


Acquiring Mental Resources For Lasting Happiness



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Mental Resources for Lasting Happiness

Mental Resources Support Happiness

Resilience

Mindfulness

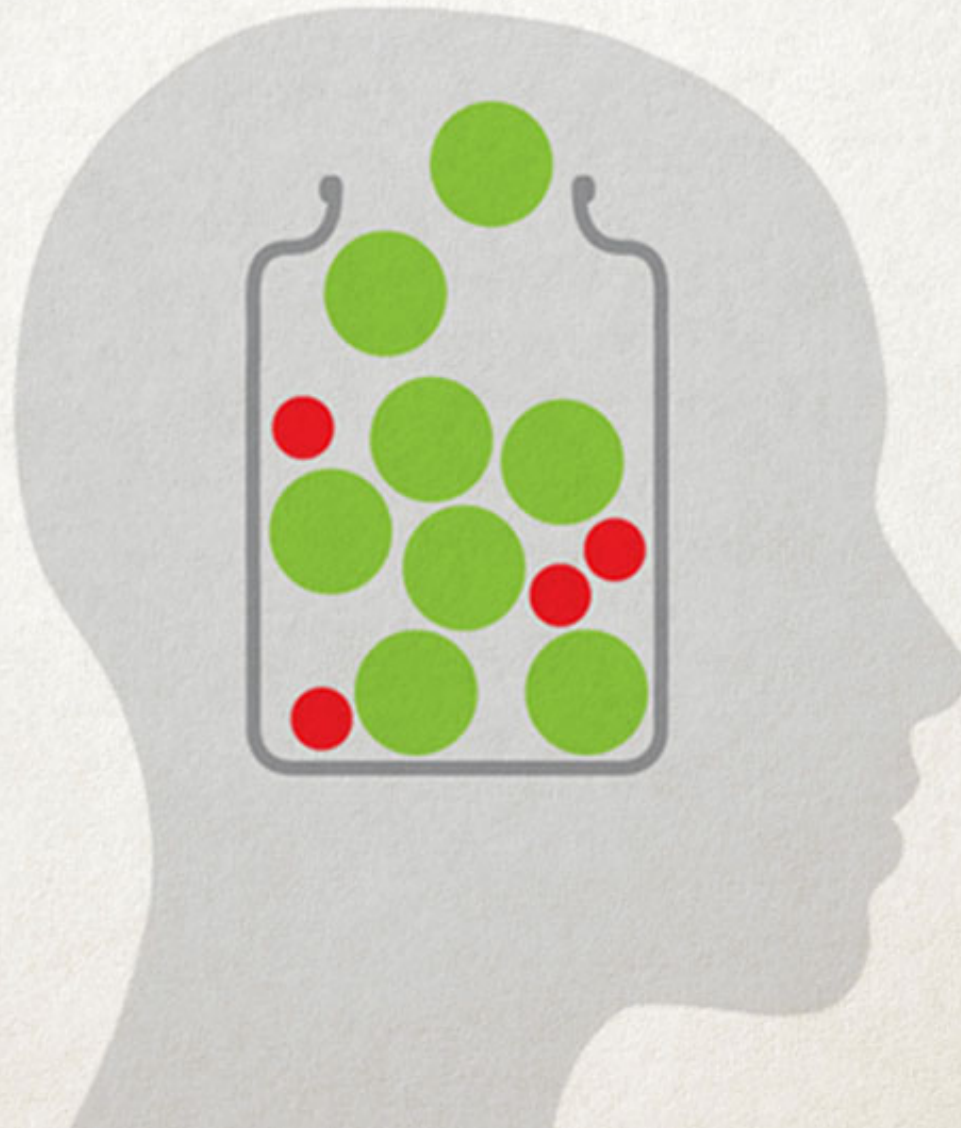
Secure Attachment

Self Regulation

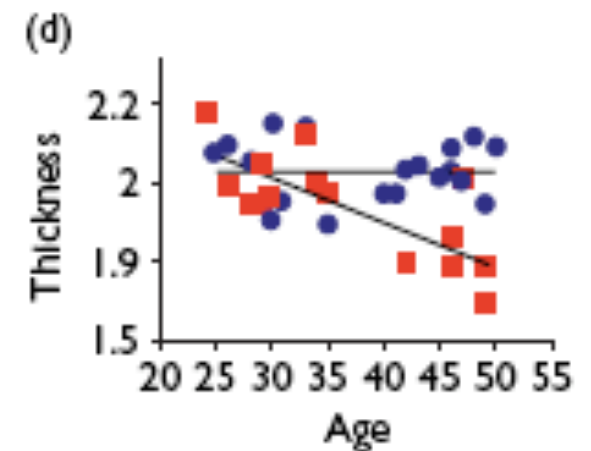
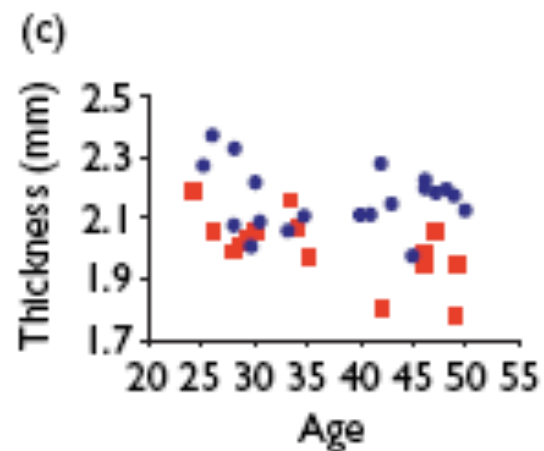
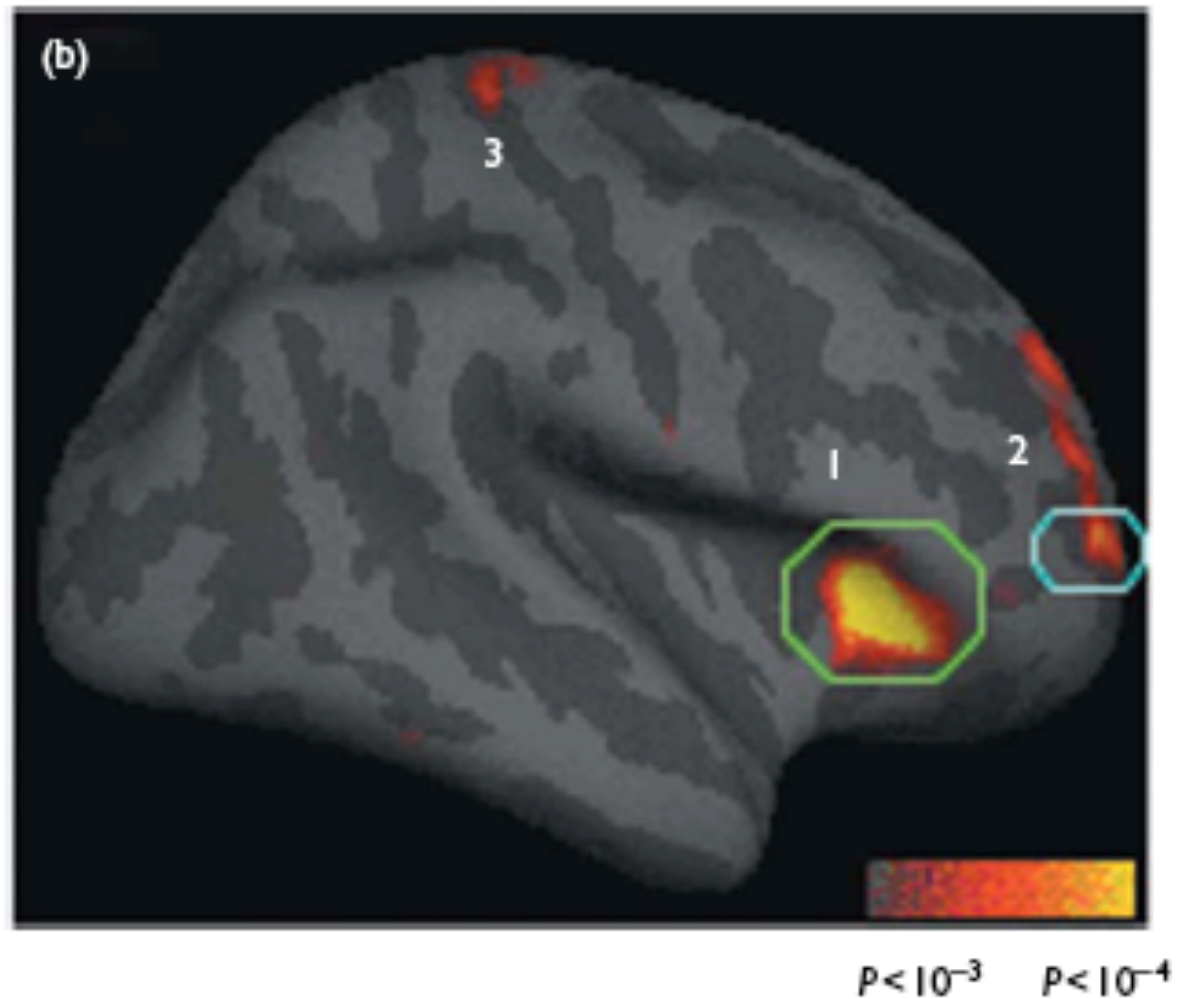
Optimism

Self-Worth

Mental Resources Are Embedded In Brain Structure



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



Mental resources are acquired in two stages:

Encoding	➤	Consolidation
Activation	➤	Installation
State	➤	Trait

A detailed illustration of a neural network. The background is black, and the neurons are depicted as glowing yellow-orange structures. A central neuron is prominent, with a bright green nucleus and a complex web of dendrites and axons extending across the frame. Other neurons are visible in the periphery, some partially obscured. The overall effect is one of a complex, interconnected system.

