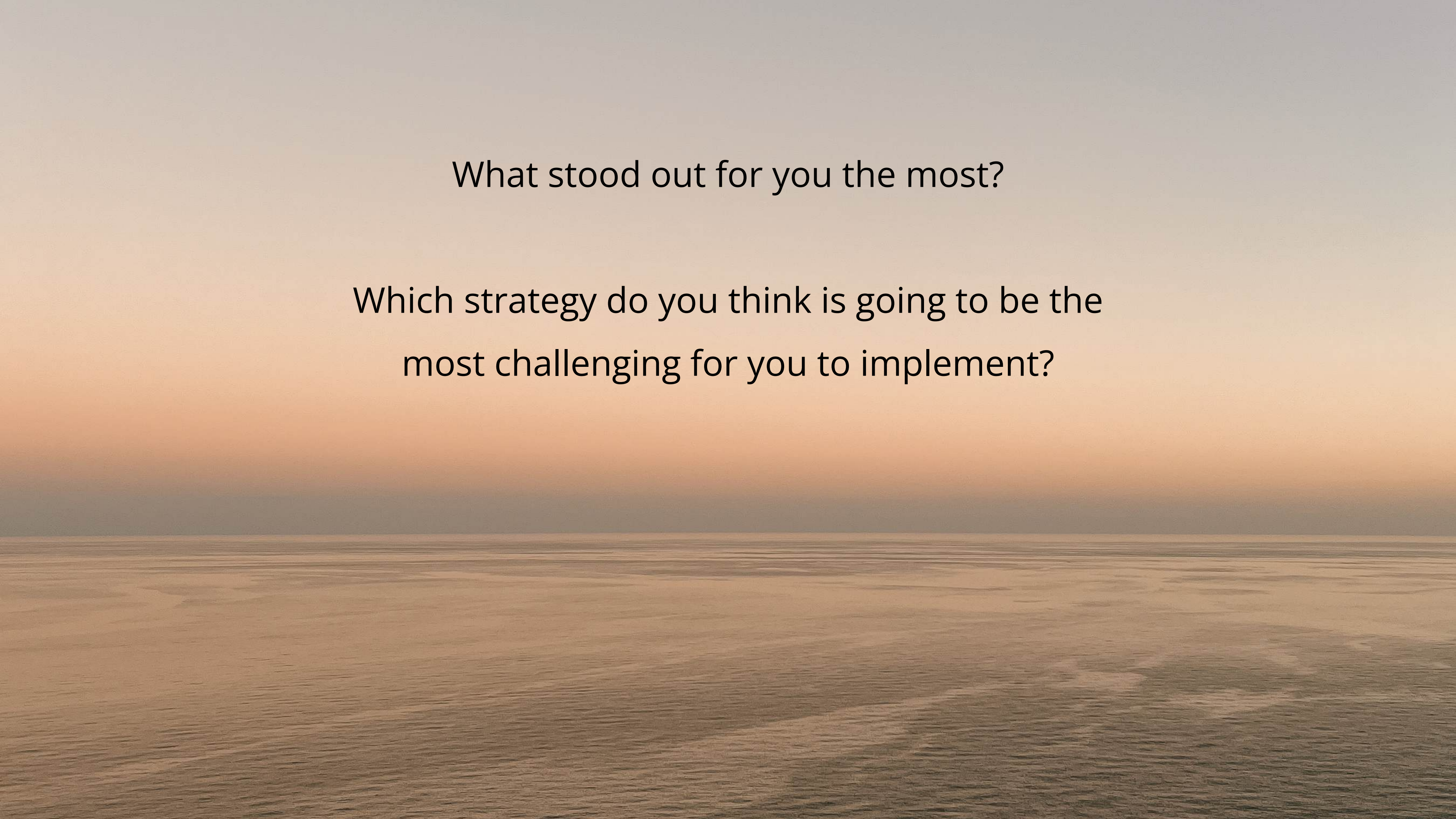
Stay with them while they get started implementing the instructions and do it with their own hands

Reminder:

If someone still looks stuck, **it doesn't mean you did a bad job explaining it.** It usually means they need it presented a different way.

And if you're out of ideas for how to explain it, bring in another volunteer.





