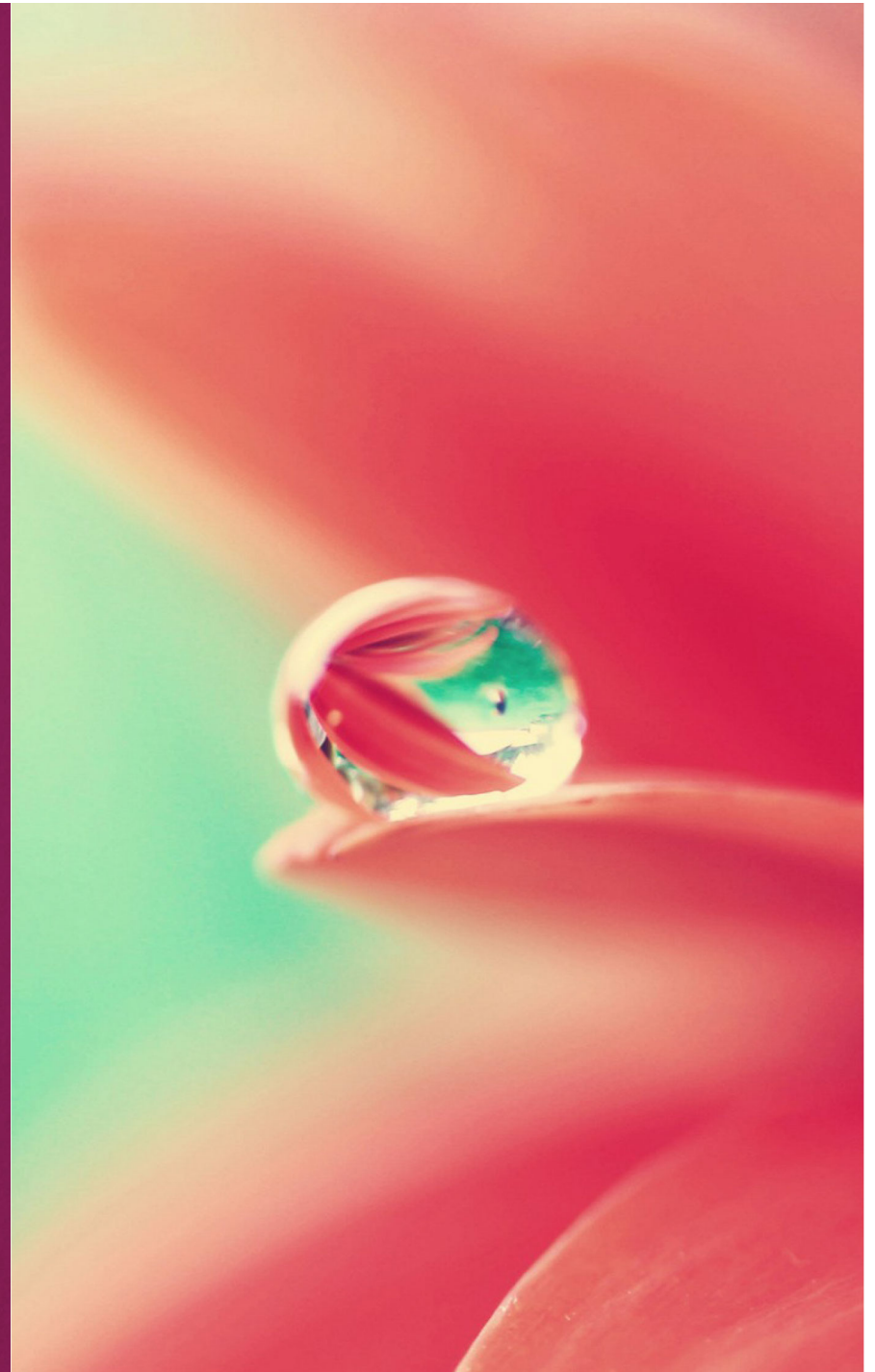


*Think not lightly of good,
saying,
“It will not come to me.”*

*Drop by drop is
the water pot filled.*

*Likewise, the wise one,
Gathering it little by little,
Fills oneself with good.*

Dhammapada 9.122



Positive Neuroplasticity: How to Grow Resilient Self- Worth and Happiness



Rick Hanson and Laurel Hanson
Esalen, July 2019

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1

Introduction

Two Wolves in the Heart



Inner Strengths

Understandings

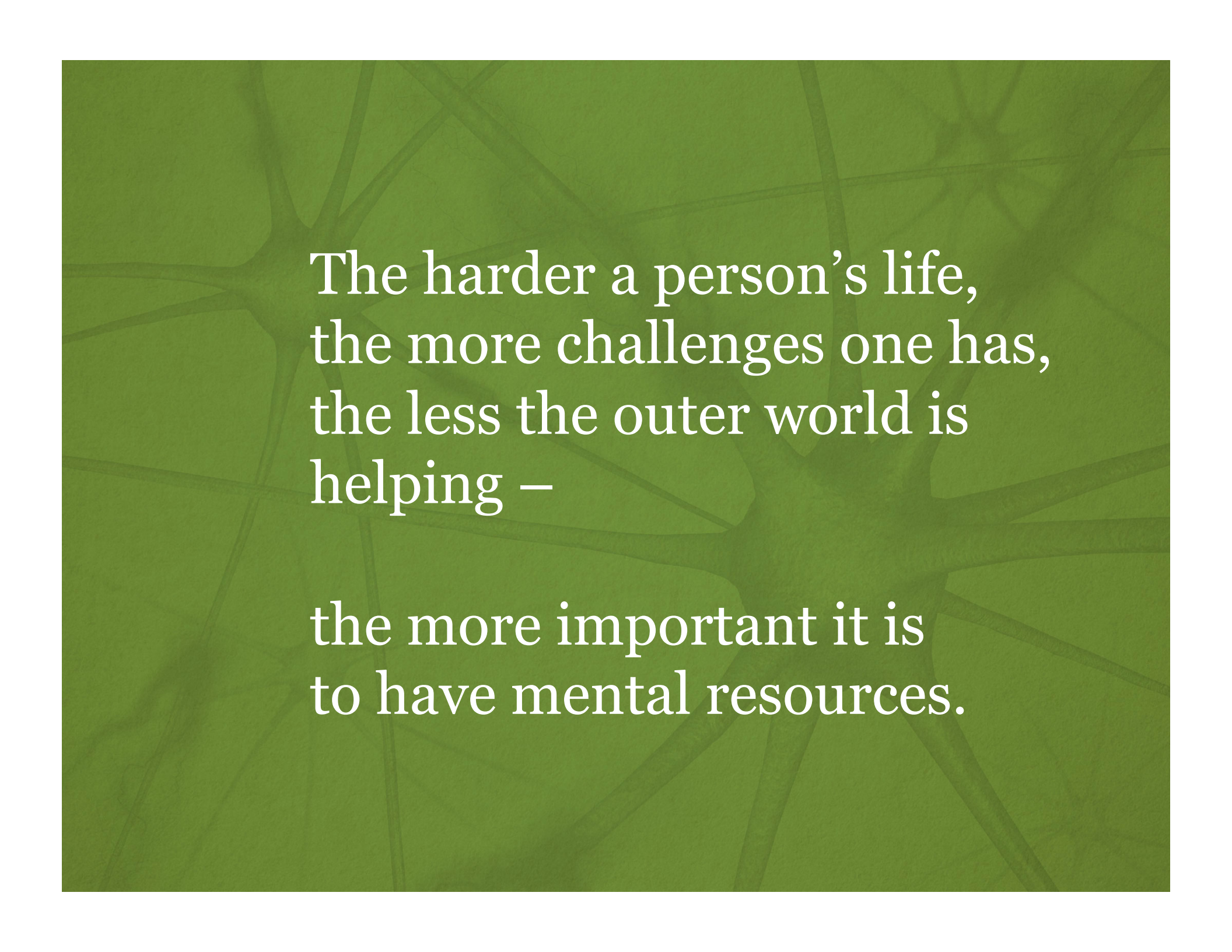
Capabilities

Positive Emotions

Attitudes

Motivations

Virtues



The harder a person's life,
the more challenges one has,
the less the outer world is
helping –

the more important it is
to have mental resources.

In the Garden of the Mind

1

**Be with what
is there**

2

**Decrease
the negative**

3

**Increase
the positive**

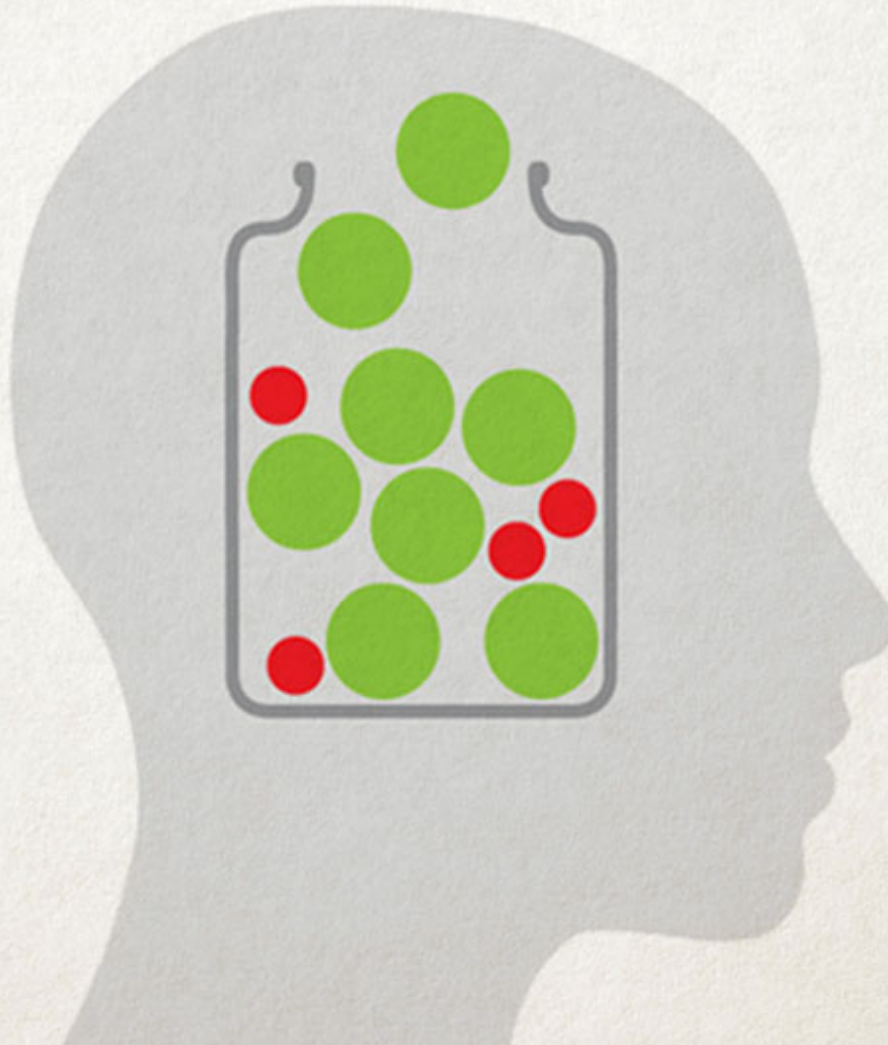
Witness. Pull weeds. Plant flowers.

Let be. Let go. Let in.

Mindfulness is present in all three.

“Being with” is primary – but not enough.
We also need “wise effort.”

