

Change Your Brain, Change Your Life

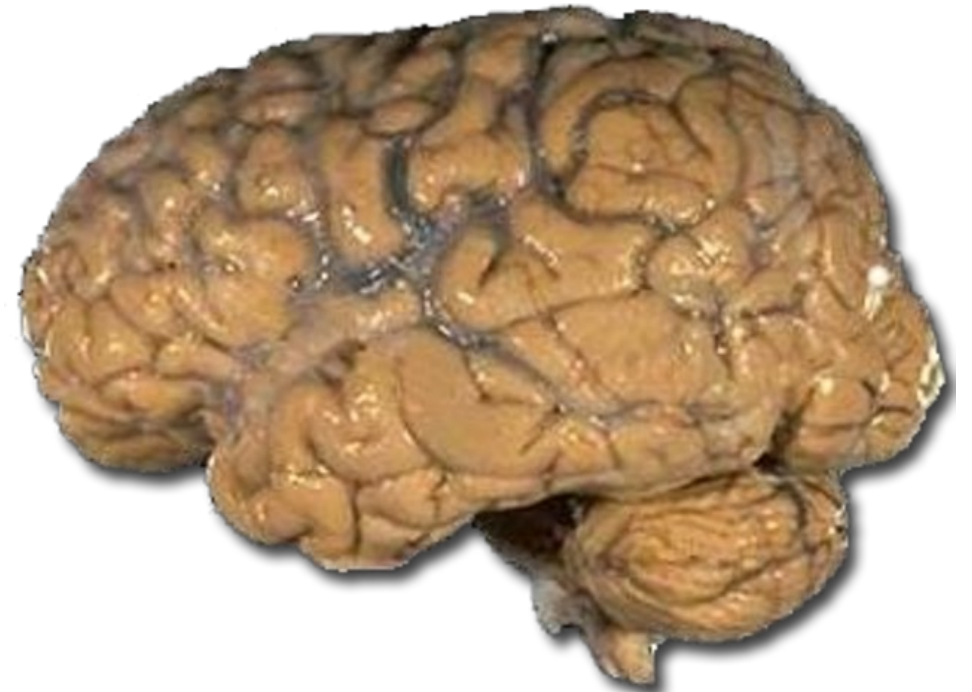
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No disclosures



Human Brain
• 3 pounds



Neuroplasticity



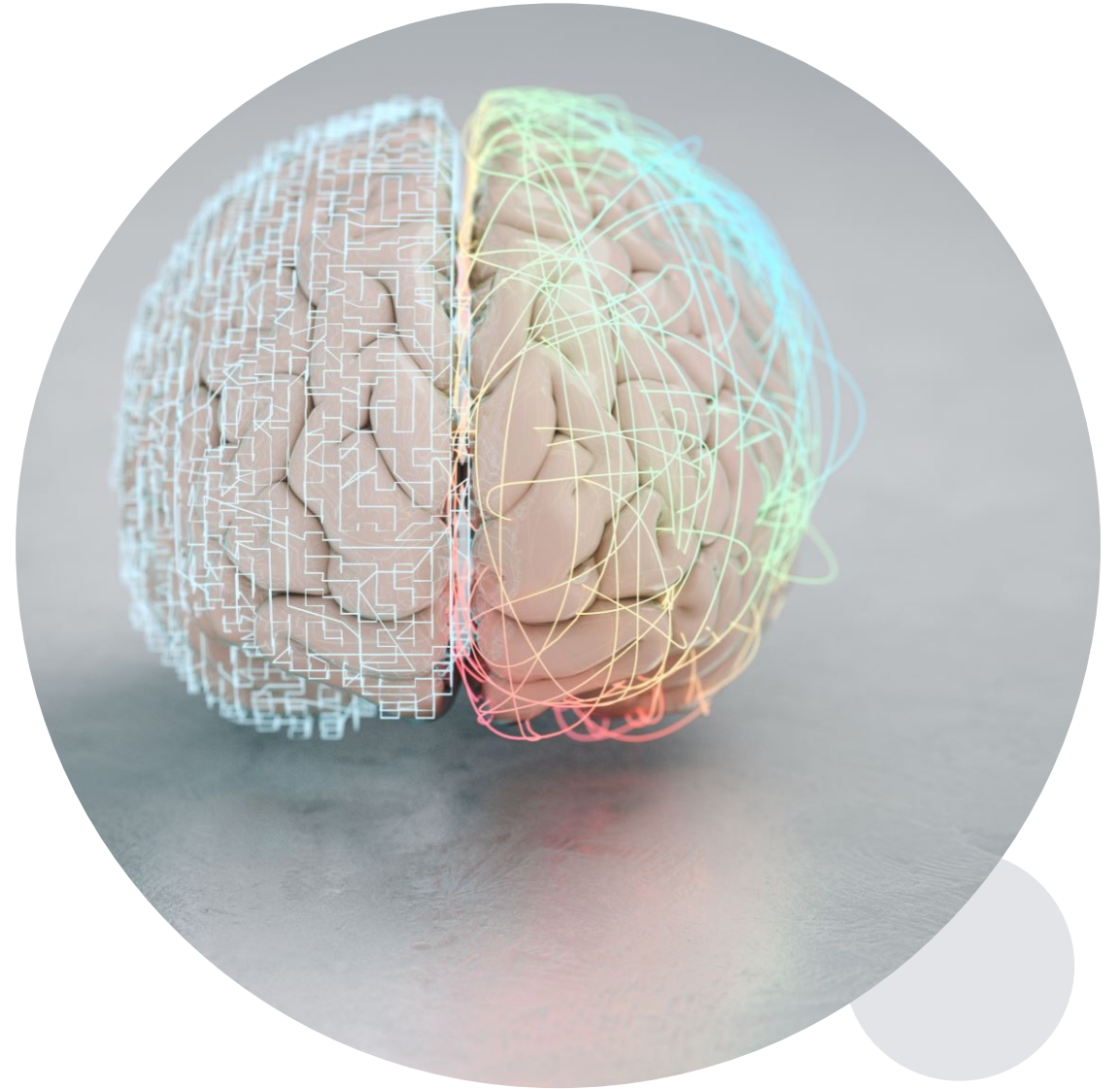
Neuroplasticity: The brain's ability to change and adapt as a result of experience