What stood out for you the most?

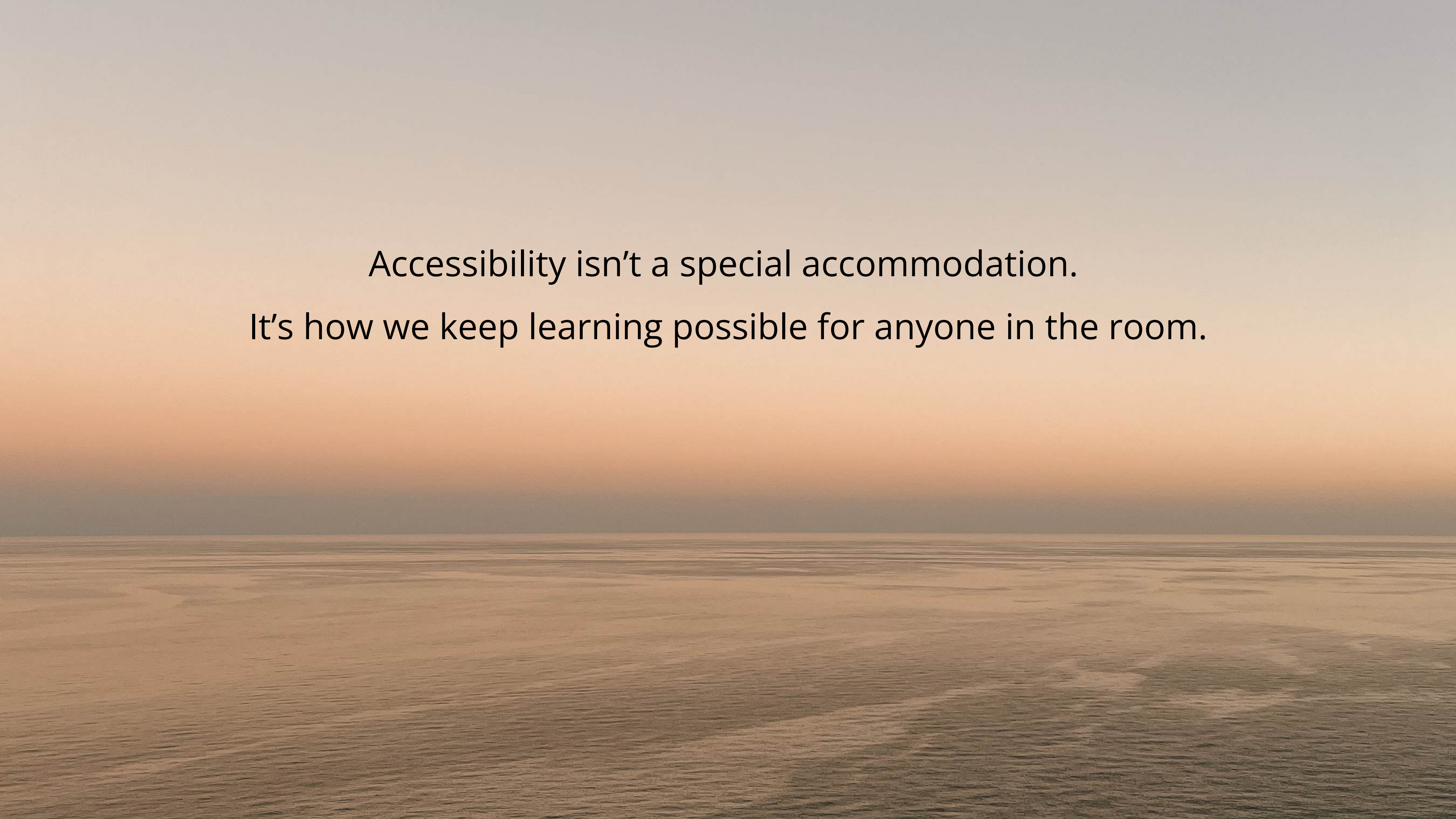
Which strategy do you think is going to be the most challenging for you to implement?

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Accessibility isn't a special accommodation.
It's how we keep learning possible for anyone in the room.