Inner Strengths Are Built From Brain Structure

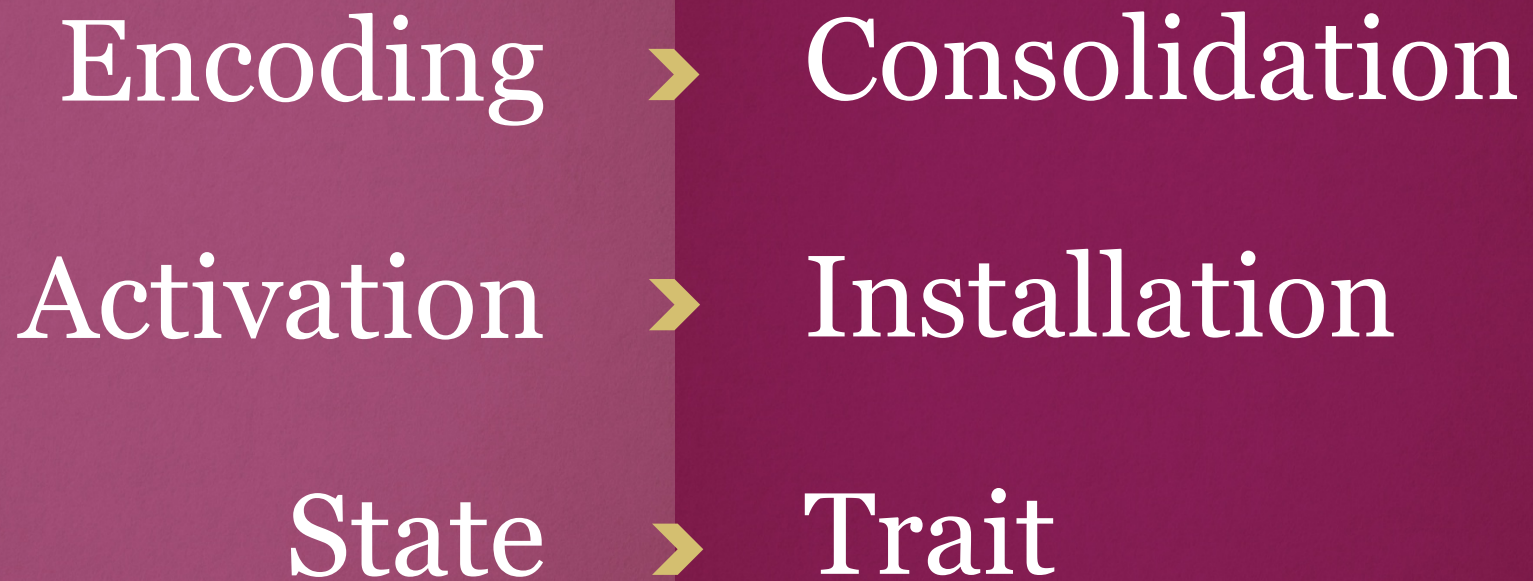


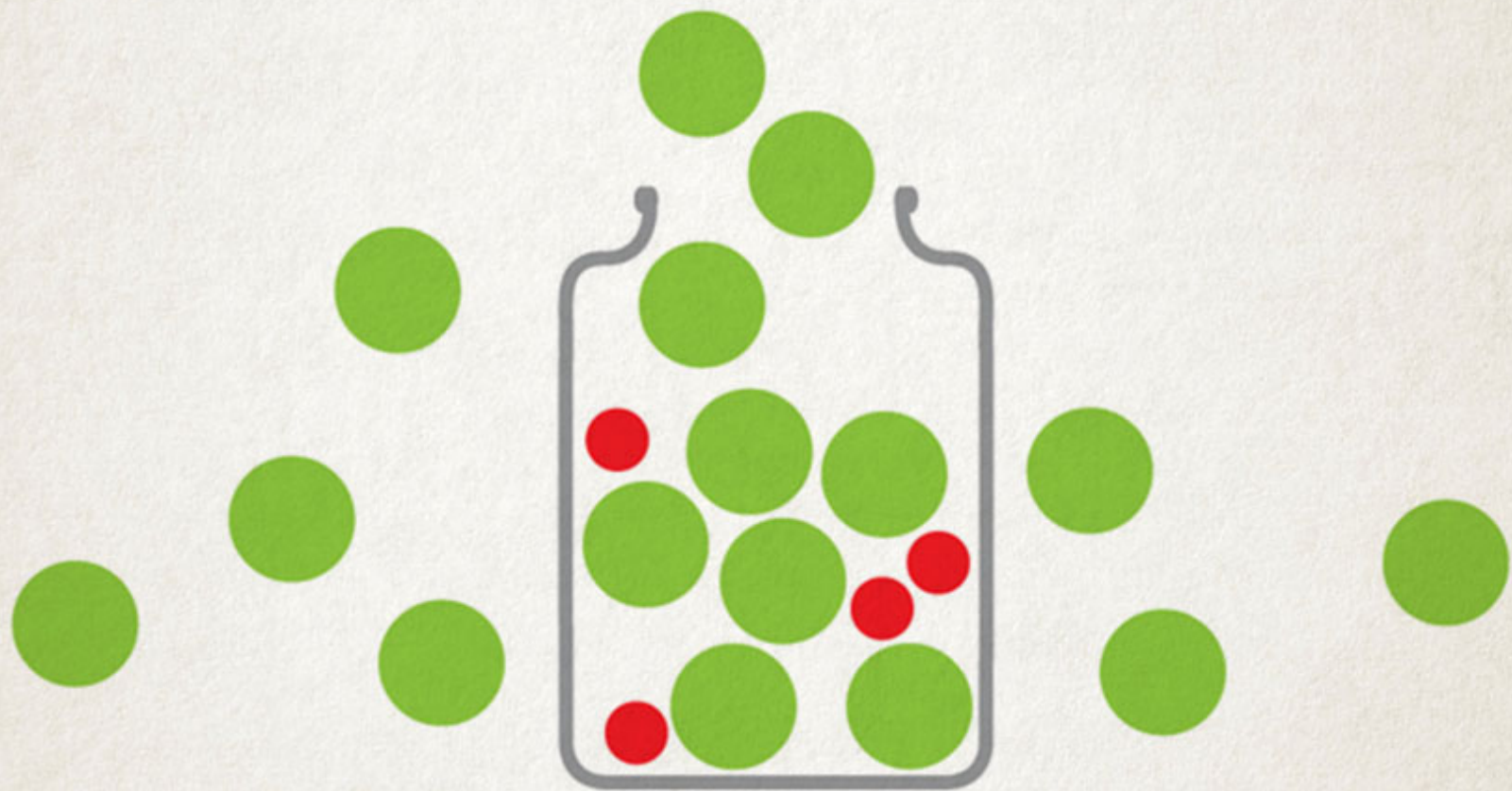
A microscopic image of neurons, showing a central neuron with a glowing green nucleus and numerous yellow, thread-like axons extending across the field of view. The background is dark, making the glowing structures stand out.

Neurons that fire together,

wire together.

Learning – changing
neural structure and function,
proceeds in two stages:





Have It, Enjoy It



Pick a partner and choose an A and a B (A's go first). Then take turns, with one person speaking while the partner mainly listens, exploring this question:

TIP: If you're alone, reflect or journal.


What are some of the good facts in your life these days?

As the listener, keep finding a genuine gladness about the good facts in the life of our partner.



2

The Essence of Positive Neuroplasticity



So, how can we
grow the good
inside ourselves?



Mental activity entails
underlying neural activity.

Repeated mental activity
entails repeated neural activity.

Repeated neural activity
builds neural structure.

Major Neural Mechanisms of Learning

(De)Sensitizing existing synapses

Building new synapses

Altered gene expression

Building and integrating new neurons

Altered ongoing activity in a region

Altered connectivity of regions

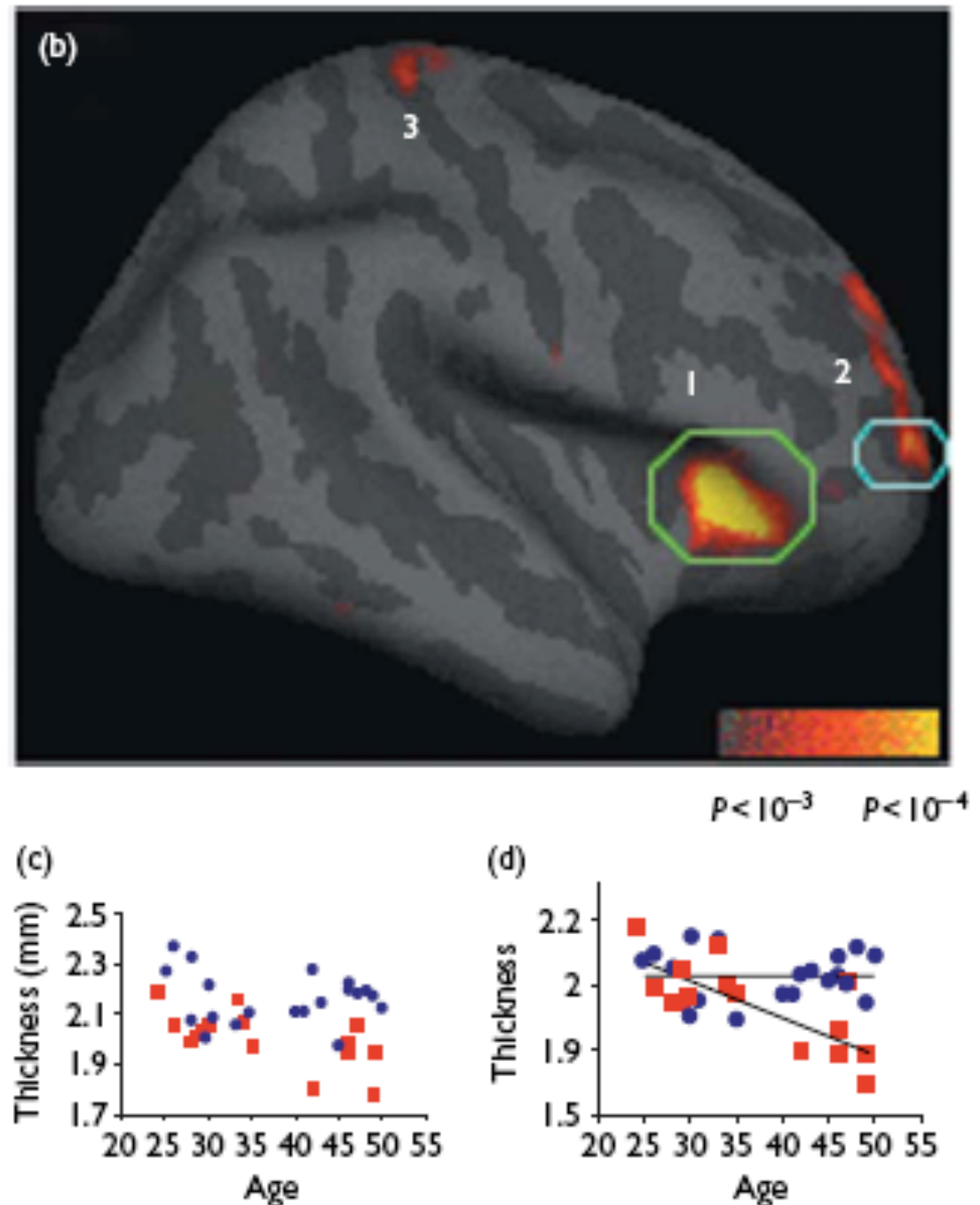
Altered neurochemical activity

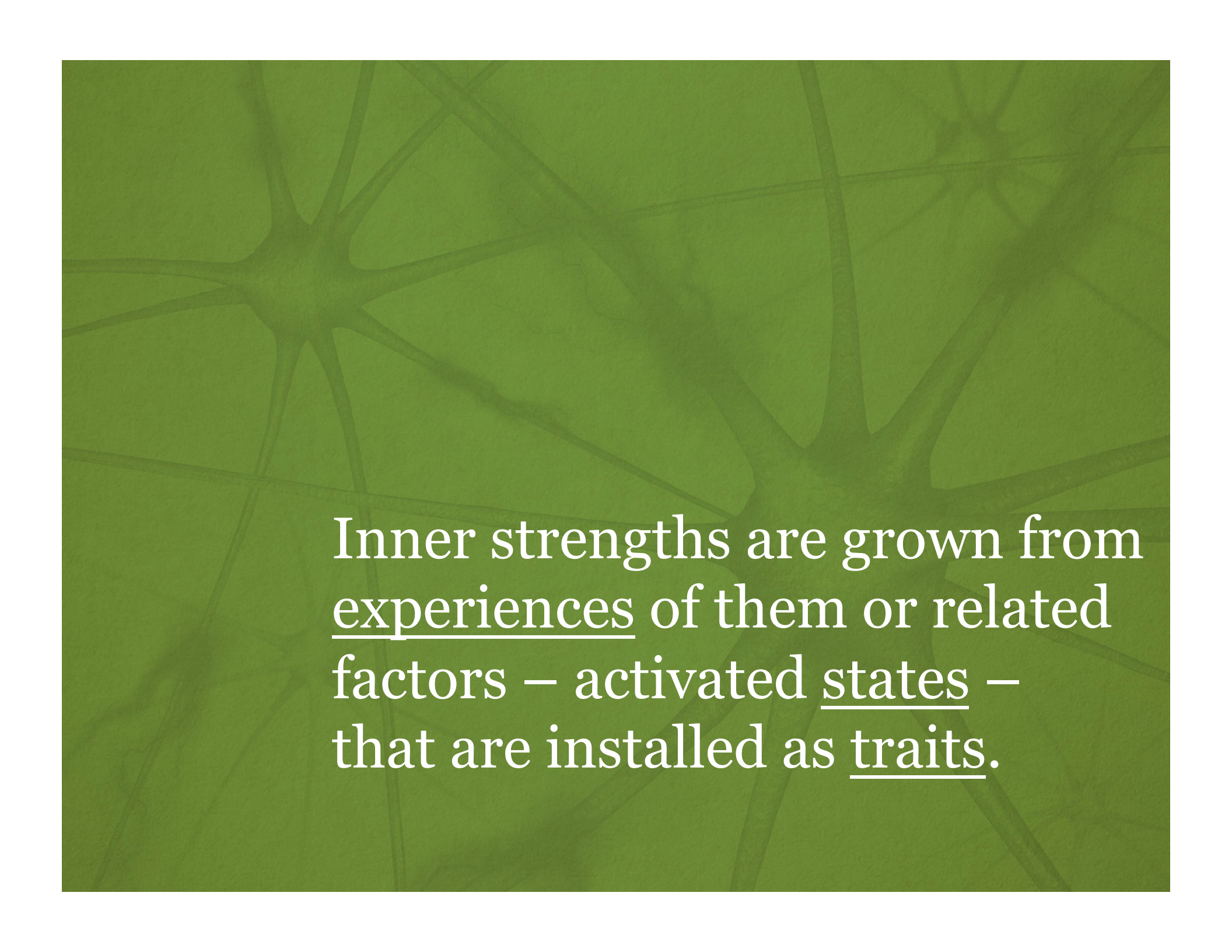
Information from hippocampus to cortex

Modulation by stress hormones, cytokines

Slow wave and REM sleep

Lazar, et al. 2005.
Meditation
experience is
associated
with increased
cortical thickness.
Neuroreport, 16,
1893-1897.





Inner strengths are grown from experiences of them or related factors – activated states – that are installed as traits.

You become more **peaceful**
by repeatedly installing experiences
of peacefulness.

You become more **grateful** by repeatedly
installing experiences of gratitude.

You become more **compassionate** by
repeatedly installing experiences of
compassion.



Let's try it . . .

You become more **peaceful**
by repeatedly installing experiences
of peacefulness.

You become more **grateful** by repeatedly
installing experiences of gratitude.

You become more **compassionate** by
repeatedly installing experiences of
compassion.

How was that for you?

Most experiences of inner strengths –
resilience, kindness, insight,
mindfulness, self-worth, love, etc. –
are **enjoyable**.

Without **installation** – without passing mental states becoming lasting changes in neural structure or function – there is no learning.

Activation without installation may be useful or enjoyable at the time, but does not increase psychological resources.

What fraction of your
beneficial mental states leave
lasting changes behind?

