

# Supporting Neurodivergent Comics Creators

## Illustrated by Michelle Chan

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#### Books referenced on opposite page (left to right):

Nimona.

ND Stevenson. HarperTeen, 2015.

Hyperbole and a Half: Unfortunate Situations, Flawed Coping Mechanisms, Mayhem, and Other Things That Happened.
Allie Brosh. Touchstone, 2013.

Invisible Differences: A Story of Gender, Autism, and Human Rights. Julie Dachez and Mademoiselle Caroline. Translated by Ivanka Hahnenberger. Oni Press, 2020.

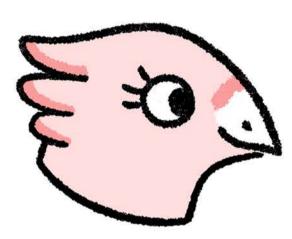
Dog Man. Dav Pilkey. Graphix, 2016.

Sensory Life on the Spectrum: Interventions and Insights. Edited by Anna Remington and Jacqui Fairnie. Pavilion Publishing, 2017.

## What's the deal with comics and neurodivergence?

Some of the world's most popular comics have been created by neurodivergent people, and many comic artists are neurodivergent!



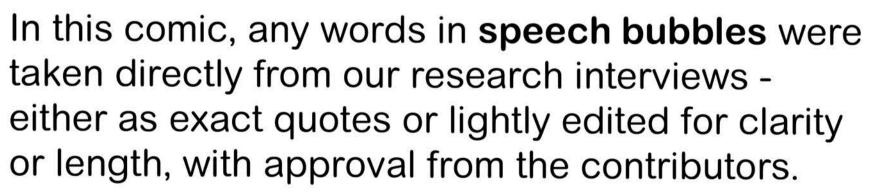


It's important to understand how neurodivergence affects the experience of creating comics, the challenges artists may face, and the supports that can help them succeed.

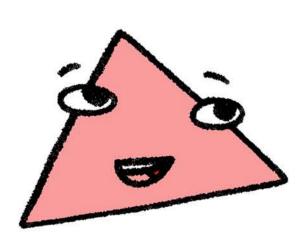




This comic is based on research into the experiences of neurodivergent comic creators in Adelaide, South Australia.

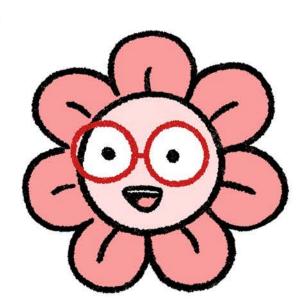






To protect participant identities, their words are represented by six fictional characters. These characters don't match specific participants, helping to keep everyone anonymous.

A huge thank you to the artists who shared their stories and made this comic possible.



# The Cast



# Connection & Expression

### Comics can be a means of...



...feeling at home

Many of the neurodivergent artists explained that reading, drawing, and writing comics help them to feel safe, comfortable, and "at home."

Comics can portray the world in a way that feels relatable.

I find home in others' art, and try to create that in mine.



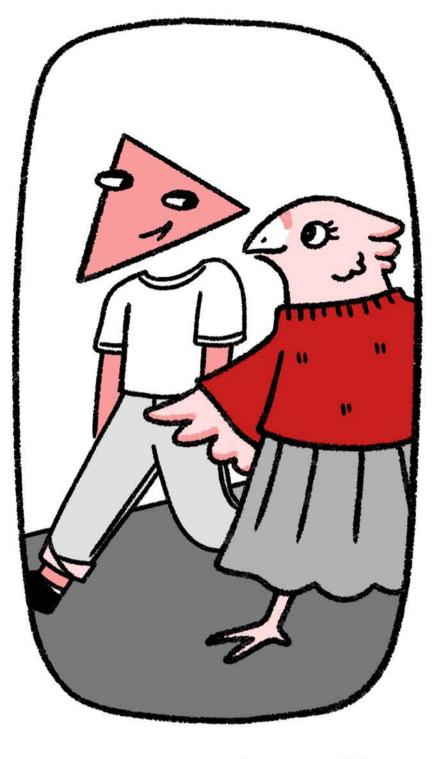
...connecting with yourself

The artists also used drawing as a means of understanding and communicating with themselves.

