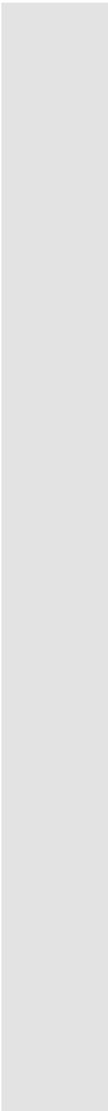


A Neuroscience Guide For Thriving In Uncertain Times: Principles For Hope And Happiness

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PREVIEW

- Expectations
 - Hard Times
 - Loss
 - Our Brains and Stress
 - Positive Emotions
 - The Emotional Brain and A Felt Experience
 - Imagination & Make A Wish
 - Using A Growth Mind Set, The Psychology of Possibility, Micro-Moments, Endings
 - Gratitude, Awe, Savoring
 - Hope
- 



What would make
today's presentation
a success for you?

Hard Times





Ambiguous Loss

“Ambiguous Loss is a loss that remains unclear and without verification or immediate resolution **which is never to be achieved.**”

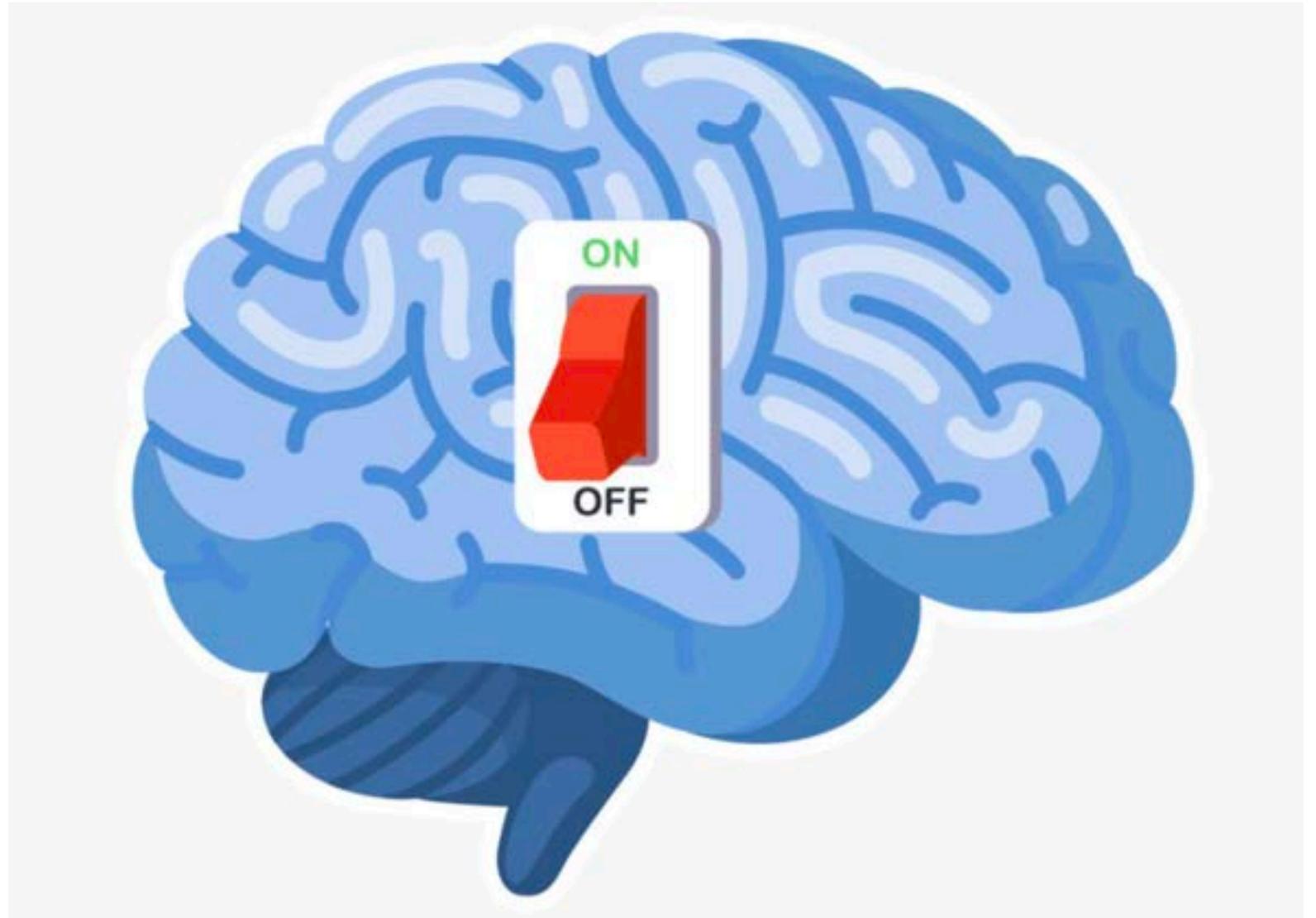
(Boss, 2021, p. 3)



