

Autism Conversations: Individualizing Educational Interventions with the MIGDAS-2 Evaluation Process

Marilyn J. Monteiro, PhD



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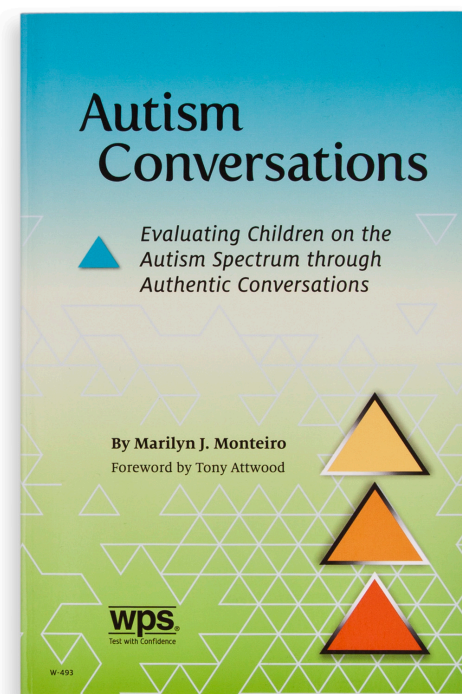


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Autism Conversations

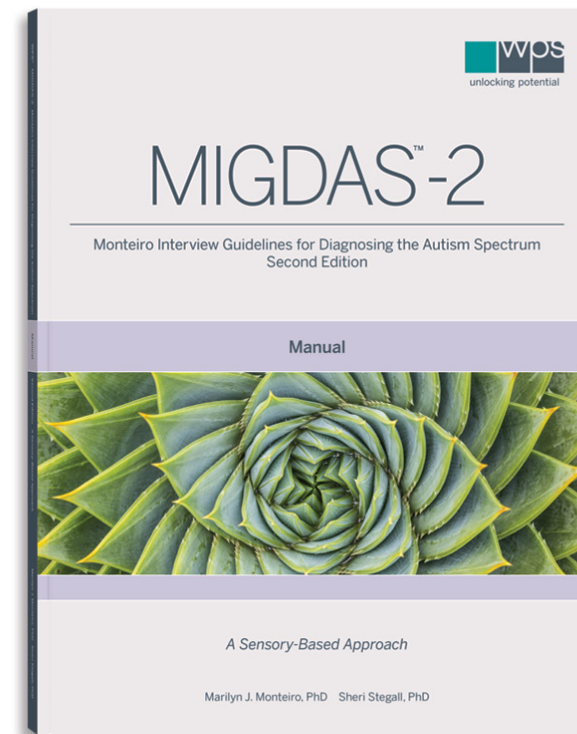


Evaluating Children on the Autism Spectrum through Authentic Conversations

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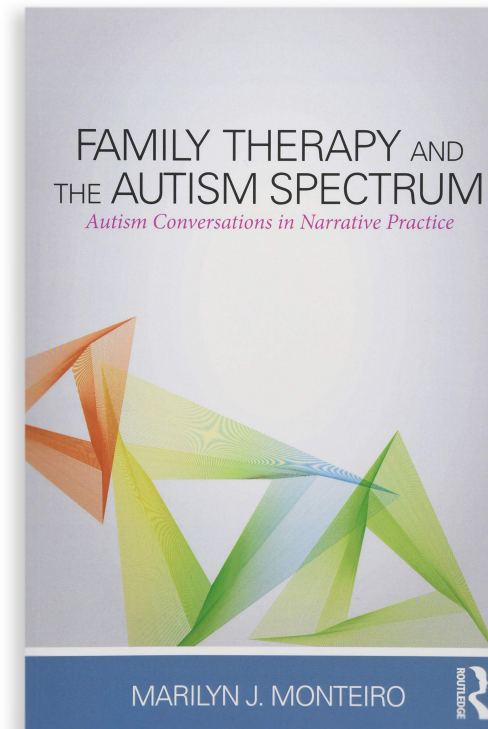
MIGDAS-2



Monteiro Interview Guidelines for Diagnosing the Autism Spectrum, Second Edition

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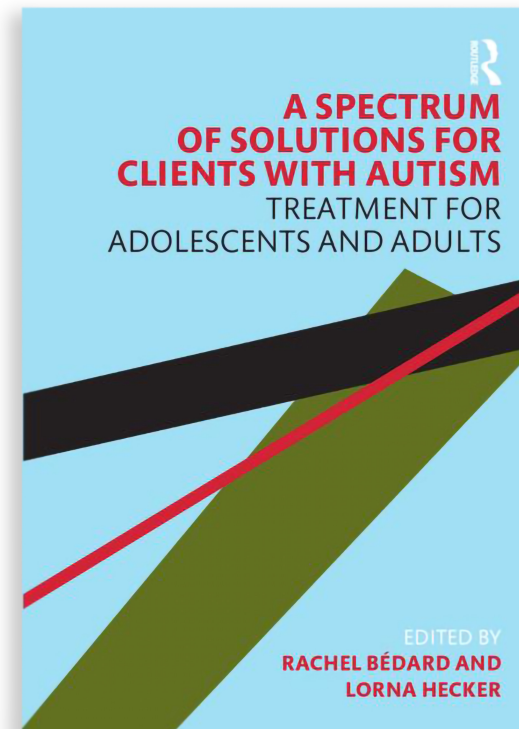
Family Therapy and the Autism Spectrum