What Body Dysmorphia Is

- A distressing or distorted relationship with one's body
- Can be activated by visibility, comparison, or feedback
- Often invisible, even in confident or skilled participants

What can unintentionally activate it

1. Comments about bodies, appearance, or physical traits
2. "Flattering," "slimming," or appearance-focused language
3. Comparison between people or outcomes
4. Uninvited feedback or attention



What to Avoid:

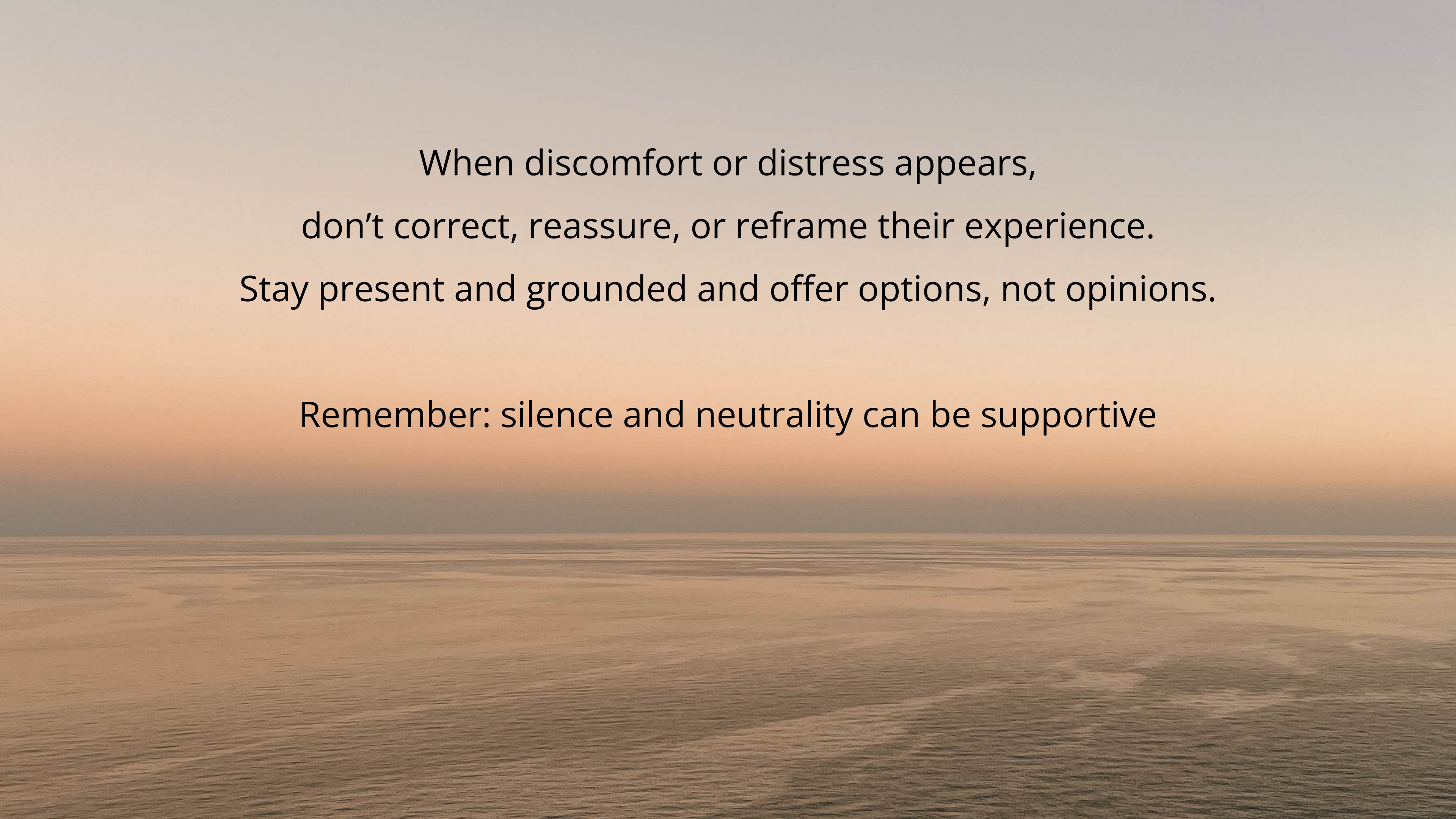
Appearance-based
praise or critique

Assumptions about
comfort,
confidence, or
intent

Comparing
people or their
work to others

Instead Use:

1. Process-focused language (“What are you noticing?”)
2. Choice-based questions (“Do you want feedback or space?”)
3. Consented, objective observations about the project, not the person



When discomfort or distress appears,
don't correct, reassure, or reframe their experience.
Stay present and grounded and offer options, not opinions.