Stressors

“When our Brain is processing complex emotions and stressors, it hinders our ability to function at our best”
(Beilock, 2022)

Our brains go offline.



An exercise

1. What is your political leaning?
2. What is your salary/retirement income?
3. Based upon a scale of 1-10, how attractive do you find the person you are talking with is?
4. How old do you think the person is?

Distress from Overstimulation and Uncertainty

Neurofrazzle
(Arnsten, 1998)



*The New Yorker, published in the print
edition of the May 17, 2021, issue.*

"Are you O.K.? You're barely paying attention to your book, phone, show, laptop, and the crossword you started ten minutes ago."

Stress induces our brain to become dysregulated, resulting in:



1. Making us become more focused on what is negative



2. Making it less likely for us to be able to use our willpower to make changes



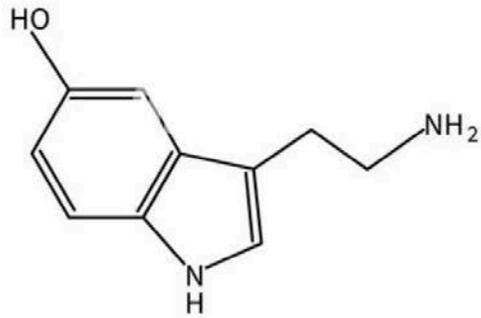
3. We are more likely to lose our restraint in telling someone who has upset us "to go to shove it"



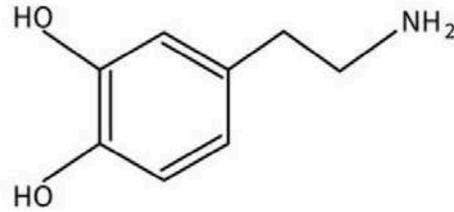
4. More likely to feel guilty over our perceived faults



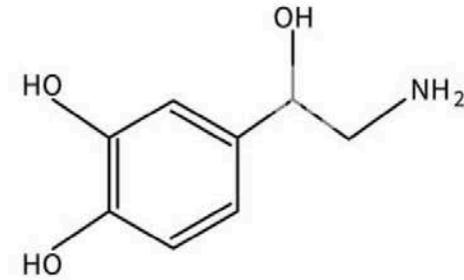
5. Find it more difficult to make decisions and problem solve



serotonin



dopamine



norepinephrine

HORMONES OF HAPPINESS

Positive emotions and happiness neurotransmitters

Serotonin – mediates our levels of satisfaction, happiness and our optimism

Norepinephrine - gives us some energy; gives us some “get up and go”

Dopamine – brings us a sense of pleasure; makes us feel more trusting and secure in ourselves and others; *IT MAKES US HAPPY*

Positive emotions

Undo Negative Emotions

Helps Us to Endure Pain Better

Helps Us To Take More Health and Safety Precautions When Threatened

Helps Us to Build Friendships, Romantic Love

Helps Us To Engage In Activities That Promote A Healthy Lifestyle

Helps Us To Be More Successful (Seligman, 2002)



Experiencing mild positive emotions

When we experience even a little positive emotion, we are more likely:

1. To help others
2. To be more flexible in our thinking
3. To come up with solutions to our problems

(Isen, in Synder, Lopez, Pedrotti, 2011)

Positive Emotions

"Steeping our Brain in positive emotion, encourages our prefrontal cortex to lighten its grip on our limbic system, thawing numbness, (anxiety) with good feeling"

(Fletcher, 2021,p.351)



