

Centering Joy in the Neurodivergent Community



Shaunté Johnson, Educator, Homeschool Mother, UW LEND Family Advocate

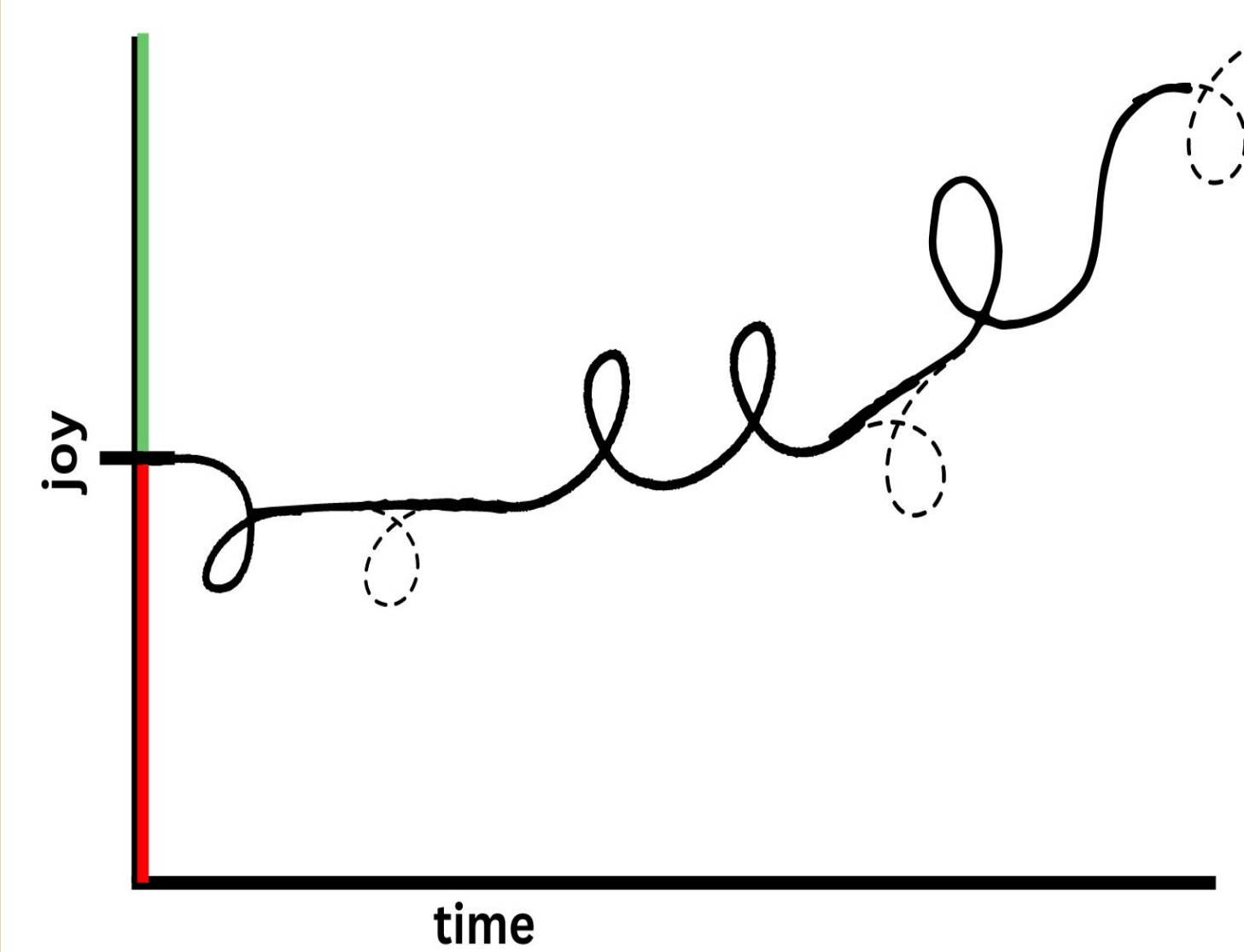
Introduction

Raising a child with autism has been one of the most amazing, yet difficult experiences of our family's life. Our son's journey has opened our eyes to a fresh way of being while also teaching us what parts of life are truly important. I wish someone would have told us not only about the early signs and stages of autism, but equally coached us on how to POSTURE during the journey. Luckily Apollo-Kahn Johnson, even with limited verbal communication, has gifted the world an opportunity to know the importance of centering joy well before autism became the label that medical care providers would describe him as.