Remember: silence and neutrality can be supportive



The background of the slide is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a vast, flat landscape. The sky is a gradient of light colors, from pale yellow at the horizon to a soft blue at the top. The foreground shows a calm body of water, likely the ocean, with gentle ripples and a reflection of the sky. The horizon line is straight and divides the image roughly in half.

Tip:

Always leave the body out of the conversation entirely
and bring it back to agency, identity expression and consent.

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What Gender Dysphoria Is

- Distress related to how one's gender is perceived or interacted with
- Can be activated by language, assumptions, or visibility
- May be present even if someone does not name it or talk about it

You don't need to know or understand someone's gender.

You need to avoid making it a point of friction.



What to Avoid:

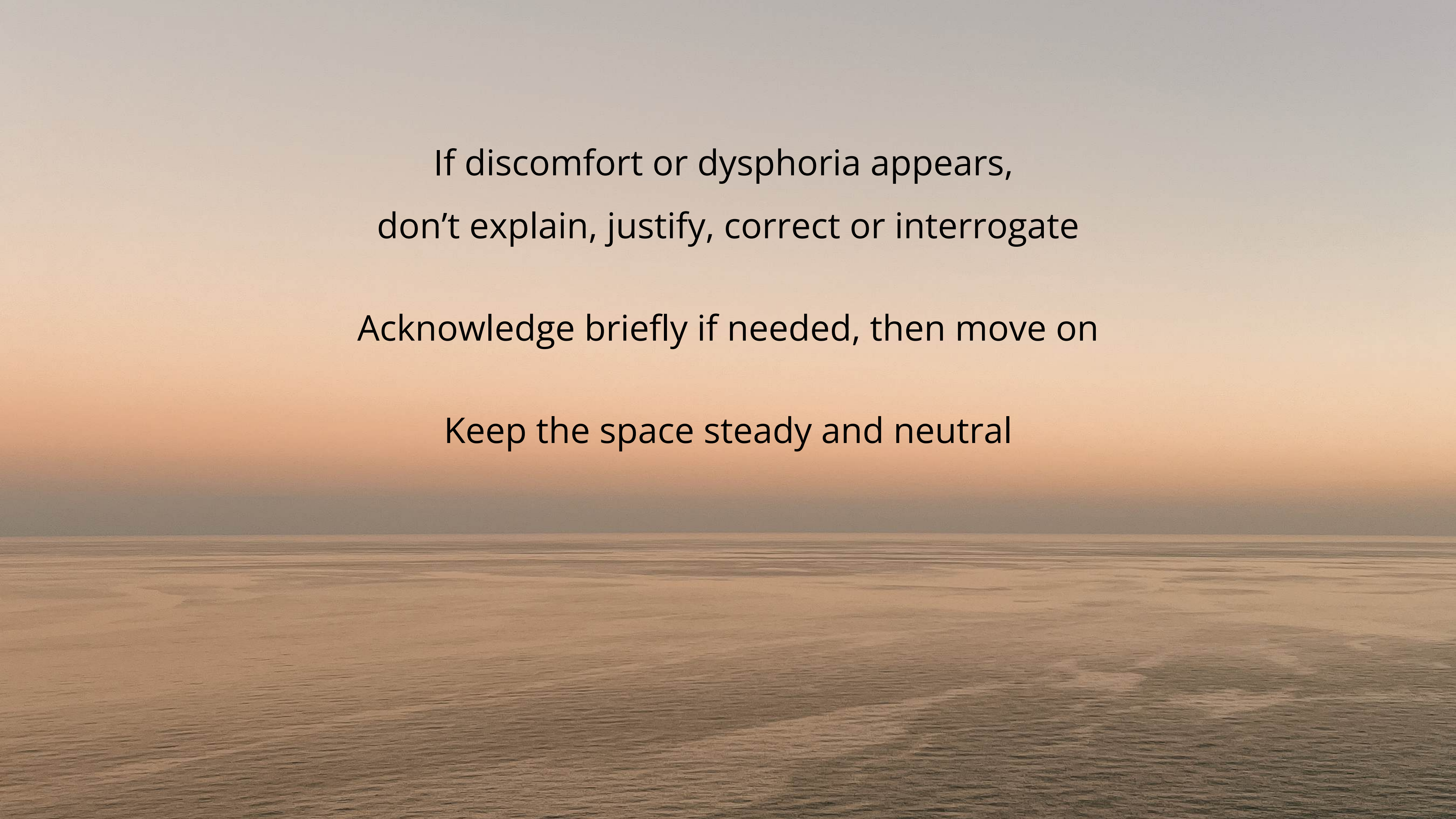
Gendered comments, compliments or jokes about bodies, interests or skill levels