The Emotional Brain

Thinks like an animal

Understands 5 words or less at a time

“...no matter how brilliantly our prefrontal cortex delivers intellectual insight and plans elegant coping strategies, *the Brain is primed to override it all with neural patterns that persists until we intervene with something OUR EMOTIONAL BRAIN CAN UNDERSTAND*”

A Compelling Felt
Experience

Steve Hartman,
"Remembering Dad"



A Compelling Felt
Experience

Steve Hartman, "Best
Friends Always"



The Elements for Rewiring Our Brains

To Rewire Our Brains, We Need To:

Develop A "Growth Mindset"

Use "The Psychology of Possibility"

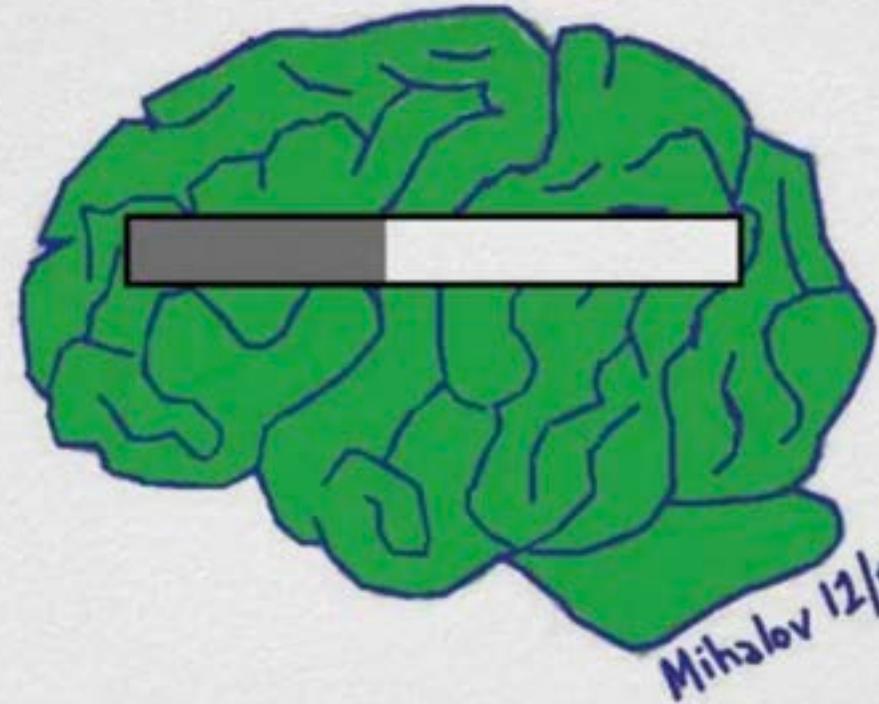
Increase Our Positive Emotions - - Create Positive Experiences

Use Our Emotional Brain

Create "Micro-Moments" and Moments of Connection

Pay Attention To Endings

BRAIN REWIRING...



PLEASE WAIT.

Imagination

- Is a different kind of knowing
- It plays a key role in creativity and innovation
- It aids in emotional healing
- It activates specific Brain neurons that can create and enhance positive emotions (Davies, 2019; Lachman, 2020)

“Humans are blessed with the power to conjure up worlds that don’t exist and might never exist – and this changes everything.”

(Bloom, 2021, p.77)



Imagination “Make A Wish” Exercise

If the Positivity Fairy Godmother appeared today and said, “I will grant you one of the following ten emotions, for you to feel as often as you want this week,” which would you choose?

*Joy, Gratitude, Serenity,
Interest, Hope, Pride, Fun,
Awe, Inspiration, Love*





WHY DID YOU CHOOSE
THE POSITIVE EMOTION
THAT YOU DID?