Autism Conversations in Narrative Practice

Routledge

The Power of the Autism Spectrum Narrative



The Transformative Power of the Autism Spectrum Narrative

Chapter in Routledge Compilation

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?



- Interviewing children and their parents over the course of thousands of evaluations led to the development of the MIGDAS-2 system
- The MIGDAS-2 qualitative interview process emerged from the application of interview techniques that are in sync with the autism brain style and the resulting use of positive, descriptive language
- The conversational approach provides you, the clinician, with a way to connect with children and their parents in a meaningful way during the autism evaluation process

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



- It also provides a structure to make the evaluation process enjoyable for the child, adolescent, or adult
- Children and their families are given a way to have a shared experience with you, the evaluator
- Both the child and the parents leave the autism evaluation experience with a nuanced and positive understanding of the child's individual story

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



- This contrasts with the more common experience of being in a setting in which the individual is measured, observed, and scored—and then given a diagnosis or label with negative implications
- Although standardized measures play an important role in the autism evaluation process, they leave us without a compelling way to tell the nuanced story of the individual child, adolescent, or adult

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



- Standardized measures like the ADOS-2 provide a solid, structured behavior sample that emphasizes social communication differences, with limited use of sensory-based materials
- The MIGDAS-2 is a qualitative diagnostic interview that is organized around exploring the individual's areas of preferred interest and inviting the individual to explore materials with interesting sensory properties

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



- This sensory-based interview process replaces the familiar, structured prompts that can mask the individual's underlying pattern of *creating* and *maintaining routines* with preferred topics and materials with interesting sensory properties
- Sensory-based routines become instantly recognizable with this process, as the individual's distinctive pattern of autism spectrum neurodiversity drives the approach to the materials and the conversation

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



- The MIGDAS-2 process guides you to pay attention to what is relevant in how the individual with autism differences experiences the world
- When you provide an autism evaluation experience that is in sync with the autism spectrum brain style, you gain valuable information about how the individual *organizes* and *regulates* their brain

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



- This leads you toward creating individualized interventions and supports that make sense to the student, parents, and teachers
- Let's review the visual framework and descriptive language that are central to the MIGDAS-2 autism evaluation process
- Then we'll link that framework to an organized way to individualize recommended supports and interventions

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



- The conversational structure of the MIGDAS-2, using sensory fidget materials and topics of interest to the individual as the conversational entry points, results in a clear presentation of the autism spectrum brain style across age and ability levels
- The MIGDAS-2 visual framework, descriptive language, and accessible interview protocols were developed to support evaluators in creating the compelling individual story

You Play a Key Role in Supporting Individuals with Autism Differences

- When you understand and describe how the individual with autism spectrum brain style differences views the world, you become a key advocate in promoting a positive personal narrative
- Your evaluation story supports the development of resiliency and a positive outlook for the child and the parents

Words We Want to Hear from Parents

“This evaluation process helped us really see how Milo thinks and how he experiences the world. The ‘course correction’ supports that came from understanding Milo’s diagnosis made so much sense. Now we ‘talk less and show more’ and life is so much better for all of us!”

Why the MIGDAS-2 Process?

(cont.)