Neurons that fire together,

wire together.

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

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

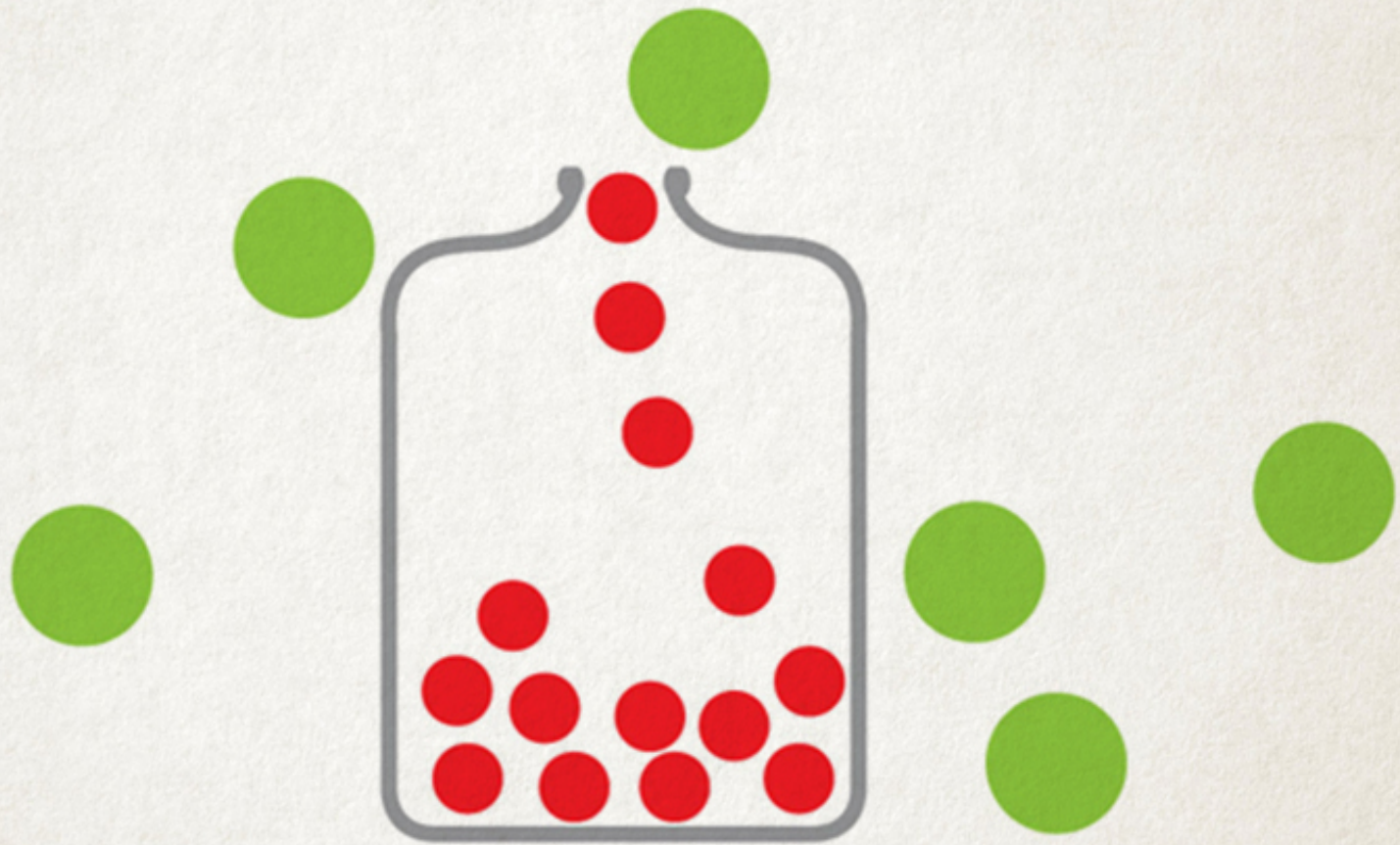
We become more **resilient** by repeatedly installing experiences of resilience.



Steepening Personal Growth Curves

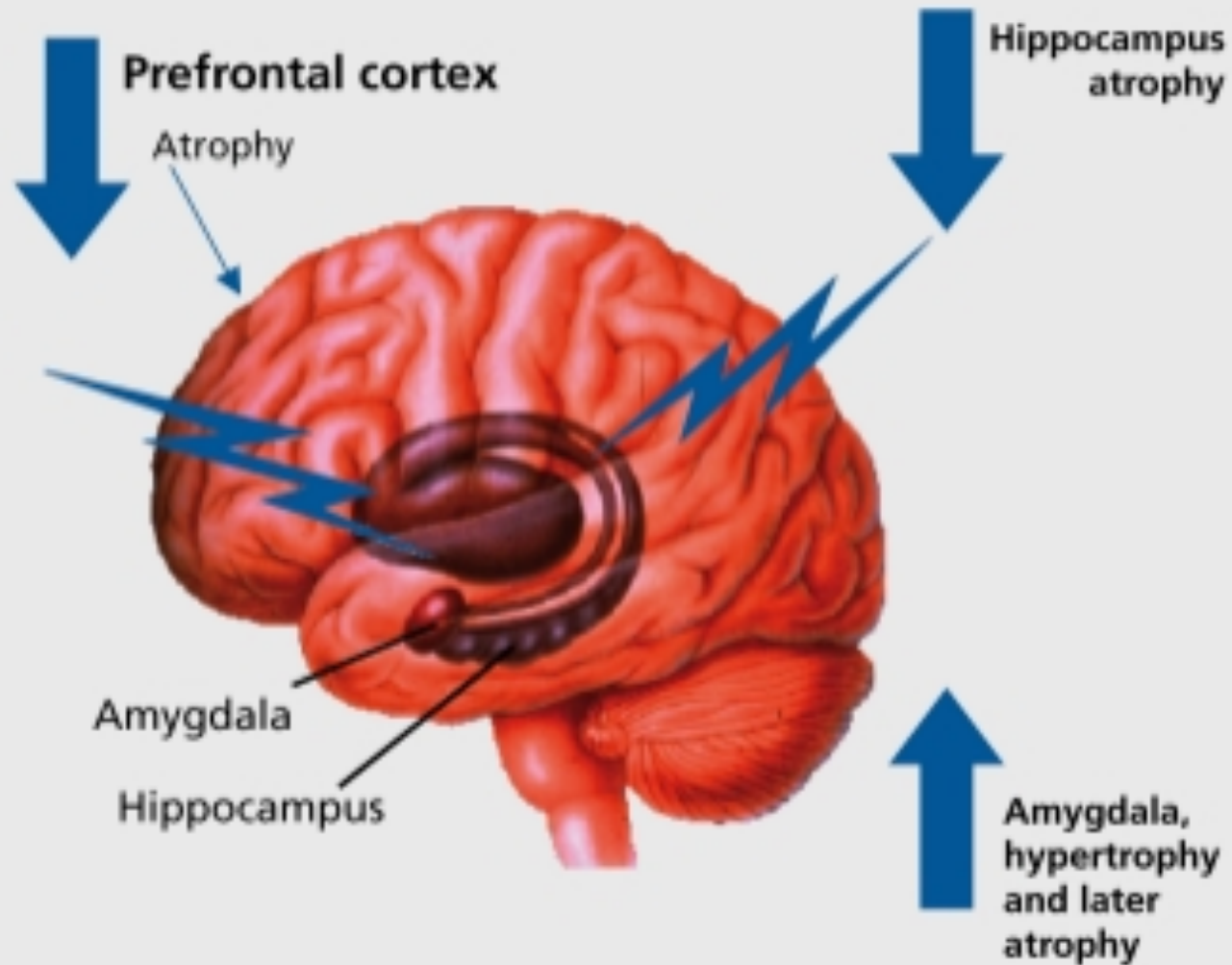
**Activation without installation
may be pleasant,
but it has no lasting value.**

What fraction of our
beneficial mental states ever
become neural structure?