Toys

Gratitude

Savoring

Awe

Hope



An Exercise

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- “WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT INTELLIGENCE, HOW MUCH IS ABOUT THE ***EFFORT*** AND HOW MUCH IS ABOUT YOUR ***ABILITY***?” (Dweck, 2007)
- ***INTELLIGENCE = _____PERCENT EFFORT + _____PERCENT ABILITY***

MINDSET



Fixed Mindset People typically say the intelligence is ***35% effort and 65% ability***



Growth Mindset People say it is ***65% effort and 35% ability***

CREATE
POSSIBILITIES



CARLO

MINDSET

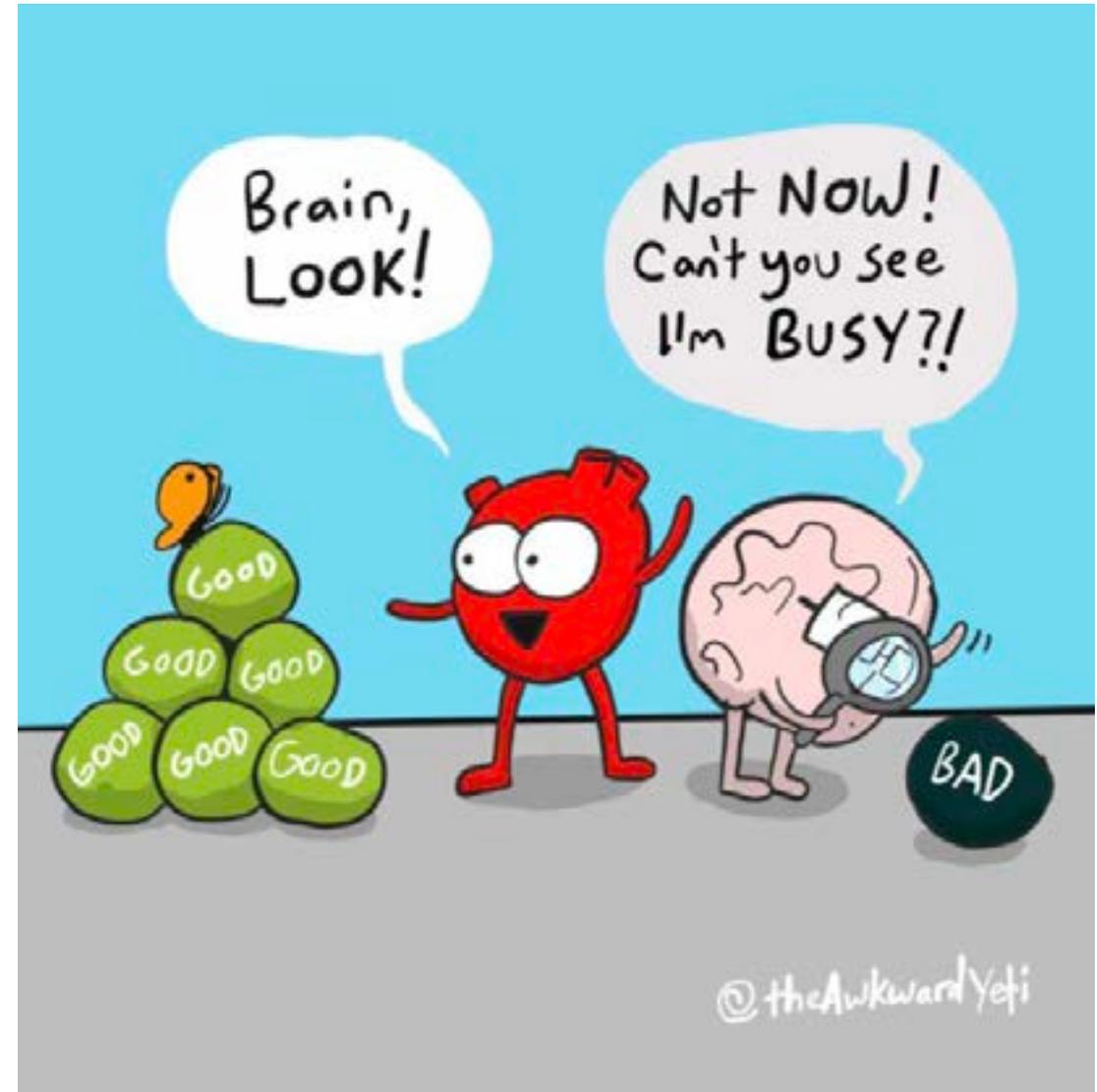
A Growth Mindset creates motivation.

THE BRAIN CAN CREATE POSSIBILITIES (Dweck, 2007)

We are trying to prime our brains.

