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Personal wellbeing

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In relation to this presentation, I declare that I have no conflict of interest

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Today

- What is personal wellbeing?
- Workplace wellness
- What are we at risk of?
- Support available
- Reflective practice
- Recognising moral injury/burnout
- Window of Tolerance & the ANS
- Self soothers

Pause



Recognising the unsettled mind

A photograph of a diverse group of people at a social gathering, possibly a dance or party. In the foreground, a woman with short, curly blonde hair is smiling warmly at the camera and waving her right hand. She is wearing a blue cardigan over a patterned top and a necklace with a small pendant. To her left, the back of a woman with long blonde hair is visible, wearing a white top. In the background, other people are seen in a dimly lit room with warm, golden light from a large window or stage lighting. The overall atmosphere is joyful and social.

"We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike."

Human Family by Dr Maya Angelou



What is Personal Wellbeing?

- The individual is able...
 - to develop their potential, work productively/creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to their community.
 - to fulfil personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society”.
- Foresight Mental Capital & Wellbeing Project [2008]

What about us?

‘The NHS can only achieve the extraordinary things for patients if *the safety, health and wellbeing of our people* is recognised as a key priority’

[NHS England]

- Almost 1 in 5 adults (19.2%) were likely to be experiencing some form of depression during Covid-19.
- Personal well-being in the UK remains **below** pre-pandemic levels (year ending March 2019).

Piercy & Wills [2022] suggest:

“The levels of compassion fatigue we identified has potentially adverse implications for individual wellbeing and for the HIV services.

Physical, psychological and occupational consequences of job burnout (Salvagioni et al. 2017)

Secondary traumatic stress is similarly considered to have long-term implications”.

[The office for National Statistics [ONS, 2022]]

What are staff at risk of?

Continued absence of strategies that promote self-care, puts individuals in the helping professions at risk.



- **Self-critical** voice
- **low** levels of **self-compassion**
- symptoms of **stress and anxiety**
- **compassion fatigue**
- **trauma and burnout**
- **Helplessness**
- **Irritability**
- **Cynicism**
- **Low mood**
- **Don't want to come to work**
- **Increased sickness rate** – financial burden
- **Decreased retention** of staff
- **Lack of understanding** of others? Haven't the energy to understand!



Personal barriers?

- Fear of criticism / judgements, being ostracised
- I '**should**' be able to cope
- It will never happen to me! [stoic]
- Shame
- Isolation
- Perfectionism [I'm not good enough/didn't do well enough/should do better] > unclear boundaries



Available to all NHS employees

- **Employee assistance Programme** **0800 783 2808**
- Samaritans **116 123**
- Confidential text support service:
text **SHOUT** to **85258**
- NHS England's free & confidential **self-check tool**
- **Apps:** "Do nothing"
- **Daily check-in** with team members



What else is available?

 **Mind** & Mental Health at Work – list of resources & information, podcasts, guides, tips & videos.

Blue Light Together – for emergency services MH [working in partnership with Mind].

<https://www.perkbox.com/uk> - blogs & online resources

<https://www.redcross.org.uk/> - Self kindness toolkit & resources

<http://stresscontrol.org> – A 6 session online class involving CBT & positive psychology aspects.

www.myworldofwork.co.uk – Lists of different supportive organisations.

www.unmind.com/resources - a digital MH platform free to NHS employees



What is available in our Trust?

Carers support

Connect Service – 6 sessions counselling for staff

8 week Mindfulness course linked to the Sussex Mindfulness Centre

Financial wellbeing advice

Health & wellbeing passports

Health assured staff assistance

Menopause support & link to Harley St Health

Reflective Practice Sessions & supervision for facilitators

Staff Networks: BAME, LGBTQ+, Disability & Wellbeing, Religion & Spiritual Belief.

Trauma informed training

Wednesday Wellbeing – 15 minutes of protected weekly time via Microsoft Teams involving chair-based yoga, mindful body scans, visualizations.

Who are we?



Brighton & Hove

Caseload


The caseload comprises of individuals who have lived experience of multiple and complex needs including:

- Substance use [alcohol, crystal meth, G, cannabis],
 - mental ill-health,
 - homelessness or a safe place to call home,
 - non-adherence to medications,
 - interpersonal difficulties and breakdown in relationships,
 - domestic violence,
 - lack of funds/poverty.
-
- Perhaps many of these issues attributed to complex childhood and/or adult trauma.