Velcro for Bad, Teflon for Good

The negativity bias

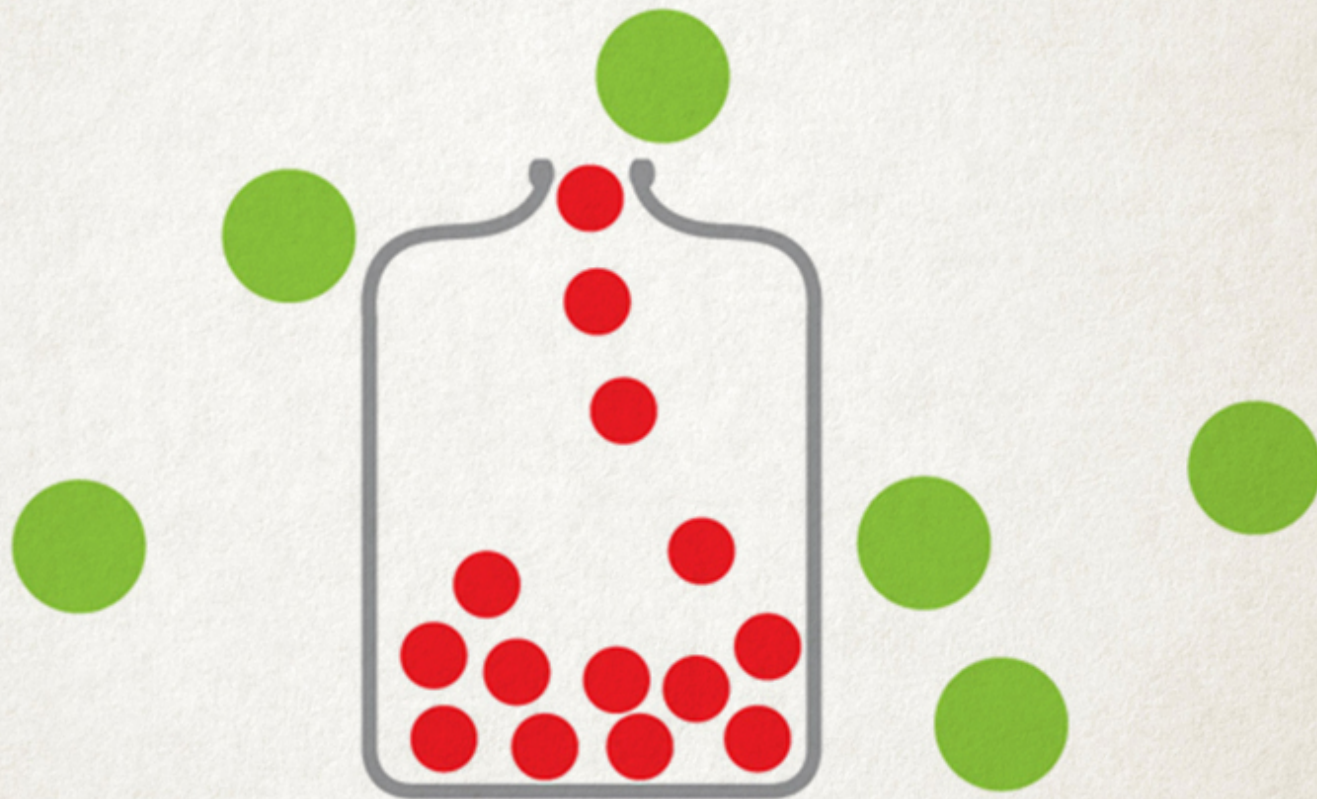
bad experiences

good experiences

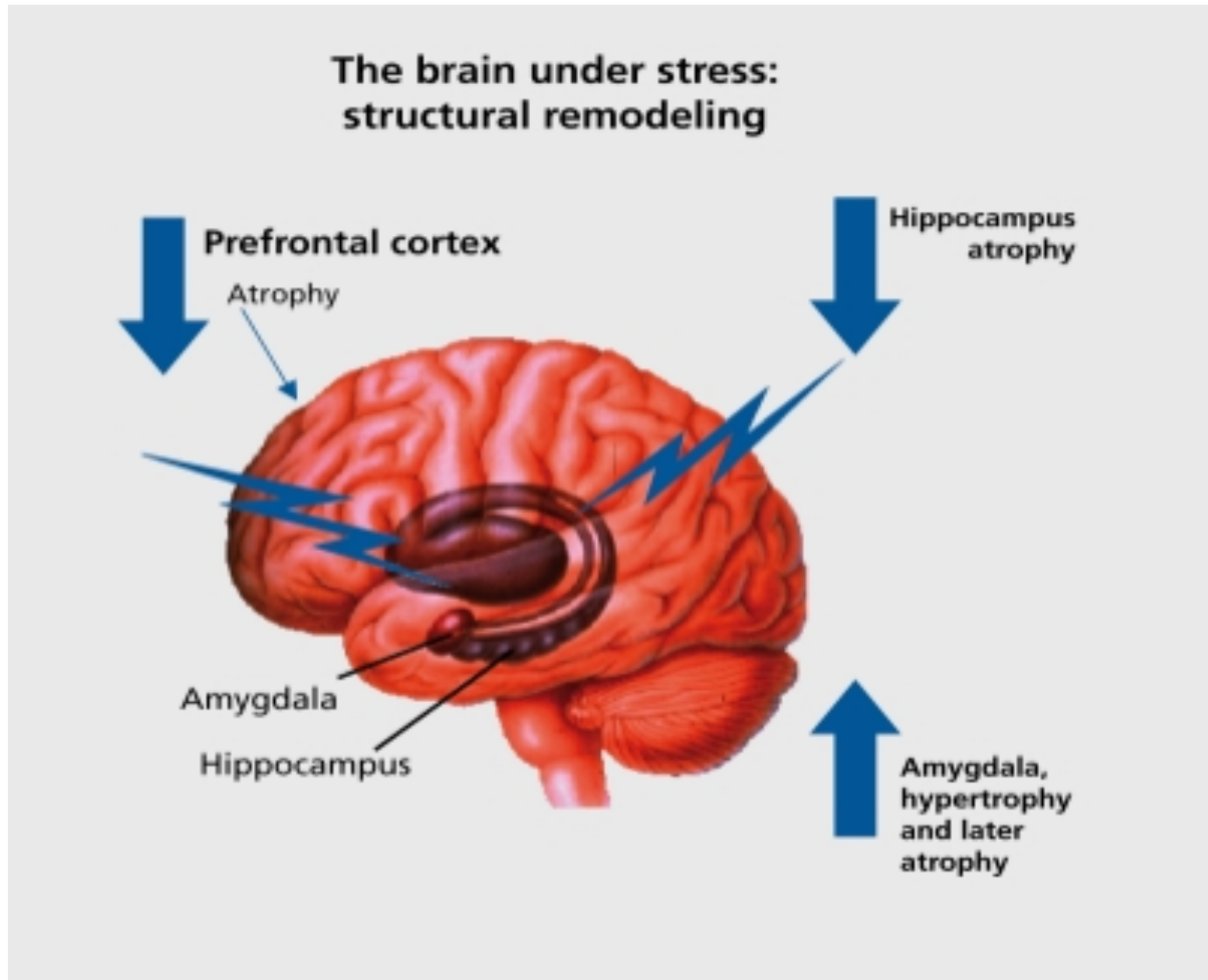
The Negativity Bias

During the 600 million year evolution of the nervous system, avoiding “sticks” was usually more consequential than getting “carrots.”

1. So we scan for bad news,
2. Over-focus on it,
3. Over-react to it
4. Install it efficiently in memory (incl. implicit),
5. Sensitize the brain to the negative, and
6. Create vicious cycles with others.



The Negativity Bias



How stress changes the brain

McEwen, 2006. Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience, 8:367-381 ²⁸

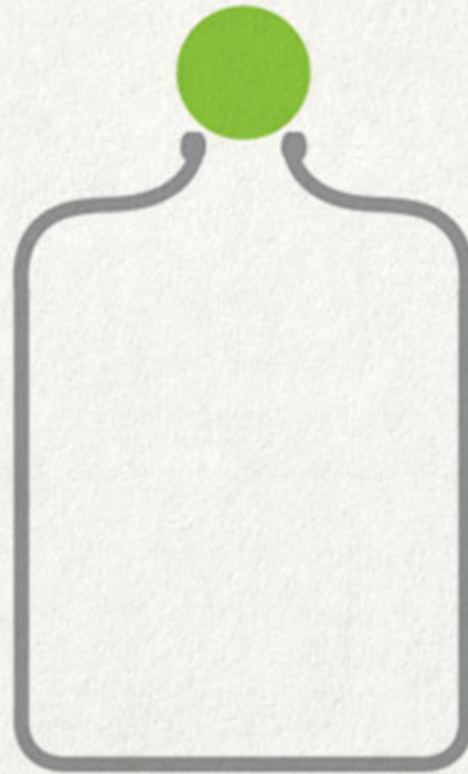
How to Take in the Good: HEAL

Activation

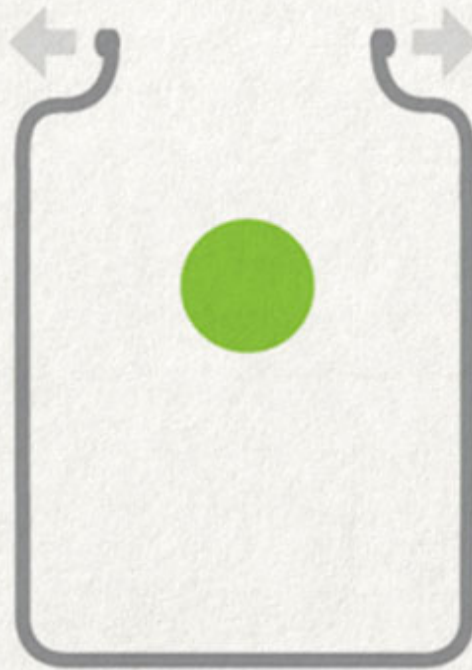
1. **Have** a beneficial experience

Installation

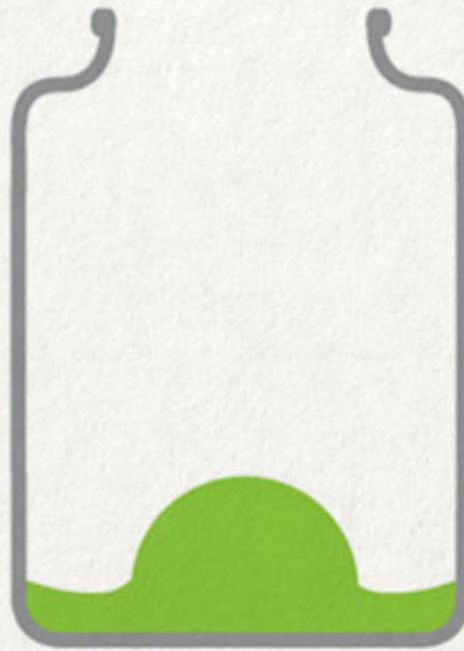
2. **Enrich** the experience
3. **Absorb** the experience
4. **Link** positive and negative material
(Optional)



Have a Beneficial Experience



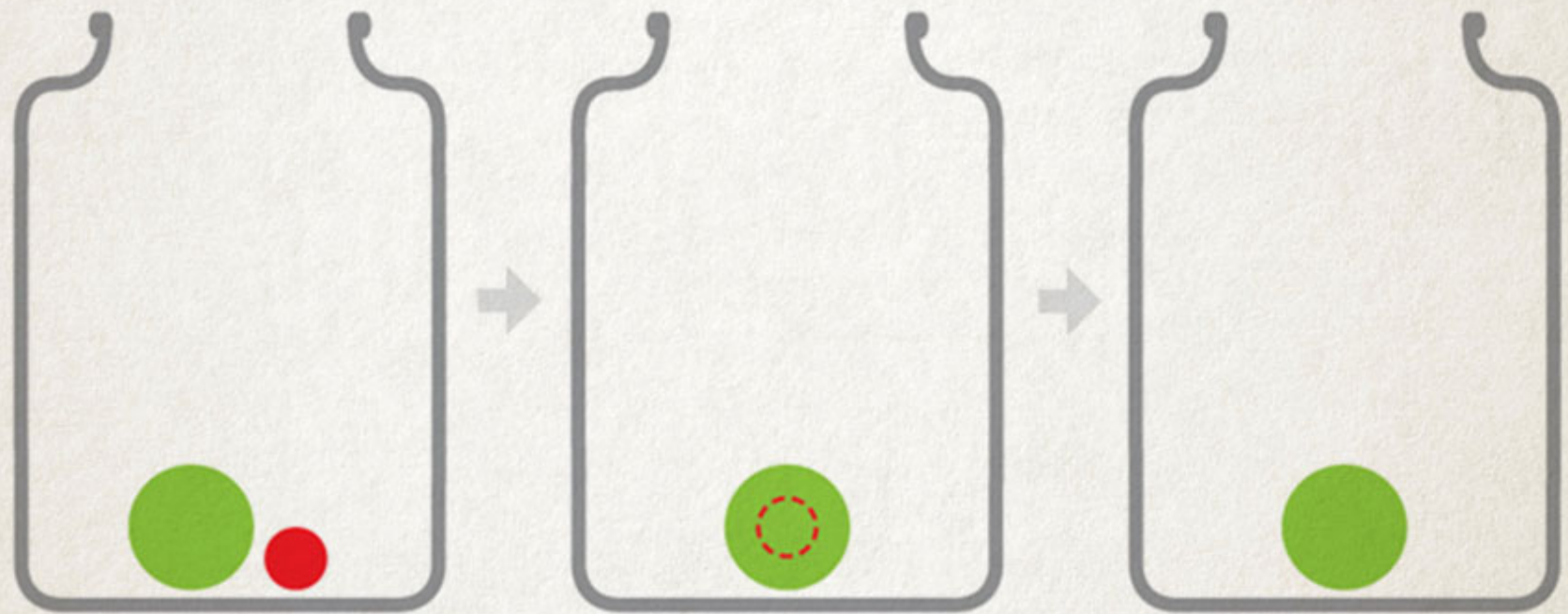
Enrich It



Absorb It

Like a Nice Fire





Link Positive & Negative Material

Let's Try It

Notice

relaxing as
you exhale

Create

the experience
of gladness

Create

the experience
of kindness

For each of the above:

Have the experience. Enrich it. Absorb it.