PRIMING

PRIMING temporarily increases resistance to negative stimuli, in addition to the increase activation of Positive Associative Networks in our Brains



PSYCHOLOGY OF POSSIBILITY

CANCER

COUNTERCLOCK WISE



PSYCHOLOGY OF POSSIBILITY

Langer states:

"CERTAINTY IS A CRUEL MINDSET"

- It hardens our mindsets against possibility and closes them to the world we actually live in
- When all is certain, there are no choices for us - if there is no doubt, there is no choice (2009)

Psychology of Possibility

Mindless or Mindful Labels

“To be fair, help us organize our thoughts, the problems begin, however when they determine our thoughts” (Langer, 2009)

Psychology of Possibility

“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are”

(Anais Nin in Langer, 2009)

- Knowing what is, and knowing what can be, are not the same thing
- “Using a different word, offering a small choice, or making a subtle change in the physical environment can improve health and well-being” (Langer, 2009)

Psychology of Possibility

- “Small changes can make large differences, so we should open ourselves to the impossible and embrace a Psychology of Possibility”
- “The Psychology of Possibility requires that we begin with the assumption that we do not know when we can do or become” (Langer, 2009)

Micro Moments of Connection: Why Are They Important?

Activates the regions of our brains that calms our anxious feelings

Increases the Happiness Neurotransmitters: dopamine, norepinephrine, endorphins (Cozolino, 2017)



Rewiring
exercises to
reduce stress
and to thrive
and flourish



The Mr. Roger's Exercise

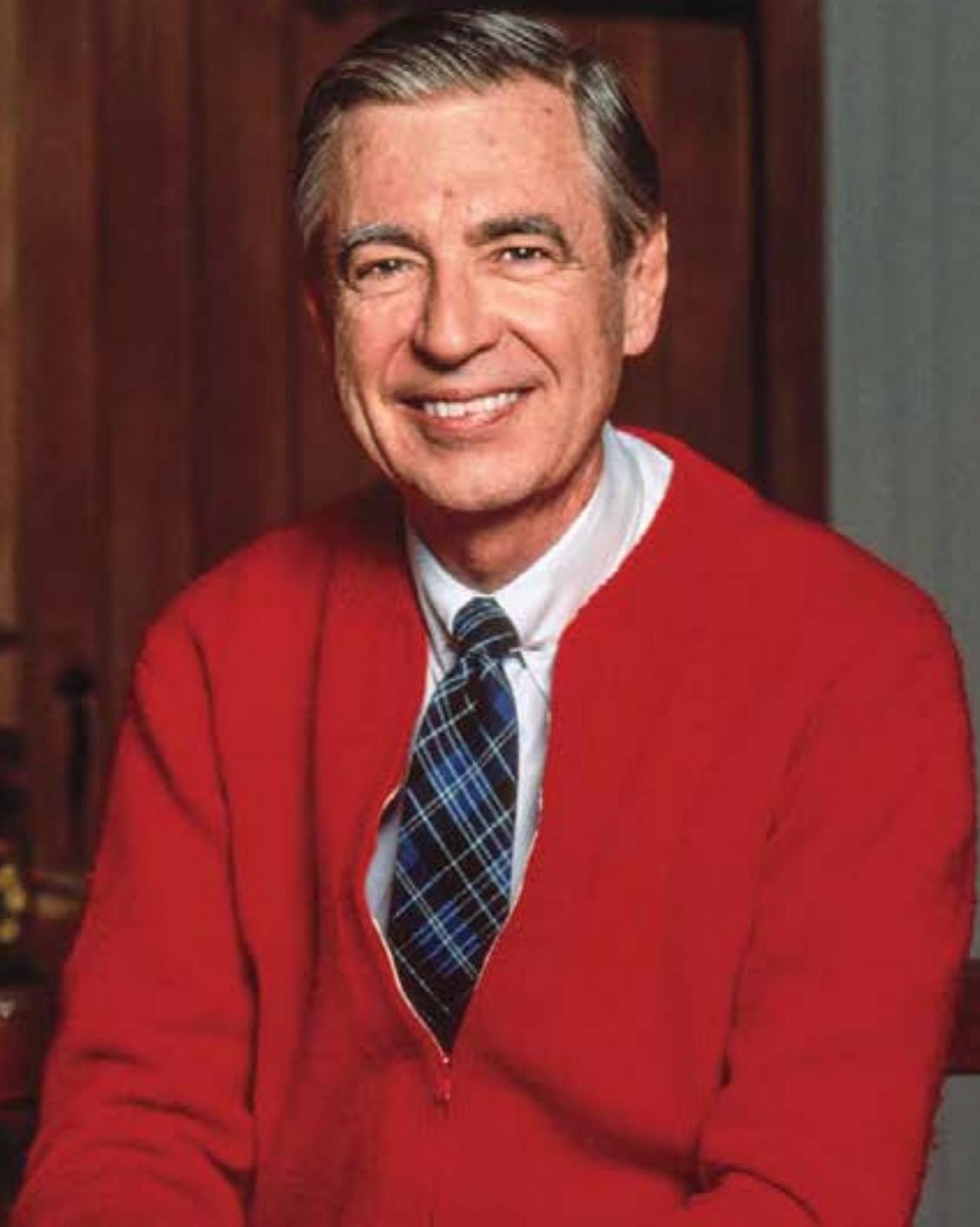
All of us have special ones who
have loved us into being