This caseload of patients *may* not have had their needs fulfilled in childhood, therefore to be shown they matter, to learn and develop functional capacities for self-soothing, to develop a trusting relationship with a professional other are important in the nurse/patient relationship.



Verbalised thoughts & feelings in reflective practice

- “We hold our caseload and worry even when off sick or on AL and then worry another healthcare professional [HCP] may judge me because I am unable to see this patient.
 - “We never hand over everything; we are always sitting with them”
 - “We are with our patients in a long-term relationship, not friends but whatever that may look like”
 - “We care about the patients', meaning discharge is difficult and we always expect a reaction from them [abandonment issues, own thoughts the patient will be alone]
 - “I really gained confidence from talking about this patient and of the power dynamics being played out working with him”
 - “Sometimes it feels like borderline burnout not being able to offload”
 - “Why use the words reflective practice, can't we change this to something else?”
 - “I have learnt something about myself and when to step back”
- 


“Sometimes it feels like borderline burnout not being able to offload”



“nurses who care for patients with infectious diseases exhibit higher levels of burnout.

Specifically, their emotional exhaustion and depersonalization scores are higher than those of personnel who do not care for patients with infectious diseases”

(Boo *et al.* [2018](#); Qiao *et al.* [2016](#)).



Moral Injury? Burnout?

Moral injury describes the distress that individuals feel when they perpetrate, witness or fail to prevent an act that transgresses their core ethical beliefs [Jones, E. 2020]: ITU, lack of PPE, Intentional non-adherence in the context of ARVs [Foote, 2023]

Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy [Maslach, C et al, 2001]

Compassion fatigue & vicarious trauma

Compassion Fatigue – the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatised or suffering person [Figley, 1995:7].

Vicarious Trauma [secondary traumatic stress] – exposure to graphic & traumatising material changing the practitioners' sense of world view and self-identity resulting in feelings of sadness, cynicism and mood swings.

Symptoms of vicarious trauma

Having difficulty talking about our feelings

Sense of helplessness / hopelessness

Anger and/or irritation
Blaming / Shaming

Startle effect / being jumpy

Overeating or undereating

Difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep (dreaming about work)

Worried that you are not doing enough for your clients

Diminished joy towards things you once enjoyed

Feeling trapped by our work

Diminished feelings of satisfaction and personal accomplishment

Intrusive thoughts of clients with especially severe trauma histories

Grandiosity
Presentism / Workism

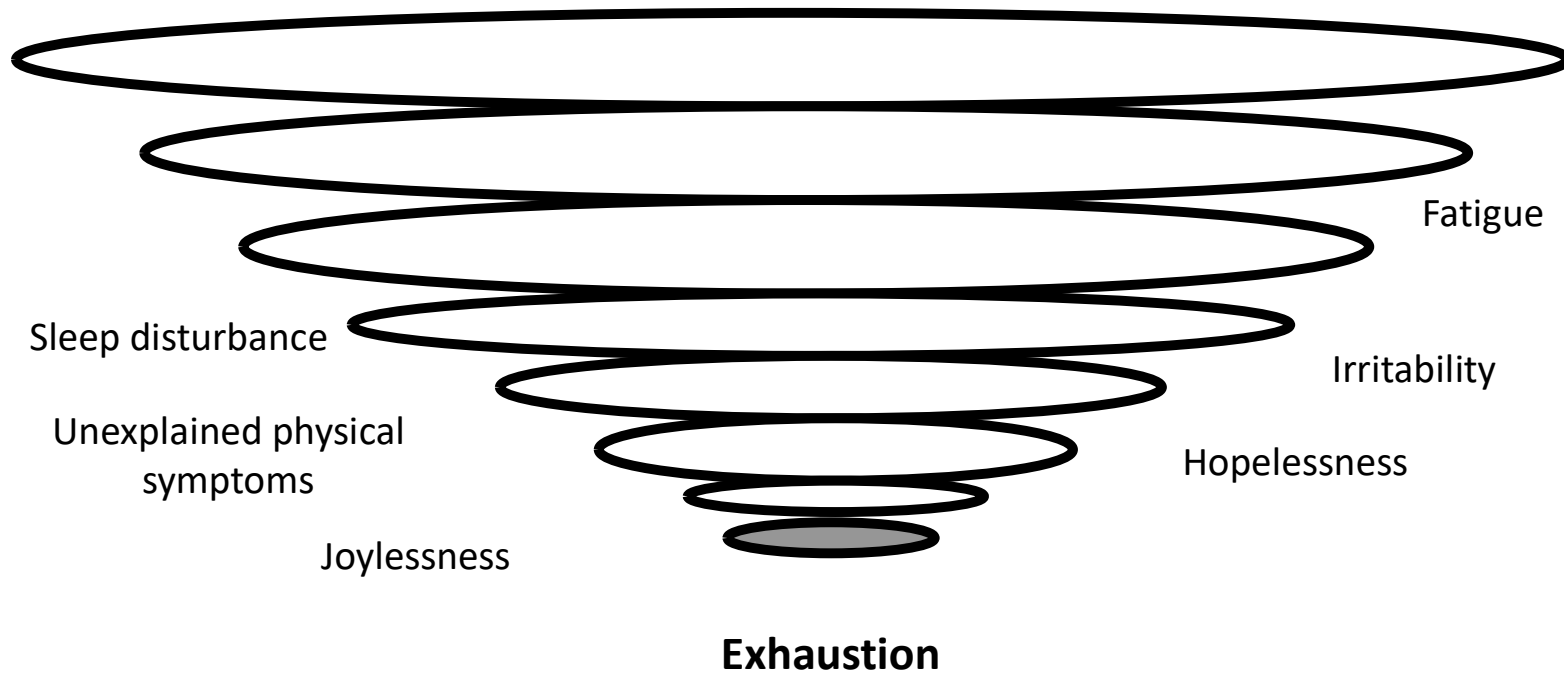
Resilience?