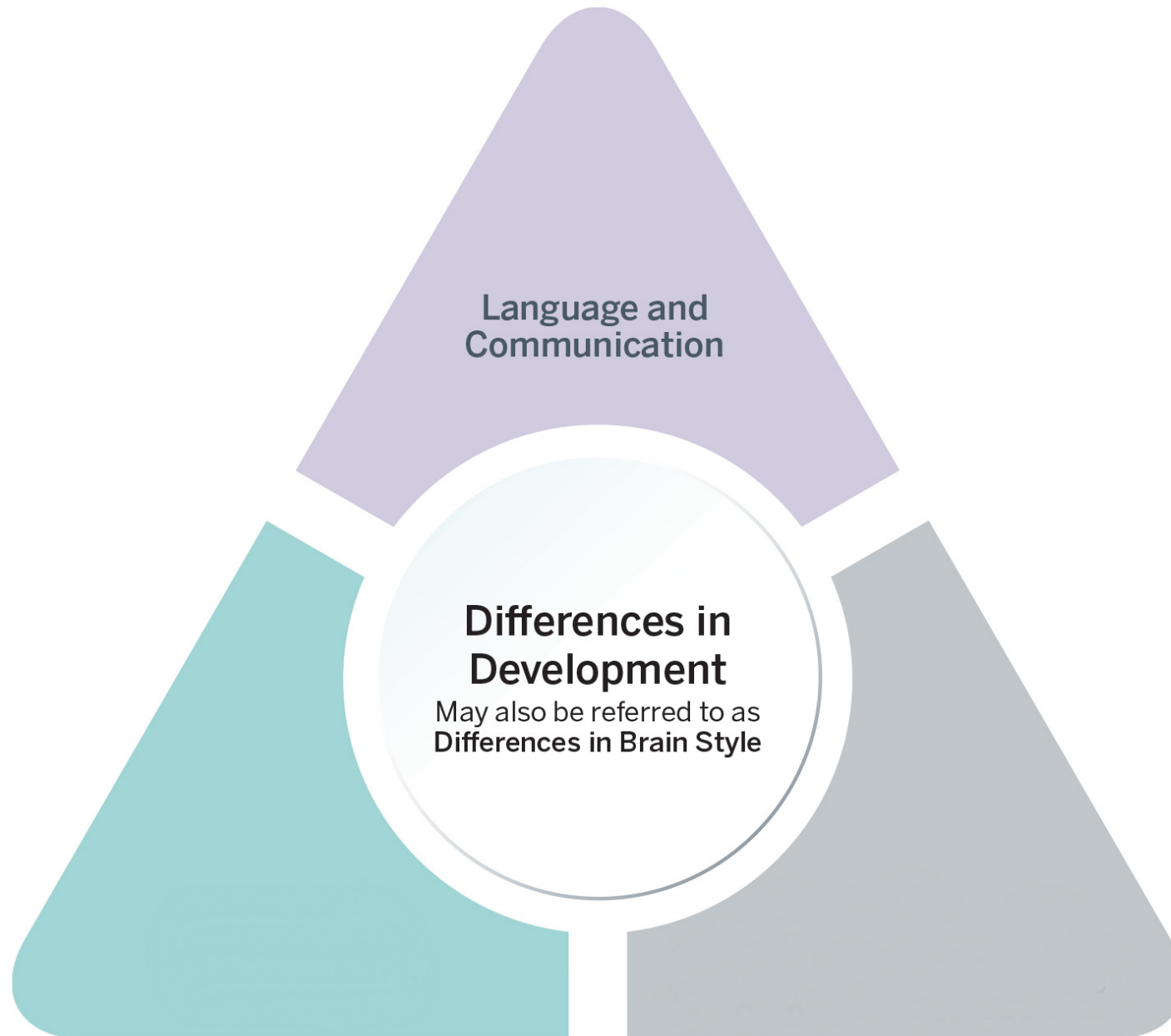
- The MIGDAS-2 process is built around a visual framework
- This framework provides you with an organizational system to guide the way you think—
- And talk—
- About the individual's autism spectrum brain style profile