Some reflected that creating comics helped them to acknowledge and externalise their ideas and feelings.



This is who I am, visually.



...connecting with others

Making comics about their special interests helped artists find and connect with other people who shared those same interests.

Comics can bring together like-minded comic creators and consumers.

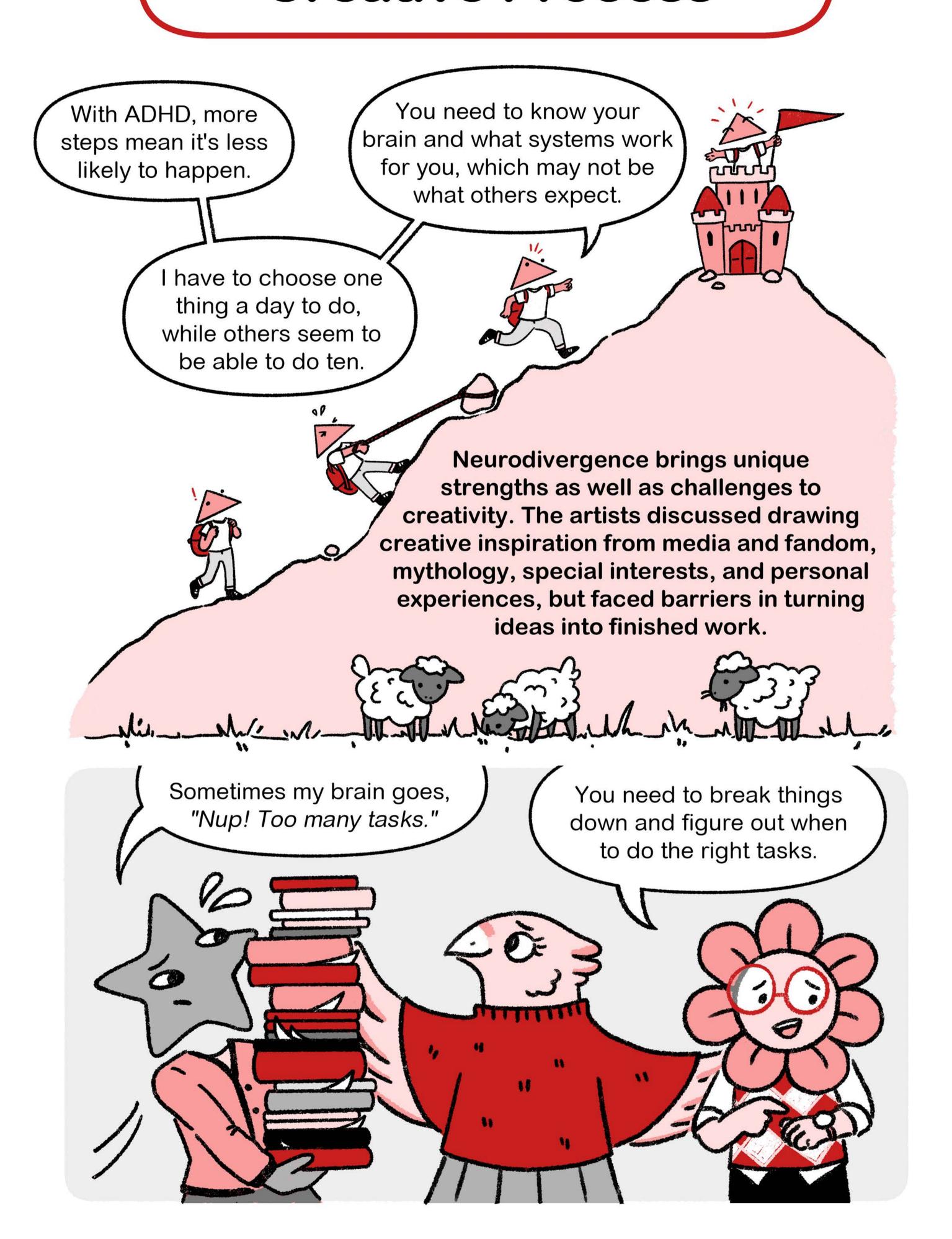


I have to use paper and pen to tell you how I feel.