Objective

- Celebrate multiple ways of being vs only celebrating once individual achieves neurotypical milestones
- Dismantle neurotypical ways of thought and looking at diagnosis/linear model with an added perspective
- Empower the parent to take hold of their experience they will have, as well as take action to protect their child's identity, joy, and intersectionality's prior/after their diagnosis
- Transition the culture to where parents become a partner with the provider to aid their child's development

Joy Continuum



Conclusion

- We are only observers and supporters of a person who actually experience what it means to be neurodivergent
- The goal is to have a celebratory posture, joy and positive trajectory for our loved ones
- The loved one's experiences and life doesn't have to look like what you imagined.

Resources

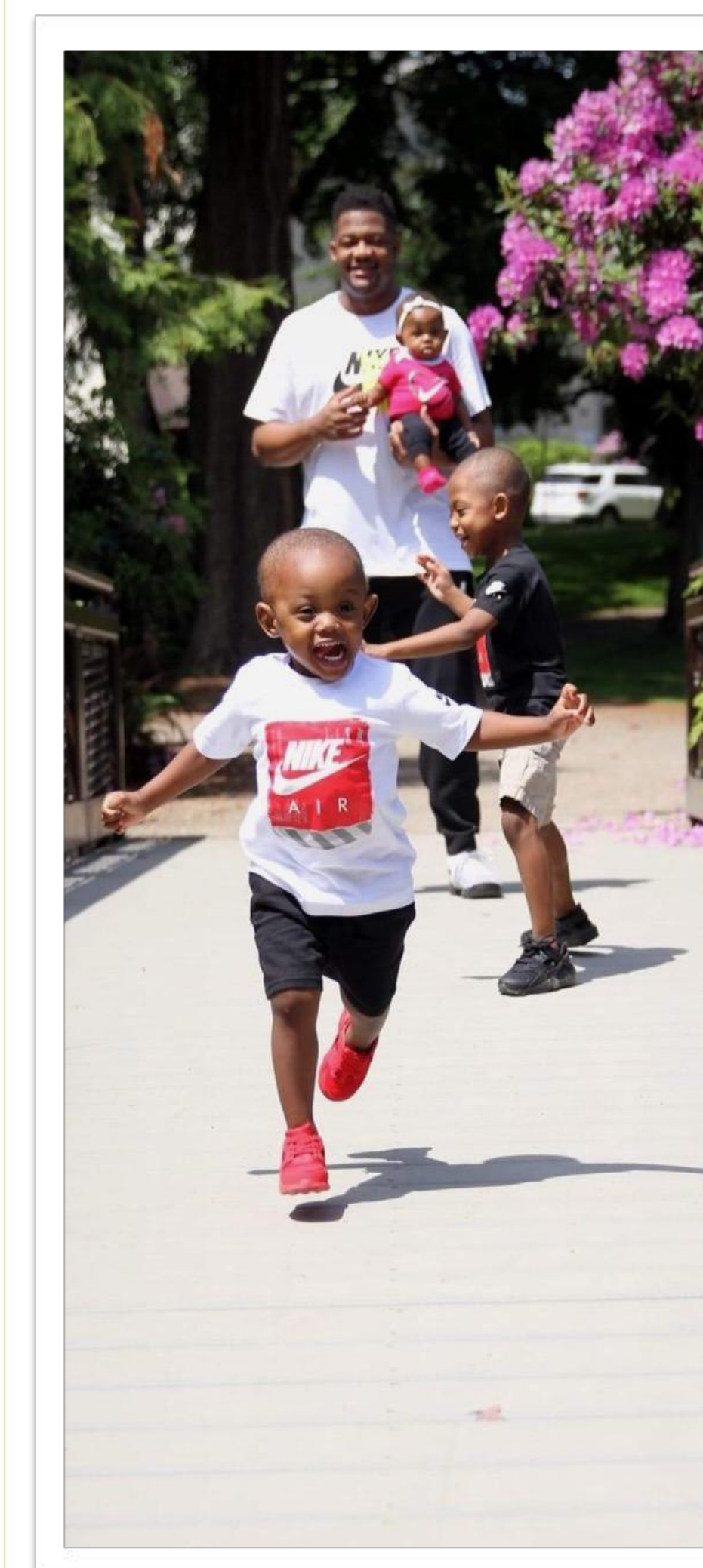
OUR LIVED EXPERIENCE!

"Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world; all knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it. Information is not knowledge. The only source of knowledge is experience. You need experience to gain wisdom."

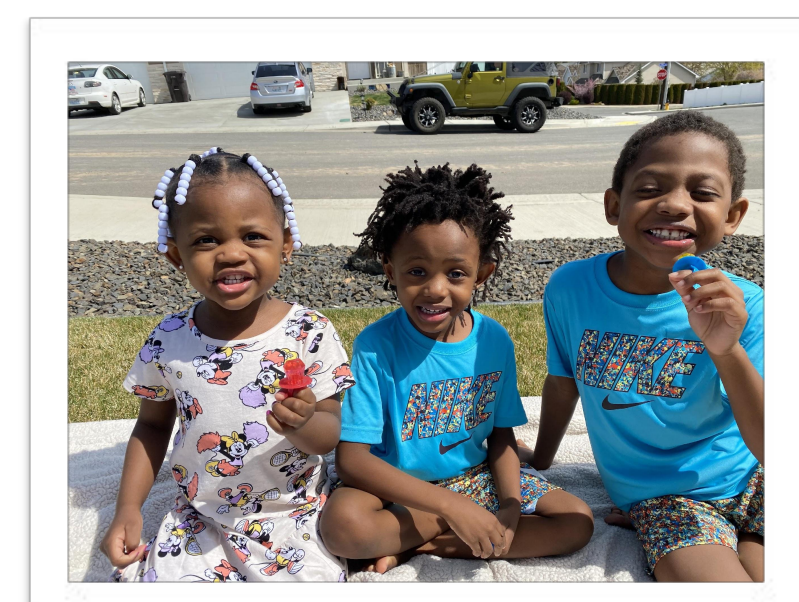
-Albert Einstein

Acknowledgements

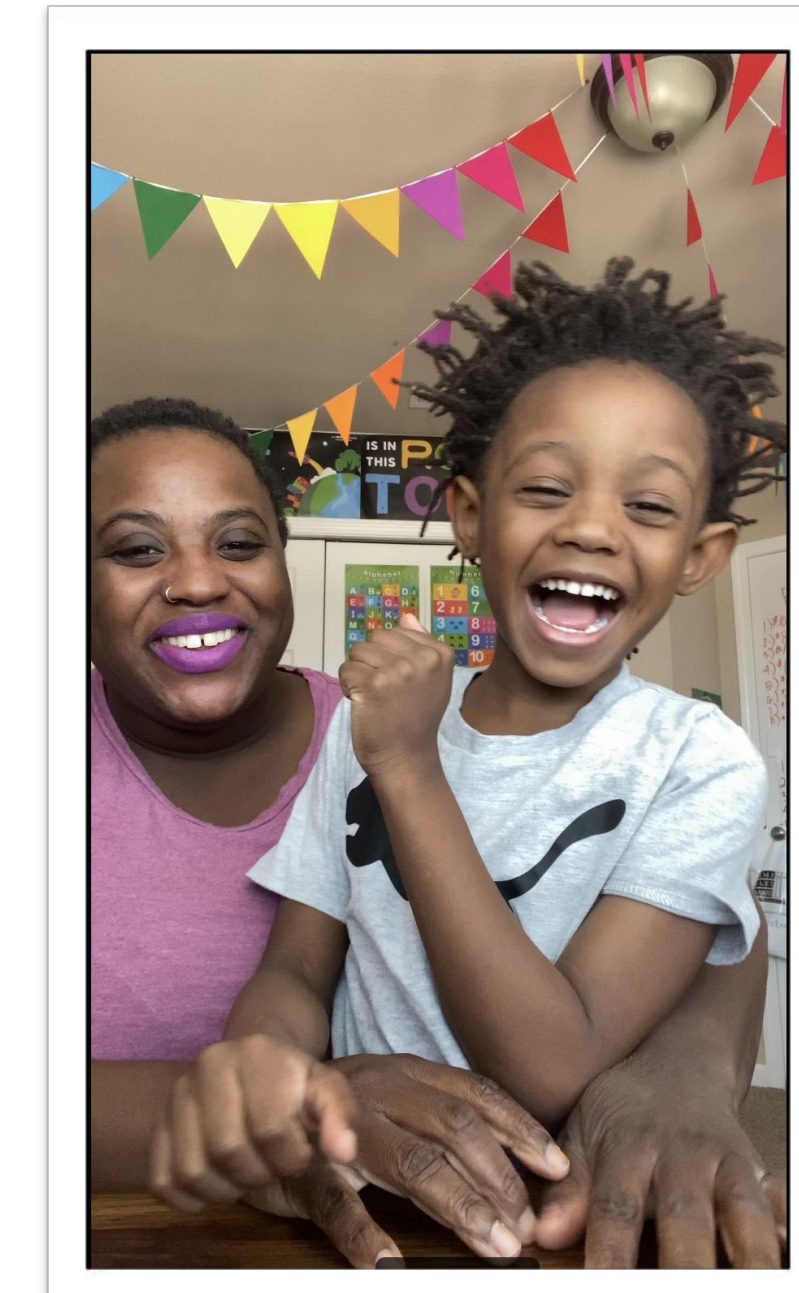
THANK YOU to **Katie Buck**, my mentor, whose support and time made this project possible.