The Negativity Bias

The brain under stress: structural remodeling



How stress changes the brain

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

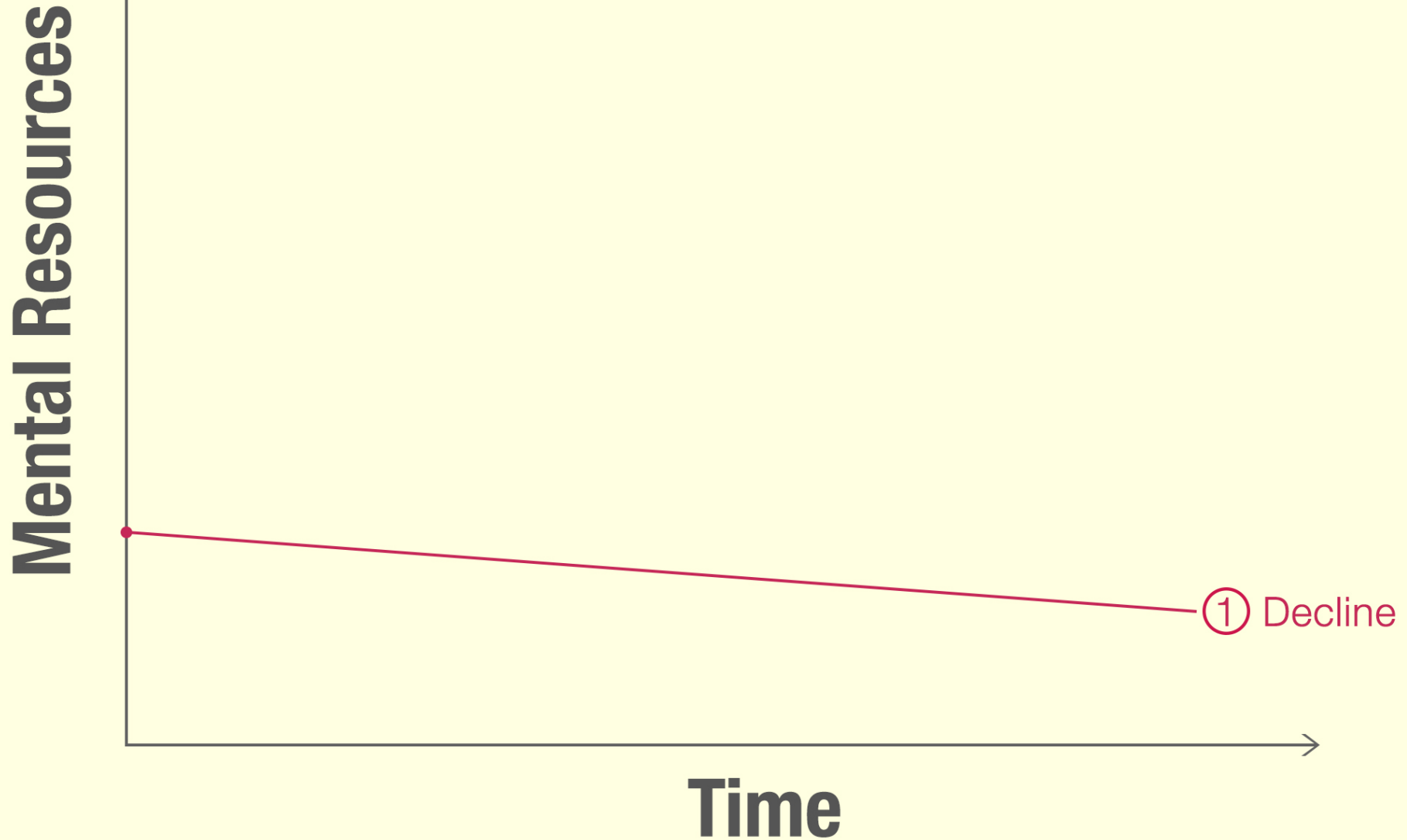
The same research that
proves therapy works
shows no improvement
in outcomes over
the last 30 or so years.

Scott Miller, Ph.D.

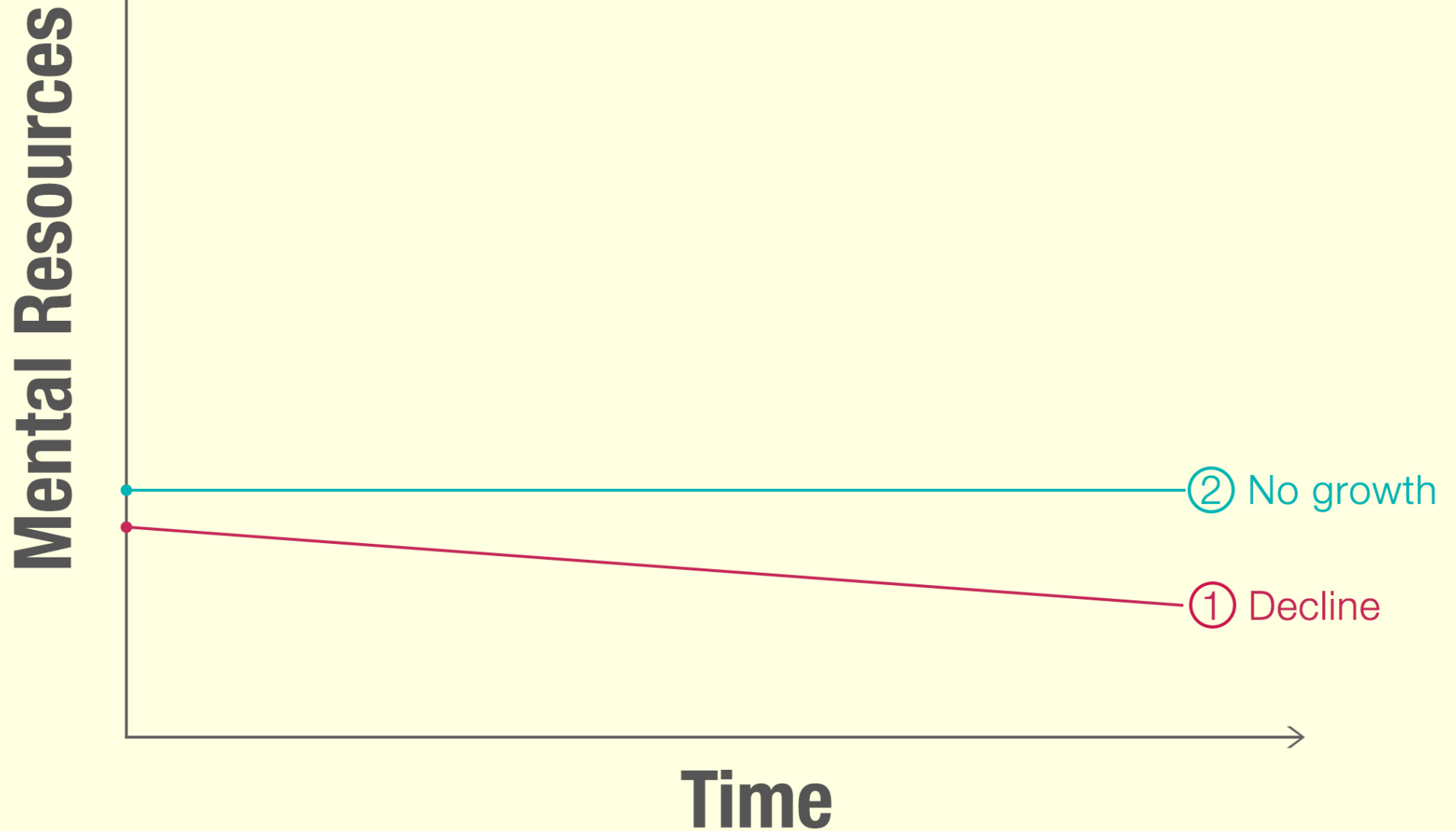
Professionals and the public
are generally good at activation
but bad at installation.

This is the fundamental weakness
– and opportunity – in much
coaching, psychotherapy, human
resources training, and
mindfulness programs.

