



# ***STAYING AFLOAT : CULTIVATING RESILIENCE IN TURBULENT WATERS***

**Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators  
November 3rd 2022, 1:55 to 2:55**

**RACHEL THIBEAULT, PH.D., FCAOT, O.C.  
CONSULTANT IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AND PEER SUPPORT**



# WHO AM I?

- An occupational therapist with doctoral and post-doctoral training in psychology
- A researcher in the field of resilience for over 30 years
- Participatory Action Researcher in conflict and post-conflict contexts, disaster areas, regions affected by epidemics... with a broad range of UN implementing agencies and other civil society groups.

# WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?

Like you, I work  
with people who  
have experienced  
trauma.

Like you, I work  
under pressure in  
anxiety-provoking  
contexts.

# WHAT ARE WE GOING TO TALK ABOUT?

- DEFINING RESILIENCE
- PHYSICAL FACTORS CONDUCIVE TO RESILIENCE
- COGNITIVE/EMOTIONAL FACTORS CONDUCIVE TO RESILIENCE
- SYSTEMIC FACTORS CONDUCIVE TO RESILIENCE
- MICRORESOLUTIONS

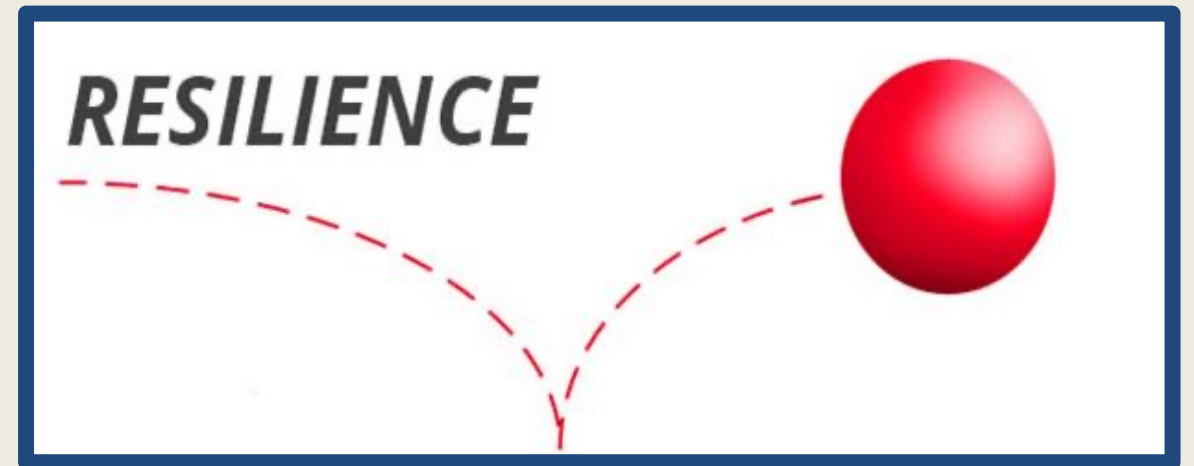
# DEFINING RESILIENCE

# WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

OFTEN DEFINED AS THE CAPACITY TO RESIST ADVERSITY.

IN REAL LIFE: THE CAPACITY TO BOUNCE BACK IN A TIMELY MANNER.

*THE DEFINITION MATTERS.*



# SURVIVAL RESILIENCE VS WELLBEING RESILIENCE



# A MYTH TO DISPEL

RESILIENCE IS NOT ABOUT  
TOLERATING THE INTOLERABLE.

IT SHOULD NEVER BE USED TO  
MASK SYSTEMIC ISSUES.

IT IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.