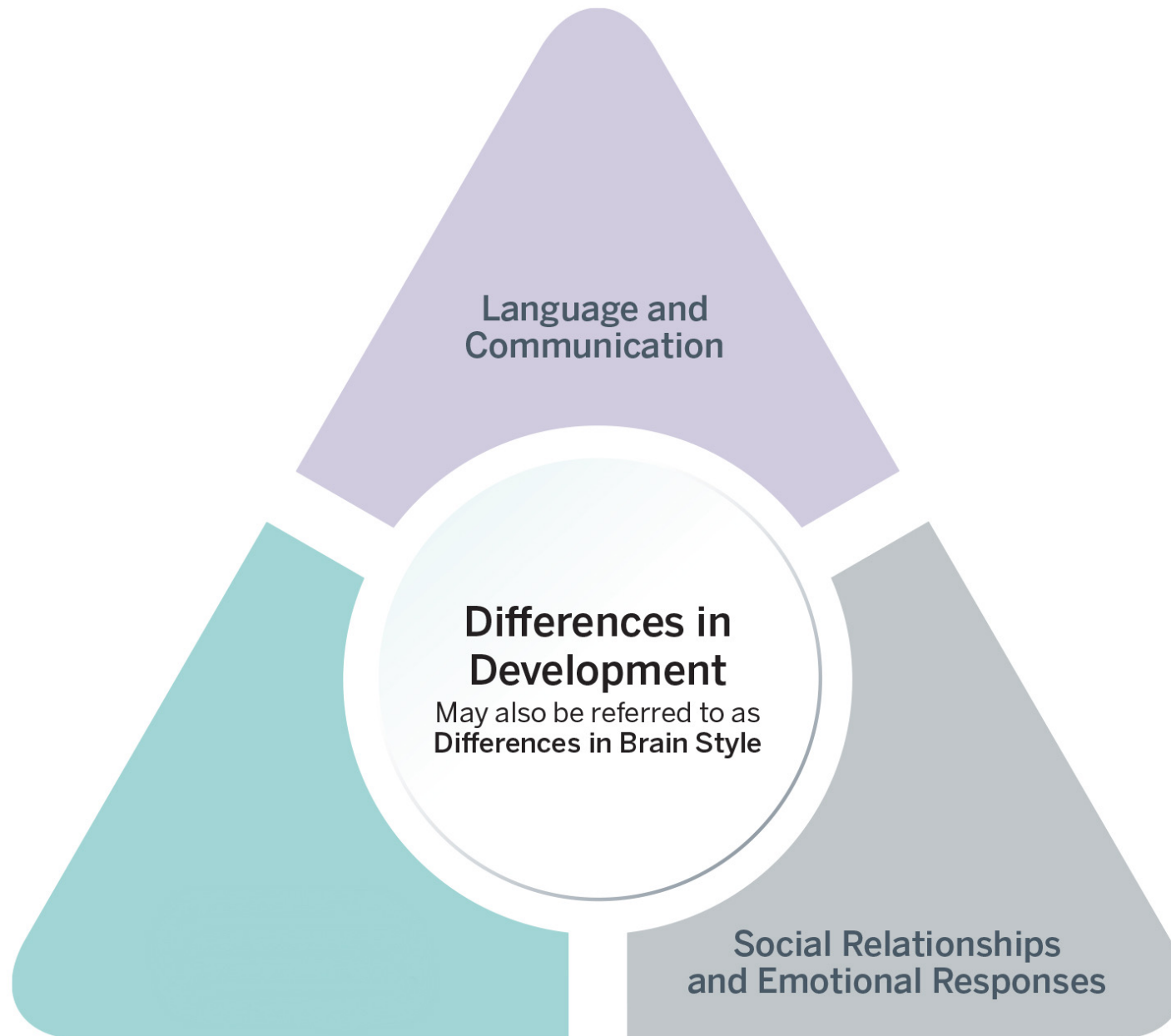
The Visual Framework

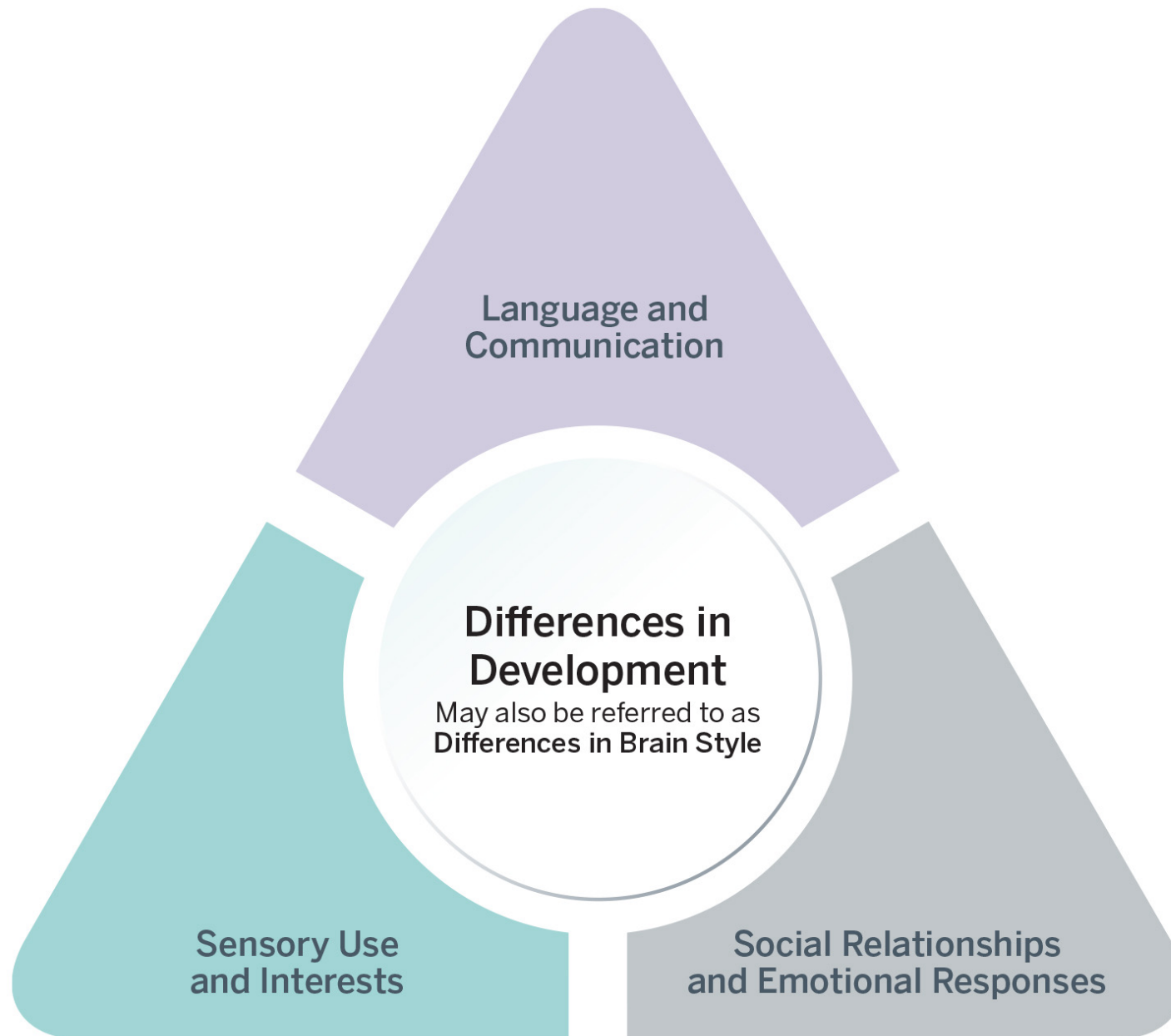
The Descriptive Triangle











Connecting the MIGDAS-2 System to Individualized Supports



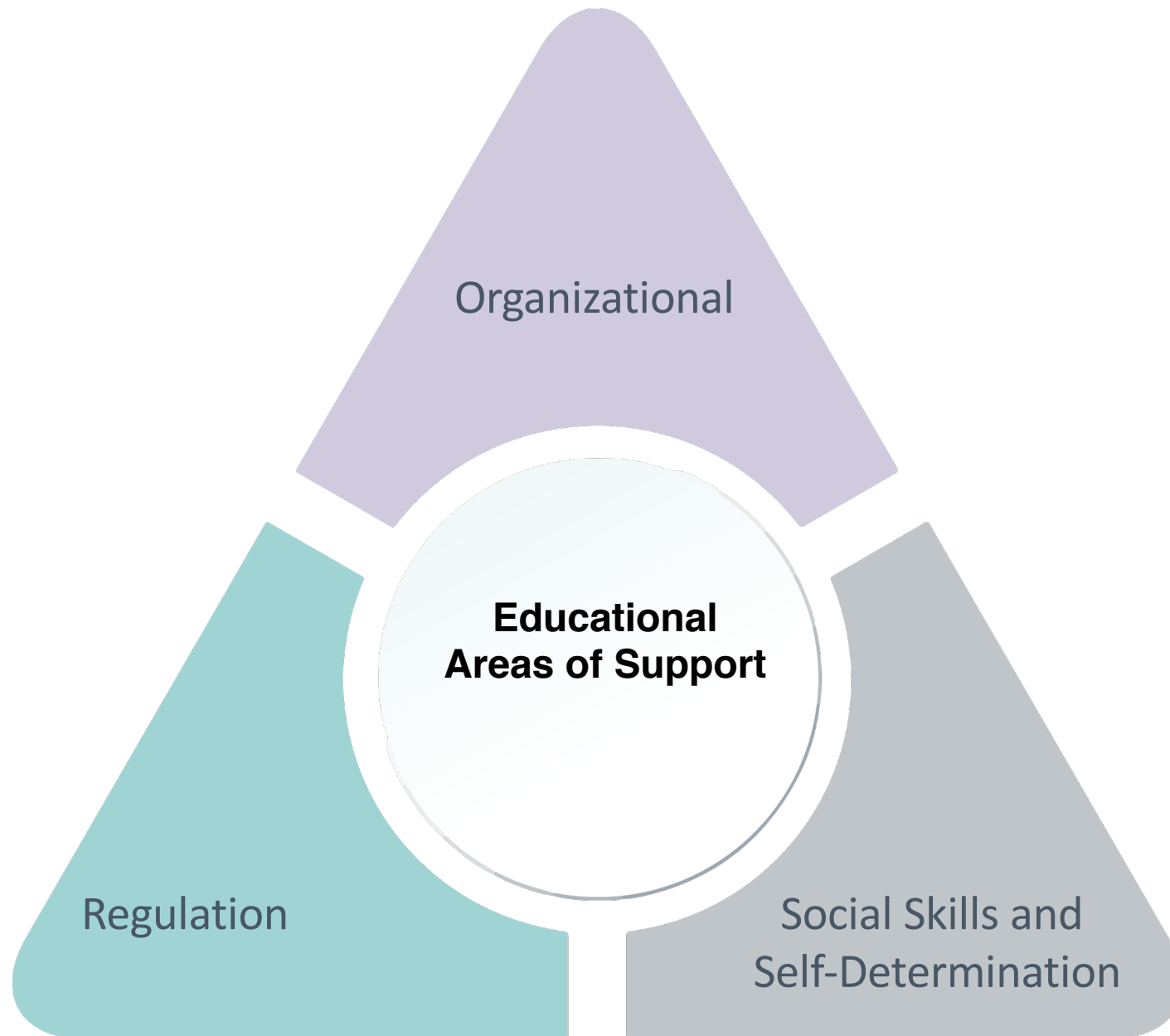
- Just as the MIGDAS-2 process supports you in *organizing* and *describing* the individual's pattern of strengths and differences in the three key areas, the following descriptive triangle helps you *organize* and *describe* three key areas of intervention and support
- Why is this important?
- What is the value of placing your recommendations into a visual framework?