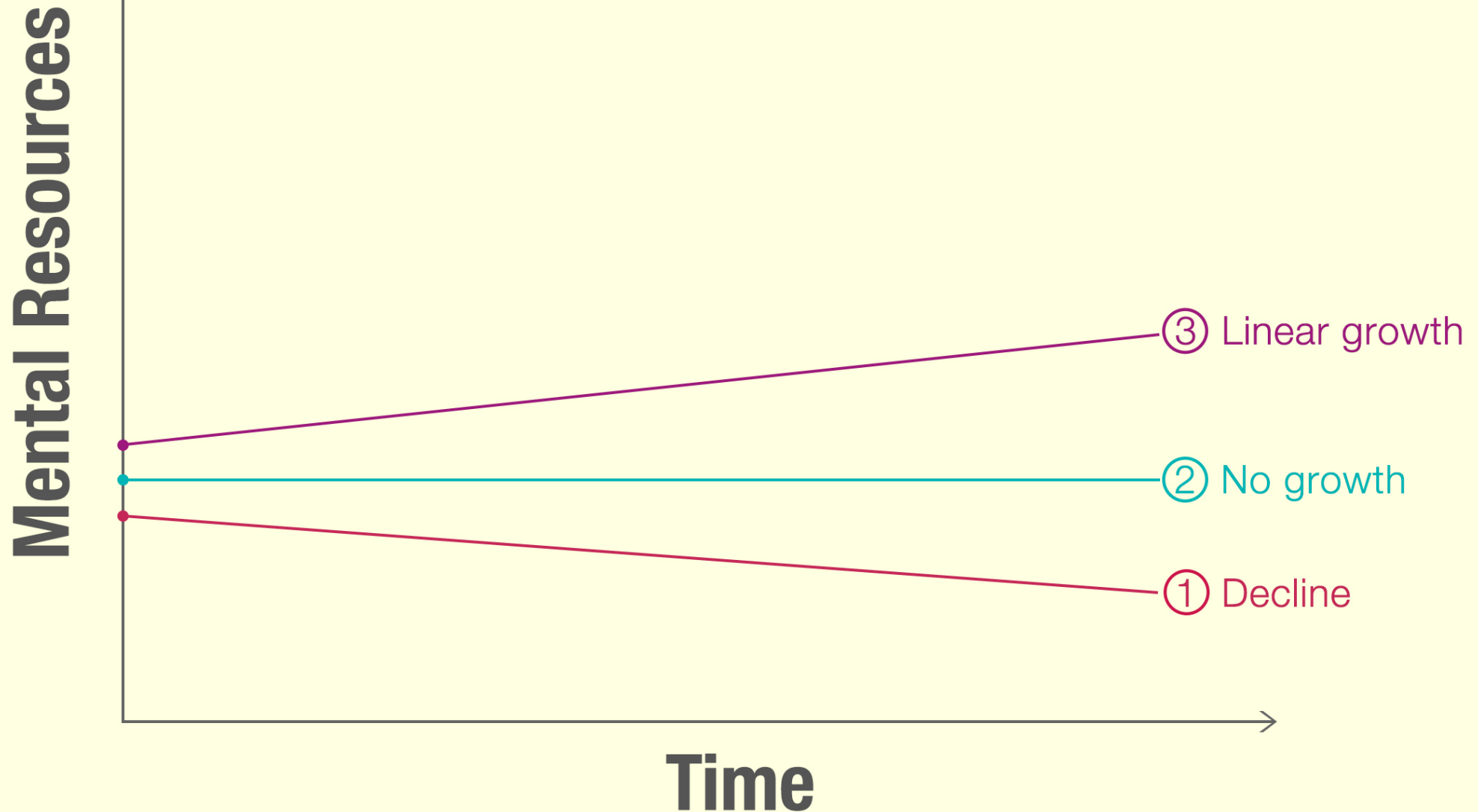
Four Learning Curves



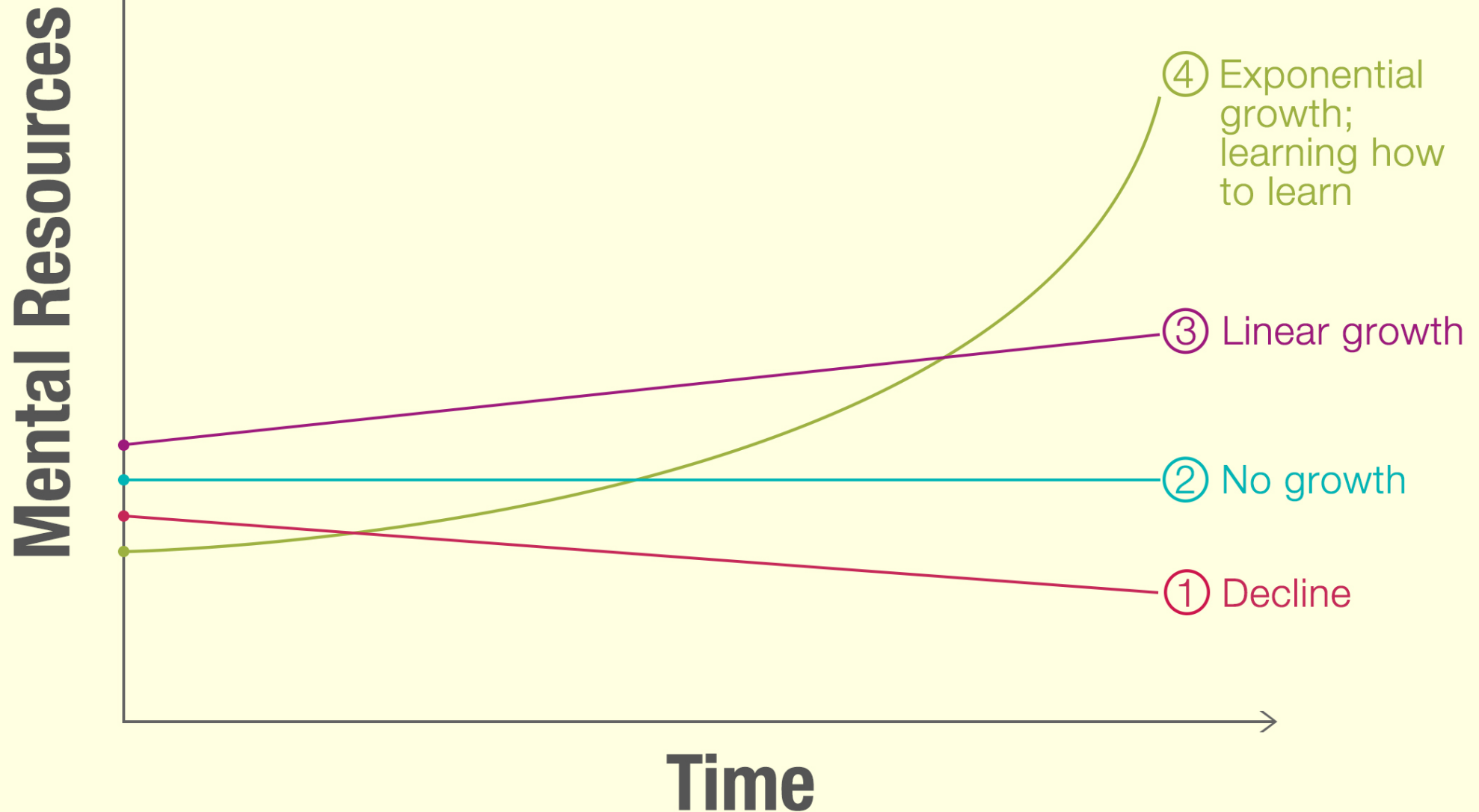
Four Learning Curves

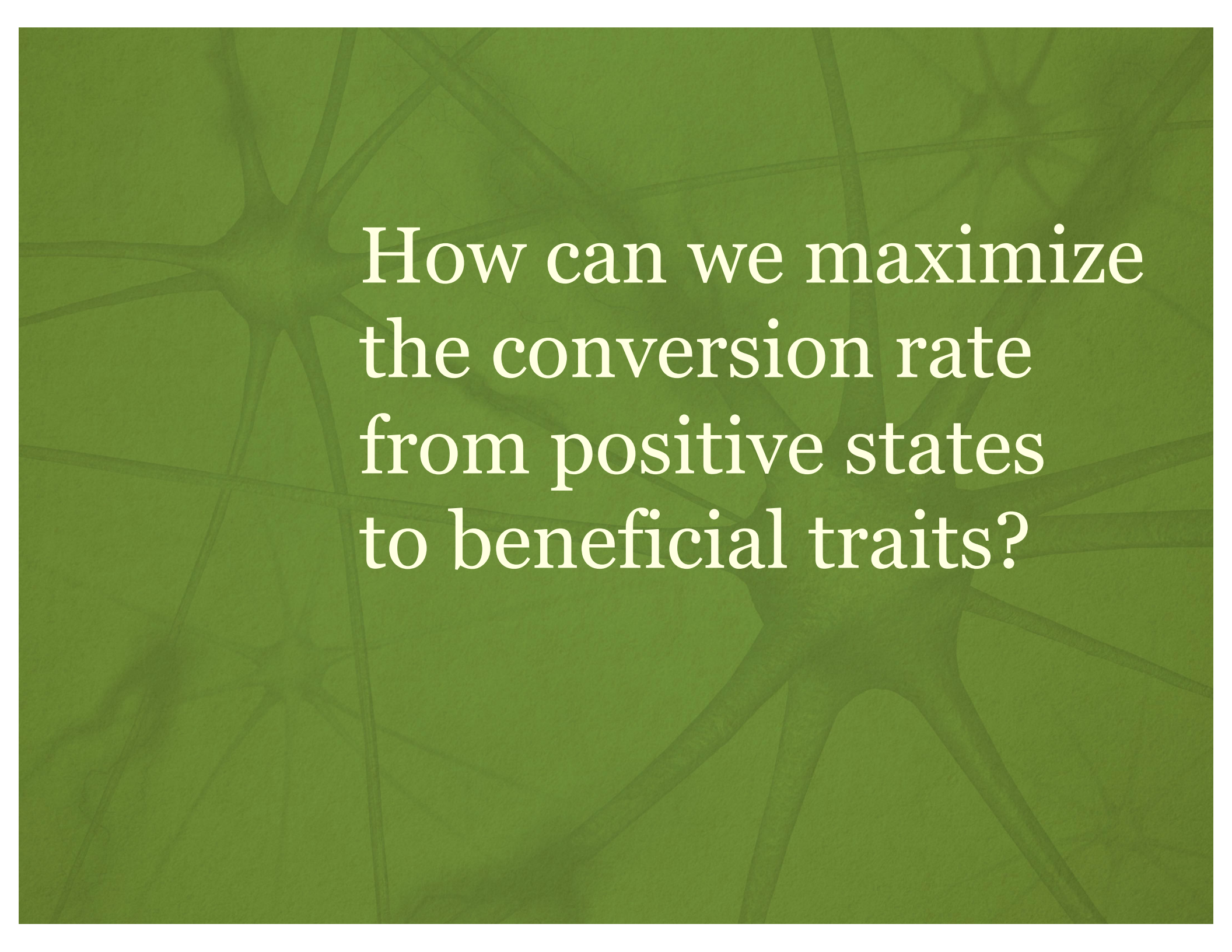


Four Learning Curves



Four Learning Curves






How can we maximize
the conversion rate
from positive states
to beneficial traits?