Changes based on what you feel, think, chose, eat and more



Means we can develop strategies to improve well-being



Case Example

- Dr. Smith is a professor and high-achiever. Like many high achieving individuals, he struggles under the weight of his own high expectations. He assumes that being harsh toward himself and always expecting more of himself is necessary to remain motivated and competitive.
 - At 37-years-old, he now recognizes that this approach to life isn't working. He is highly anxious and wants to change. His anxiety is causing distress and work impairment.
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Calming the Anxious Brain: The Power of Connection

“The Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” (**Genesis 2:18**).



Isolation vs Connection

Source: S. Schnall et al./Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
44 (2008) 1246–1255



What Chickens Teach Us

THE MUIR
EXPERIMENT

What happens in Vegas,
Stays in Vegas



A flock of Canada geese is shown in flight against a clear, bright blue sky. The geese are arranged in a loose V-formation, with several birds visible in the foreground and others trailing behind. Each goose has a dark brown head and neck, a white patch on its cheek, and a white body with dark brown wings and tail. Their wings are spread wide, showing the intricate feather patterns. The text "What do Geese Teach Us?" is centered in the middle of the image in a black, sans-serif font.

What do Geese Teach Us?

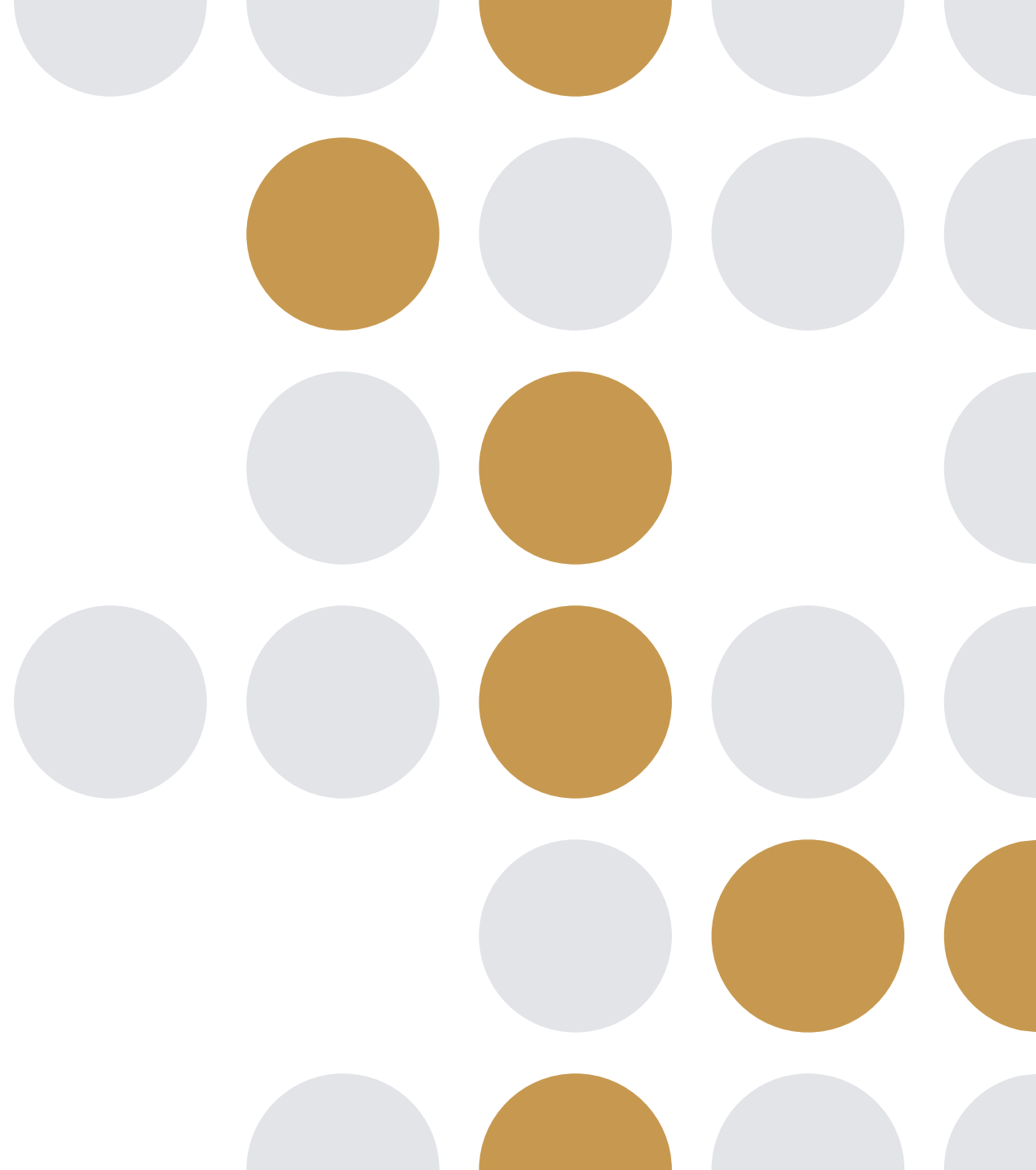
**“But I just feel
anxious”**





The Amygdala Hijack

Regain Immediate Control of the Amygdala Hijack



Retrain Your Amygdala

01

Face the fear -
don't avoid

02

Expose to trigger
or stimulus
feelings of
anxiety or panic

03

Use distraction
or calming to on
board your
thinking brain

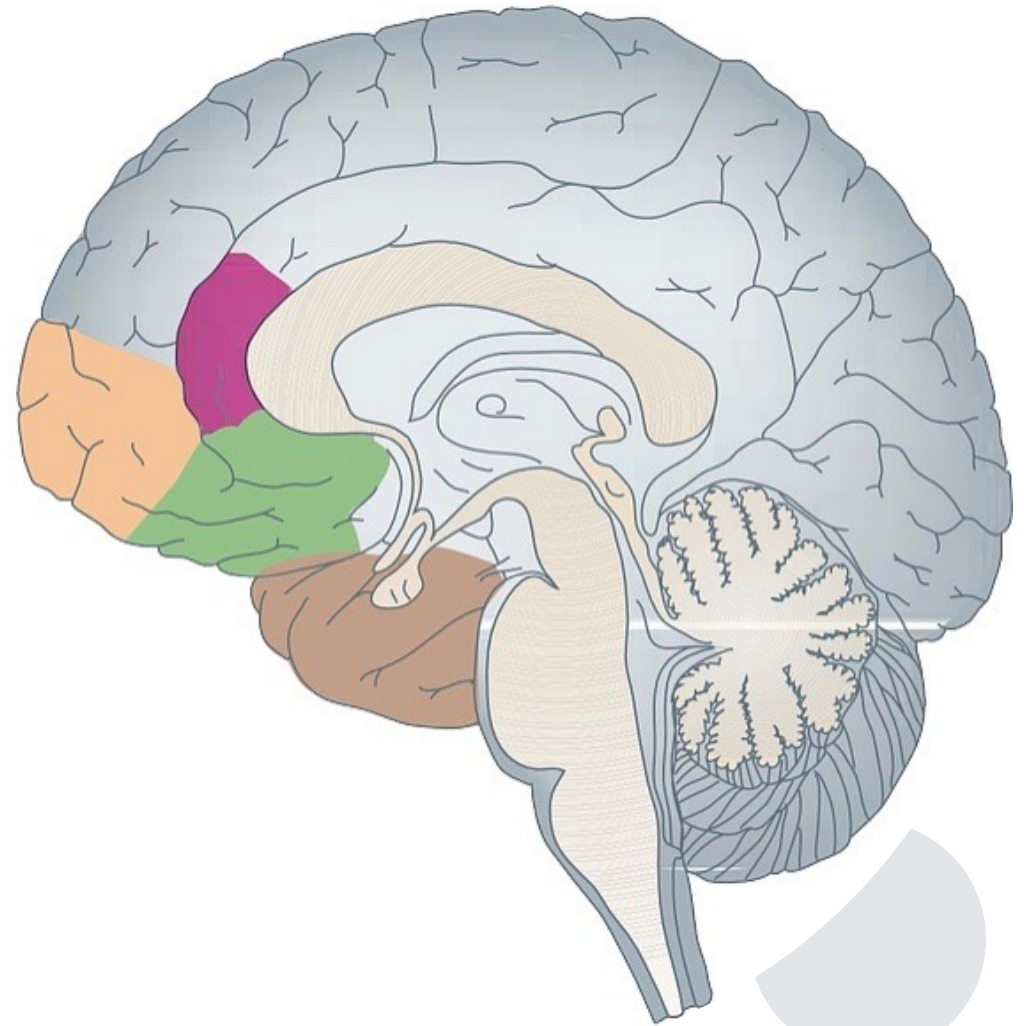
Notice Your Body: Breathe

- IF YOUR BODY IS STARTING TO EXPERIENCE AROUSAL....
 - SLOW YOUR BREATHING TO ACTIVATE THE PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
 - BREATHING DEEPLY ENCOURAGES THE RELAXATION RESPONSE, WHICH IS THE COMPLEMENT TO THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE.
-



Distraction: The 6 Second Rule

- IT TAKES THE CHEMICALS THAT ARE RELEASED DURING THE AMYGDALA HIJACK ABOUT 6 SECONDS TO DISSIPATE
 - TAKE THOSE 6 SECONDS TO TAKE 6 DEEP BREATHERS OR USE DISTRACTION
 - DISTRACTION: DURING THE 6 SECONDS, USE THE TIME TO THINK ON SOMETHING PLEASANT OR SOMETHING ELSE—COUNT TO 10 BACKWARDS, 5 CITIES THAT BEGIN WITH A
 - **REENGAGE THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX**
-



Distraction: The 333 Rule

- Feel anxious?
 - Look around, name 3 things you see, 3 sounds you hear, and move three parts of your body