# THE ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE/Wellness SWISS-CHEESE MODEL

(THIBEAULT, 2020)

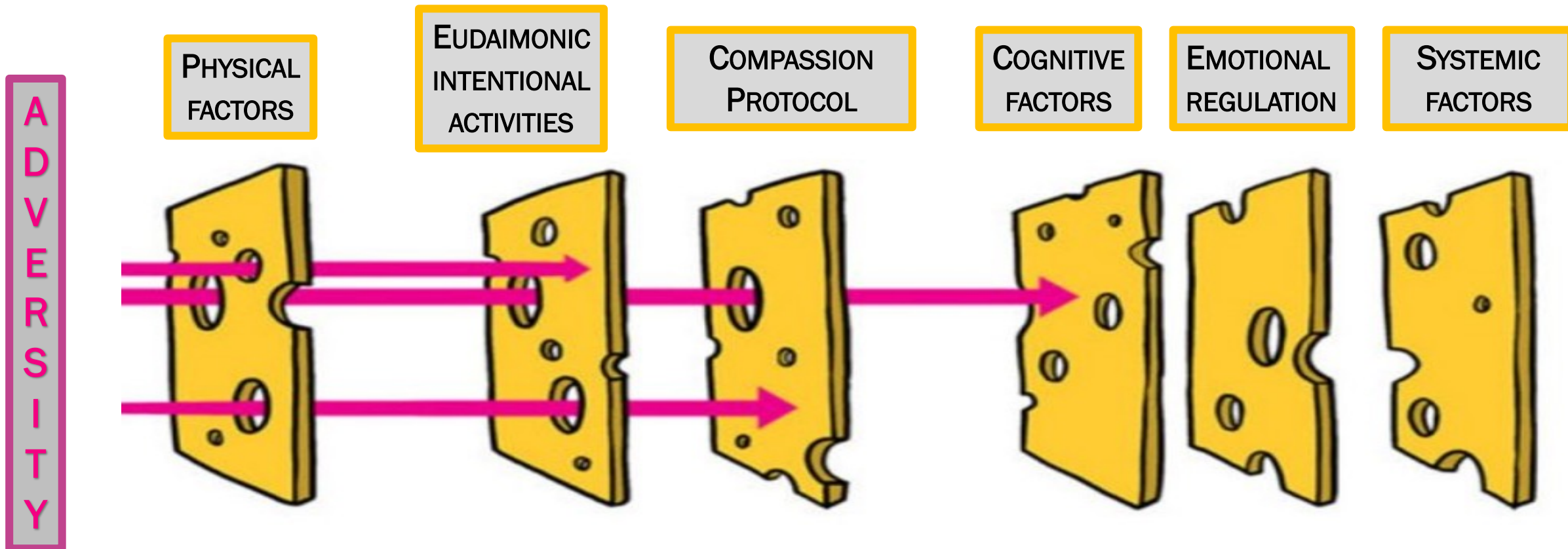


Image inspired by James Reason, 2000

# A COMMON PROCESS

Uncertainty/Change/Exposure to trauma



Turbulence



Exhaustion and Anxiety

# DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN STRESS AND ANXIETY



- STRESS IS OUR **PHYSICAL** REACTION TO A REAL OR PERCEIVED THREAT.
- ANXIETY IS A FORM OF NEGATIVE AND UNPLEASANT ANTICIPATION. IT IS **COGNITIVE**, OFTEN AMPLIFIED, DISTORTED, VAGUER AND MORE PERSISTENT THAN STRESS.

# GIVEN THOSE FACTS, WHERE CAN WE ACT?

**BODY:** WE CAN DECREASE THE INTENSITY OF THE PHYSICAL STRESS REACTION (BY CREATING CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO BEING CALM).

**MIND:** WE CAN CONTROL OUR OUTLOOK AND THE COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS THAT LEAD TO ANXIETY.

**ENVIRONMENT:** WE CAN ALTER OUR SURROUNDINGS TO OPTIMIZE STRESS MANAGEMENT

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AT THE  
BEGINNING  
WAS...

SLEEP



THE PHYSICAL PREREQUISITE  
TO SOUND DECISION-MAKING:  
**SLEEP** AND  
THE GLYMPHATIC SYSTEM  
(NEDERGAARD, 2017)

# SOME SOBERING DATA *(WALKER, 2017)*

- AFTER 15 HOURS WITHOUT SLEEP, COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE PLUMMETS AND, AT THE 19-HOUR MARK, PRODUCES THE SAME IMPAIRMENT THAT WOULD BE OBSERVED WITH A 0.08 PERCENT BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL.
- 'AFTER 10 DAYS OF JUST 7 HOURS OF SLEEP, THE BRAIN IS AS DYSFUNCTIONAL AS IT WOULD BE AFTER GOING WITHOUT SLEEP FOR 24 HOURS.'
- 'SUPERVISORY REGIONS IN THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX REQUIRED FOR THOUGHTFUL JUDGMENTS AND CONTROLLED DECISIONS ARE SILENCED IN THEIR ACTIVITY BY LACK OF SLEEP.'