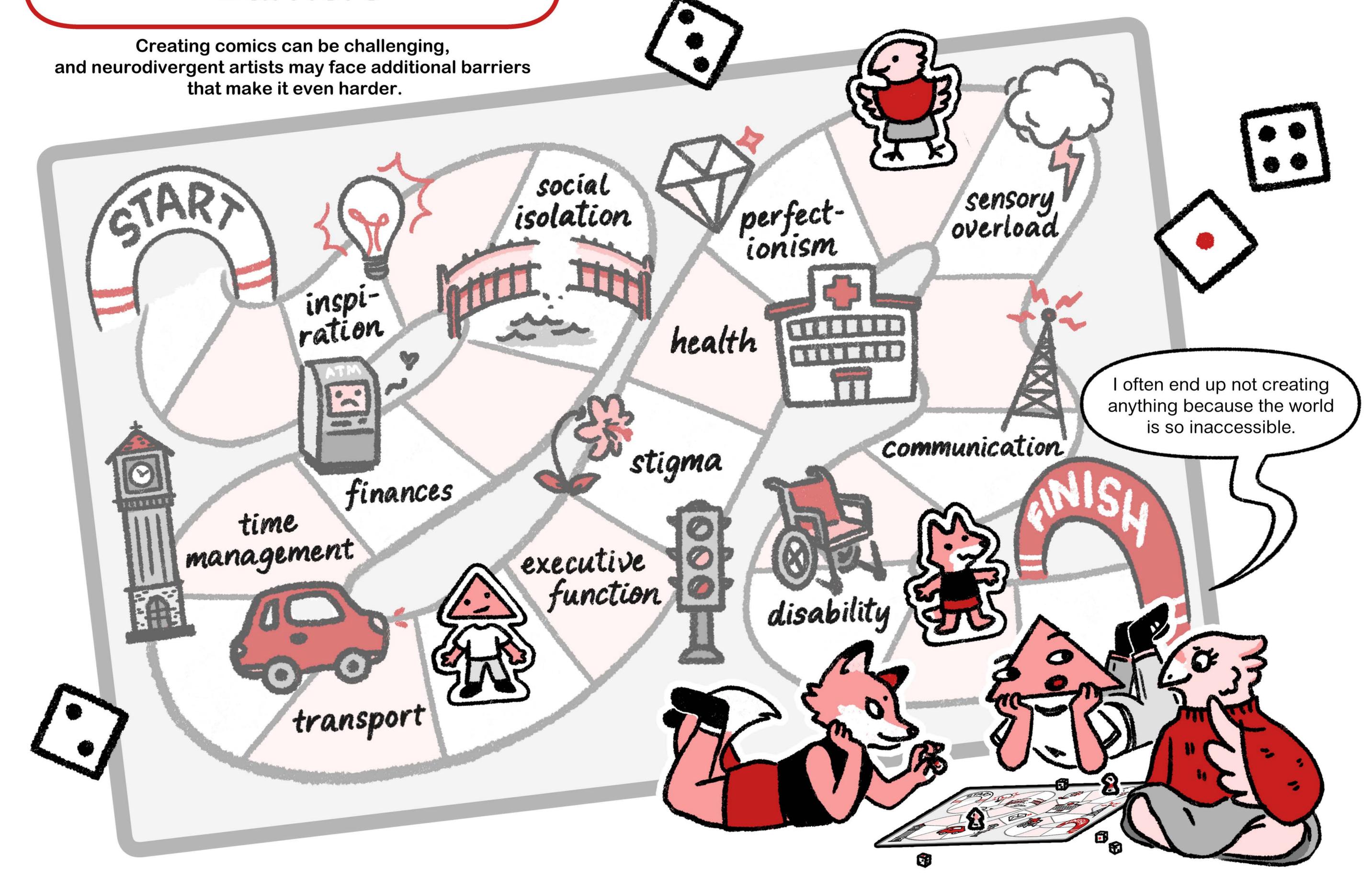
# Comic Techniques



## **Creative Process**





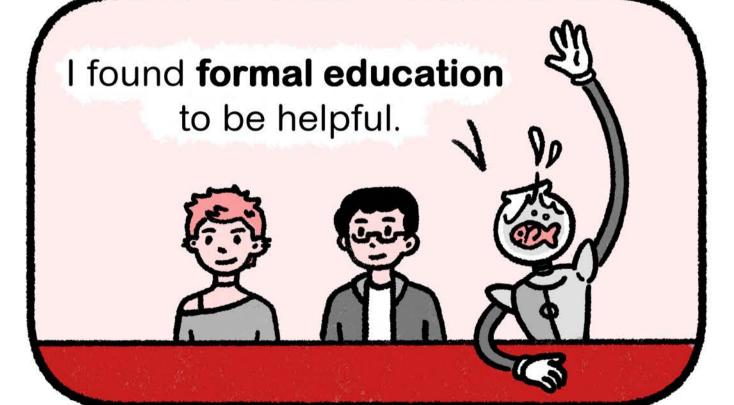


## Resources

## **LEARNING**



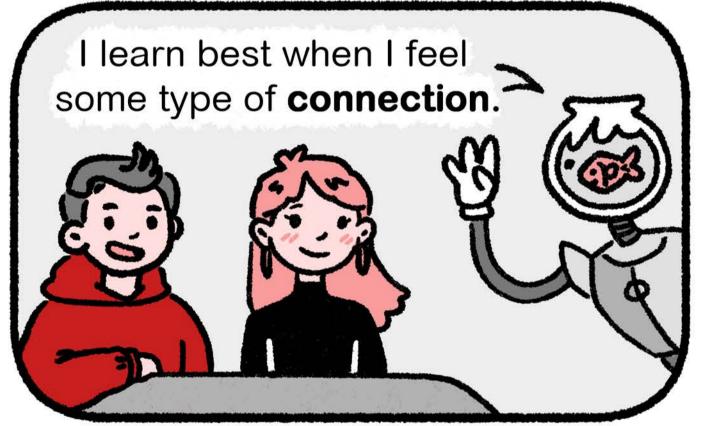