Taking care of one's physical and psychological needs –

- healthy eating,
- sleep,
- exercise,
- boundaries,
- work/life balance,
- awareness of one's own vulnerabilities, triggers & stress reactions.
- Supervision
- Reflective practice
- Surrounding ourselves with positive & supportive individuals

- [* parties & alcohol]

How often do we feel distress? Helplessness? Feeling overwhelmed in our work on a day-to-day basis?



Marie Asberg cited in Finding Peace in a Frantic World, Mark Williamson and Danny Penman

Art & creativity

- Within the NHS, some **10 million working days are lost to sick leave every year**, costing £2.4 billion! Arts engagement helps health and care staff to improve their own health and wellbeing and that of their patients.
- Cultural engagement reduces work-related stress and leads to longer, happier lives.
- Visual and performing arts in healthcare environments help to reduce sickness, anxiety and stress.
- Participatory arts activities help to alleviate anxiety, depression and stress both within and outside of work

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Report, 2017

A photograph of two small birds, likely Japanese tits, perched on a green branch in a forest. The birds have black heads with white patches and yellowish-green bodies. The background is a soft-focus green forest with bokeh light effects.

Nature, gardening, green spaces, water
can all improve our wellbeing.

Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) is a healing practice in Japan, where people immerse themselves in nature, while mindfully paying attention to their senses. Often involving a walk in a forest, it aims to integrate and harmonise humans with a forest (Miyazaki, 2018)

A Recap of The Nervous System

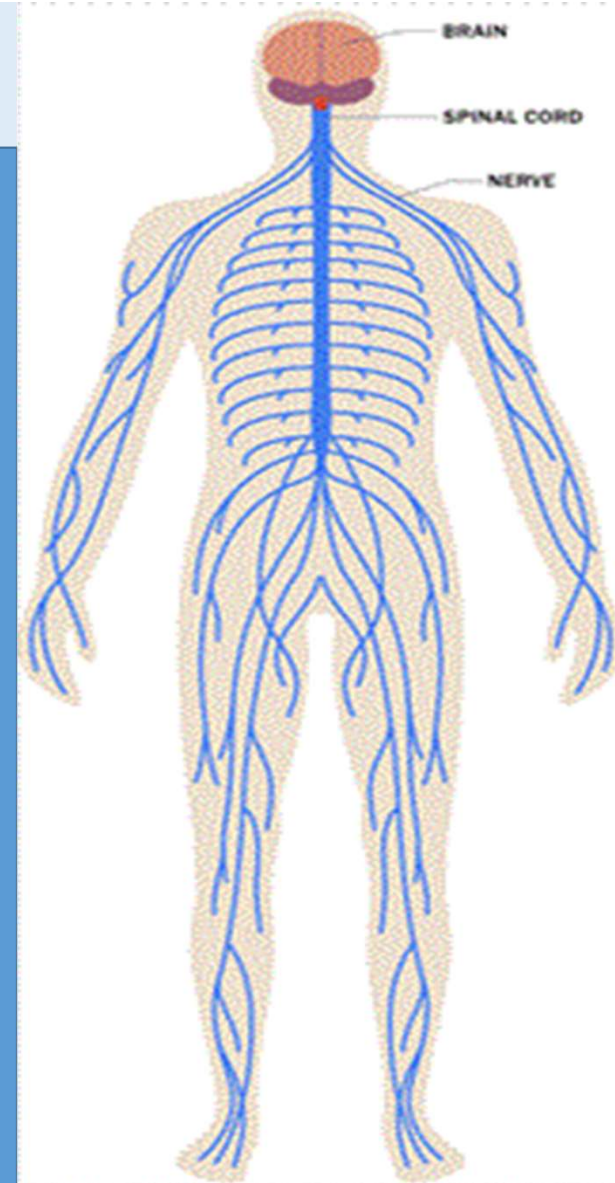
- The central nervous system [CNS] involves the brain & spinal cord.
- The autonomic nervous system [ANS] involved in our physical response to stress.