 - Both 6 seconds or 333 rule:
 - Decreased activation in the amygdala
 - Increased activation in prefrontal and cingulate regions
 - Greater increases in activation in prefrontal and parietal regions
-



Immediately

Short term: Get your rational brain back on-line - avoid the amygdala hijack



Identify

Identify the stressor – what triggers you and sends you in to fight/flight or challenge mode, morning of exam, night before, perform a skill, oral presentation, etc.



Label

Label it “I’m being hijacked right now.” WHY?

Language is in the domain of the pre-frontal cortex, when we use language to name the reaction that we are having, it starts to reactivate.

Calming Anxious Thoughts





A Lesson from White Polar Bears About Thoughts



**Let the anxious thought come and go
Observe it, notice it like a wave in the ocean**

Take the Thought Captive

- OBSERVE YOUR SELF-TALK
- CONFINE IT
- REPLACE IT WITH MORE RATIONAL, REASONABLE, OR EVEN TRUE-REAPPRAISAL
- REAPPRAISAL—LEADS TO GREATER DECREASES IN NEGATIVE AFFECT
- GREATER INCREASES IN A NETWORK OF REGIONS ASSOCIATED WITH PROCESSING AFFECTIVE MEANING (MEDIAL PREFRONTAL AND ANTERIOR TEMPORAL CORTICES).



Coping Thoughts & Planning

Optimistic and positive, e.g., I can meet the challenge with God's help

Positive thought, e.g., I can do this job as I have the training. God will help me