Two Aspects of Installation

Enriching

Mind – big, rich, protected experience

Brain – intensifying and maintaining neural activity

Absorbing

Mind – intending and sensing that the experience is received into oneself, with related rewards

Brain – priming, sensitizing, and promoting more effective encoding and consolidation

How to Enrich an Experience

- **Duration** – 5+ seconds; protecting it; keeping it going
- **Intensity** – opening to it in the mind; helping it get big
- **Multimodality** – engaging multiple aspects of experience, especially perception and emotion
- **Novelty** – seeing what is fresh; “don’t know mind”
- **Salience** – seeing why this is personally relevant

Absorbing an Experience

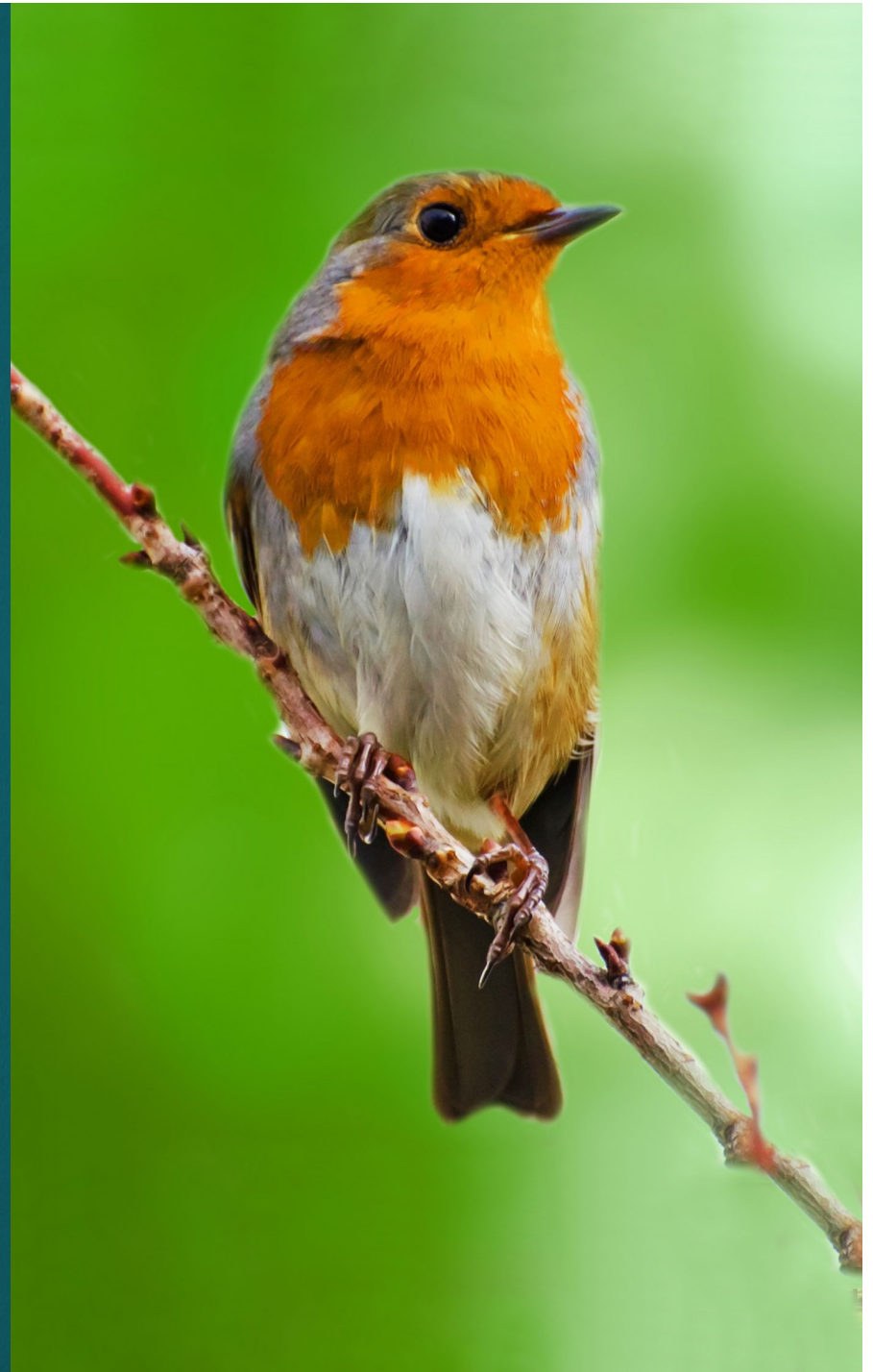
- Intend to receive the experience into yourself.
- Sense the experience sinking into you.
 - Imagery – Water into a sponge; golden dust sifting down; a jewel into the treasure chest of the heart
 - Sensation – Warm soothing balm
 - Give over to it; let it change you.
- Be aware of ways the experience is rewarding.

It's Good to Take in the Good

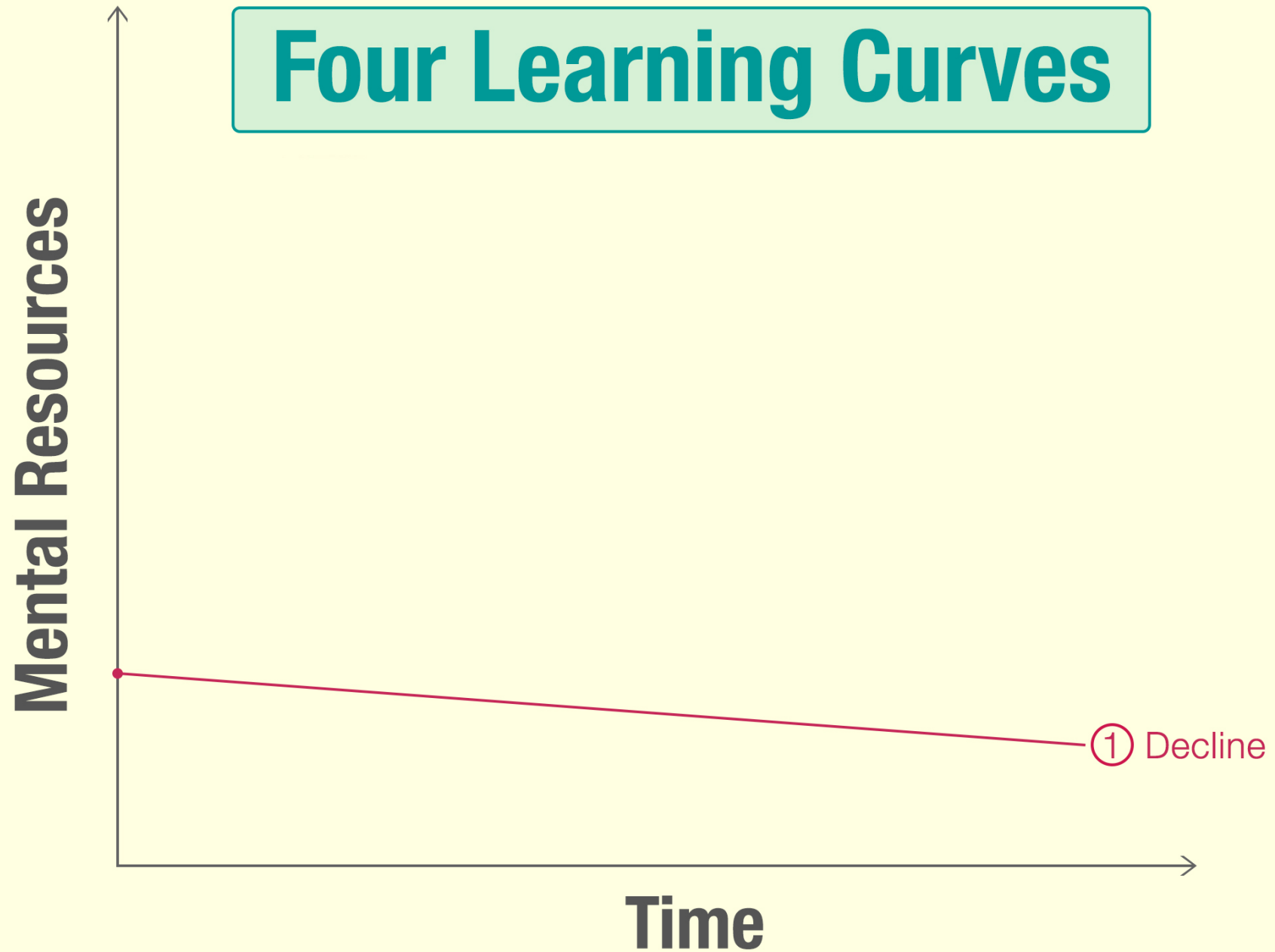
- **Development of specific inner strengths**
 - General - resilience, positive mood, feeling loved
 - “Antidote experiences” - Healing old wounds, filling the hole in the heart
- **Implicit benefits:**
 - Shows that there is still good in the world
 - Being active rather than passive
 - Treating yourself kindly, like you matter
 - Rights an unfair imbalance, given the negativity bias
 - Training of attention and executive functions
- **Sensitizes brain to positive: like Velcro for good**