↓
This is divided into

↙
sympathetic nervous system [SNS]
[*car accelerator*] **fight or flight** [stress response]
This is our **default** setting [threat response]

↘
parasympathetic nervous system [PNS][*the breaks of the car*].
freeze & flop [feign death – Porges, 2011]

> Normally once the stress is over the PNS aids in a return to the homeostatic state.



Mindsight [Daniel Siegel, 2010]

When a system is integrated this results in wellbeing and a state of harmony

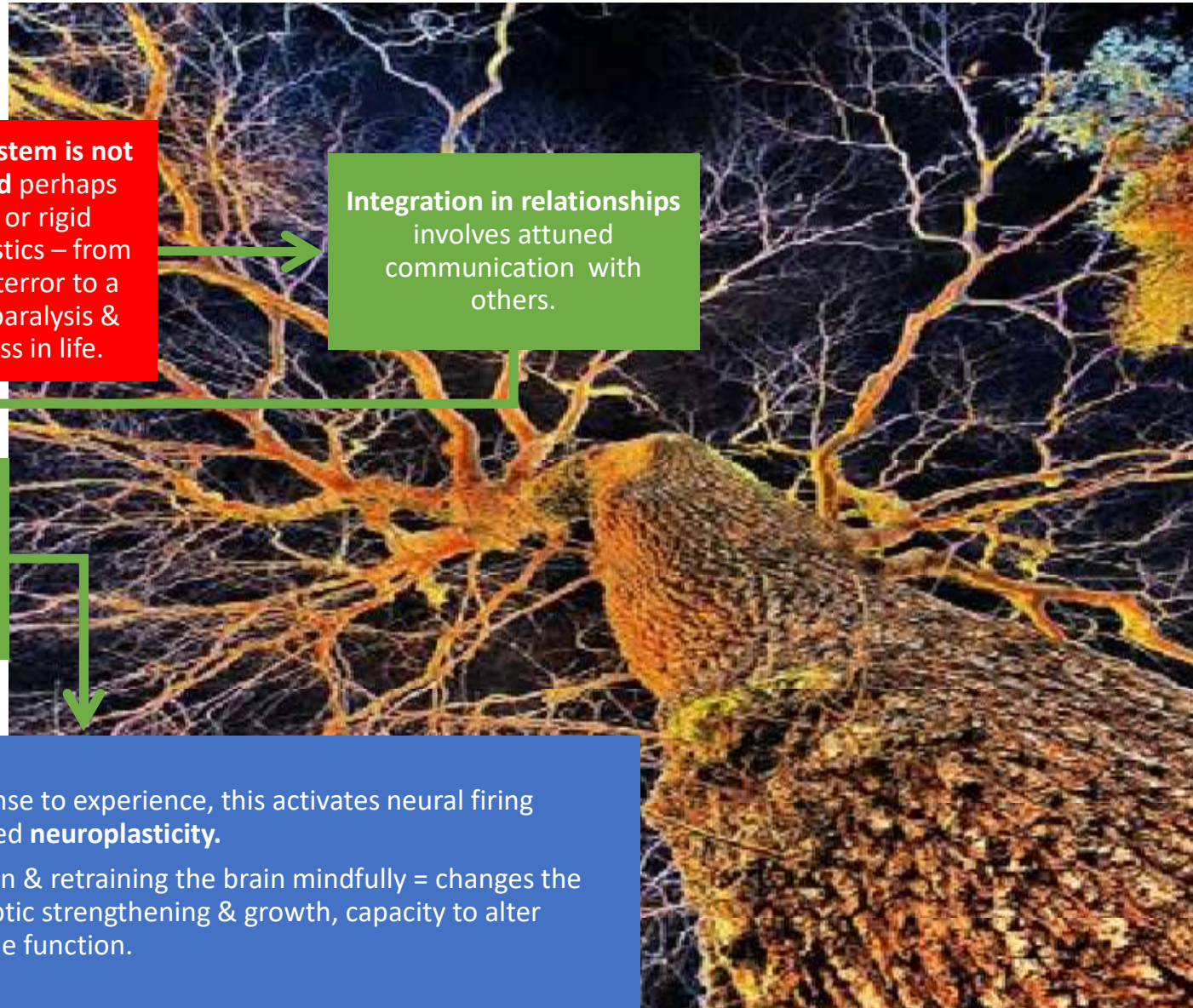
When a system is not integrated perhaps chaotic or rigid characteristics – from rage and terror to a sense of paralysis & emptiness in life.