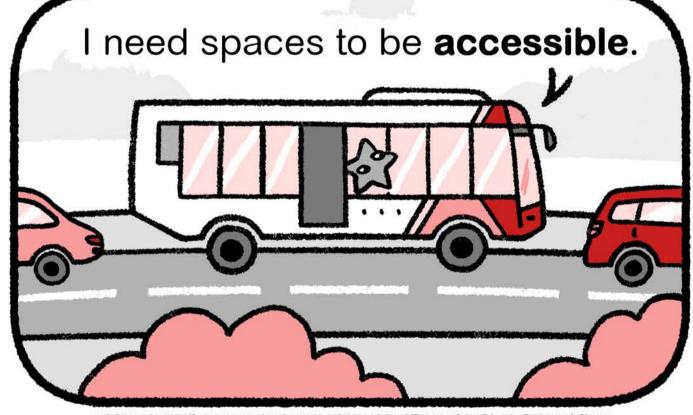


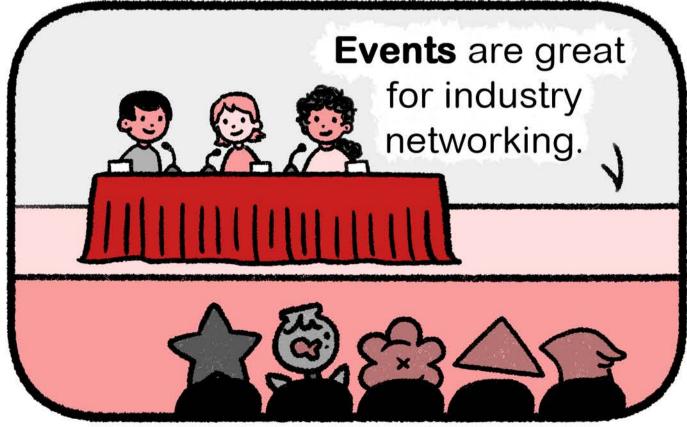
The artists discussed how resources in various formats support their artistic development and help them connect with other artists and comics makers.