Worry? Act with a plan and be anxious no more

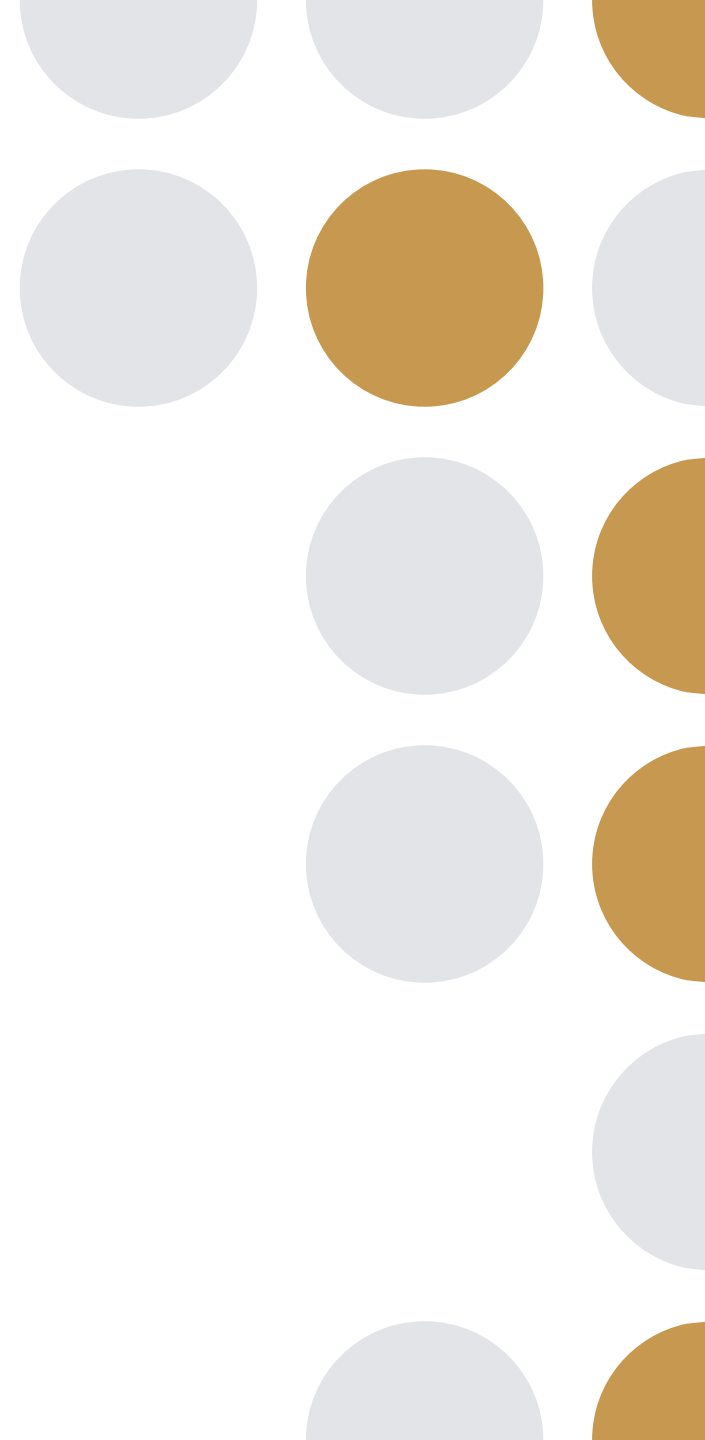


I can take the hit!

- I GOT THIS!
 - BACK ON-LINE!
 - PREFRONTAL
ENGAGED!
 - BOLDLY GO WHERE
YOU NEED TO GO!
-

SUM

- **Anxious situation:** Face it, don't avoid – exposure, move through it
 - **Amygdala hijack:** Immediate help: Breathe! Use distraction to re-engage the prefrontal – using the 6 second rule or the 333 rule
 - **Anxious thoughts:** Observe the thought-don't try to push away (polar bears)
 - **Reappraisal** – Take the thought captive and reappraise to retrain the brain away from anxious thoughts
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Physical Relaxation Exercises

- Deep slow breathing
 - Guided Imagery
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Lectio Divina
 - Music Meditation
-

Lectio Divina

- Lectio (1st reading): Listen to the reading of Scripture (no interpretation, overall feel of the passage)
- Meditation (2nd reading)-Listen with heart and asking Holy Spirit if there is a particular word, phrase or theme to meditate on-what stands out
- Oratio (3rd reading)-meditation turns to prayer-sharing your heart with God and drawing nearer
- Contemplatio (4th reading) rest in the presence of God.