Integration in relationships involves attuned communication with others.

Integration in the brain & CNS involves the linkage of separate neural areas [attuned communication with the self].

The brain changes physically in response to experience, this activates neural firing enabling new connections; this is called **neuroplasticity**.

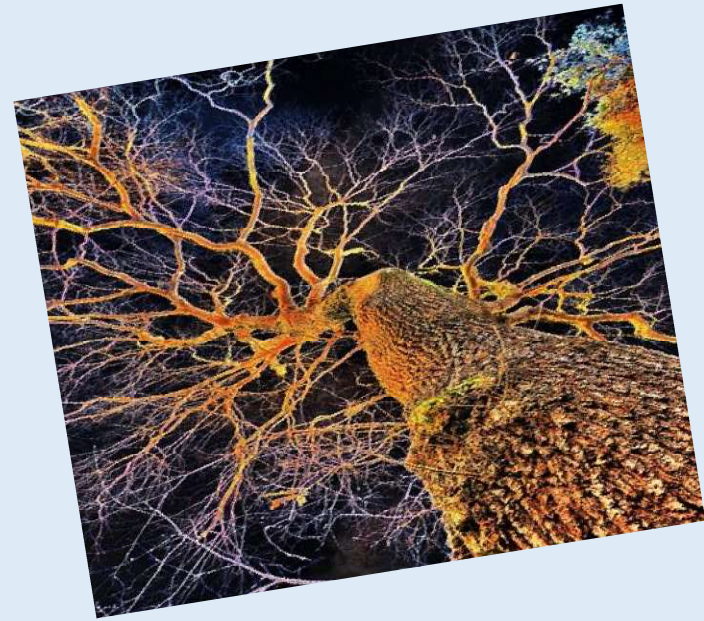
Focused moment to moment attention & retraining the brain mindfully = changes the pattern of activity in the brain > synaptic strengthening & growth, capacity to alter habitual patterns & improved immune function.



Mindsight - Transform your brain with the new science of kindness

Focused attention & intention leading to increased:

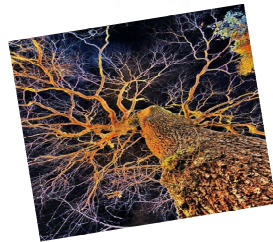
1. body regulation
2. attuned communication
3. emotional balance
4. fear modulation
5. response flexibility
6. insight
7. empathy
8. intuition



Another example is becoming mindfully aware of our own **window of tolerance** [Daniel Siegel]

Window of Tolerance

A term used to describe the **zone of arousal** in which a person is able to function most effectively



(Daniel Siegel, 1999)

Hyperarousal



Extremely anxious

Angry, or even out of control

Unfamiliar or threatening feelings can overwhelm

Fight or run away.

Shaking /trembling

React to triggers & emotions

Negative thoughts

Act on impulses

Act defensively

Feel unsafe

Hypo-arousal

This is when you feel extremely zoned out, numb, disconnected with your world both emotionally and physically. Time can go missing, it might feel like you are completely frozen.



- Experience little emotions
- Stare into space
- Have little or no energy
- Feel disconnected from self & others
- Feel empty
- Find it hard to think.

Optimal arousal

This is where we feel okay, calm and able to cope with what life throws at us. We can think clearly and rationally.