”
*Keep a green bough
in your heart,
and a singing bird
will come.*

Lao Tzu

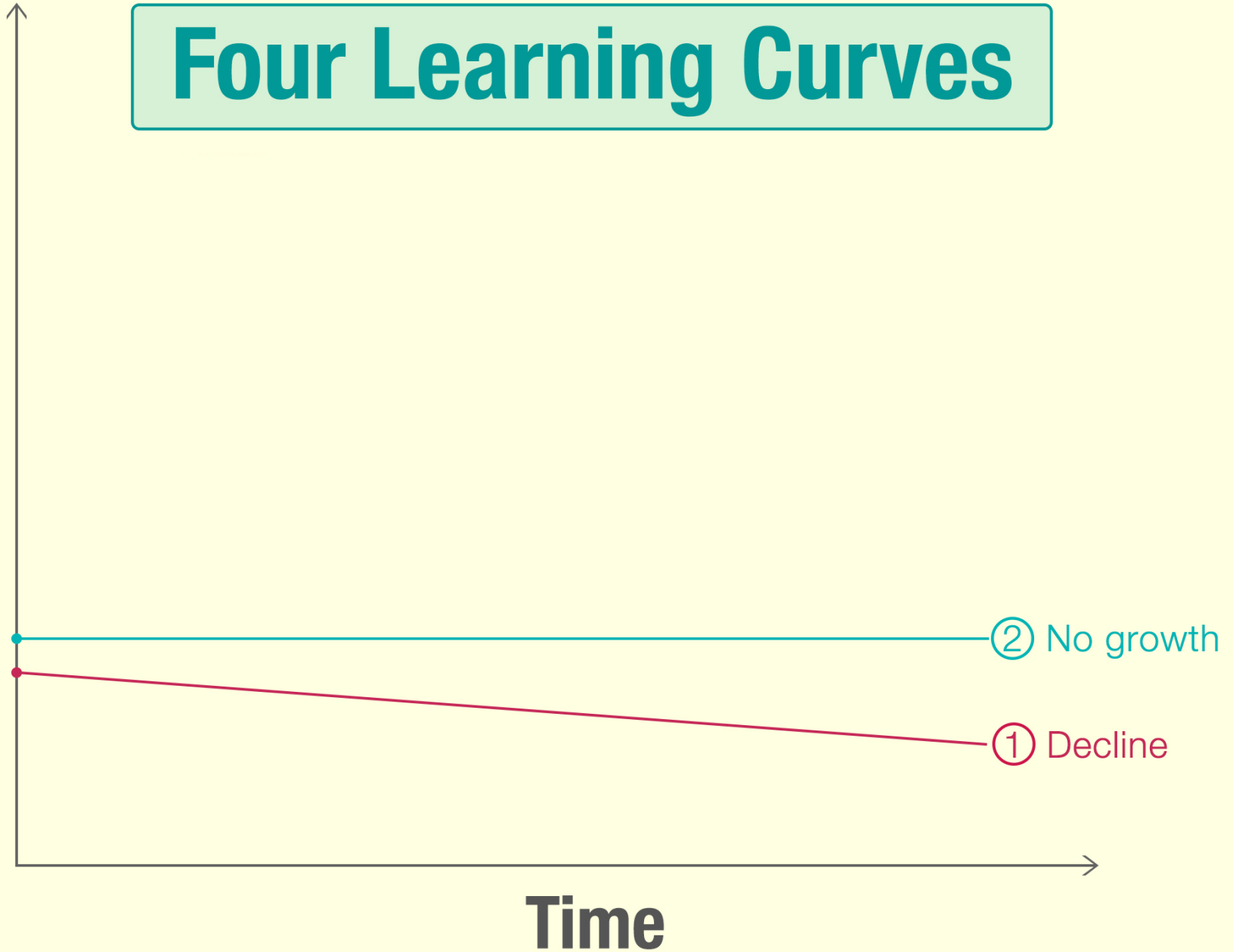


Four Learning Curves

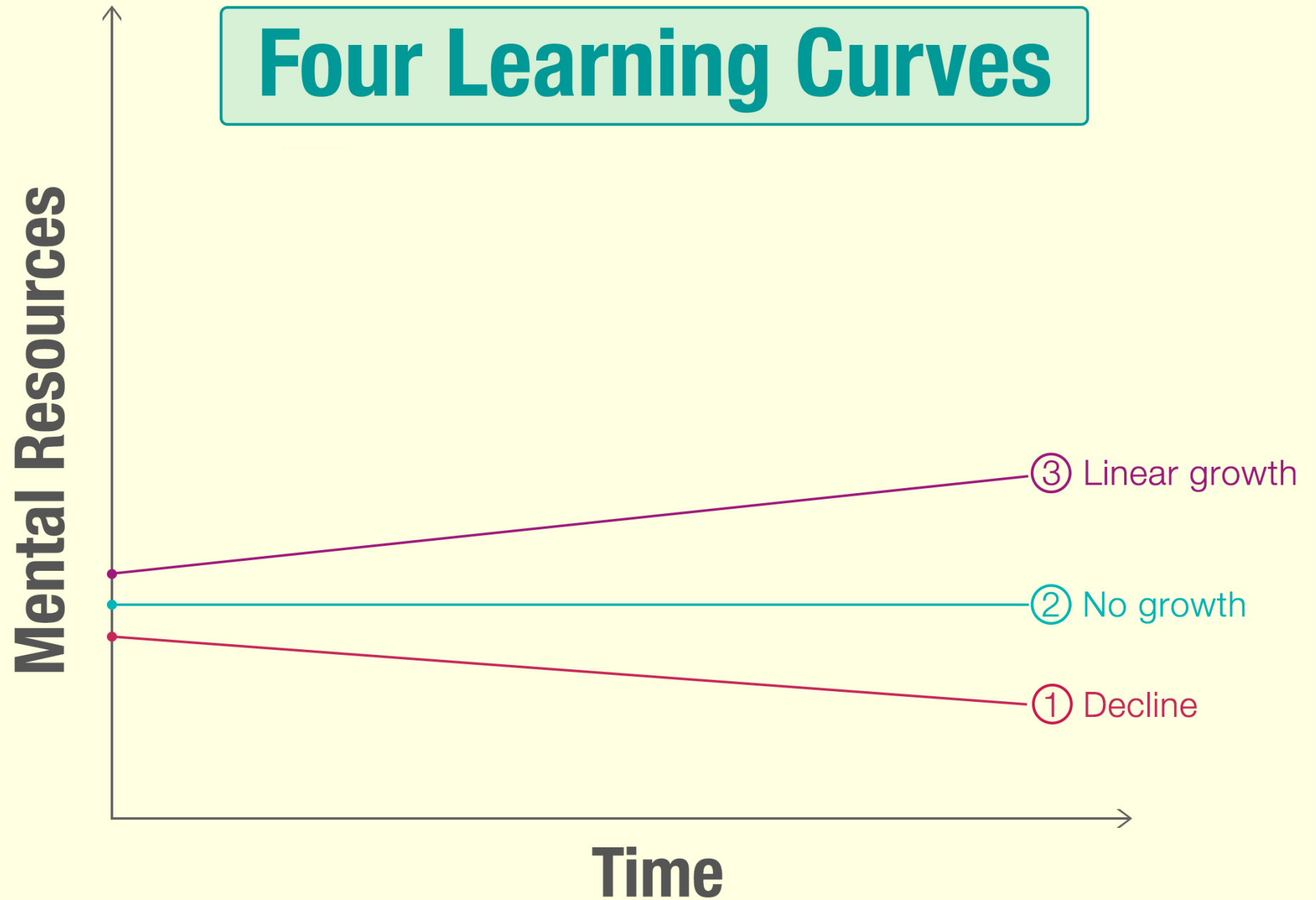


Four Learning Curves

Mental Resources

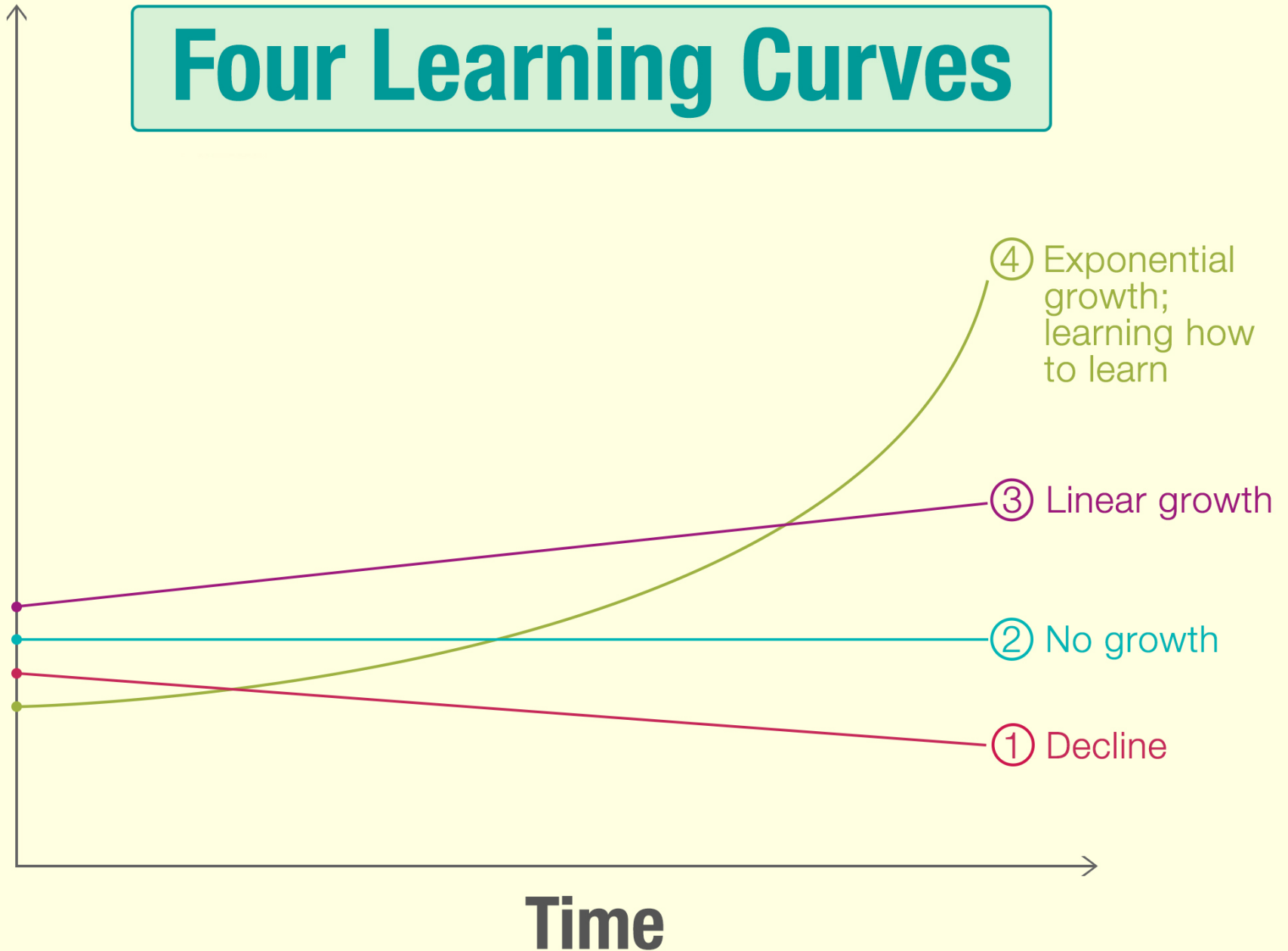


Four Learning Curves



Four Learning Curves

Mental Resources





3

On Your Own Side

*The good life,
as conceive it,
is a happy life.
I do not mean that
if you are good
you will be happy;
I mean that
if you are happy
you will be good.*

Bertrand Russell



Being for Yourself

- Bring to mind someone you are *for*. Find a sense of caring, support, being loyal, standing with someone as an ally. Know this stance toward someone.
- Apply this stance, this feeling, toward yourself.
- Recognizing your difficulties and burdens. Recognizing injustice applied to you. Recognizing the impacts on you.
- Finding determination that you not be mistreated, that you cope with challenges, that you be truly happy, having a good life as best you can.

Self-Compassion

Compassion is the wish that beings not suffer, with warm-hearted concern. Compassion is sincere even if we can't make things better.

Self-compassion simply applies this to oneself.

To encourage self-compassion:

1

Get the sense of being cared about.

2

Bring to mind beings you care about. Find compassion for them.

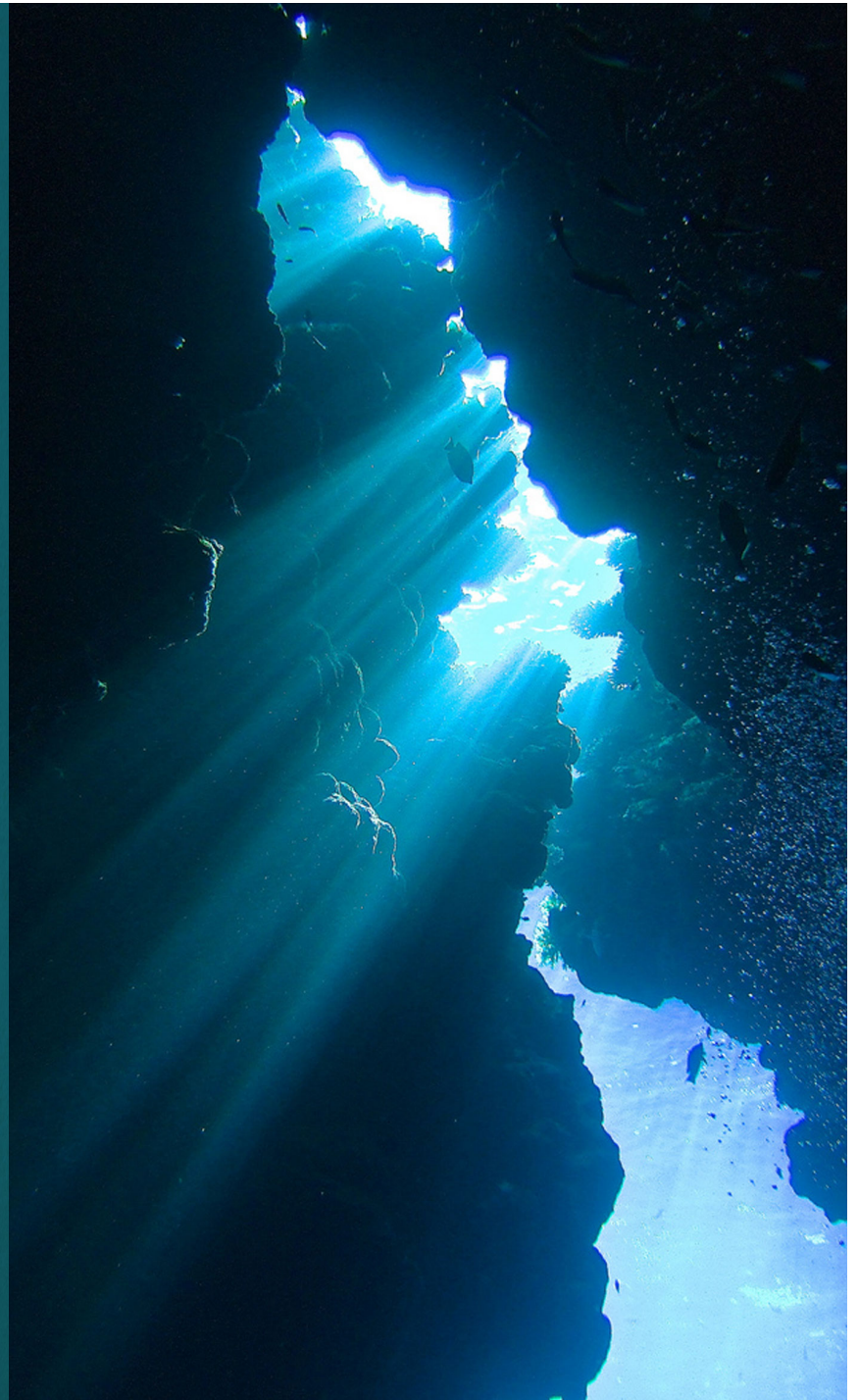
3

Shift the compassion to yourself.

“Anthem”

*Ring the bells that can still ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in*

Leonard Cohen





4

Needs and Resources

What – if it were more present in the mind of a person – would really help with challenges, temperament, or inner wounds or deficits?

How could a person have and install more experiences of these mental resources?

Our Three Fundamental Needs



safety



satisfaction



connection

Needs Activated by...



Safety

Unpleasant
Pain
Threat



Satisfaction

Pleasant
Opportunity
Loss



Connection

Heartfelt
Attraction
Rejection

Needs Met by Three Systems



Safety

Avoiding
harms



Satisfaction

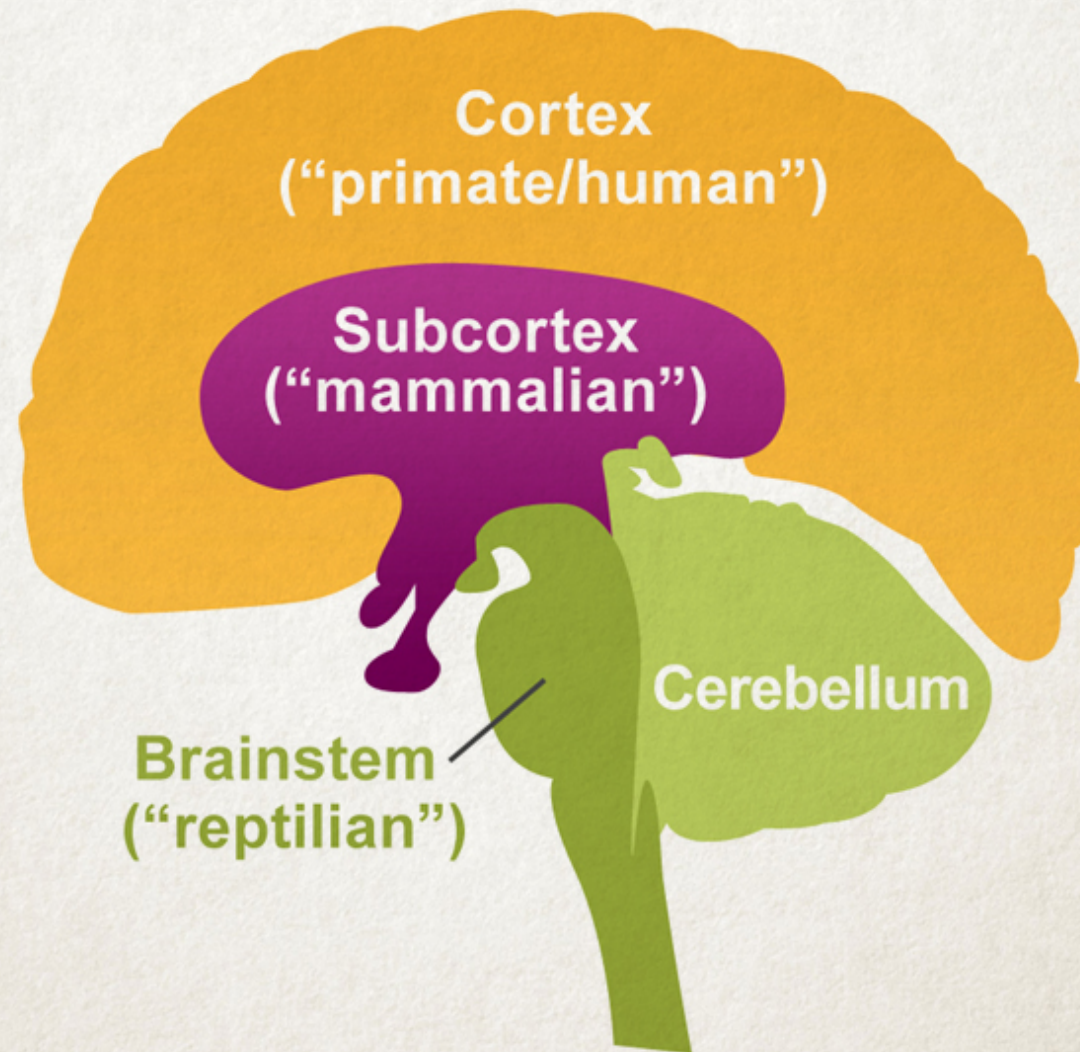
Approaching
rewards



Connection

Attaching
to others

The Evolving Brain



Can You Maintain Your Well-Being When:

Things are
unpleasant?