Would you just take along with
me ten seconds to think of
people who have helped you:

To become who you are

Those who have cared for you

TEN SECONDS



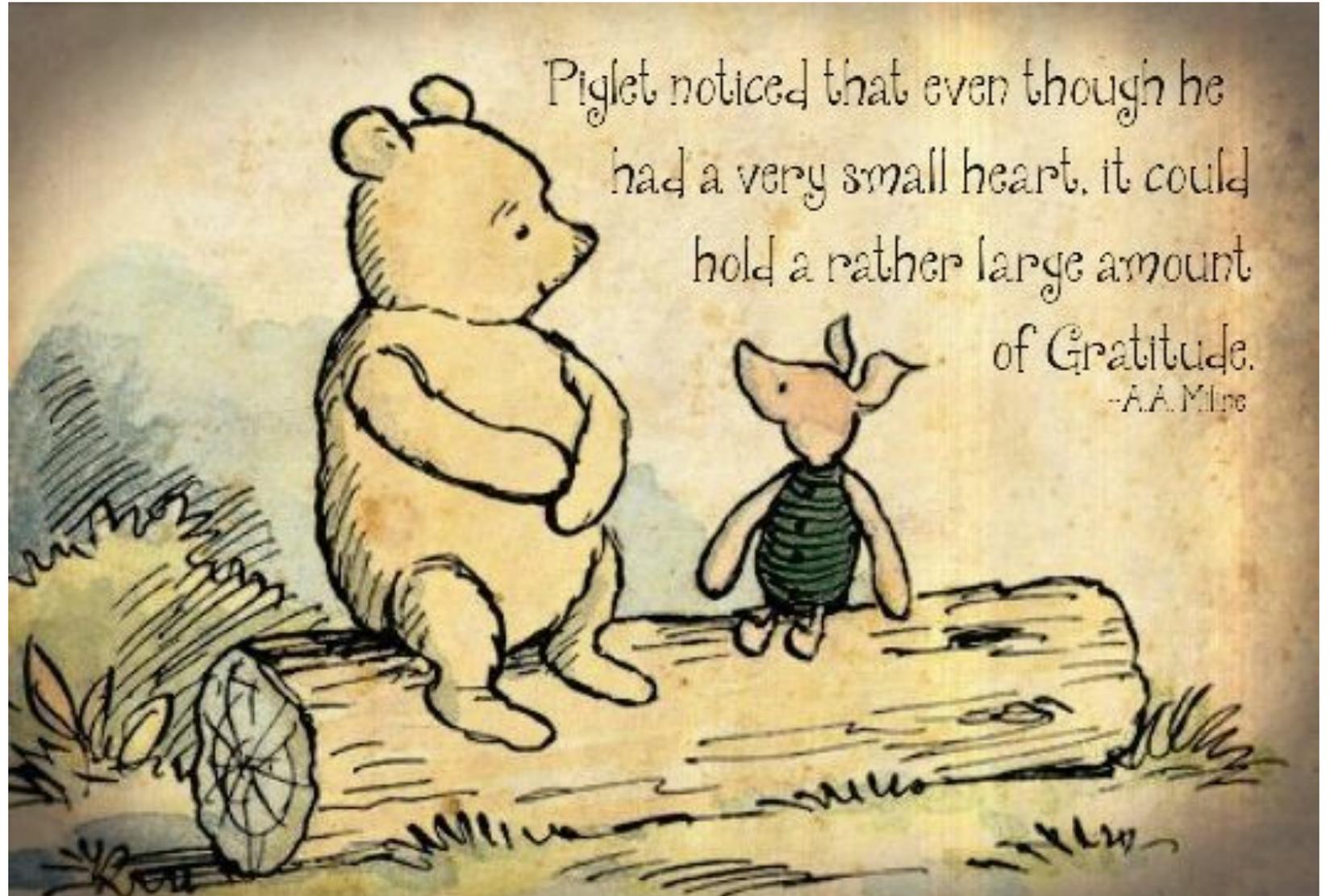
GRATITUDE

“Wonder, it is an appreciation; It is looking at the bright side of a setback; it is fathoming abundance; it is thanking someone in your life;

It is Thanking God

It is Counting Your Blessings

It is Not Taking Things For Granted” (Lyubomirsky, 2007)



Benefits of Gratitude

Linked to contentment,
happiness and hope

Induces positive states

Increases alertness,
enthusiasm, determination

Life satisfaction

Sense of vitality

Sense of optimism





Benefits of Gratitude

Lower levels of depression and Stress (McCullough, et al. 2002)

Improved Cardiovascular and immune functioning (McCraty 7 Childre, 2004)

Buffers on from debilitating emotions

*Regular expressions of gratitude can help build personal resources for coping effectively with stress and adversity (Fredrickson, 2013)

Benefits of Gratitude

- *The disposition toward gratitude appears to enhance pleasant feeling state more than unpleasant emotions*
- ***Grateful people do not deny or ignore the negative aspects of life (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)*

Practicing Gratitude

A weekly/daily list (3 things)

Write a letter to someone to whom you are grateful



Savoring/ Memories

Savoring has a:

1. Past
2. Present
3. Future Component

Benefits of savoring:

When We Savor, We are More

Self-confident

Gratified

Less Hopeless

Less Neurotic

Less likely to experience
depression, stress, guilt,
shame



AWE

There are only two ways to live your life.

One is as though no thing is a miracle.

The other, is as though everything is a miracle

Albert Einstein



What is Awe?

