



Changing Minds, Driving Impact : SPELL

Dr. Zahilah Filzah Zulkifli. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

How it All Began...



Danial, 13, non-speaking autistic boy. Special interest: Thomas the Engine.
Adi, woodworker. Joined as a volunteer at The Ark Autism Centre. One of the 5 earliest people I trained on SPELL.

SPELL Malaysia : Our First Impact Story



SPELL in Action : Rooted in acceptance, belonging and connection

The SPELL Framework: Understanding & Responding to Autism

- Five interlinking pillars, each designed to be ‘socially valid’ :

Structure

Positive Approaches, Attitudes and Expectations

Empathy

Low Arousal

Links

The SPELL Framework

SPELL is not just a framework it is a way of organizing help that is :

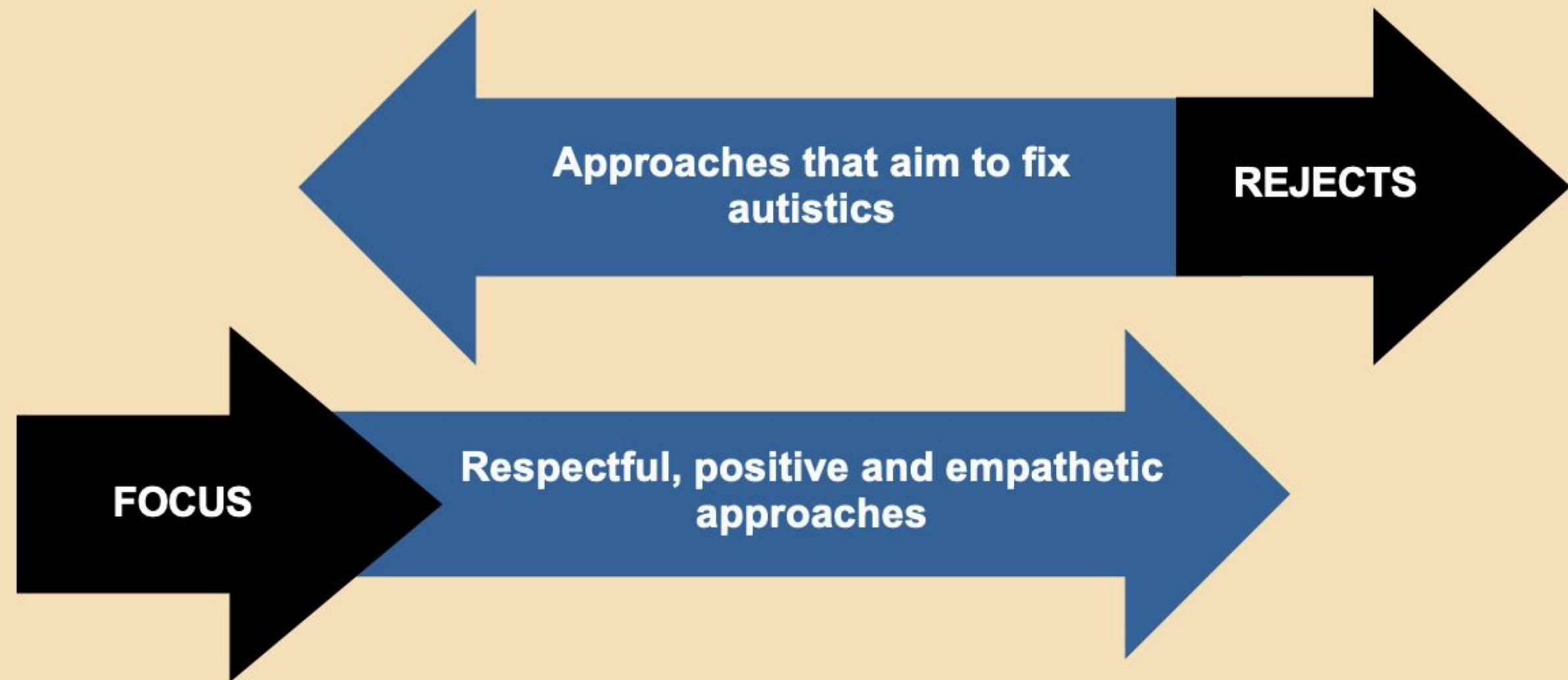
- Practical and human
- Rooted in empathy and respect
- Provide context and basis for other approaches
- Adaptable across cultures and settings
- A guide that helps us see, listen and respond better



Focus on 'what we can do'

The 5 Principles of The SPELL Framework

- It is ethical
- It is individual
- It is hopeful
- It is respectful
- It is honest