Are aware of boundaries [mine and others]

Have feelings of compassion & empathy

Can handle our feelings

Feel safe

Are in the present moment

Feel open and curious

A photograph of a white and black spotted horse standing in a grassy field. The horse is facing right. The background shows a vast, open landscape under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

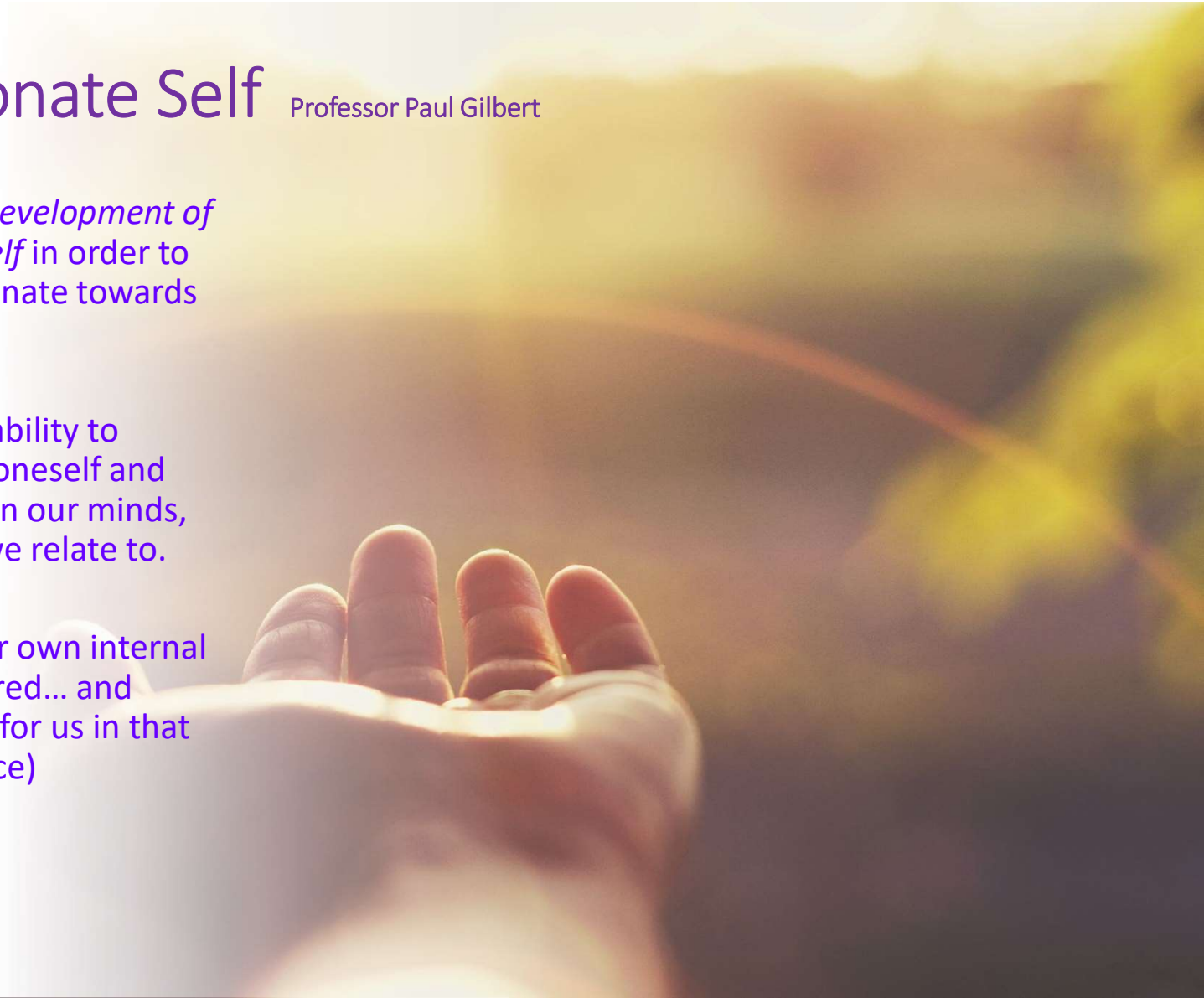
Self Soothers

Compassionate care for self
Mindful walking / Walking the dog
Being by the sea /in the mountains
nature
Doing the garden
Doing nothing
Reading
Listening to music
Driving the car
Mindfulness 10 min breaks
Stroking the cat/dog/gerbil
Writing* journal, blog...