Music Relaxation

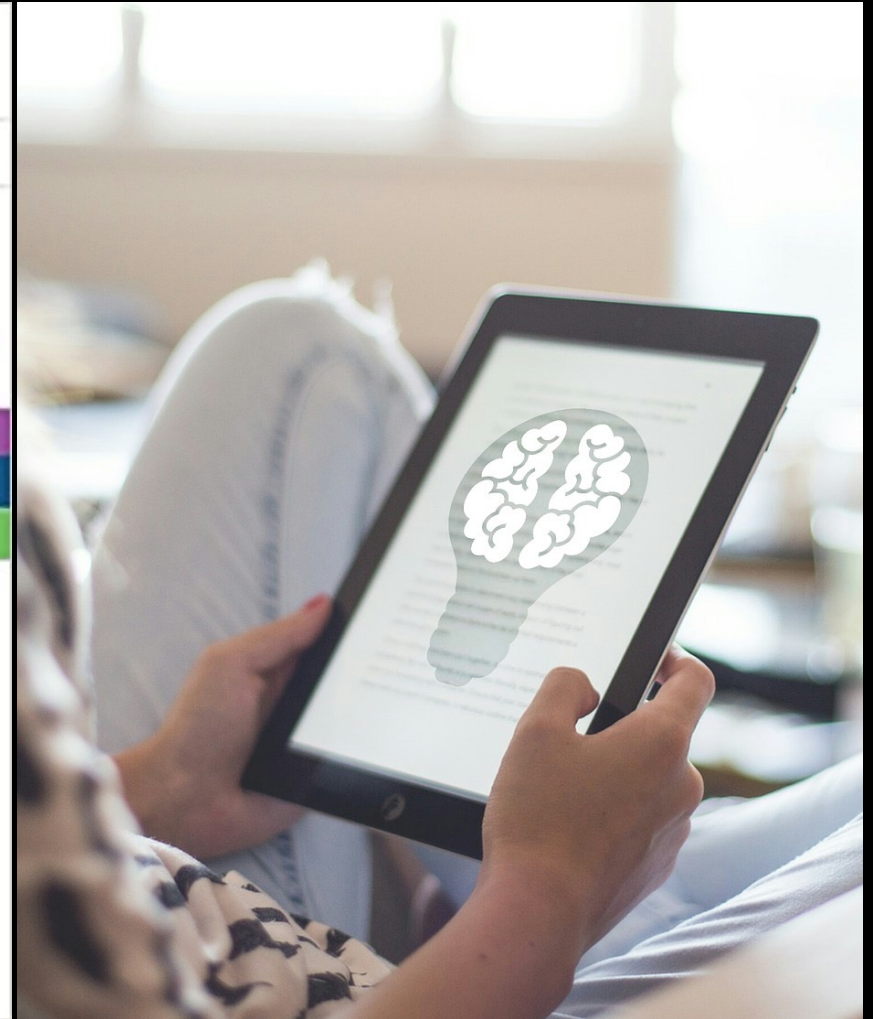
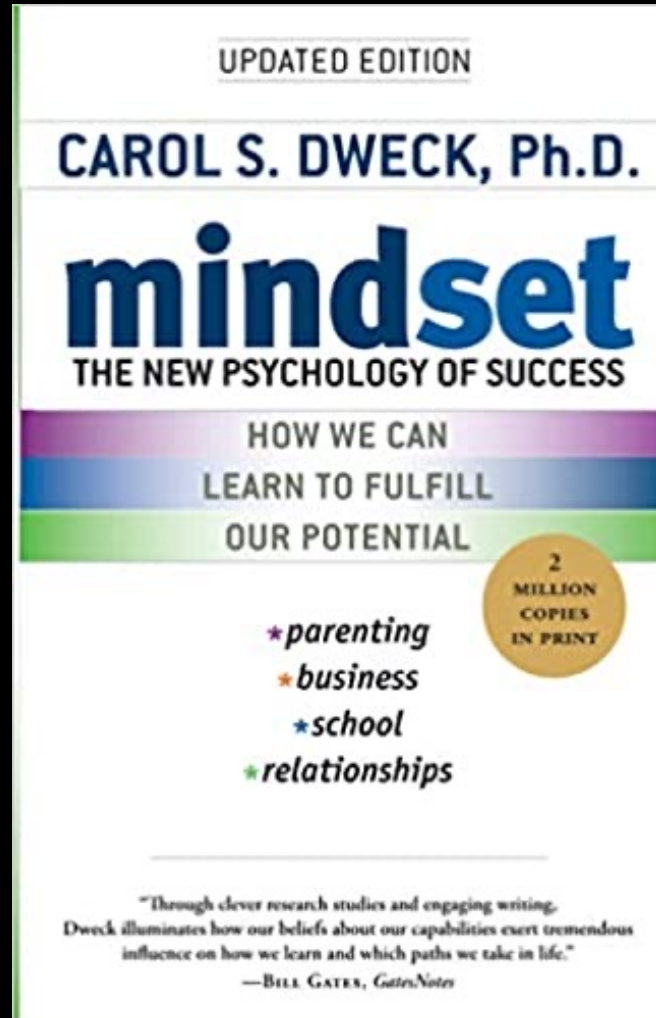
- Therapeutic use of this music affects the tiny muscles of the middle ear connected to the vagal nerve.
 - Re-regulation of the entire nervous system can be supported by training the muscles of the inner ear to actually listen differently, “tuning” to calming sounds created by a friend, therapist or a carefully chosen piece of music.
 - A slower tempo can quiet your mind and relax your muscles, making you feel soothed while releasing the stress of the day. Music is effective for relaxation and stress management.
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Music mediation