Connecting the MIGDAS-2 System to Individualized Supports

(cont.)



- When you guide parents and teachers through the visual framework, you describe the individual first
- This provides a context and meaning to the diagnostic term
- When you organize the recommended interventions into a visual framework, you provide parents and teachers with a context so the supports acquire functional meaning



Organizational Supports

- Let's start by better understanding the rationale behind this category of educational supports

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



- Language and Communication differences affect the way in which the autism spectrum brain takes in information
- Processing incoming language and managing verbal directives are a source of stress and lead to fatigue as the individual's threshold for taking in information is surpassed
- Even children with high levels of verbal fluency who have autism spectrum differences become reactive when they are required to manage too much verbal input

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



- The autism spectrum brain organizes and regulates best when the individual can see and respond to visual contextual cues
- When this brain difference is understood, the adults working with the child can take the child's perspective and provide visual organizational supports

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



Remember the quote from Milo's parents?

- The most efficient way for adults to communicate is to use verbal communication
- This cancels out the most efficient way for the autism spectrum brain to process communication

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



The descriptive triangle of educational supports reminds adults that even when children are verbally fluent, the use of visual supports helps the child...

- Organize
- Regulate
- And take in information more efficiently than when they have to rely solely on auditory input

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



- The use of visual schedules, checklists, “First/Then” charts, and other visual supports provide organizational contextual cues and supports
- Pairing verbal directives with visual contextual cues helps the individual with autism spectrum differences manage incoming demands without becoming distressed or dysregulated

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



- It allows both the child and the adult to shift from feeling powerless to feeling capable
- Partnering with the child in the development of visual supports is a key part of the process
- This allows the child to link imagery from areas of preferred interest to visual organizational supports, placing the routine into a context that has positive associations

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



The use of visual organizational supports...

- Leads to the development of personal agency for the child, as they transfer their prompt dependency from the adult who gives them verbal directives to their visual system
- Provides the adult with a way to transfer prompt dependency away from them, as the child comes under instructional control of the system they helped develop

Organizational Supports

(cont.)



- The use of visual organizational supports provides the adult with a way to transfer prompt dependency and to support independence
- Visual supports prompt the following shifts:
 - Talk less and show more
 - Show while telling
 - Prompt the child to use their visual system that is in close proximity to their body to initiate and follow through the steps involved in completing daily tasks and routines

Social Skills and Self-Determination Supports

- The autism spectrum brain organizes around object-focused routines and narratives
- This serves the function of reducing internal stress, as object-focused routines can be self-initiated, have predictable elements, and minimize the unpredictability inherent in social exchanges with others

Social Skills and Self- Determination Supports

(cont.)



- Social exchanges increase the individual's level of stress and distress, as the brain has to work hard to recognize, interpret, and respond to social communication cues
- Over time, lack of success in managing incoming social overtures, and lack of success in their object-focused social overtures, leads to an internalized negative narrative
 - “There’s something wrong with me”
 - “My brain doesn’t work right”
 - “I don’t want to go there/do that”

Social Skills and Self- Determination Supports

(cont.)



- At the same time, children have a drive to share their interests with others and to connect with others
- When there is a pattern of being out of sync with others in daily social exchanges, distress and a negative self-narrative become amplified
- Social skills and self-determination supports are a category of supports and interventions that address this key area of need for individuals with autism spectrum brain style differences

Social Skills and Self-Determination Supports

(cont.)



- As with organizational supports, the use of a visual context is essential
- Supporting social skills development by providing a visual context can be done using social thinking t-charts, social stories/step-by-step visual maps, identifying and listing the steps involved in a conversational exchange, comic strip social autopsies, visual modeling, and other visual supports
- Something as simple as using a “pause” button in coaching sessions will amplify when the brain needs to make the flexible transition from talking to listening

Social Skills and Self- Determination Supports

(cont.)