The Compassionate Self

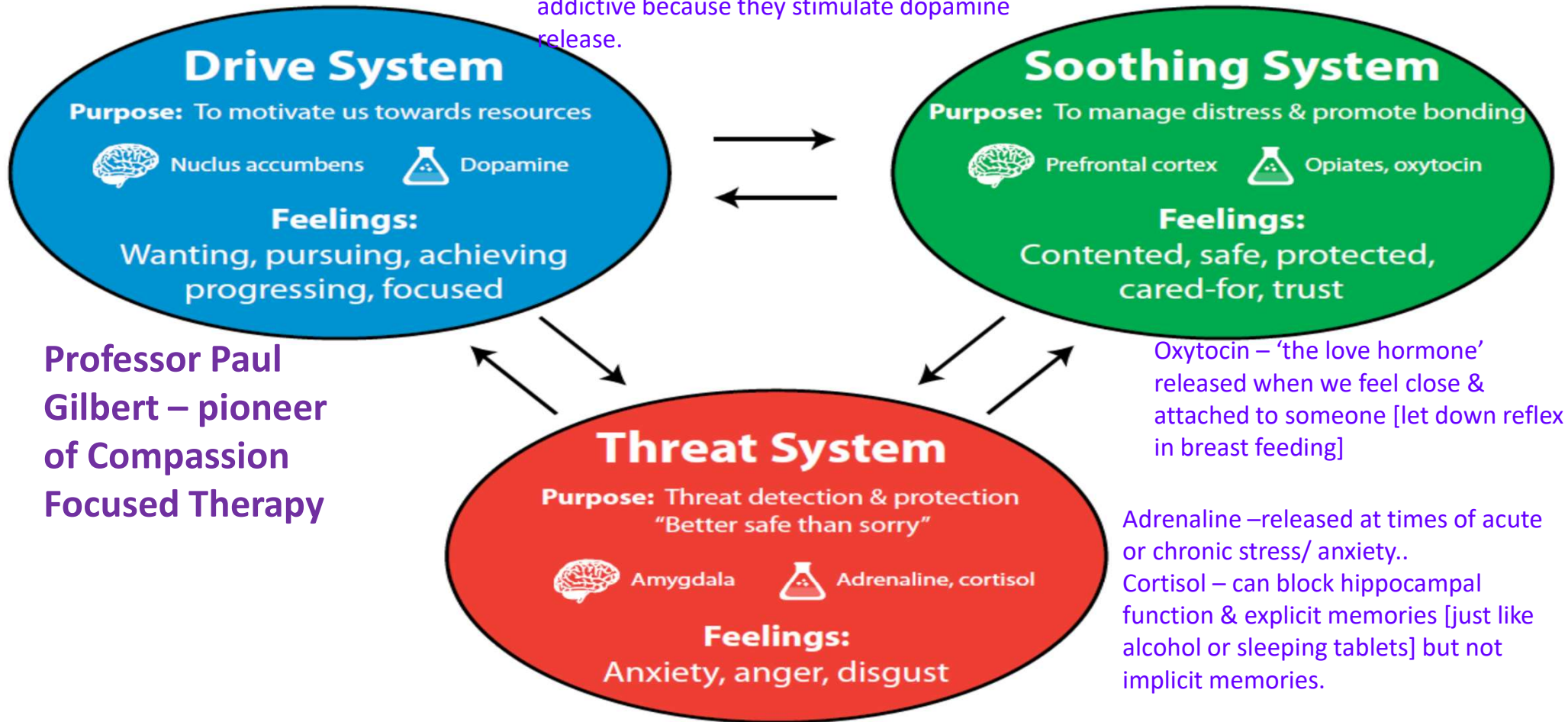
Professor Paul Gilbert

- There is thinking around our *development of our own self compassionate self* in order to then become more compassionate towards others..
- Research has shown that the ability to develop compassion towards oneself and others has a profound effect on our minds, health, happiness and those we relate to.
- Noticing with service users our own internal feelings... when we feel triggered... and reflection on what is going on for us in that moment (reflecting our practice)