Think about a time when you've felt overwhelmed by beauty or encountered something so mind-blowing that it shook you to the core

Perhaps it came from being in nature, experiencing a birth of a child, or hearing about an act of great courage, kindness or valor

"That's Awe - - the feeling that comes when we encounter something so vast or profound that we struggle to comprehend it"(Paquette, 2020, p.6)

AWE-INSPIRING MOMENTS ARE ALL AROUND US, RANGING FROM THE GRAND TO THE COMMON PLACE

Neurobiology of Awe

- Activates regions of the brain associated with interpersonal bonding and the release of oxytocin - - a hormone linked to feelings of ***Warmth, Closeness, and Connection with Others*** (Paquette, 2020)
- Decreases activity in the part of the brain called the Default Mode Network (DMN). When this part of the brain is active, are brains are more prone to ***wander, ruminate, and engage in negative judgment. Awe-inspiring Moments lessen activity in the DMN, thus leading to less worrying and less self-criticism***
- ***Increases Parasympathetic Nervous Response – thus induces a calming response***

AWE

“By experiencing more Awe in our daily lives, we can become *less stressed, healthier, happier and more connected to those around us*” (Paquette, 2020,p.viii)

Moments of AWE can boost our mood, improve our work performance, reduce the stress response in our body, and even decrease cellular inflammation. Experiencing AWE can lead to lasting changes to OUR MIND AND BODY (Paquette, 2020, p.x)

Studies have shown that AWE can be reliably induced and increased in daily life

Steve Hartman

“Man with Dementia
Forms Special Bond”



AWE



HOPE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO
HAVE HOPE?

HAVE YOU EVER USED HOPE
IN YOUR OWN LIFE?