## CONNECTING



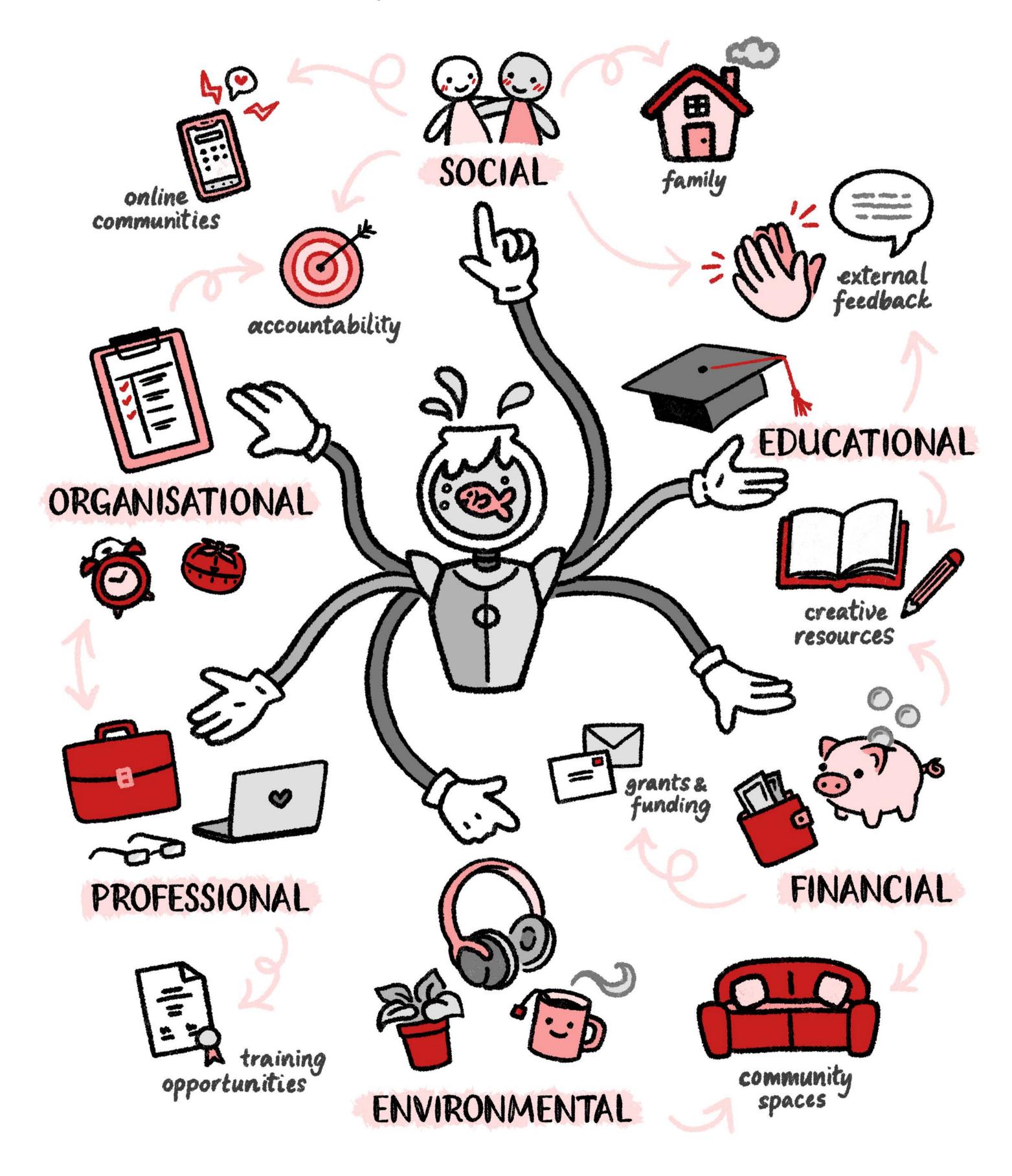




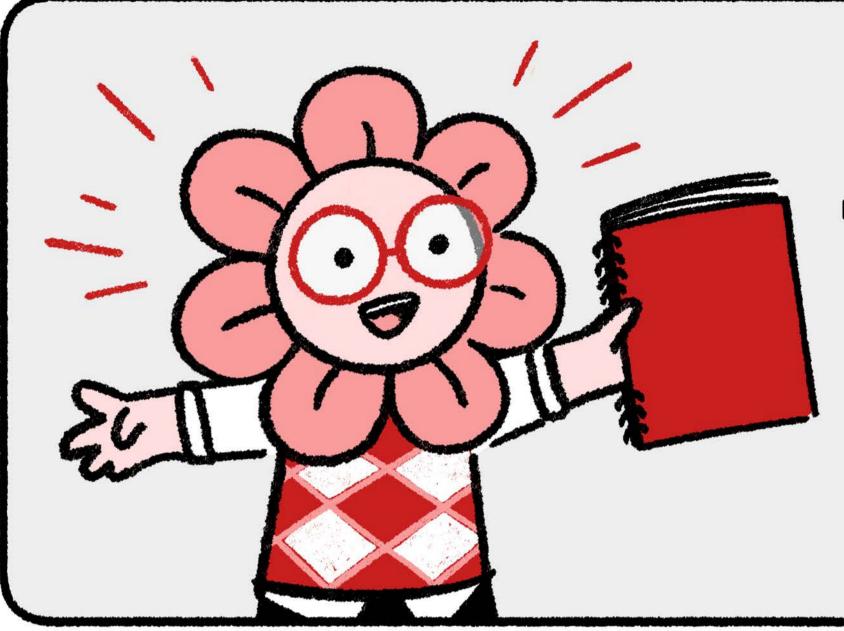


# Supports

The artists highlighted several key supports that help them to create their comics...



## Publishing



Completing a comic marks an exciting milestone and culmination of ideas, time, and effort - but what comes next?

The artists suggested a range of formal and informal avenues for publishing works...