A Growth Mindset vs Fixed Mindset



Optimism Benefits

BODY: Tend to live longer, experience lower risk of heart disease, and have better recovery after surgery

MIND: Better at handling stress, overcoming setbacks, performing under pressure, and taking advantage of opportunities

Improved quality of life and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety

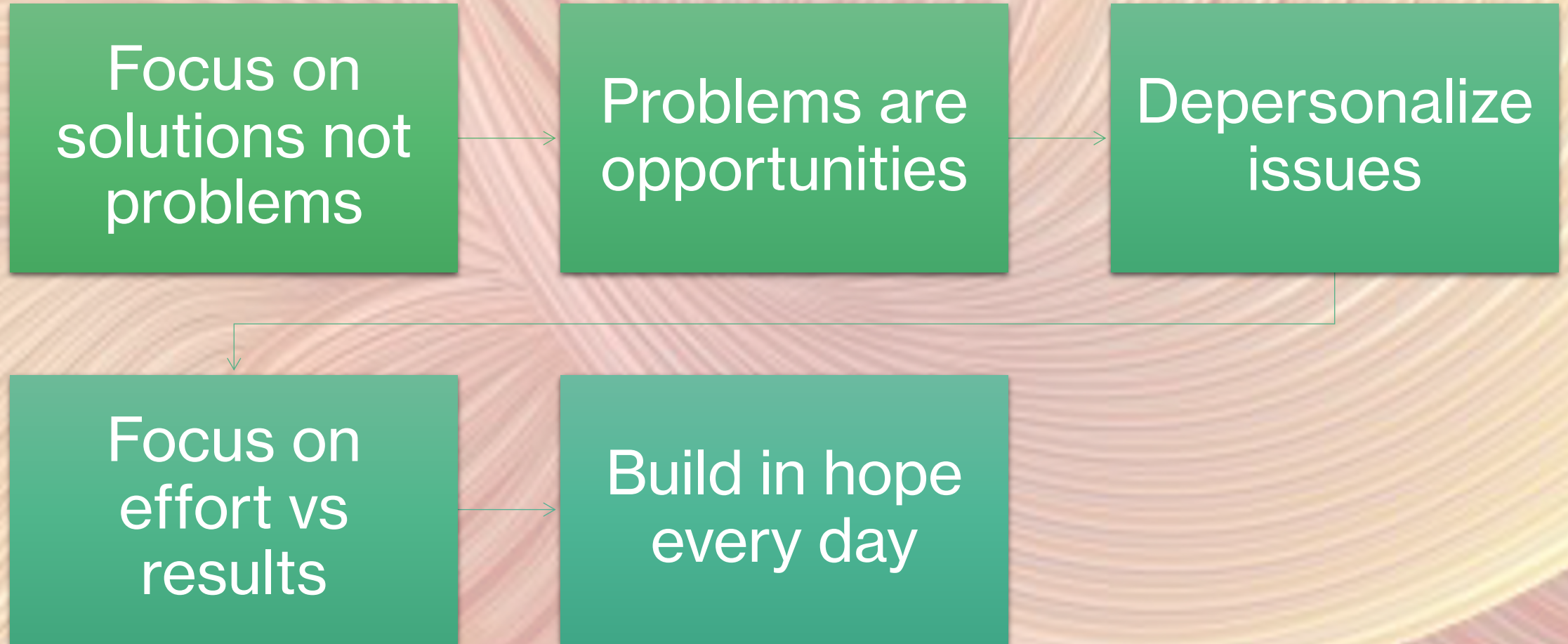
Greater social support and joy in their relationships, and they're seen as better leaders

Better performance in sports, work, and school

Greater job satisfaction and longer job retention

SPIRIT: Keeps hope alive

Optimism Tips



Gratitude



Gratitude

1. Gratitude with Details

2 minutes a day:
Think of **one** thing
you are grateful
for right now.

Bullet point each
detail you can
remember.

2. Scan the world for 3 new things you are grateful for and do this for 21 days

Reflect on and write

One thing that made you happy that day. Push a little deeper and describe at least two more words associated with the reasons why you were happy.

Reflect on and write

One thing someone else did nice for you today. This doesn't have to be anything big either, just something that someone did for you that was nice.