Learning Factors

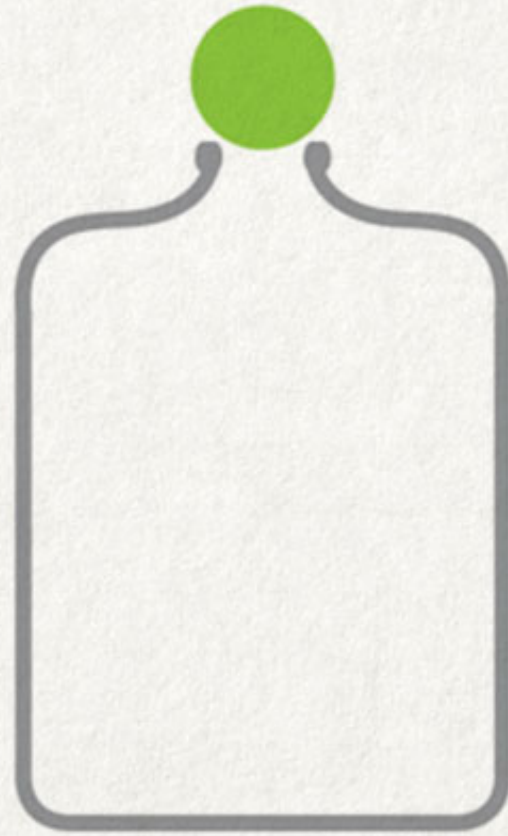
Environmental – setting, social support

Behavioral – activities, repetition

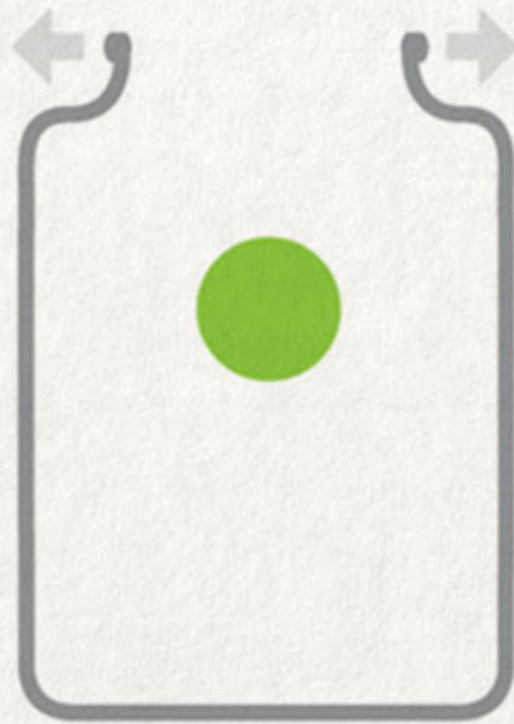
Mental – motivation, engagement



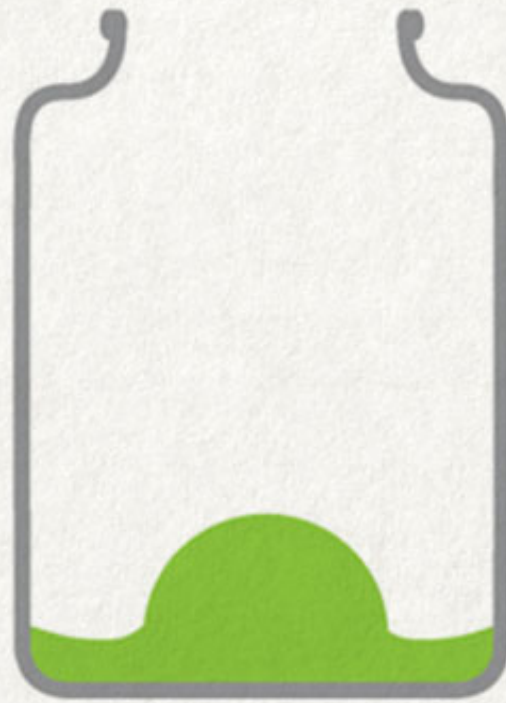
Learning How To Learn



Have a Beneficial Experience



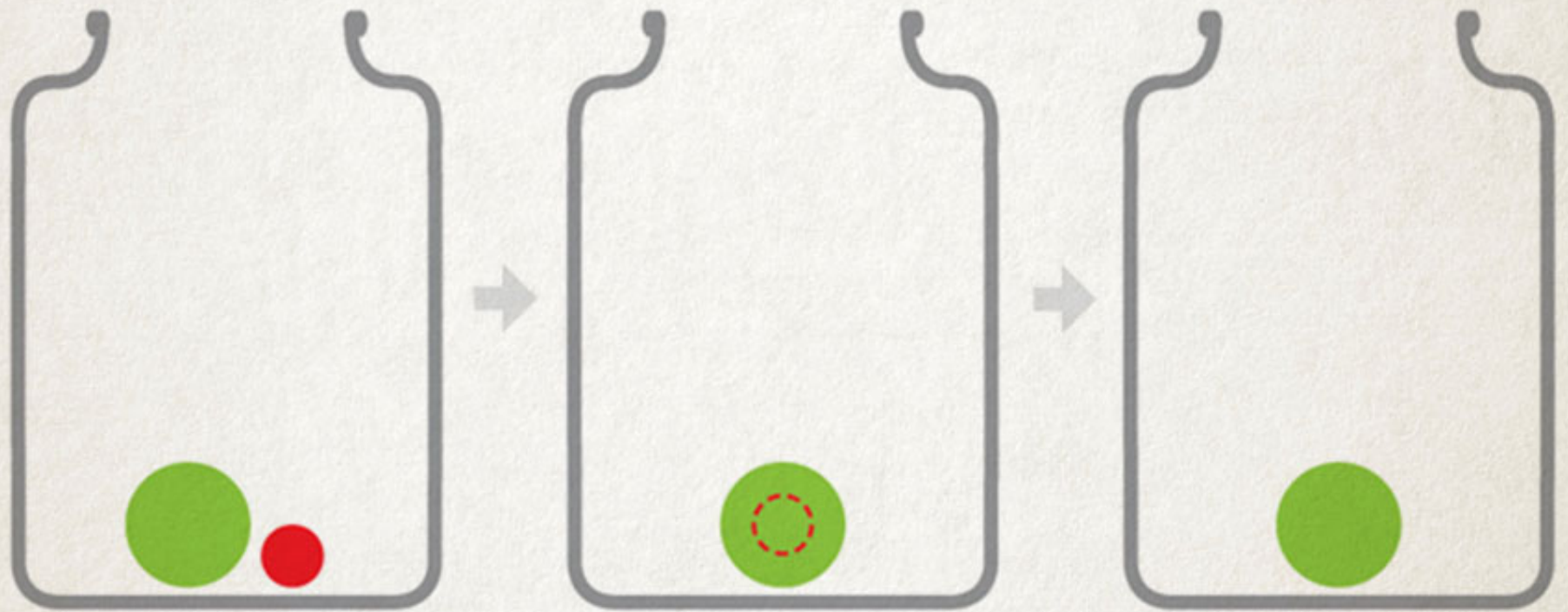
Enrich It



Absorb It

Like a Nice Fire





Link Positive & Negative Material

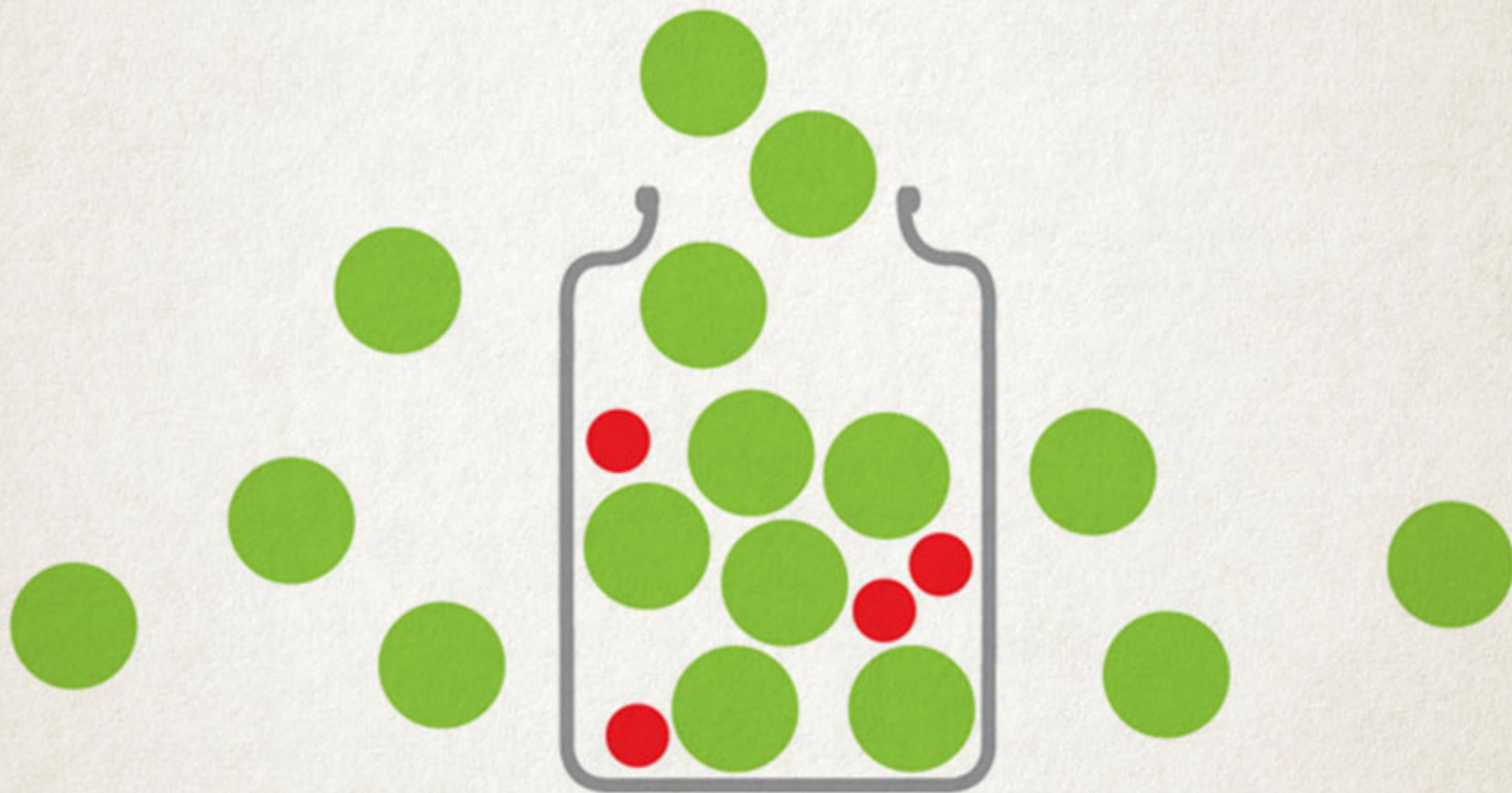
Neuropsychology of Learning

Activation

1. **Have** a beneficial experience.