Things are
pleasant?

Things are
relational?

Examples of Resources Matched to Needs

Avoiding Harms

Feeling basically
alright right now

Feeling protected,
strong, safe,
at peace

The sense that
awareness itself is
untroubled

Approaching Rewards

Feeling basically full,
the enoughness in this
moment as it is

Feeling pleased,
glad, grateful, satisfied

Feeling accomplished,
successful

Attaching to Others

Feeling included, seen,
appreciated, liked,
loved

Feeling
compassionate, kind,
generous, loving

Feeling worthy, self-
accepting, confident

The Responsive Mode is Home Base

In the **Responsive “green zone,”** the body defaults to a sustainable equilibrium of refueling, repairing and recovering.

The mind defaults to a sustainable equilibrium of:

Avoiding

Peace

Approaching

Contentment

Attaching

Love

This is the brain in its homeostatic **Responsive,**
minimal craving mode.

The Reactive Mode is Leaving Home

In the **Reactive “red zone,”** the body fires up into the stress response: fight, flight, or freeze; outputs usually exceed inputs; long-term building projects are deferred.

The mind fires up into:

Avoiding

Fear

Approaching

Frustration

Attaching

Heartache

This is the brain in its allostatic **Reactive**, *craving* mode.

Coming Home, Staying Home

Meeting your core needs brings you home to the **Responsive** “green zone.”

Taking in the good Responsive states grows Responsive traits. In a wonderful cycle, these traits promote good states – which can strengthen your Responsive traits.

Responsive states and traits help you stay Responsive when the world is flashing red.



Pet the Lizard



Feed the Mouse



Hug the Monkey



Coming Home

Peace

Contentment

Love



5

Using the Positive
To Heal the Negative

HEAL by Taking in the Good

1. **Have** a beneficial experience.
2. **Enrich** it.
3. **Absorb** it.
4. **Link** it with negative material.
(Optional)

Degree of Engagement with Negative

- The idea of the negative material
- A felt sense of the negative material
- The positive material goes into the negative material

Throughout, the positive material remains
more prominent in awareness.

Feeling Strong

- Bring to mind times that you felt strong, determined, enduring . . . Use HEAL to take in this experience . . . Times you were strong for others . . . Times you were strong for yourself . . . Open to feeling strong and let this spread and establish itself in you . . . Feeling strong in this moment . . .
- Being aware of the idea of being helpless, overwhelmed, “weak” off to the side of awareness while focusing on feeling strong in the front . . . A felt sense of weakness off to the side while focusing on feeling strong . . . Feeling strong going into any weakness, easing it, bringing clarity, filling up hollow places inside . . .
- Letting go of anything “negative” and focusing simply on feeling strong . . .

The Tip of the Root

In the fourth step of TG, you could try to get at the youngest, most vulnerable layer of painful material.

The “tip of the root” is commonly in childhood. The brain is generally more affected by the negative experiences that occur in early childhood than by ones occurring later in life.

Prerequisites:



1

Understanding the
need to get at
younger layers

2

Compassion and
support for the
inner child

3

Capacity to “presence”
young material
without flooding



6

Resources for Safety,
Satisfaction, and
Connection

Resources for Avoiding Harms

Challenge

Weakness

Helplessness

Freezing

Inflated threats

Alarm

Tension

Dread

Confusion, overwhelm

Irritation, anger

Resource

Strength

Agency

Action, venting

Accurate appraisal

Protection, calming

Relaxation

Feeling alright now

Make a plan

Big picture, peace

Resources for Approaching Rewards

Challenge

What I don't have

Scarcity

Disappointed, sad

Frustration, failure

Bored, numb

Grief

Giving up

Drivenness

Resource

What I do have

Enoughness

Gratitude, gladness

Accomplishment

Pleasure, excitement

Loved and loving

Aspire, lived by good

Already satisfied

Resources for Attaching to Others

Challenge

Left out, excluded
Inadequacy, shame
Ignored, unseen
Lonely
Resentment
Envy, jealousy
Feeling stifled

Resource

Belonging, wanted
Appreciated, respected
Receiving empathy
Friendship, caring
Recognize it hurts you
Self-compassion,
take action, good will
Skillful assertiveness

Recognizing Resources in Yourself

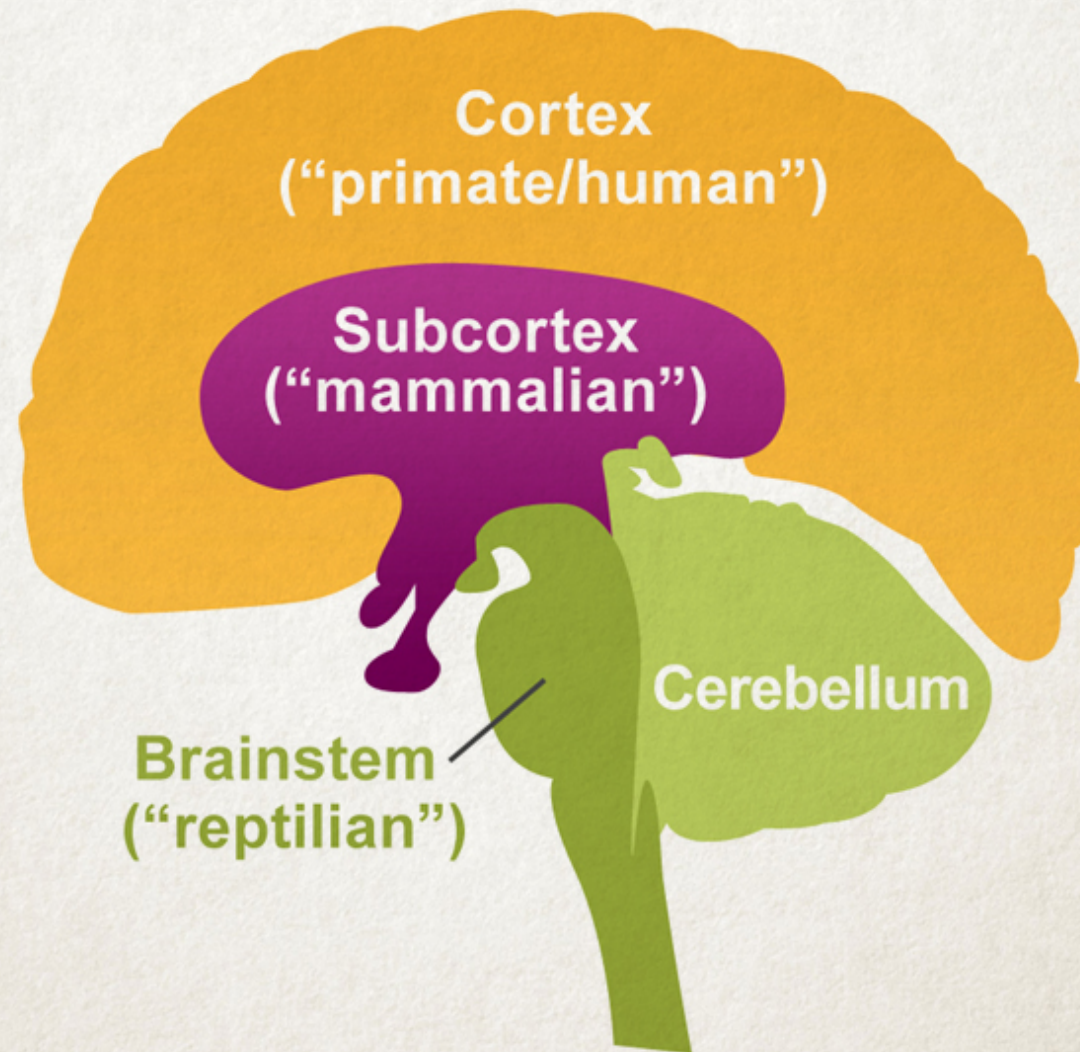
- Being aware of and appreciating some of the resources inside you for safety . . .
- Being aware of and appreciating some of the resources inside you for satisfaction . . .
- Being aware of and appreciating some of the resources inside you for connection . . .