SPELL Training Approach



Exchange of stories and experiences



SPELL Audit



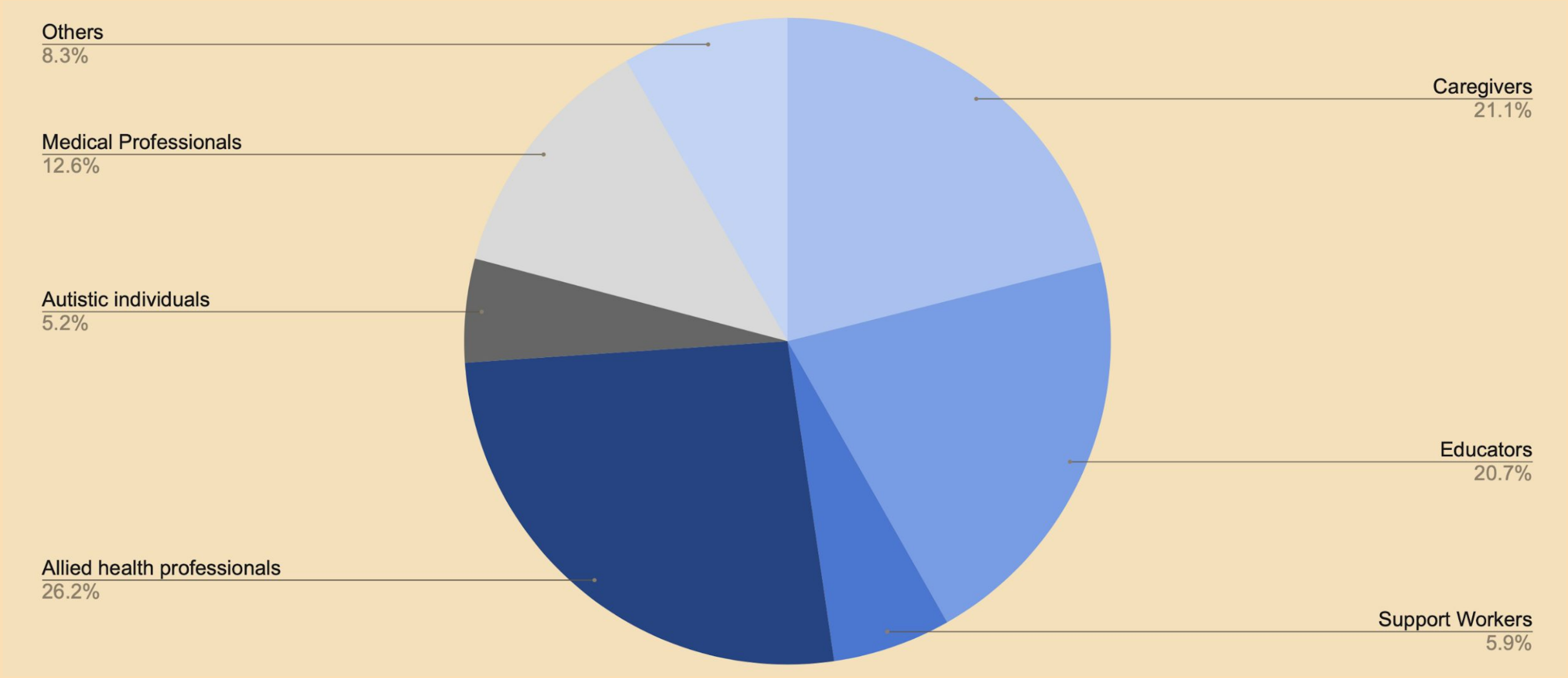
- **Violation** : Ignores or opposes the SPELL principles
- **Misunderstanding** : Mis-application due to partial understanding of the SPELL principles
- **Good Practice** : Complies with SPELL principles and shows good understanding

SPELL Malaysia



- 581 trained
- Most participants joined because of **word of mouth (76%)**
- Available in **English, Bahasa Melayu (Malay) , and Mandarin**

SPELL : Participant Representations



SPELL Papua New Guinea



Many parents in PNG travelled long distances each day to bring their child to Callan as this is their only option.



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Lack of awareness prompts first-ever autism training

Monday, 18 November 2024, 3:39 pm



First SPELL training funded by the Department of Prime Minister & National Executive Council.

Feedback Highlights



Coming from a country that is only beginning to have conversations on autism, SPELL has been a step into a whole different level of understanding for me. And I really needed that **structured outline and guidance on the practical application**. I also have **better insights into what it is actually like to be autistic**.