Self-publishing, physically or online



Collaborative zines and anthologies



Open call or cold pitch submissions



Networking with publishers at events



There are so many stressful elements to think about. Financial elements... marketing... what editors want... publisher-creator power dynamics... publishing rights and contracts.



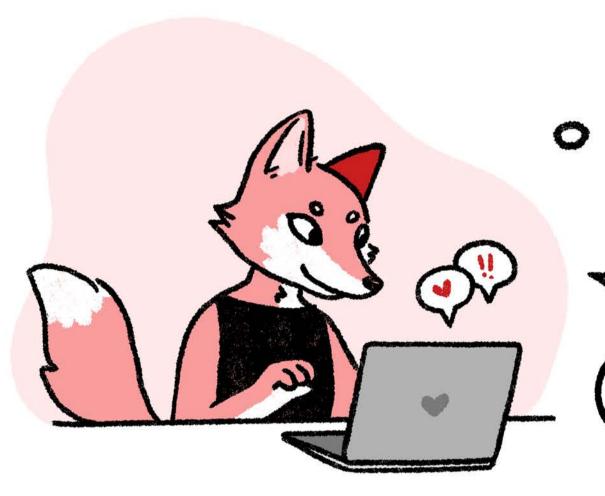
And, unfortunately, those contracts don't come in comic form!