Installation

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

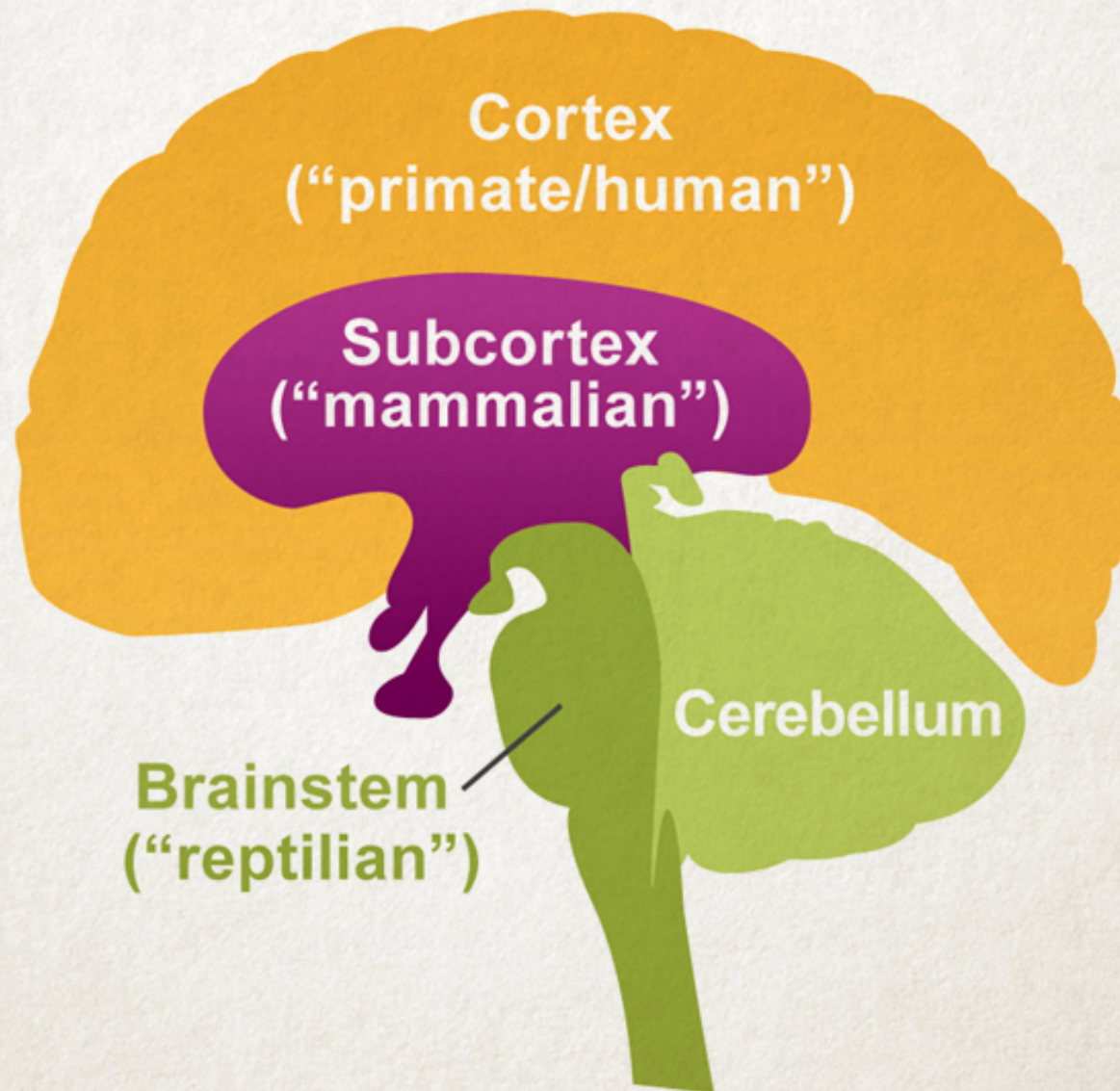


Have It, Enjoy It



Key Resources for Fundamental Needs

The Evolving Brain



Three Fundamental Needs



Safety



Satisfaction



Connection

Matching Resources to Needs

Safety

Vigilant
Sturdy
Determined
Protected
Calm
Relaxed

Peace

Satisfaction

Grateful
Glad
Accomplished
Moderate
Ambitious
Enthusiastic

Contentment

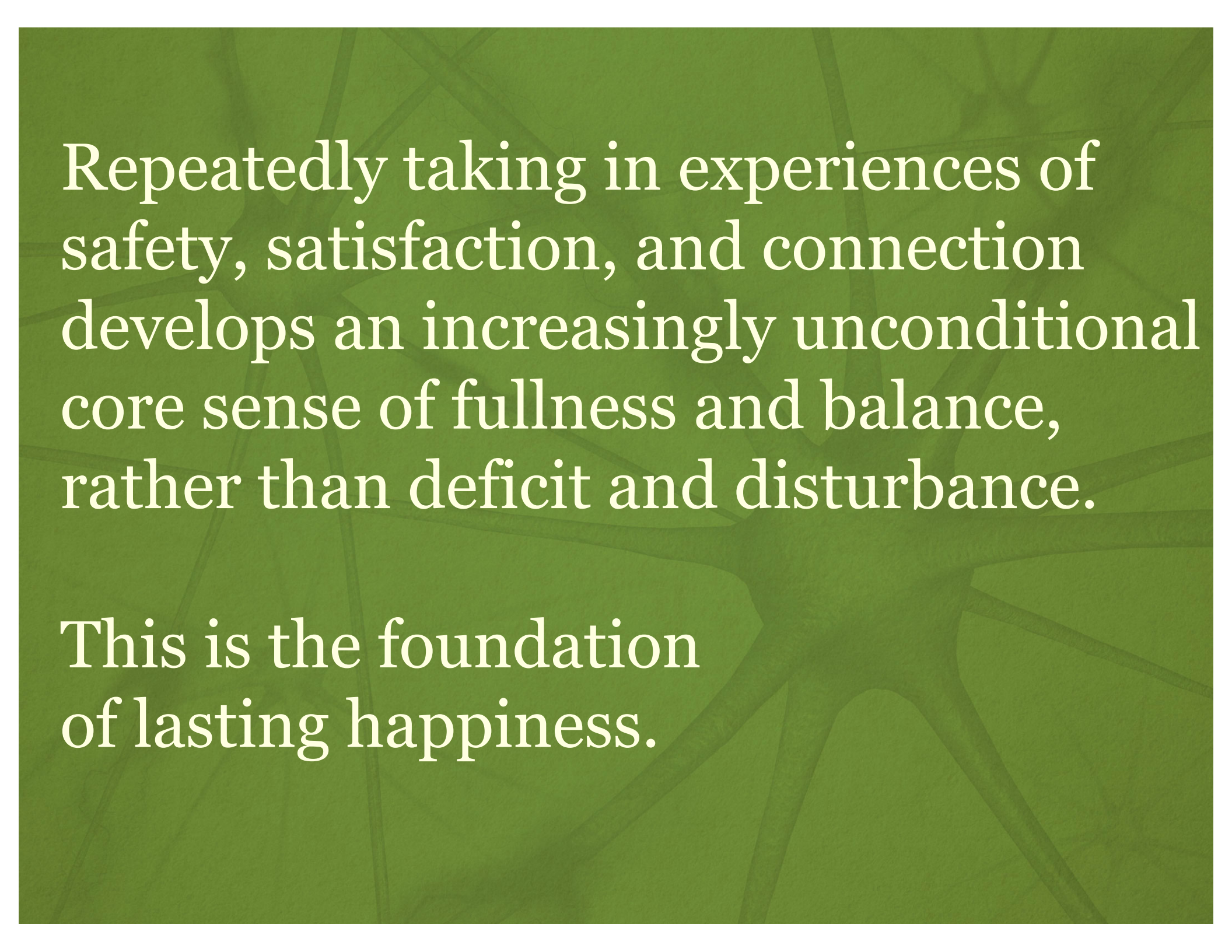
Connection

Included
Empathic
Kind
Just
Worthy
Confident

Love



Societal Implications