Reflect on and write

One thing you did nice for someone today. I'm certain you did many things nice for others, the point is picking one, reflecting on it, and writing about it.

3. Acts of kindness

Gratitude
Email/Text



Ask 5 questions

Where do I have control to make things better?

What must I accept?

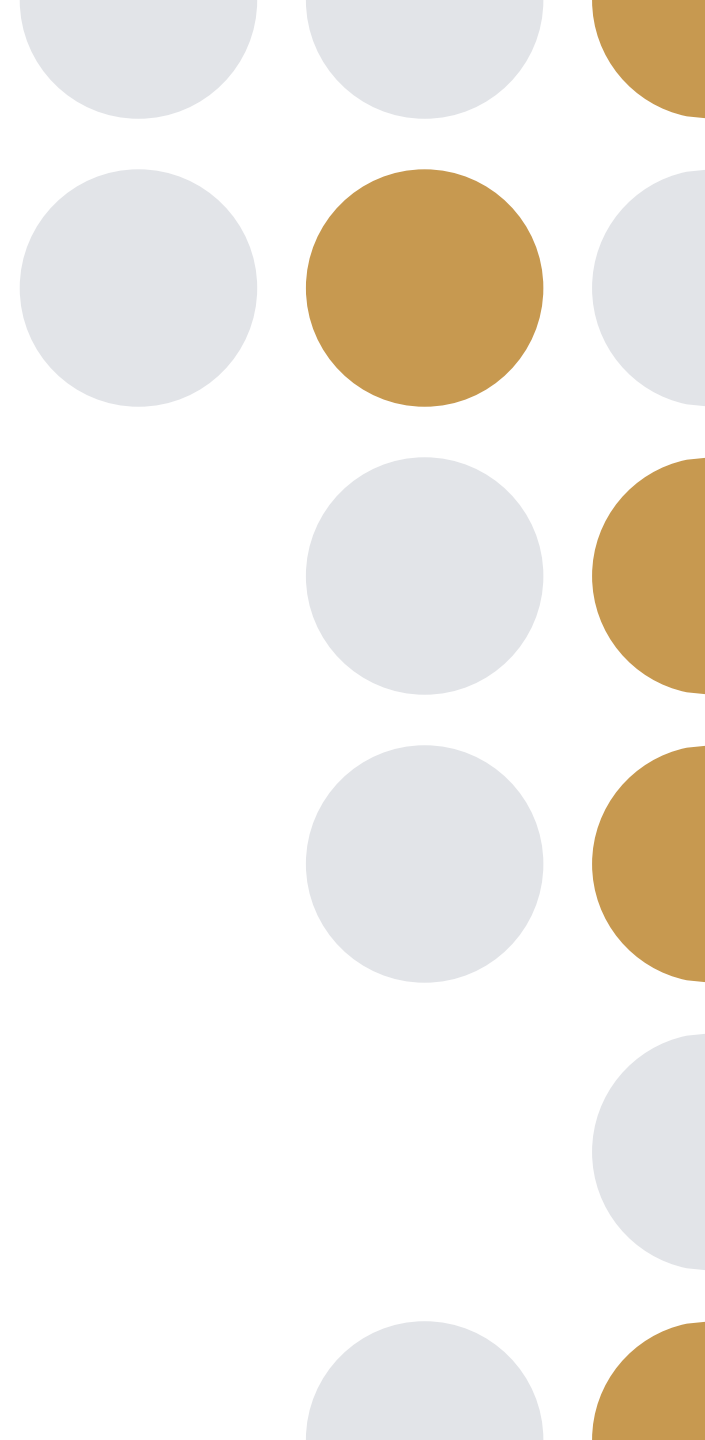
How can I take productive action now?

How can I keep one issue from affecting other parts of my life?

What's good?

Back to Dr. Smith

- After learning about neuroplasticity, he began to work on increasing his self-awareness by noticing self-defeating anxious thoughts and used distraction and thought replacement fueled by a growth mindset.
 - He incorporating Lectio Divina and music meditation into his weekly routine.
 - He also realized he isolated himself and began making connections with his fellow professors
 - He has moved from a place of self-deprecation to self-compassion.
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Resources: more help

- Books on my website and Amazon, e.g., Letting Go of Worry www.drlindamintle.com
 - Faith Radio show and podcast: weekends and any time on ITUNES or other podcast platforms : <https://myfaithradio.com/programs/the-dr-linda-mintle-show/>
 - Social media: Twitter and Instagram: @drlindamintle
 - FB: Dr. Linda Mintle, Author and Speaker
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