7

A Social Brain

The Evolving Brain













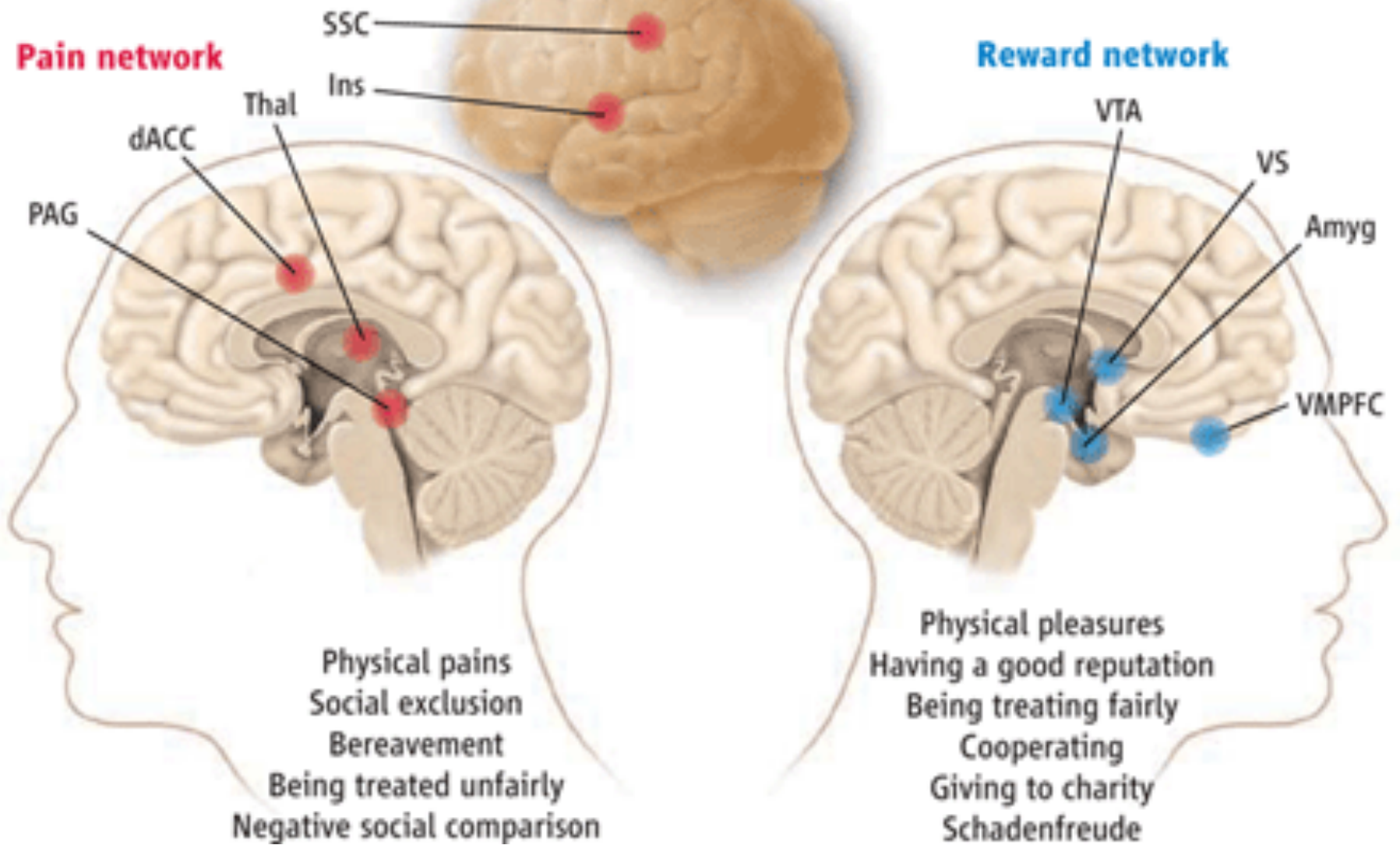




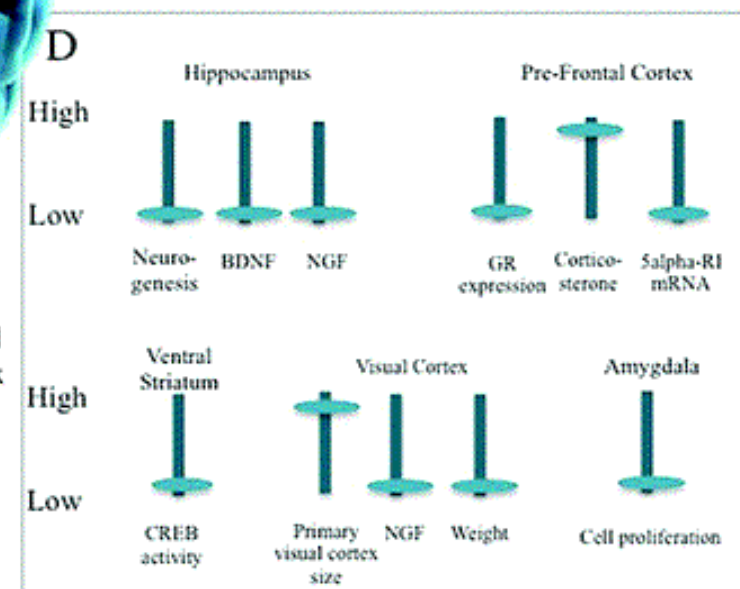
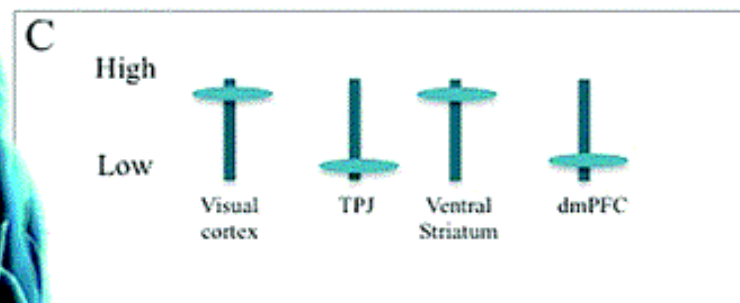
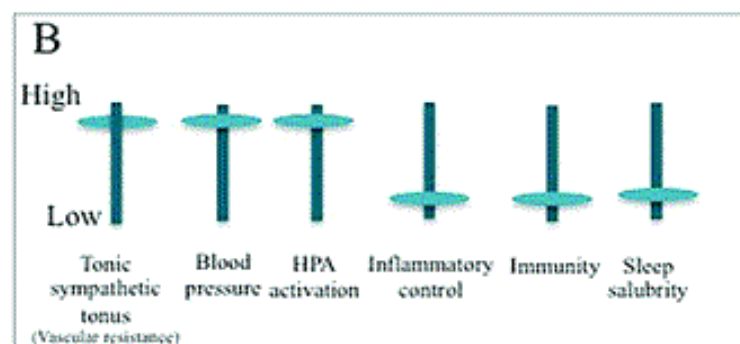
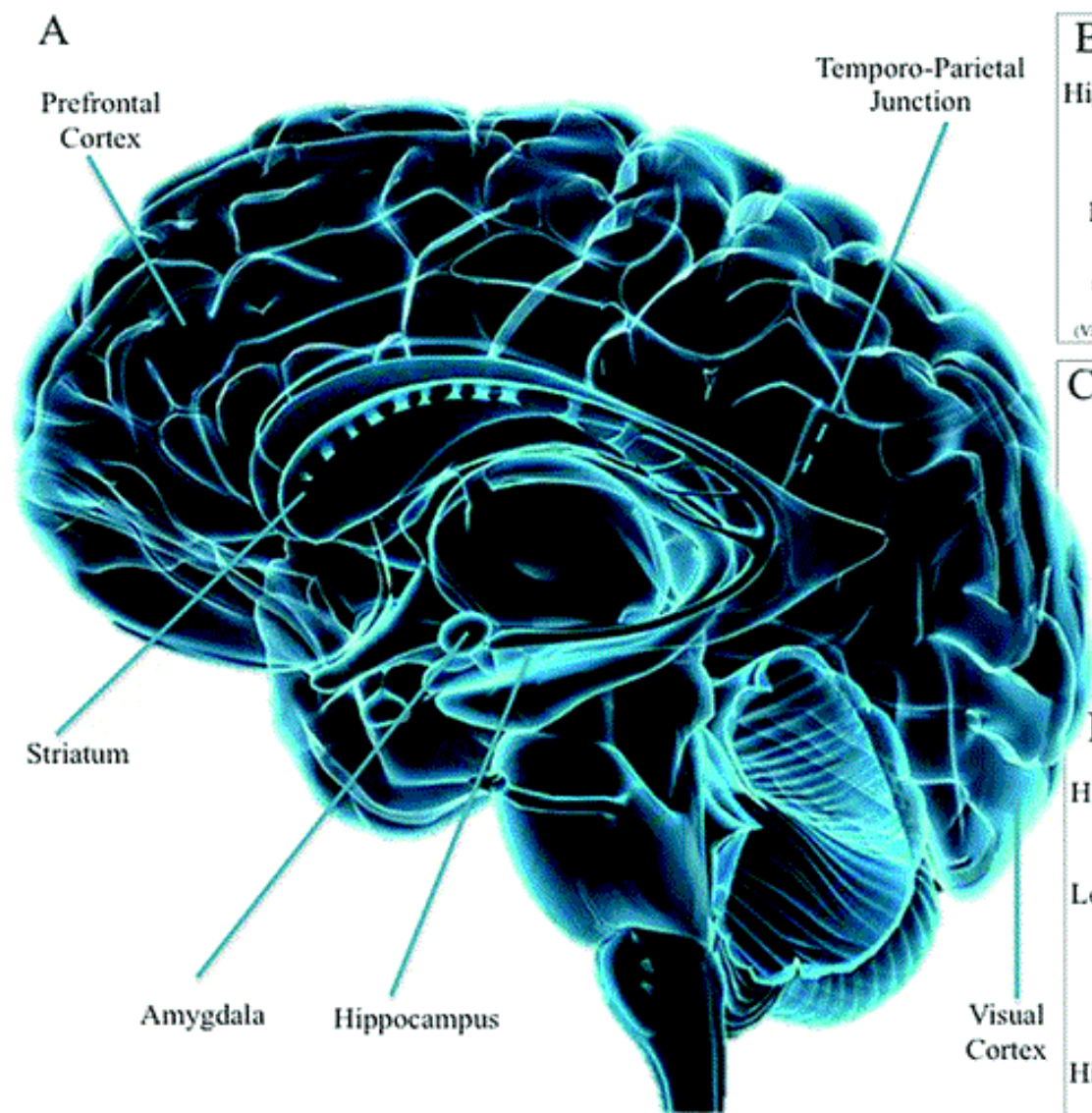




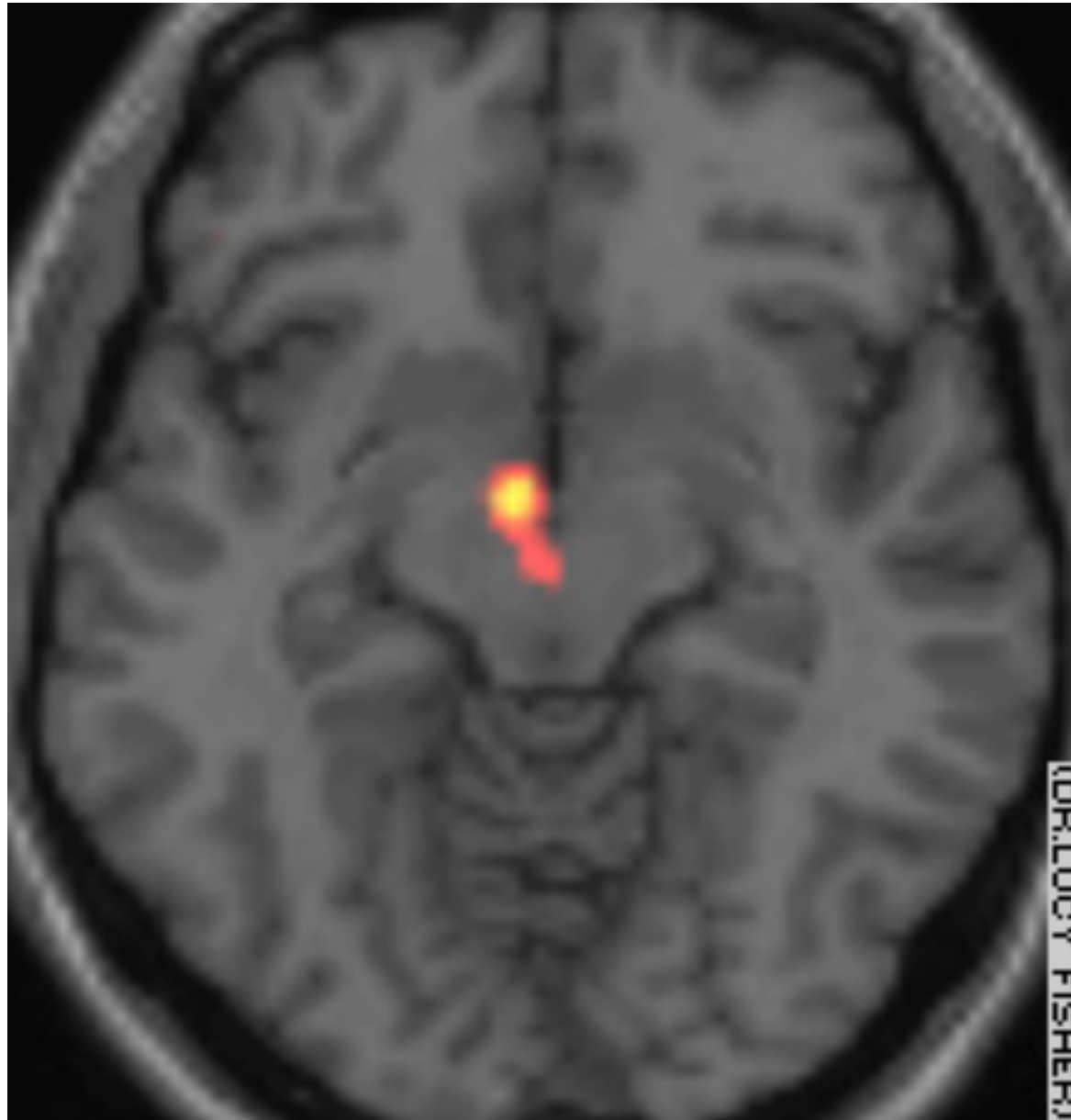




K. Sutliff, in Lieberman & Eisenberger, 2009, *Science*, 323:890-891



Rewards of Love





Pick a partner and choose an A and a B (A's go first). Then take turns, with one person speaking while the partner mainly listens, exploring this question:

TIP: If you're alone, reflect or journal.

What are some of the things you have **accomplished** in your life?

(Including lots of seemingly small things)

Take in your partner's recognition of you.

Attachment Theory

Primary need for children to attach to caregivers

Forms of attachment:

- Secure
- Insecure-anxious
- Insecure-avoidant
- Insecure-disorganized

Factors in children; in caregivers; in peers

Repair in adulthood

Object Relations

Paradigms of self-and-world; adaptive to non-adaptive; mild to severe

Roots in psychoanalysis, social learning

Paranoid

Sociopathic

Schizoid

Narcissistic

Borderline

Recognizing tendencies; situational factors



Pick a partner and choose an A and a B (A's go first). Then take turns, with one person speaking while the partner mainly listens, exploring these questions:

TIP: If you're alone, reflect or journal.

What reflections do you have about yourself from this material?

What reflections do you have about others?

Resting in Love

- Bring to mind beings you care about . . .
Friends, family, pets, people who have
helped you . . . Compassion for suffering . . .
Kindness and friendliness . . .
- Focus on feelings of caring and love . . .
Spreading and sinking into you . . .
- Bring to mind beings who care about you . . .
Focus on feeling cared about . . . Receiving
this into yourself . . .





8

The Circle of Us

Autonomy and Intimacy

Two great themes: independence/dependence, separation/joining, me/we

They serve each other: autonomy helps you feel safe in the depths of intimacy, and intimacy nurtures the sense of worth and “secure base” that helps you explore life and dare greatly.

When you feel autonomous and strong inside, you’re more able to manage differences and conflicts with others from the “green zone” without going “red” into fear, anger, and aggression.

Us and Them

- Within-group cooperation, and between-group aggression.
- Our biological nature is much more inclined toward cooperative sociability than toward aggression and indifference or cruelty. We are just very reactive to social distinctions and threats.
- That reactivity is intensified and often exploited by economic, cultural, and religious factors.
- Two wolves in your heart:
 - Love sees a vast circle in which all beings are “us.”
 - Hate sees a small circle of “us,” even only the self.

Which one will you feed?

*In between-family fights, the baboon's 'I'
expands to include all of her close kin;
in within-family fights,
it contracts to include only herself.*

*This explanation serves for baboons
as much as for the Montagues and Capulets.*

Dorothy Cheney and Robert Seyfarth

*There are those who do not realize that
one day we all must die.
But those who do realize this
settle their quarrels.*

The Buddha

Feeding the Wolf of Love

- Don't over-identify with "us."
- Release aversion to others.
- Focus on similarities between "us" and "them."
- Recognize and have compassion for the suffering of "them."
- Consider "them" as young children.
- Recognize good things about "them."
- Keep extending out the sense of "us" to include everyone.

A Widening Circle

- Bring to mind beings you care about . . . Friends, family, pets, people who have helped you . . .
- Get a sense of “us” . . . Then bring more and more beings into that circle . . .
- Finding common ground . . . Widening the circle of “us” . . .
- Resting in the largest sense of “us” . . .

Forgiveness

- Two levels of forgiveness: disentangling yourself . . . and a full pardon. In both there can be a recognition of wrongdoing and a valuing of justice.
- Disentangling involves standing up for yourself while not feeding resentments and grievances, and deliberately releasing the charge on what happened.
- A full pardon involves compassion, a recognition of the many causes of what happened, a release of punishment, and a full letting go.

Forgiving Yourself

Centering in peace . . . Contentment . . . Love . . .

Being aware of something to forgive . . . Seeing the big picture, so many causes . . .

Taking responsibility for your part . . . Feeling appropriate remorse . . . Knowing the steps you will take . . .

Knowing that you have owned your part . . . Recognizing your goodness . . . Recognizing your pain . . . Finding compassion for yourself . . . Releasing harshness toward yourself . . . Bringing kindness, respect, blessing to yourself . . . Forgiving yourself . . . Imagining other beings forgiving you . . . Letting go . . . Forgiving yourself . . .



9

Integration



Pick a partner and choose an A and a B (A's go first). Then take turns, with one person speaking while the partner mainly listens, exploring these questions:

TIP: If you're alone, reflect or journal.

What are the
key benefits
for you from
this workshop?