Repeatedly taking in experiences of safety, satisfaction, and connection develops an increasingly unconditional core sense of fullness and balance, rather than deficit and disturbance.

This is the foundation of lasting happiness.

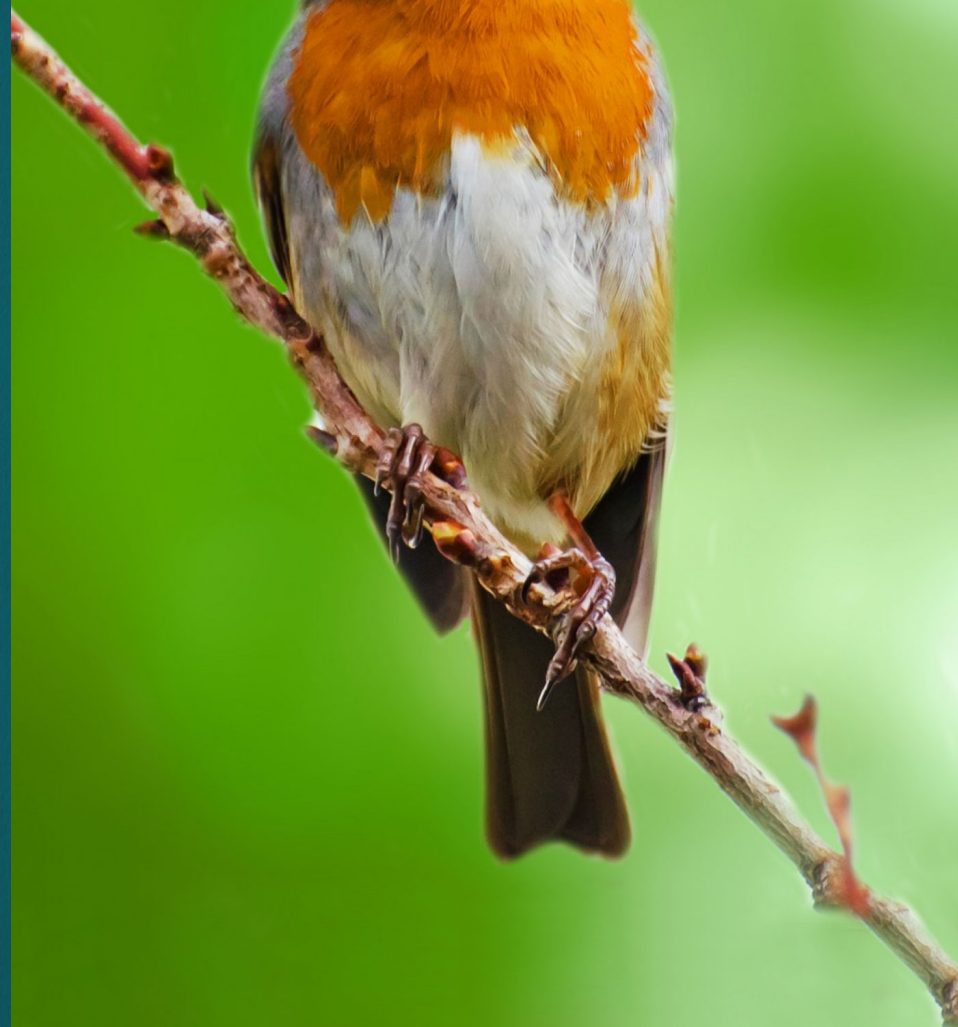
With a stable internal sense
of fullness and balance,
of fundamental needs already met,

people are less vulnerable to
fear and anger,
greed and possessiveness,
and “us” against “them” conflicts.

”

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

Lao Tzu



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See www.RickHanson.net/key-papers/ for other suggested readings.