Rosemary Laki,
Parent

Feedback Highlights

Before attending SPELL, I found it **extremely hard to handle meltdowns**. SPELL has been **life-changing** for me. I now know how to support him through the low arousal approach. It's been a turning point especially for me as a dad.

M. Yusof, Parent

The SPELL Framework helped **break down the principles in a way that is easy to understand** and apply to people of all ages and support needs. Not only can I use it to **help communicate my needs**, but it **enables me to help others** figure things out as well.

Dr. Rowina Lynn, Autistic-ADHDer, Cardiologist

Feedback Highlights

I felt so **seen and validated**, finally understanding what the spectrum means. I think above all, I **was learning more about myself** and as a result, I am **able to love myself more**.

Sofea Rozhan, Autistic-ADHDer,
undergrad student

SPELL taught me that **meaningful change does not require significant financial resources**, instead it begins with understanding and **small, intentional steps**. Such as accommodating their needs during dental appointments.

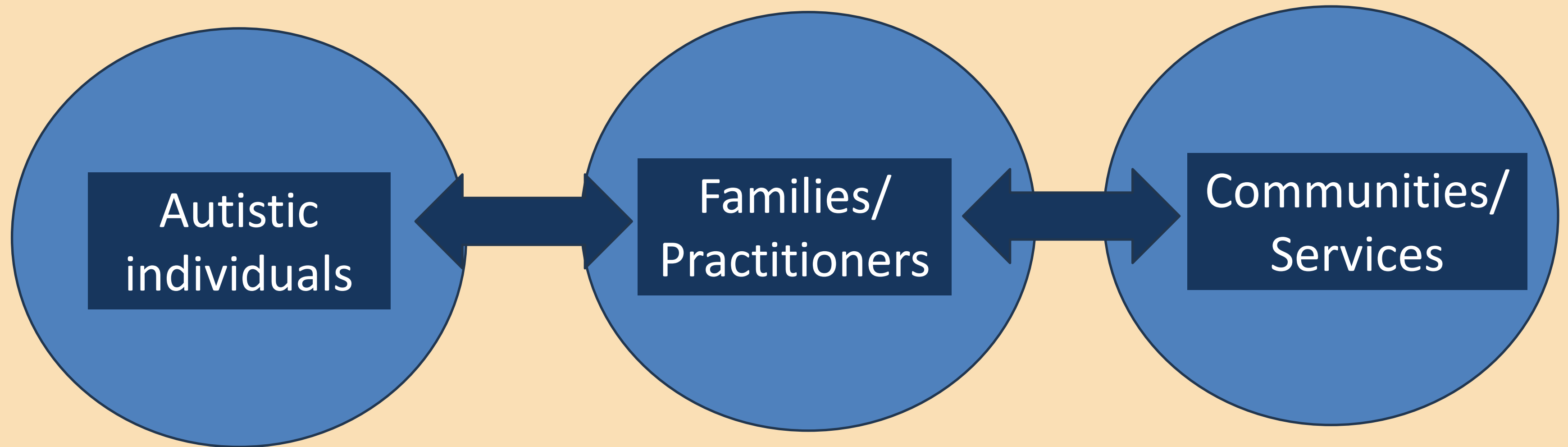
Dr.Tengku
Nurfarhana,
Paediatric dentist

SPELL : Impact Story



Applying SPELL in an acute paediatric in-patient setting with B, a nonspeaking autistic teen, with multiple, complex and chronic medical issues, requiring non-invasive ventilation.

Impact of The SPELL Framework



Impact on Autistic Individuals: Key Themes



Community &
Belonging

Positive
self-identity

Sense of
hope

Authenticity
& Advocacy

Impact on Families & Practitioners: Key Themes



KitaFamily podcasters named SPELL as their top recommended autism course.



SPELL empowers practitioner to see beyond behaviour

Increased
understanding,
empathy

More confidence
in providing
support

Stronger
relationship &
connection

Reduced stress
&
renewed hope

Impact on Communities/ Services : Key Themes



Permata Kurnia, an Autism Preschool under Ministry of Education



The Passion Hub, a private center providing support to neurodivergent children and young adults

Shift from behaviour
control to
Person-centered support

Stronger collaboration
with autistics and their
families

Moving forward
together as a team
with a shared vision

SPELL Movement in Malaysia



SPELL will be heading to 3 other states in 2026

Voices of Change : The Impact in Their Words

CONCLUSION

SPELL



Change in Mindset



Change in Practice



Effective & Meaningful Support

THANK YOU

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Each of us has the power to shape environments that honour, affirm, and uphold the dignity of autistic lives.