- The self-determination social narrative can be supported through the use of visual supports as well
- Creating a brain book with tools that highlight strength-based ways to understand and talk about the individual's brain style addresses this
- 5 things my teacher needs to know about me lists can also be helpful
- The self-determination social narrative helps individuals and their families shift from the deficit-driven diagnosis identity (disorder) to the strength-based neurodiversity identity (brain style)

Regulation Supports

- Emotional dysregulation and reactive behavior routines are closely linked to sensory preferences and sensitivities for the autism spectrum brain style

Regulation Supports

(cont.)



- Emotional reactivity leads to deeply embedded, disruptive, and upsetting behavior routines
- Each time the reactive behavior routine is triggered, brain inflexibility creates a sense of being out of control
- The brain goes from thinking to reacting and the behavior routine is communicating:

TOO MUCH!!!

Regulation Supports

(cont.)



- Once the reactive behavior routines are triggered, incoming demands and input add to the stress level and may prolong the episode before the child is able to reset their regulation level
- The binary autism spectrum brain experiences going from being okay to being not okay in a rapid sequence
- Adults who are with the child experience this binary switch as well

Regulation Supports

(cont.)



- Our behavior regulation supports tend to be organized around managing behavior after reactivity is triggered
- Once reactivity is triggered, however, the child is not available to problem solve or respond to the adult in an adaptive way

Regulation Supports

(cont.)



- Regulation supports that are in sync with the autism spectrum brain style include language that describes the words and actions associated with the individual's "thinking" brain and their "reacting" brain
- The development of individualized and visual regulation measures support the individual's ability to identify, self-monitor, and begin to self-regulate before making the switch from their thinking to their reacting brain

Regulation Supports

(cont.)



- Introducing strength-based language such as...
 - Understanding the science behind thinking versus reacting brain states
 - Making a list of triggers
 - And using the language of “brain reset” breaks and activities
- Are all part of the individualization and understanding of why you are recommending specific regulation supports for the individual

Regulation Supports

(cont.)



- Identifying and listing the form and function of the individual's self-soothing sensory routines and preferences are a key part of developing an individualized “brain reset activities menu”
- Understanding the underlying differences that lead to the destabilizing experience of emotional dysregulation and brain reactivity shifts the story from an experience of dysregulation to one of emotional management and balance

Regulation Supports

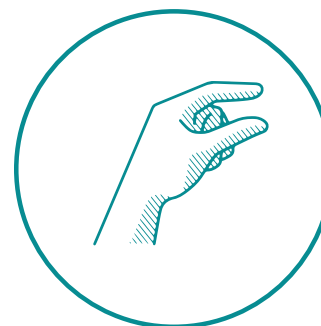
(cont.)



- Here's how 9-year-old Milo described his emotional regulation challenges:

“It felt like a Pokémon opponent that was so powerful that I despaired of ever being able to beat it.”

“But now, he's like, this big!”



The MIGDAS-2 Protocol System



- Manual
- Parent/Caregiver Questionnaire
- Teacher Questionnaire
- Diagnostic Interview Protocols



<https://www.wpspublish.com/migdas-2-monteiro-interview-guidelines-for-diagnosing-the-autism-spectrum-second-edition>

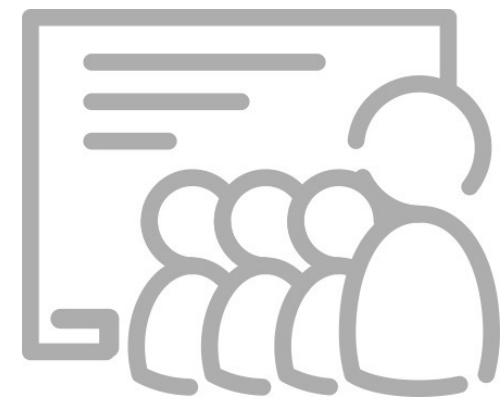
What Materials Are Needed to Use the MIGDAS-2 Protocol System?

- In addition to purchasing the manual and sets of protocols, you will need to collect sensory materials that contain visual, tactile, movement, and sound qualities
- A list of suggested sensory materials is available on the WPS website



What Training Is Needed to Use the MIGDAS-2 Protocol System?

- Participating in a full-day workshop will prepare experienced autism evaluators to begin using the MIGDAS-2 system as part of their autism evaluation toolkit
- Online training workshops are currently available once a month through my website:
www.marilynmonteiro.com
- I offer periodic workshops on narrative report writing and interventions
- You can also request that your state professional organization or school district sponsor a full-day MIGDAS-2 training workshop



Thank You

- I hope this gave you some ways to think and talk about linking interventions to the MIGDAS-2 visual framework
- Thank you for sharing your time with me
- Thank you for the important work you do supporting individuals with autism spectrum brain style differences and their families

Keep up the good work!



