



PARENTING A CHILD WITH AUTISM

DSM5 CRITERIA

Deficits in social- emotional reciprocity which leads to impairments in social communication

Deficits in verbal communication which leads to impairments in communication

Deficits in developing/maintaining/understanding relationships

Stereotypical and/or repetitive motor movements/use of objects/speech

Insistence of sameness or inflexible adherence to routine/ritualized behavior

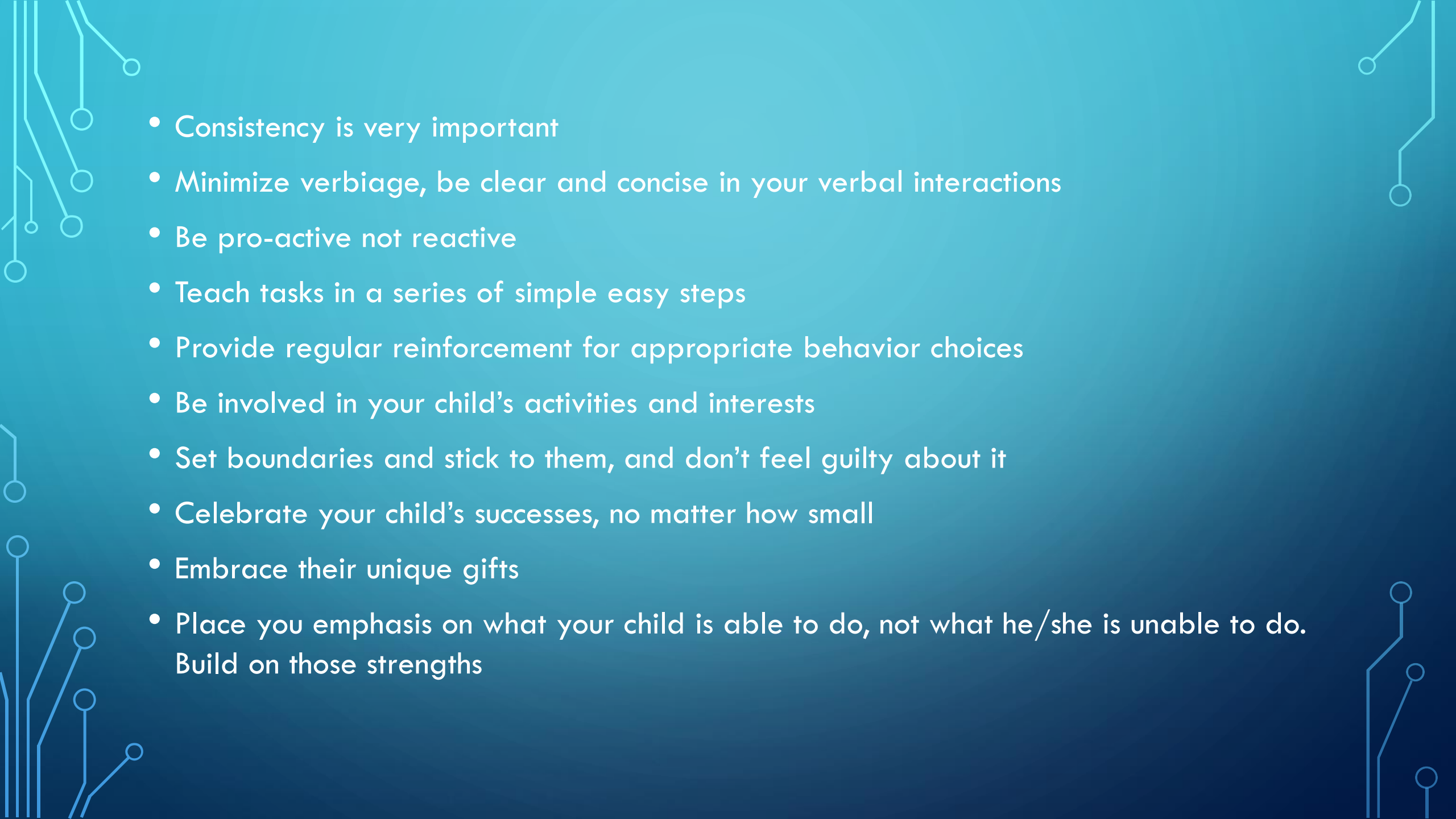
Highly restrictive fixed interests

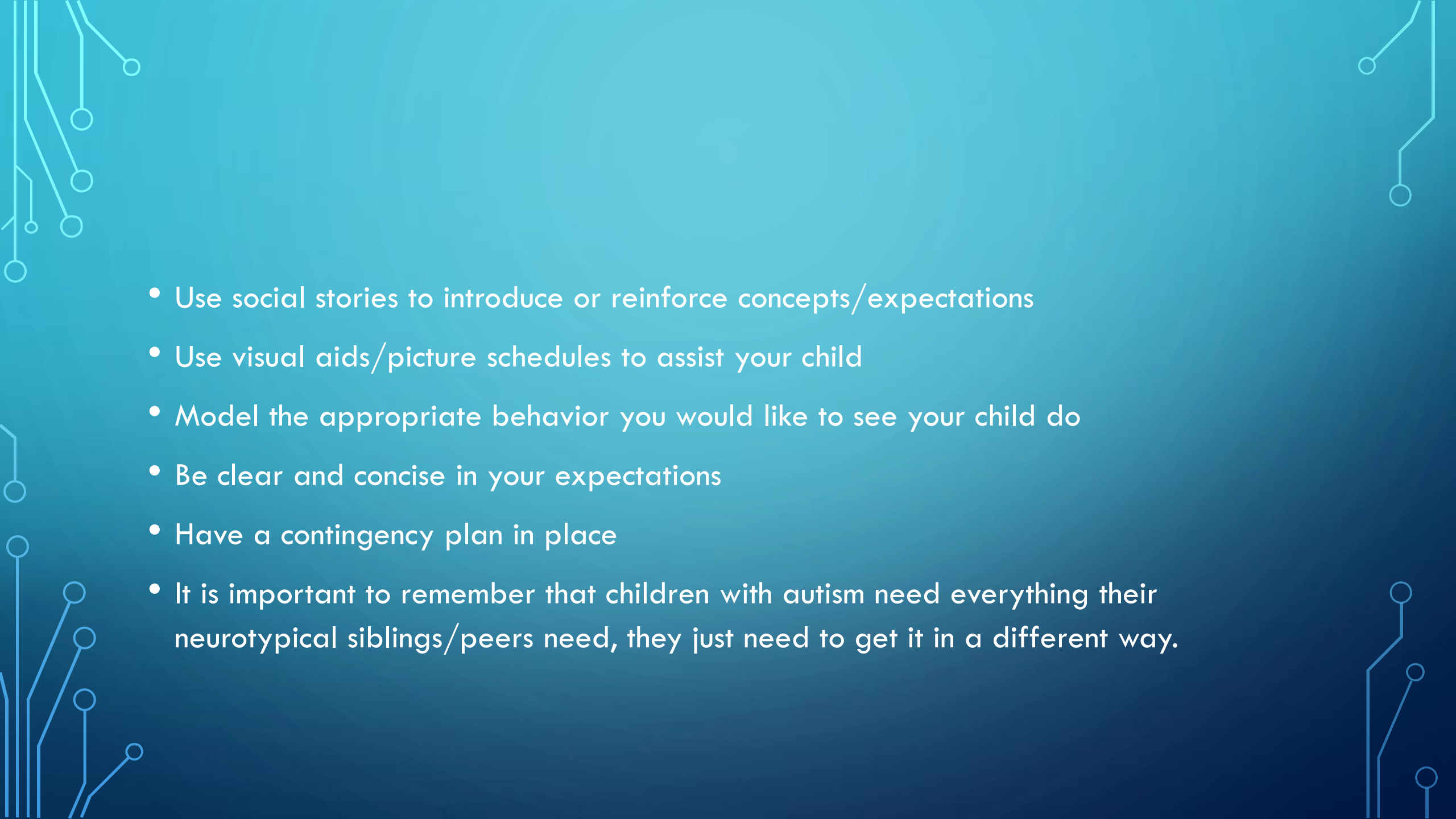
Hyper or hypoactivity to sensory input

(American Psychiatric Association. 2013, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition*. Washington DC, American Psychiatric Association)

PARENTING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM VS NEUROTYPICAL CHILDREN

- Behavior is a form of communication – what message is the child's behavior trying to convey
 - Is the child upset because there has been a change in routine
 - Is the child upset due to sensory overload
 - When a child with autism is acting out it is not necessarily due to poor behavior choices
 - Children with autism do not have a strong understanding of cause and effect
 - Children with autism often have a slow processing speed and it takes time for them to make sense of things in their environment

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- The slide features a teal-to-blue gradient background. In the corners, there are decorative white line-art elements resembling circuit boards or neural networks, with lines connecting to small circles.
- Consistency is very important
 - Minimize verbiage, be clear and concise in your verbal interactions
 - Be pro-active not reactive
 - Teach tasks in a series of simple easy steps
 - Provide regular reinforcement for appropriate behavior choices
 - Be involved in your child's activities and interests
 - Set boundaries and stick to them, and don't feel guilty about it
 - Celebrate your child's successes, no matter how small
 - Embrace their unique gifts
 - Place you emphasis on what your child is able to do, not what he/she is unable to do.
Build on those strengths