My agent really helps.

She advocates for me and helps when communication is difficult for me.



## Audience



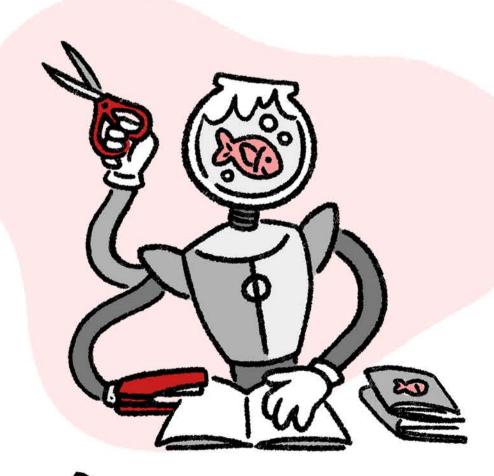


I make the comics I wish I saw growing up. It's a fight for representation.





For someone with the same lived experience, it's like saying "Hey, you're not alone."





I want seven year olds, and teenagers, and adults to enjoy my work. I want it to feel so comfortable that anyone can feel safe in it.



With comics, and with all forms of art that you dare to put out into the world... You can make it, and you can market it, but you don't know who will consume it.

All you can hope for is that it will find the people who will connect with it.

# Community



### **Creative and Professional Comics Resources**

#### **Written and Media Resources**

Rates of Pay - Comics.

Australian Society of Authors, 2023.

https://www.asauthors.org.au/rates-of-pay/comics

Australian Cartoonists Association Professional Minimum Rates.

Australian Cartoonists Association, 2020.

https://cartoonists.org.au/members/rates

Graphic Storytellers at Work.

Creative Australia, 2021.

https://creative.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/graphic-storytellers-at-work

Tips for Navigating the Publishing Industry as an Autistic Writer.

Kay Kerr, Amaze, 2023.

https://www.amaze.org.au/2023/05/tips-for-navigating-the-publishing-industry-as-an-autistic-writer

How to Make a Webtoon | Conquering ADHD as a Webtoon Artist. S-Morishita Studio, 2023.

https://www.s-morishitastudio.com/how-to-make-a-webtoon-conquering-adhd-as-a-webtoon-artist

Comic Art and Zine Fair Organiser's Checklist.

Zara Slattery, The Comics Cultural Impact Collective, 2025.

https://www.thecomicsculturalimpactcollective.org/Accessibility%20Checklist.pdf

"My Life with ADHD: Breaking Down and Planning a Comic Project."

Becca Hillburn, YouTube, 14 Sept. 2018.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6FLWdGyjWg

#### **Communities and Events**

Papercuts Comics Festival. <a href="https://papercutscomicsfestival.com">https://papercutscomicsfestival.com</a>

Squish Squash. https://squish-squash.carrd.co

Spectrum Writing. <a href="https://www.spectrumwriting.com.au">https://www.spectrumwriting.com.au</a>

The Society of Authors – Comics Creators Network <a href="https://societyofauthors.org/groups/comics-creators-network">https://societyofauthors.org/groups/comics-creators-network</a>

#### Thanks for reading!

The material in this zine was based on a series of focus groups with self-identified neurodivergent comic creators, conducted from September to November 2023.

Our research was conducted in Tarndanya (Adelaide), and we acknowledge and pay respect to the Kaurna people, the traditional custodians of the ancestral lands on which we live and work.

#### This project was supported by the following institutions:













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Sensitivity reading by Meg Riley

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