Emotional Regulation Systems

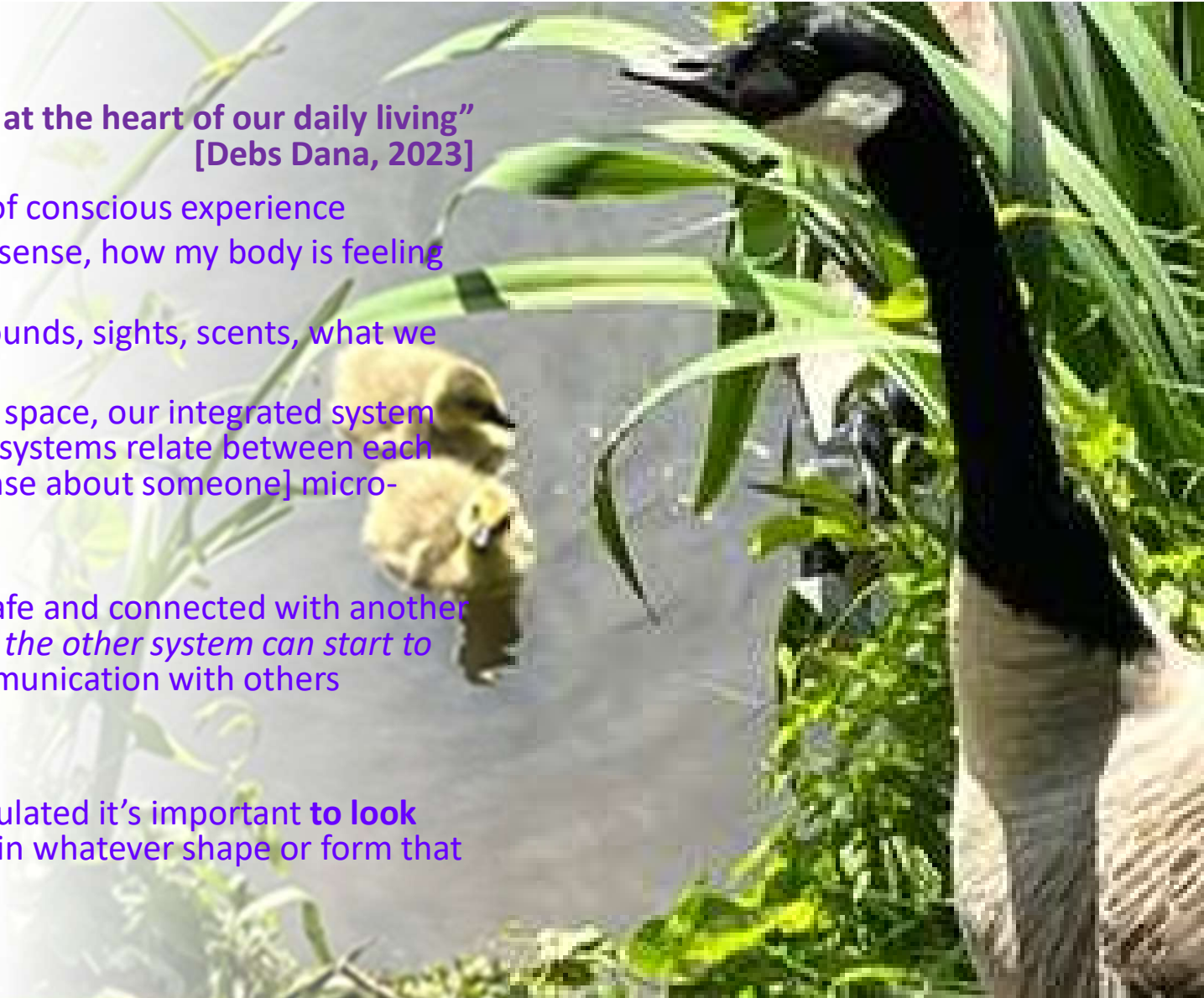
Dopamine involved in the reward systems of the brain –behaviours & substances can become addictive because they stimulate dopamine release.



To summarise

“The Autonomic Nervous System is at the heart of our daily living”
[Debs Dana, 2023]

- **Neuroception** – below the level of conscious experience
 - Inside the body – our somatic sense, how my body is feeling right now
 - Outside – our environment, sounds, sights, scents, what we touch
 - Between – our intersubjective space, our integrated system [Mindsight], how our nervous systems relate between each other.... [perhaps our sixth sense about someone] micro-moment by micro-moment.
- **Co-regulation** – The need to feel safe and connected with another person/mammal [*If I am regulated the other system can start to regulate*] resulting in attuned communication with others [integration (Siegel, 2011)].
- **Self Soothers** – in order to feel regulated it's important **to look after our own personal wellbeing** in whatever shape or form that may be.



This being human is a guest-house,
every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture.
Still, treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
Meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Rumi

Thank you

Questions?



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