



Easy to read version of the talk

The Tangram Method: building double empathy bridges

Autism & ADHD Show 2025 – London





Educator & Author



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hilravinha.com

tangram@hilravinha.com

<https://giftsyou.etsy.com>

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Hello! My name is **Hilra**.

Today, I will talk about my books.



Figure 1: This is Hilra



Figure 2: These are Hilra's books

My books are called the **Tangram method**

They help people understand one another better.

Tangram is a type of puzzle.



Figure 3: This how a tangram looks like

I am from Brazil¹.
That is why I have an
accent.

I work in a college and
write books.



*Figure 4: Ronaldinho is a
footballer from Brazil*



*Figure 5: This José
(Sessé) and Hilra*

I grew up with
a brother who
has a disability.
He also has autism.
I went to my own school,
like other
children. I
also went

to my brother's special
school a lot.

We grew up very close.



*Figure 6: Sessé and Hilra in
2020*

¹ Picture by Andre Kiwitz - originally posted to Flickr as olympics-soccer-6 –
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Figure 7: Hilra wrote about her brother in this book

In the old days, many people had not met a person with a disability.

Because of this, people often asked unkind questions about my brother.

Some people laughed at him. My mum told me not to be angry at these people.

She said they asked these questions and laughed because they did not know people like him.

My mum said,

"You must be kind and explain things to them."



When I grew up, I became a teacher for young children.

I always valued all different ways children learn.



Figure 8: The place in green is Brazil

One day, I learned about inclusion in schools outside Brazil.

I left Brazil to study inclusion in another country.

2

I got a PhD in education at the University of Southampton.

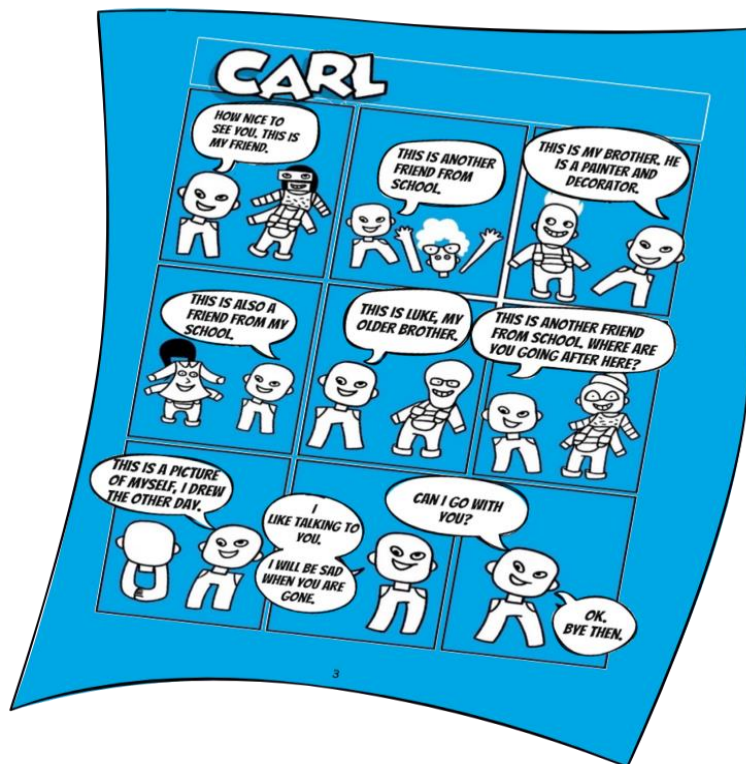


Figure 9: The Bargate in Southampton, UK

² *Geni - Photo by user:geni – Permission: CC-BY-SA 4.0*

A few years later, I worked in a secondary school.
I saw how hard it was for children with special needs in a common school.

I worked a lot with young autistic children.



That is how I learned so much about autism.