Linking projects, colors, styles, or techniques to gender

Using incorrect names or pronouns, or making a big deal about mistakes

Instead:

1. Use neutral, task-focused language
2. Treat names and pronouns as shared, without commentary
3. Ask questions that centre their experience “How do you want this to feel or function?”
4. Let people define their own goals



If discomfort or dysphoria appears,
don't explain, justify, correct or interrogate

Acknowledge briefly if needed, then move on

Keep the space steady and neutral



What did this bring up for you?

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What neurodivergence is

- Different ways of processing information, sensory input, and social interaction
- Often invisible and not disclosed
- Can show up as overwhelm, shutdown, hyperfocus, emotional expression or needing things repeated

What can unintentionally overwhelm

- Too much verbal instruction at once
- Loud environments, overlapping conversations, or sudden noise
- Being watched while learning something new
- Time pressure or being rushed
- Unclear expectations or instructions



What to Do:

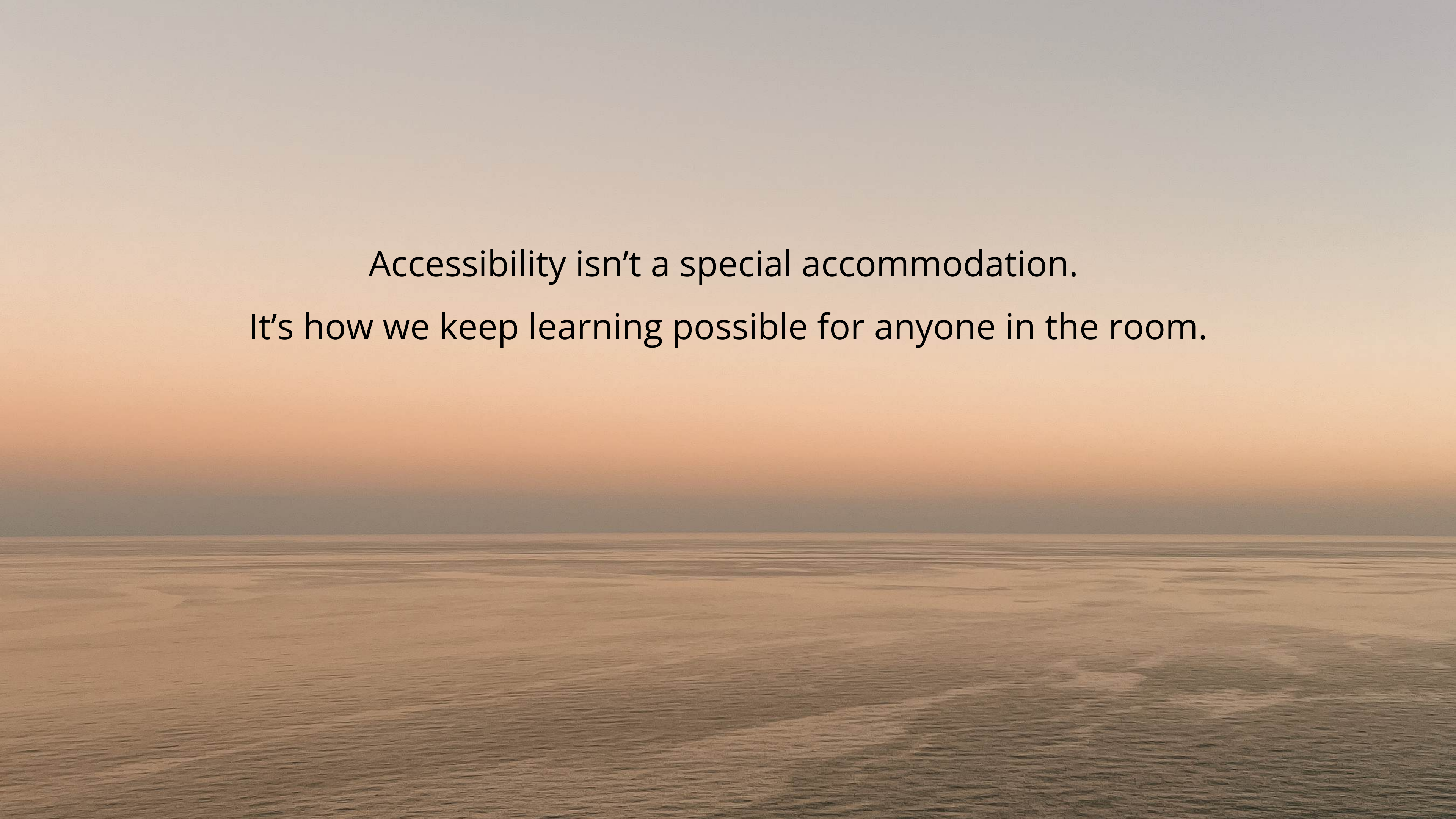
Ask if they'd like to know the big picture for the project, or if they'd rather it one step at a time.