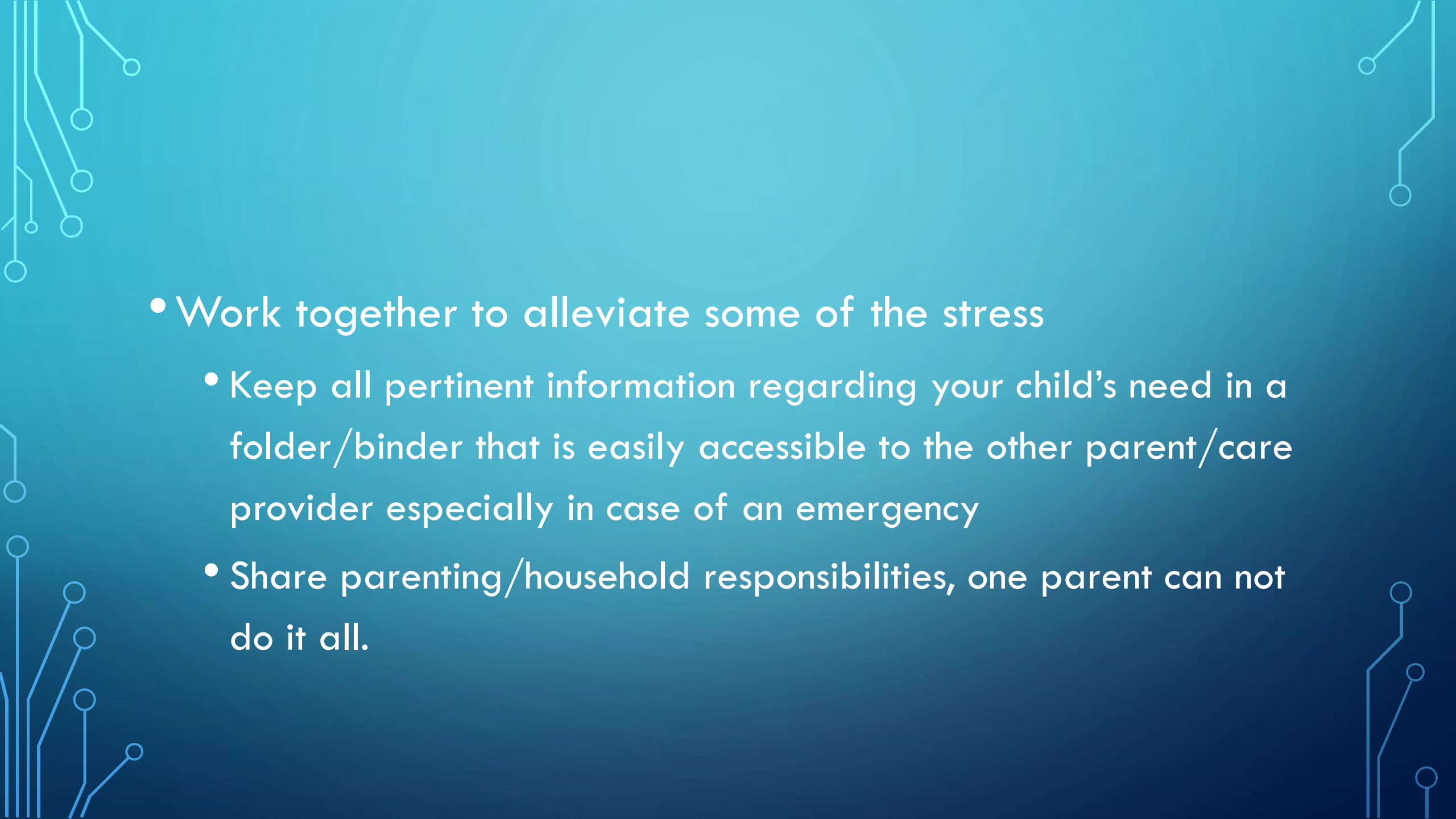
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- Use social stories to introduce or reinforce concepts/expectations
 - Use visual aids/picture schedules to assist your child
 - Model the appropriate behavior you would like to see your child do
 - Be clear and concise in your expectations
 - Have a contingency plan in place
 - It is important to remember that children with autism need everything their neurotypical siblings/peers need, they just need to get it in a different way.

MY CHILD LIKES MY SPOUSE BETTER THAN ME, WHAT CAN I DO?

- Involve yourself in your child's interests and activities
- Set aside one on one time with your child
- Don't take it personal, even neurotypical children have a preferred parent they turn to
- Involve yourself in the child's daily routine (i.e. make bathtime a time for you and your child)

UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF RAISING A CHILD WITH AUTISM

- Remember a diagnosis of autism does not define who your child is
- Take time for self – care
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Communicate with your spouse, especially if you are struggling or feeling overwhelmed
- Take time to connect as a couple, as well as a family
- Don't let outside influences negatively impact you or your family
- Children with autism often require more of your time, however, try and find one on one time with your other children to ensure they do not feel left out

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- The background is a solid teal color. In the corners, there are decorative white line-art patterns resembling circuit boards or neural networks, with lines connecting to small circles.
- Work together to alleviate some of the stress
 - Keep all pertinent information regarding your child's need in a folder/binder that is easily accessible to the other parent/care provider especially in case of an emergency
 - Share parenting/household responsibilities, one parent can not do it all.

ADDRESSING PARENT BURN OUT

- Do not be afraid to ask for help
- Seek out available community resources for respite care and other services
- Take time for yourself, self – care is so important
- Get rest – when your child is sleeping you need to be resting/sleeping
- If someone offers to help – accept it, even if it is in small increments