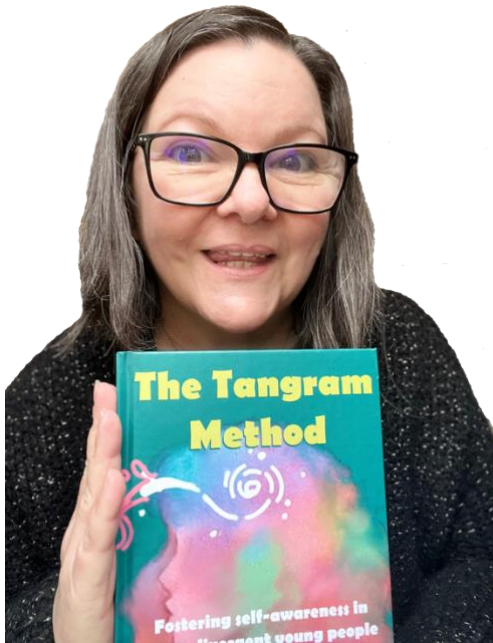
I made something I called **Autism Awareness sessions** with the help of the young people I was supporting.

Later, I moved to work in a college.

I kept doing those sessions with young people.



I kept working hard to make my method better.



My first book shows how I work.

The way I do things is very simple.

Sometimes, the simplest things are the most beautiful.

We can make simple things into something that helps other people.

That is what I tried to do with my first book.

I made my simple way of working into something others can use.



Figure 10: Cards created by Hilra to help with unmasking



I show how I listen to the young people.

Figure 11: Communication card designed by Hilra

How I talk with them.

What new ideas I have when I sit and listen to them.

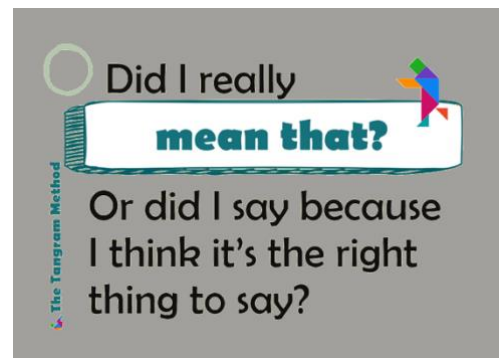


Figure 12: Cards created by Hilra to help with unmasking

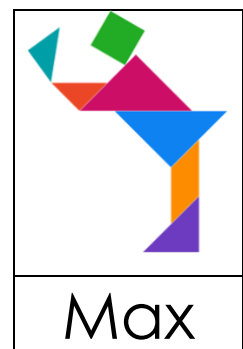
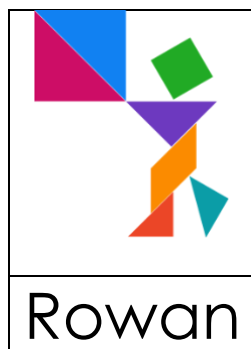
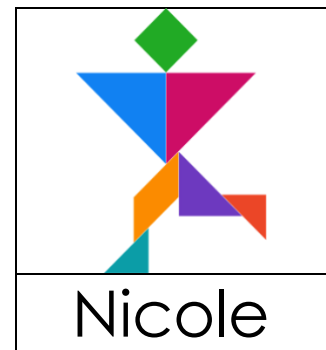
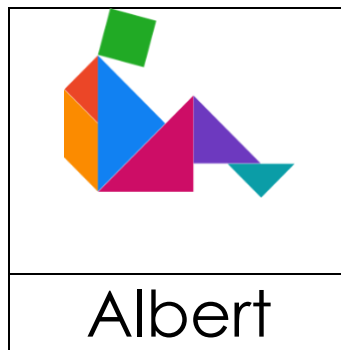
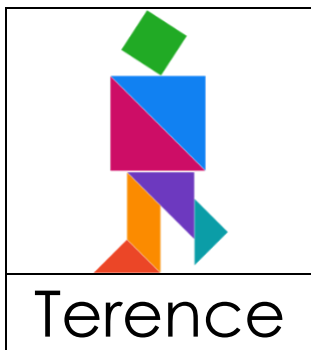


Things to say that makes them feel seen.