An Exercise

Raise both of your hands

On the count of three point to where your HOPE comes from

HOPE

Activates A full Range of Our Emotions:

Awe

Interest

Joy

Excitement

Euphoria (Lopez, 2013)



HOPE

“Hope is the single Best Predictor of Well-Being”

(Gwinn & Hellman, 2022)

Hope can be perceived as a Protective Factor against the development of chronic anxiety

- Lifts our spirits
- Increases our energy
- Makes life seem worth living
- Changes our day-to-day behavior

(Huston, 2019)

Hopeful Thinking

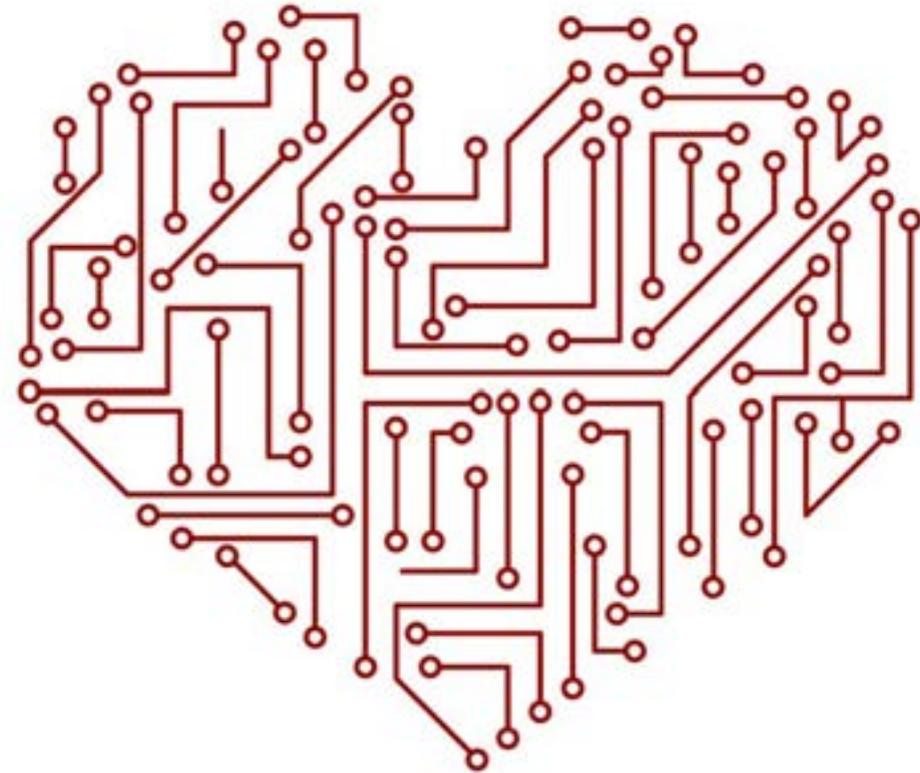
Seligman (2018) writes that when we engage in Hopeful Thinking and the previous “Toys” that I noted - - Psychology of Possibility, Awe, Gratitude, Savoring - - this activates the Medial Frontal Cortex (MPFC) and the Dorsal Raphe Nucleus (DRN).

The Hope Circuit

Hopeful thinking, **psychology of possibility**, **gratitude**, **savoring awe**, makes the brain believe that bad events can be controllable, and this will help to buffer us against helplessness and anxiety

And because of its powerful effect on our brain and our behavior, we come to feel we can weather the worst of times

For this reason/finding Seligman (2018) called this (mpfc-drn) connection – the hope circuit



PEAK AND END RULE GOOD ENDINGS

Endings are very important

Endings color forever your memory of an entire relationship and your willingness to reenter it (Seligman, 2002)

Good Endings should include an appreciative summary, an honest acknowledgement of the goodness that transpired prior to leave-taking.

(Fredrickson, 2009)



THE END

Peak and End Rule

We select a few moments from our memories in determining how we feel about an entire past event (Fredrickson, 2000)

Specifically, we select the most intense emotion from our last memories as well as the last emotion



Peak and End Rule

Factors Which Are Important:

- The intensity of the Peak Positive or Negative Emotion
- How the experience ends

Peak and End Rule Implications

If we want to increase our
Well-Being and that of other
people,

***WE SHOULD DELIBERATELY
LOOK FOR WAYS TO END
EXPERIENCES ON A HIGH
NOTE***



Gimnazija Kranj
Symphony

“Ain’t No Mountain
High Enough” with
Lyrics