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Additional Materials

Major Neural Mechanisms of Learning

Sensitizing (or desensitizing) existing synapses

Building new synapses

Altered patterns of gene expression in neurons

Building and integrating new neurons

Increased ongoing activity in a brain region

Increased connectivity of brain regions

Altered patterns of neurochemical activity

Information from hippocampus to cortex

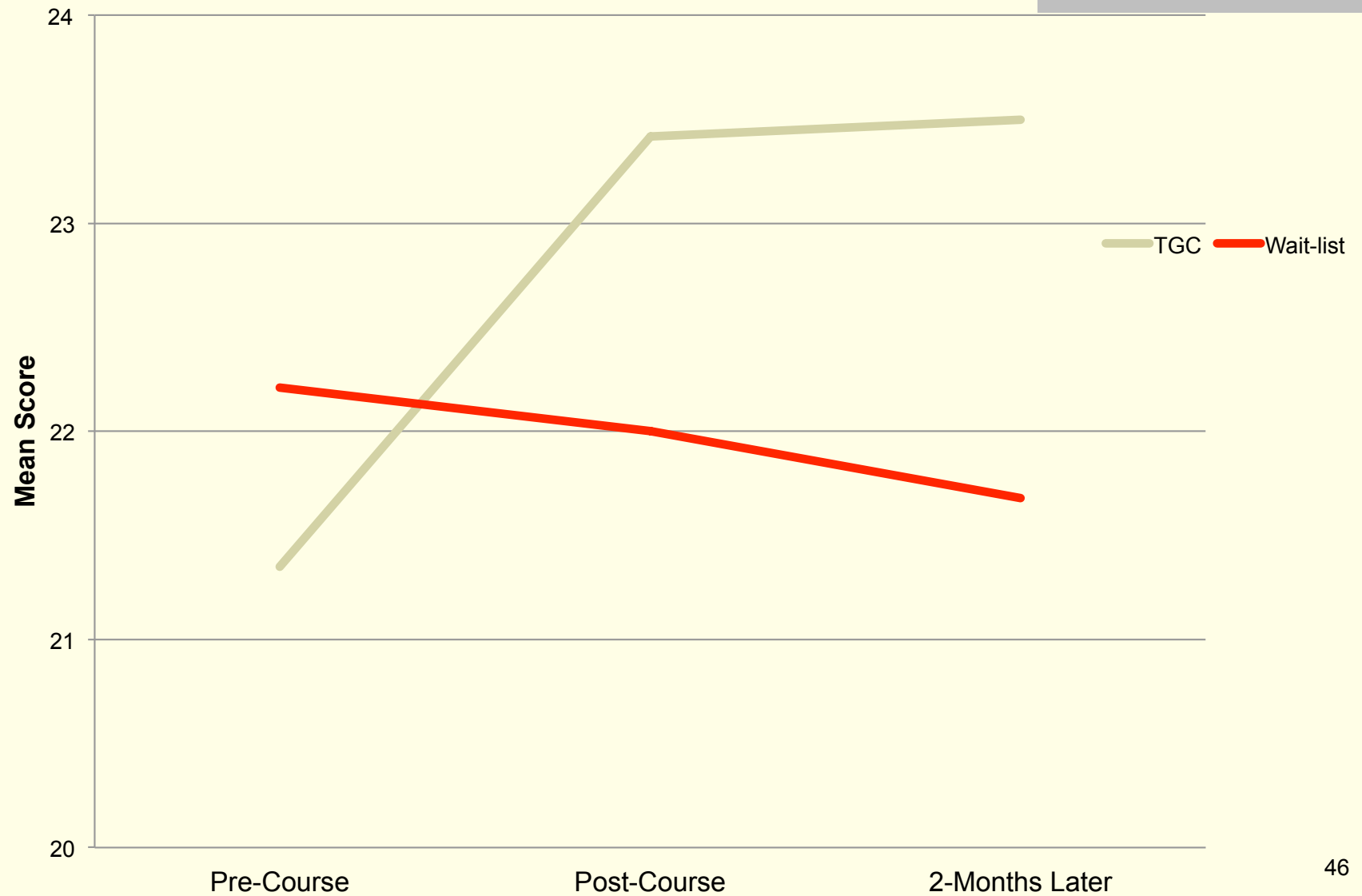
Modulation by stress hormones, cytokines

Slow wave and REM sleep

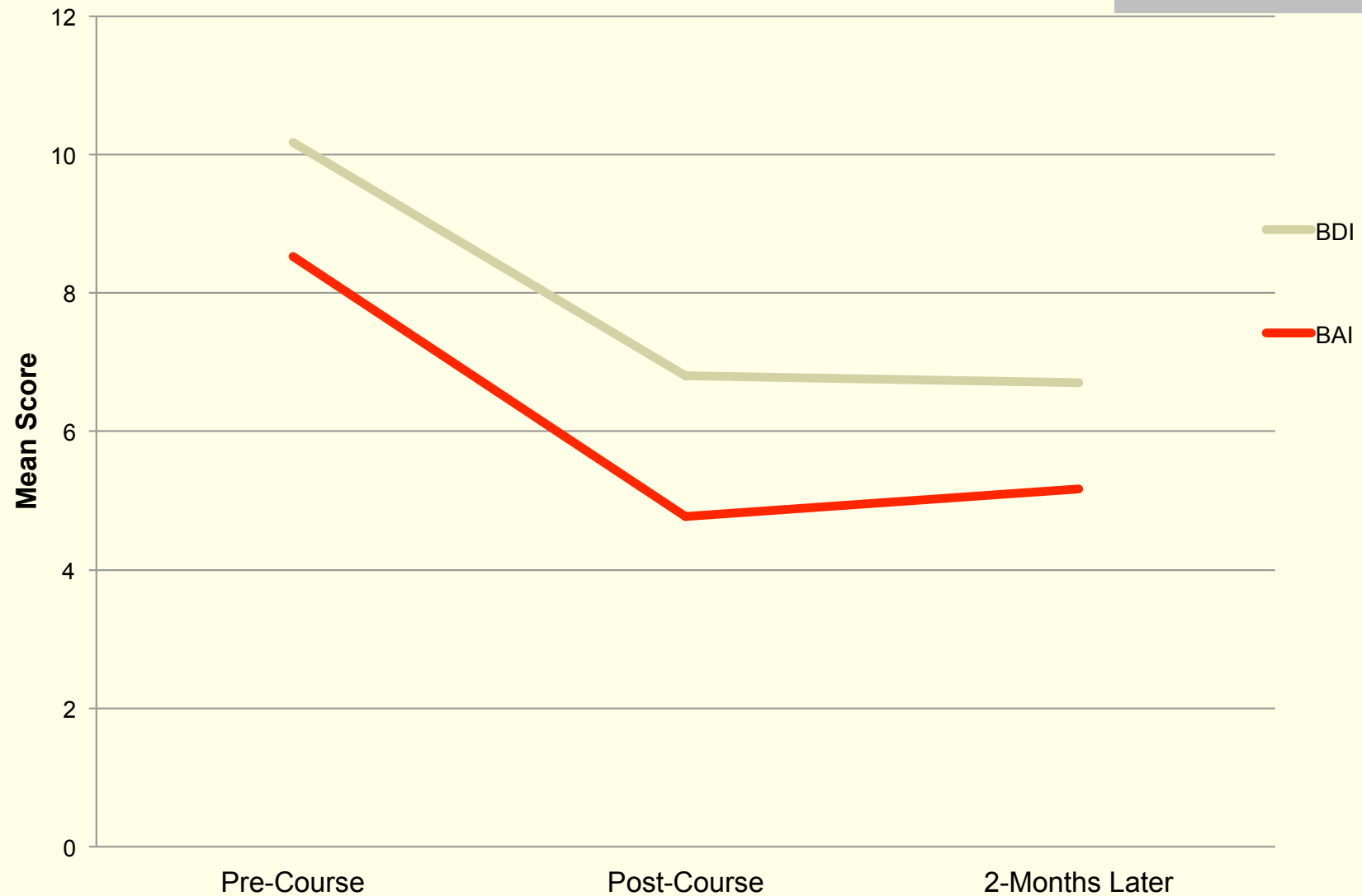
Pilot Study on the HEAL Process

- A randomized waitlist control pilot study on the Taking in the Good course (46 subjects), not yet peer-reviewed.
- Course participants, compared to the control group, reported significantly more Contentment, Self-Esteem, Satisfaction with Life, Savoring, and Gratitude.
- After the 7-week course and also at 2-month follow-up, pooled participants also reported significantly more Love, Compassion, Self-Compassion, Mindfulness, Self-Control, Positive Rumination, Joy, Amusement, Awe, and Happiness, and less Anxiety and Depression.

Self-Esteem



Combined Sample: Depression (BDI) & Anxiety (BAI)



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 quickly in implicit memory,**
- 5. Sensitize the brain to the negative, and**
- 6. Create vicious cycles with others.**

Distal, Proximal Mental Learning Factors

Distal

Openness

Mindfulness

View of pos. exper.

Growth/Lrng mindset

Motivation

Self-efficacy

Self-esteem

Feeling supported

Sense of safety

Proximal

Personal relevance

Alertness, sense of novelty

Arousal

Valence, valuing, reward

Emotion

Granularity of attention

Interoception

Maintenance, repetition

Meaning, elaboration

Imagery, metaphor

Enacted, shared with others

Benefits of Mental Learning Factors

Benefits of both types of learning factors:

- Increase learning from present experience
- Prime NS for future beneficial experiences
- Heighten consolidation of past experiences

Proximal factors have additional benefits:

- Regulate experience directly
- Increase initial processes of consolidation
- Are under volitional control

The Four Ways to Offer a Method

- **Doing it implicitly**
- **Teaching it and leaving it up to the person**
- **Doing it explicitly with the person**
- **Asking the person to do it on his or her own**

HEAL in Classes, Trainings, Families

- **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., end of a therapy session, meals, just before bed).**

RESOURCES FOR AVOIDING HARMS

Challenge

Weakness

Helplessness

Freezing,
immobilization

Inflated threats

Alarm

Tension

Worry, fear

Irritation, anger

Resource

Strength

Agency

Action, venting

Accurate appraisal

Protection, calming

Relaxation

Feeling alright now,
making 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,
fullness

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
to others and oneself
Recognize it hurts you
Self-compassion, take
action, good will
Skillful assertiveness