Figure 13: Cards created by Hilra to help with unmasking



To tell this story in my first book, I made my young people into seven characters. They are all neurodivergent.



I tell their stories to explain my method.

I tell how I do these sessions to help these young people understand their autism.

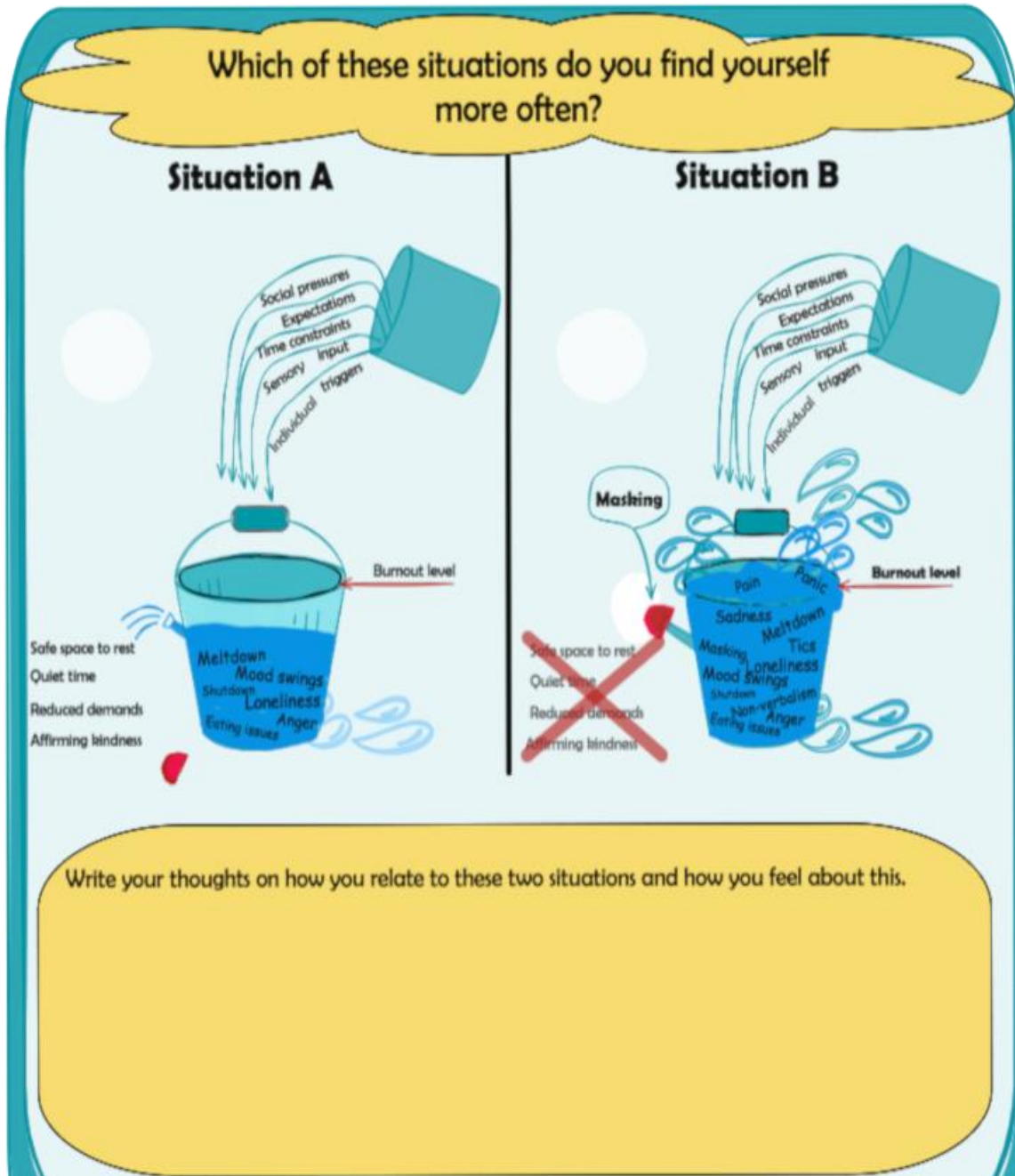


Figure 14: This is an example of things Hilra does in the sessions

They learn how to be themselves in the best way.