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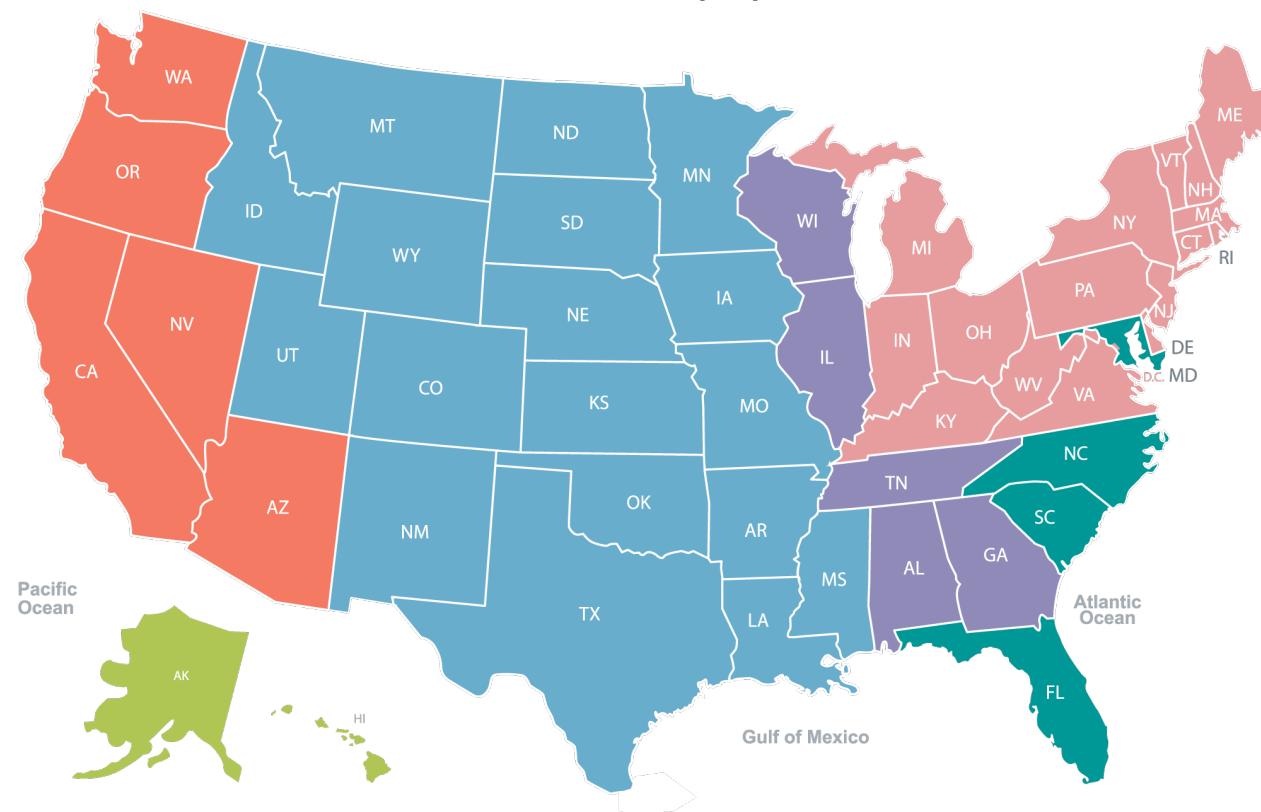


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From Screening to Intervention: How Schools Develop Comprehensive Behavior Supports for Students Using the BIMAS-2 Assessment



Webinar date:
August 27, 2021
10 a.m. PT

Presented by:
Achilles N. Bardos
Jim L. McDougal
Andria Amador

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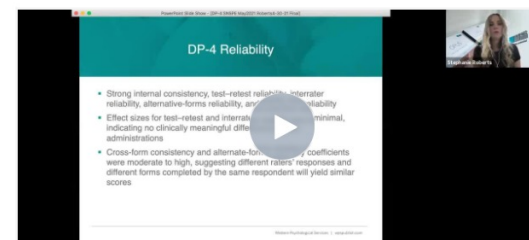


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WPS Telepractice 101

<https://pages.wpspublish.com/telepractice-101>



Assessment Telepractice Overview

The well-being of you and your clients and students remains at the forefront of our concern during this world health crisis. Our hope is that this time with our families becomes an opportunity to build stronger relationships, both at home and with others remotely. A practitioner conducting remote evaluations for the first time needs support.

You are invited to read the WPS:

- [Remote Assessment Guidelines](#)
- [Statement on Tele-assessment](#)
- [Assessment Validity Considerations during COVID-19](#)

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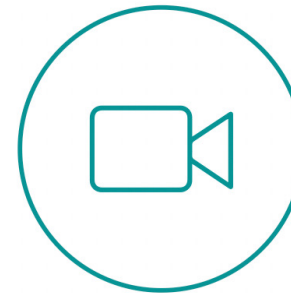
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