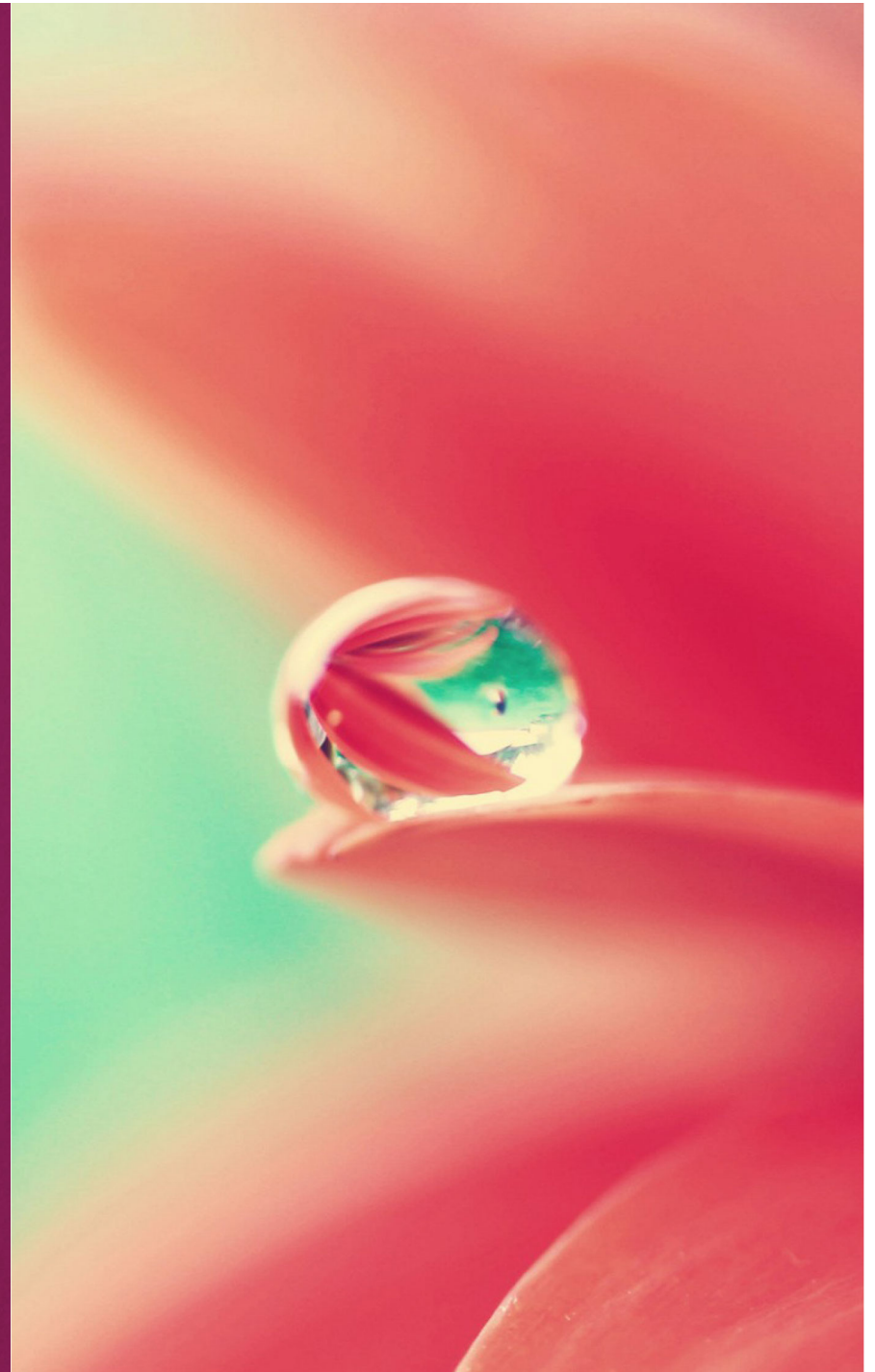
What are your
key intentions
for the days
and weeks
ahead?

*Think not lightly of good,
saying,
“It will not come to me.”*

*Drop by drop is
the water pot filled.*

*Likewise, the wise one,
Gathering it little by little,
Fills oneself with good.*

Dhammapada 9.122



Coming Home

Peace

Contentment

Love

Thank You





Supplemental Materials

Suggested Books

See **RickHanson.net** for other good books.

- Austin, J. 2009. *Selfless Insight*. MIT Press.
- Begley, S. 2007. *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*. Ballantine.
- Carter, C. 2010. *Raising Happiness*. Ballantine.
- Hanson, R. (with R. Mendius). 2009. *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom*. New Harbinger.
- Johnson, S. 2005. *Mind Wide Open*. Scribner.
- Keltner, D. 2009. *Born to Be Good*. Norton.
- Kornfield, J. 2009. *The Wise Heart*. Bantam.
- LeDoux, J. 2003. *Synaptic Self*. Penguin.
- Linden, D. 2008. *The Accidental Mind*. Belknap.
- Sapolsky, R. 2004. *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*. Holt.
- Siegel, D. 2007. *The Mindful Brain*. Norton.
- Thompson, E. 2007. *Mind in Life*. Belknap.

Key Papers – 1

See **RickHanson.net** for other scientific papers.

- Atmanspacher, H. & Graben, P. 2007. Contextual emergence of mental states from neurodynamics. *Chaos & Complexity Letters*, 2:151-168.
- Baumeister, R., Bratlavsky, E., Finkenauer, C. & Vohs, K. 2001. Bad is stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology*, 5:323-370.
- Braver, T. & Cohen, J. 2000. On the control of control: The role of dopamine in regulating prefrontal function and working memory; in *Control of Cognitive Processes: Attention and Performance XVIII*. Monsel, S. & Driver, J. (eds.). MIT Press.
- Carter, O.L., Callistemon, C., Ungerer, Y., Liu, G.B., & Pettigrew, J.D. 2005. Meditation skills of Buddhist monks yield clues to brain's regulation of attention. *Current Biology*. 15:412-413.

Key Papers – 2

- Davidson, R.J. 2004. Well-being and affective style: neural substrates and biobehavioural correlates. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. 359:1395-1411.
- Farb, N.A.S., Segal, Z.V., Mayberg, H., Bean, J., McKeon, D., Fatima, Z., and Anderson, A.K. 2007. Attending to the present: Mindfulness meditation reveals distinct neural modes of self-reflection. *SCAN*, 2, 313-322.
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Four Ways to Use HEAL with Others

Doing it implicitly

Teaching it and leaving it up to people

Doing it explicitly with people

Asking people to do it on their own

Elements of Experience

Thought

belief · perspective · expectation · image · memory · idea

Perception

sensation (e.g., relaxation, vitality) · sight · sound · taste · smell

Emotion

feeling · mood

Desire

want · wish · hope · drive · motivation · purpose · dream · passion

Action

behavior · posture · knowing how to

Turning a Good Fact Into a Good Experience

- Bring awareness to your **body**.
- Soften and **open**.
- Be a little **active** in your mind.
- Imagine how **another person** might feel.
- Be kind to yourself, and **encourage** a good experience.

“Negative” Material

- “Negative” material includes pain, worry, discomfort, helplessness, anger, frustration, disappointment, drivenness, addiction, loneliness, insecure attachment, hurt, jealousy, resentment, inadequacy, shame
- Comes from the presence of the “bad” and the absence of the “good”
- Activated explicitly and implicitly

How Linking Works

- Activated negative material associates to whatever is also present in awareness.
- When negative material leaves awareness, these associations are reconsolidated in memory.
- This means that positive material can soothe, ease, put in perspective, and even replace negative material.
- Examples: pain held in spacious awareness; telling a friend about a problem; self-compassion for an upset; feeling cared about alongside feeling hurt

Conditions for the Link Step

- Divided awareness;
holding two things at once
- Not hijacked by negative;
if so, drop negative
- Positive material is more
prominent in awareness.

Skills with the 4th Step

- Be on your own side; you want the positive to win. Perhaps imagine inner allies with you.
- Be resourceful. It's OK to be creative, even playful.
- If the negative gets too strong, drop it; return to positive.
- Get a sense of receiving the positive into the negative.
- End with just the positive.
- Start with positive or negative material.

Feeling Basically Alright Right Now

- Tuning into the body's signals that all is well right now
- Aware of breathing going fine . . . the heart beating . . . awareness itself keeps on going no matter what arises . . .
- Letting go of the past, not worrying about the future. Noticing that at least in this moment you are OK.
- Being alright, you can let go of any need to struggle with anything unpleasant.
- Feeling alright sinking into places inside that haven't . . .

HEAL in Classes and Trainings

Take a few minutes to explain it and teach it.

In the flow, encourage Enriching and Absorbing, using natural language.

Encourage people to use HEAL on their own.

Do HEAL on regular occasions (e.g., at end of a therapy session, at end of mindfulness practice)

Implicit HEAL in Therapy

- Creating space for beneficial experiences
- Drawing attention to beneficial facts
- Encouraging positive experience of beneficial fact
- Drawing attention to key aspects of an experience
- Slowing the client down; not moving on
- Modeling taking in the good oneself

Explicit HEAL in Therapy ⁽¹⁾

Teach the method

- Background helps about brain, negativity bias
- Emphasize facts and mild beneficial experiences.
- Surface blocks and work through them.
- Explain the idea of “risking the dreaded experience,” noticing the (usually) good results, and taking them in.

Explicit HEAL in Therapy (2)

- Do HEAL with client(s) during a session
 - Reinforcing key resource states and traits
 - Linking rewards to desired thoughts or actions
 - When learning from therapy has worked well
 - When realistic views of self and world come true
 - Good qualities in client
 - New insights
- Encourage HEAL between sessions
 - Naming occasions
 - Identifying key beneficial facts and experiences

HEAL and Trauma

- **General considerations:**
 - People vary in their resources and their traumas.
 - Often the major action is with “failed protectors.”
 - Respect “yellow lights” and the client’s pace.
- The first three steps of HEAL are generally safe. Use them to build resources for tackling the trauma directly.
- Use the Link step to address peripheral features and themes of the trauma.
- With care, use Link to get at the heart of the trauma.

Promoting Motivation

- Identify what you want to encourage (thought, word, deed); be clear; what would it look like?
- Use HEAL to associate rewards to what you want to encourage:
 - Before doing it
 - While doing it
 - After doing it
- Give over to this new habit, let it carry you along.

In Couples, Benefits of HEAL

- “Installs” key resources that support interactions (e.g., self-soothing, recognition of good intentions)
- Dampens vicious cycles
- Helps partner feel seen, credited for efforts
- Increases the sense of the good that is present
- Reduces clinginess, pursuing, or reproach that the other person withdraws from

Using HEAL with a Couple

- Basic steps (often informal):
 - Attention to a good fact
 - Evoking and sustaining a good experience
 - Managing blocks
 - Awareness of the impact on one's partner
 - Debriefing, often from both partners
- Pitfalls to avoid:
 - Seeming to side with one person
 - Unwittingly helping a person overlook real issues
 - Letting the other partner pile on

Uses for Children

- Registering curricular skills and other resources
- Motivation for learning; associating rewards
- Seeing the good in the world, others, and oneself – and in the past, present, and future
- Seeing life as opportunity
- Feeling like an active learner
- Developing child-specific inner strengths

Adaptations for Children

- Kids gain from HEAL – particularly mistreated, anxious, spirited/ ADHD, or LD children.
- Style:
 - Be matter of fact: this is mental/neural literacy.
 - A little brain talk goes a long way.
 - Be motivating: name benefits; “be the boss of your own mind.”
 - Down to earth, naturalistic
 - Scaffold based on executive functions, motivation, and need for autonomy.
 - Brief, concrete

Occasions for HEAL with Kids

- Explicit training in positive neuroplasticity
- Natural rhythms in the day (e.g., start of class, after a lesson or recess, end of day)
- When working with an individual child
- When dealing with classroom issues

What Is Empathy?

- It is sensing, feeling, and understanding how it is for the other person. In effect, you *simulate* his or her inner world.
- It involves (sometimes subtly) all of these elements:
 - Bodily resonance
 - Emotional attunement
 - Conceptual understanding
- Empathy is usually communicated, often tacitly.
- We can give empathy, we can receive it, and we can ask for it.

Neural Substrates of Empathy

- Three *simulating* systems:
 - Actions: “mirror” systems; temporal-parietal
 - Feelings: resonating emotionally; insula
 - Thoughts: “theory of mind”; prefrontal cortex
- These systems interact with each other through association and active inquiry.
- They produce an automatic, continual re-creation of aspects of others’ experience.

Empathy Skills

- Pay attention.
- Be open.
- Read emotion in face and eyes.
- Sense beneath the surface.
- Drop aversion (judgments, distaste, fear, anger, withdrawal).
- Investigate actively.
- Express empathic understanding.

Benefits of Unilateral Virtue

- It simplifies things: all you have to do is just live by your own code, and others will do whatever they do.
- It feels good in its own right.
- It minimizes inflammatory triggers, evokes good treatment, empowers you to ask for it.
- It stands you on the moral high ground.

Right Speech

- Well-intended
- True
- Beneficial
- Timely
- Expressed without harshness
- And - ideally - wanted

Healthy Assertiveness

What it is:

Speaking your truth
and pursuing your aims
in the context of relationships.

Healthy Assertiveness

What supports it:

- Being on your own side
- Self-compassion
- Naming the truth to yourself
- Refuges: Three Jewels, reason, love, nature, transcendental, awareness, practice
- Taking care of the big things so you don't grumble about the little ones
- Health and vitality

Healthy Assertiveness: How to Do It -

1

- Know your aims; stay focused on the prize; concede small points to gain on large ones
- Ground in empathy, compassion, and love
- Practice unilateral virtue

Healthy Assertiveness: How to Do It - 2

- Communicate for yourself, not to change others
- Wise Speech; be especially mindful of tone
- NVC: “When X happens, I feel Y because I need Z.”
- Dignity and gravity
- Distinguish empathy building (“Y”) from policy-making

Healthy Assertiveness: How to Do It - 3

- If appropriate, negotiate solutions.
- Establish facts as best you can (“X”)
- Find the deepest wants (“Z”)
- Focus mainly on “from now on”
- Make clear plans, agreements
- Scale relationships to their actual foundations

A Confident Heart

- Feeling caring . . . And cared about.
- Stepping back and seeing yourself objectively . . .
Recognizing your capabilities . . . Your good intentions . . . What you have been through and dealt with and overcome.
- Finding the respect for yourself that you would have for a person just like you . . . Letting go of needing to prove yourself or impress anyone . . .
Recognizing your decency and efforts . . . Your good heart . . .

Feeling of Worth

- It is natural and important to feel that you have worth as a person – which does not mean arrogance or ego.
- **You develop this sense of worth through:**
 - Others including, appreciating, liking, and loving you
 - You respecting yourself
- **Take in experiences of being:**
 - Capable, skillful, talented, helpful
 - Included, wanted, sought out, chosen
 - Appreciated, acknowledged, respected
 - Liked, befriended, supported
 - Loved, cherished, special