One young person read my first book and told me, she liked it. She wished her teachers had read it.

She said what she wanted was a book explaining how non-autistic people work.

That is why I wrote my second book called *Flipping the Tangram Method*.

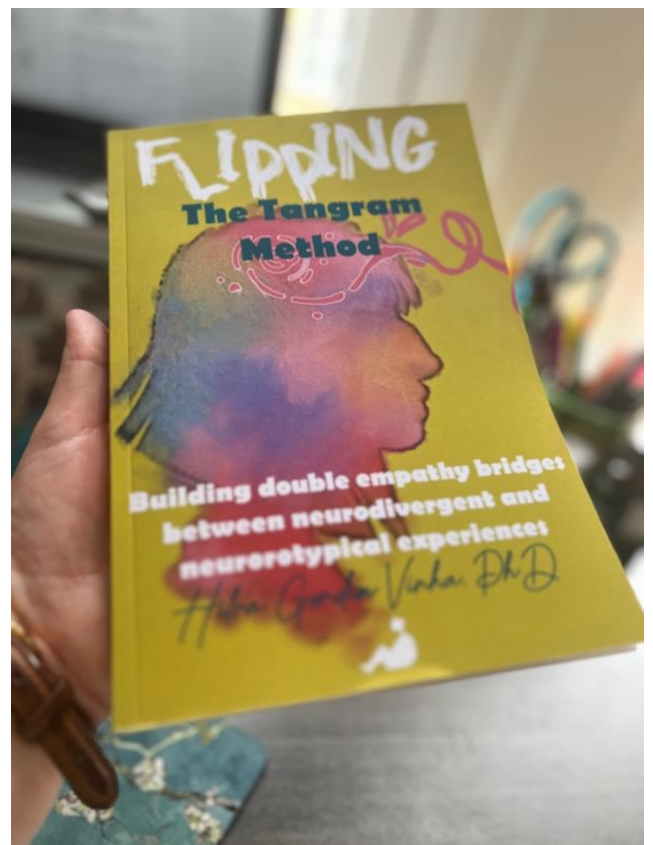
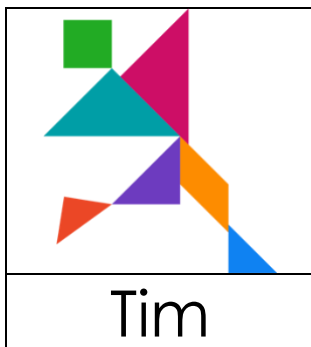
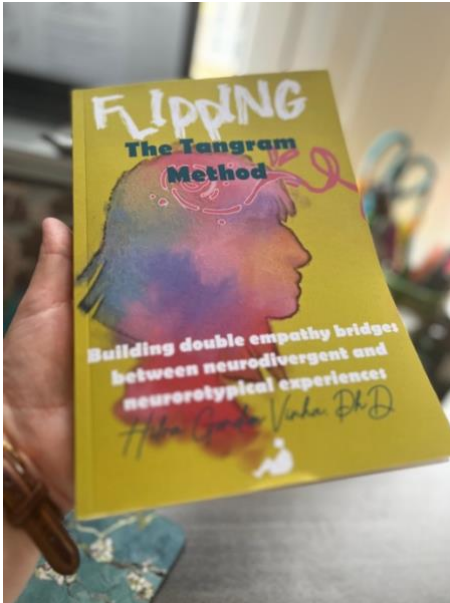


Figure 15: Second book of the Tangram Method series

I created seven new characters who are not autistic.