Repeat information with reassurance and validation.

Allow different pacing without drawing attention to it

When someone seems overwhelmed or shut down

1. Don't push, rush, or add more information
2. Don't interpret quiet as resistance
3. Offer options instead of instructions
4. Let pauses happen



Accessibility isn't a special accommodation.
It's how we keep learning possible for anyone in the room.





Where's your anxiety level at now?

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Norms for Interactions

- Consent first
 - Before touching, advising, correcting, or stepping in.
- Lead with curiosity
 - Ask questions instead of assuming or fixing.
- Focus on the task, not the person
 - Talk about the work, the process, and the next step, not bodies, identities, or ability.
- Celebrate effort, not outcomes
 - Persistence and engagement matter more than how it looks.

Boundaries:

Volunteers are here to support learning, not to manage emotions or lives, or past traumas or Trauma.

You are here to:

- Offer skill-based support and guidance
- Ask consent-based questions
- Normalize struggle and mistakes
- Keep interactions respectful, neutral, and task-focused
- Pause, loop someone else in or step back when something feels off



Boundaries:

You are not providing emotional processing or therapy

You are not fixing distress, shame, or frustration. But it's okay to sit with them while they feel it.

You are not having personal opinions about bodies, identity, or life choices

**You will never be the only
support person in the room.**

When in doubt, involve a lead or step back.

Just because you ask for help doesn't mean you failed.



If something feels bigger than the task, it probably is.

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How to get support

- **Volunteer Manual:** An on-site reference for procedures, language and expectations
- **On Site Team Lead:** First point of contact for questions, concerns, or escalation
- **Volunteer Coordinator:** volunteers@thecentreedge.ca
- **Avery:** 403-973-5270 or avery@thecentreedge.ca


What to do if you don't feel comfortable bringing it up to me?

Our board of directors are here to keep the organization on track with its mission, goals and values.

They are also my bosses.

So if you have something you don't feel I've addressed appropriately and/or don't feel comfortable speaking to me with. please email chair@thecentreedge.ca





Not everything has to get resolved in the moment.
Some things are meant to be followed up on later.

How I like feedback

Please give it to me straight. I'd much rather you say what you mean than try and soften it to protect my feelings.

Context helps me a lot, especially if we talking about something that happened in the past.

I am very skilled at making sure I respond and don't react (former ICU nurse) so you can always expect a regulated response



How do you like feedback?

Remember:

If something feels off,
that's enough reason to ask for support.