Father: Anthony Johnson

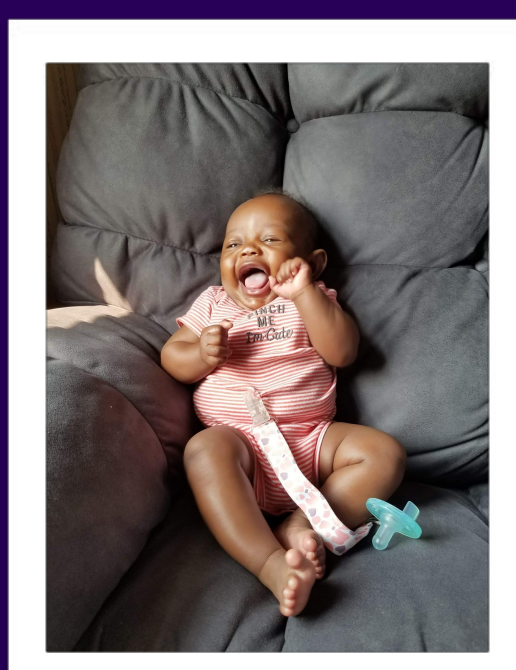


Siblings: Blade-Milan & Kaine-Carter



Mom: Shaunté Johnson

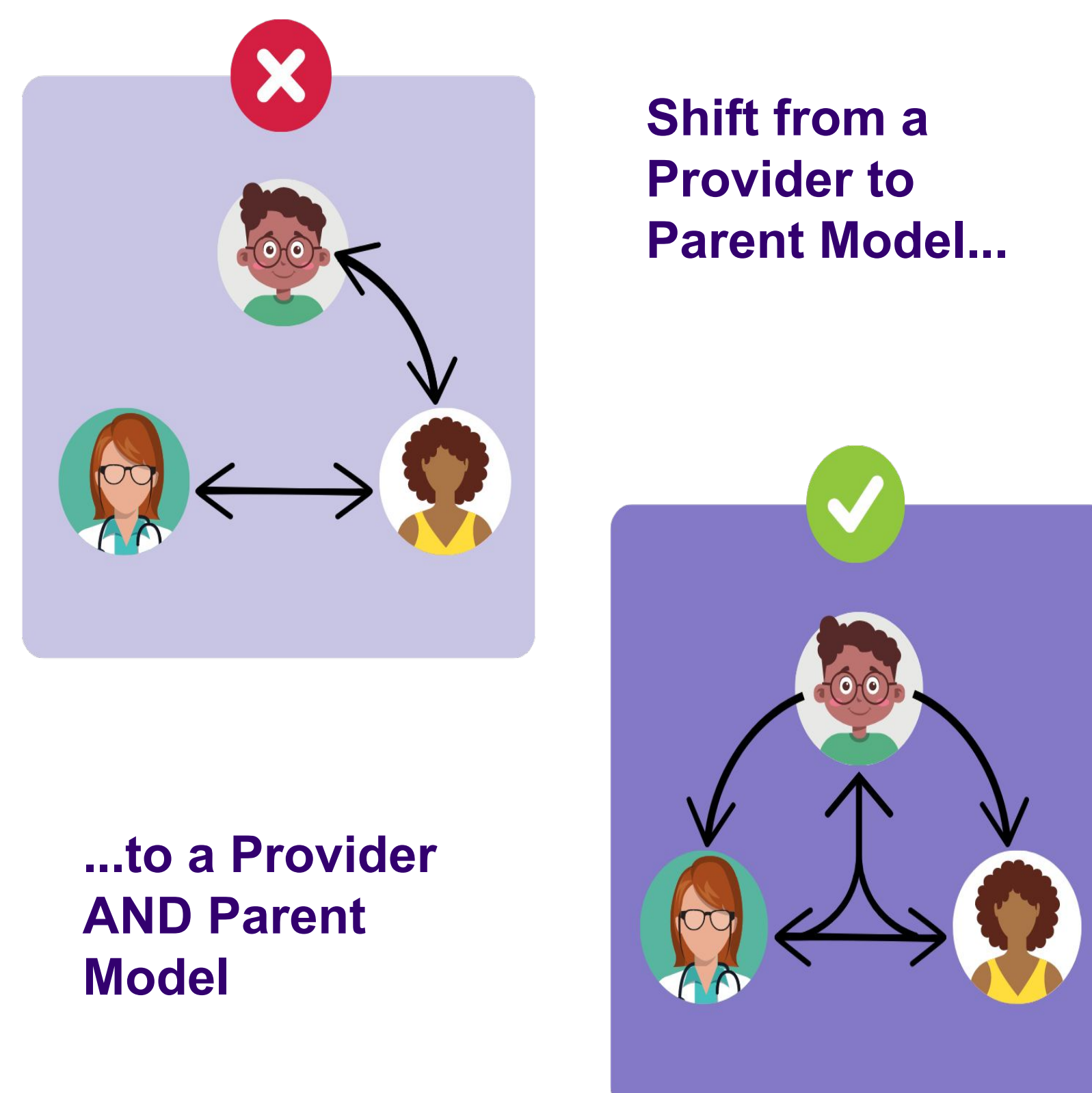
Background



- Joy is not present inherently or described in the medical field when referring to children with IDD
- Most interactions between provider and parent have a sense of devastation
- Joy is a posture and identity that one can choose even in the midst of hardship

Project

Model #1 Leaning into Partnership



Megan, Private SP



Alicia, Private OT