The characters have neurotypical traits and behaviours.



The book explains:

- How they do certain things
- Why they like small talk
- Why do they say things like "it's raining cats and dogs" when it's raining heavily
- It also talks about the future of inclusion

Because I had learned about something called the **double empathy problem**.

This is when non-autistic people don't understand autistic people.



This helped me explain what I wanted to say.

I believe the double empathy problem is real.



It is like we live in two separate worlds.

Neurotypical people on one side.

Neurodivergent people on the other.

Neurotypical people are the biggest group and theirs is the **usual** way.



Neurodivergent people have to fight to be themselves.

My second book is about people listening to each other and making fair agreements together.



It is not about one group telling the other group how to act.

It is about all types of people talking. Understanding each other and seeing things in new ways.

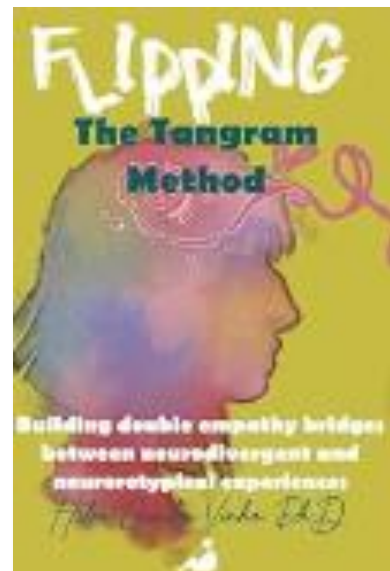
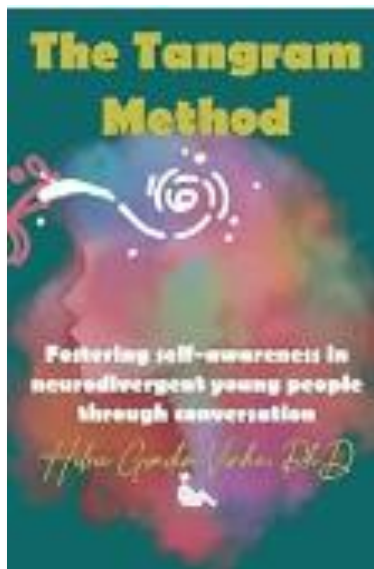


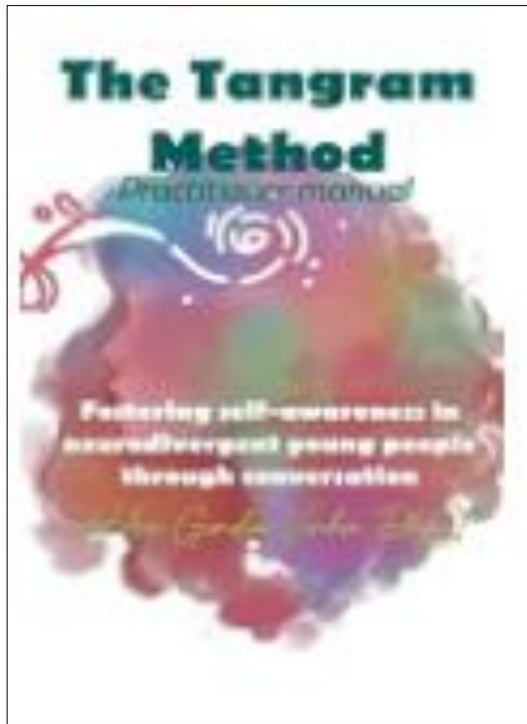
Everyone changes a little how to do things and everyone stays the same.

That is the goal of my two books:
building double empathy bridges.

We are all different and this is wonderful!

I hope you can have a look at my books.





If you want a handout of what I said today, please come and see me.

You can find me at the end of this talk. Or come to stand E20.

My business cards have my website and email. Please get in touch, ask questions, let's talk.

Let's build double empathy bridges together.



Thank you.

Hilra



hilravinha.com