# PROTECTING ONE'S SLEEP: A PRIORITY

1. SLEEP ABOUT 8 HOURS PER NIGHT.
2. KEEP YOUR ROOM DARK AND COOL (APP. 17°C-18°C).
3. *ALWAYS GET UP AT THE SAME TIME TO REGULATE SLEEP.*
4. DON'T WATCH ANY SCREEN AN HOUR BEFORE BEDTIME.
5. DIM ALL LIGHTS A FEW HOURS BEFORE BED.
6. MONITOR CLOSELY COFFEE (*HALF-LIFE OF 7 HOURS*) AND ALCOHOL (STOP 3 TO 5 HOURS BEFORE BEDTIME) INTAKE.
7. *EXPOSE YOURSELF TO MORNING LIGHT*
8. *'PROPHYLACTIC NAPS'*

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# STRATEGIC UNDERACHIEVEMENT

*(Burkeman, 2021)*

**CHOOSING AHEAD OF TIME WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH LOWER STANDARDS:**

1. I SWAP MY IDEAL OF PERFECT BALANCE FOR A VIABLE IMBALANCE THAT IS DELIBERATE AND EMBRACED.
2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS MUCH MORE OF A CHALLENGE NOW THAN IT WAS PRE-PANDEMIC (EDMONSON & MORTENSEN, 2021).

# A COMPASSIONATE POSTURE AS KEY PROTECTIVE FACTOR IN ANXIETY-PROVOKING SITUATIONS

*(DAVIDSON, 2022; ANDRÉ, 2022; EDMONDSON, 2021)*

A VERY  
PERSONAL  
STARTING POINT

## SOME PRINCIPLES OF ‘*PRODUCTIVITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY*’ RECOMMENDED BY THE UN IN THE 90s.



- *GO IN, DO YOUR JOB, GET OUT.*
- *DEAL WITH THINGS ON YOUR OWN.*
- *LEAVE NO ROOM FOR COMPASSION FOR FEAR OF BEING OVERWHELMED WITH REQUESTS.*

- THESE 'PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY' STRATEGIES ARE STILL PREVALENT TODAY.
- THEY DO NOT PROTECT US AND CAN LEAD TO PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES.

AN EXAMPLE...



BRACING  
MYSELF...  
AND  
HOLDING  
ON.



*Karlfried Graf Dürckheim*

# *Méditer*

*Pourquoi  
et  
Comment*

*Le Courrier du Livre*

WHILE IN THE  
FIELD AND  
BACK HOME:  
CULTIVATING  
MINDFULNESS.



BRINGING  
STRESS BACK TO  
A MANAGEABLE  
LEVEL.

The image shows a scene of decay. In the foreground, a building's roof is made of heavily rusted, orange-brown corrugated metal. The structure appears to be made of wood or concrete that is now crumbling. In the background, there are dense, green trees. A large, white, L-shaped graphic element is overlaid on the right side of the image, partially obscuring the building and trees. Inside the dark, shadowed area of the building, the text "UNTIL ONE DAY..." is written in a white, sans-serif font.

UNTIL ONE DAY...



A large concrete dam is shown with a significant breach. A massive, turbulent surge of water and debris is erupting from the left side of the structure, cascading down. The sky is a pale blue. The dam's structure is visible on the right, showing signs of stress and damage.

# THE DAM BURST.

# WHAT WERE MY MISTAKES AND HOW TO BOUNCE BACK?

# My main mistakes

1. I HAD STUCK TO SURVIVAL RESILIENCE, WHICH IS NOT REALLY LIVING.
2. DESPITE THE VERY USEFUL PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS, I HAD LOST TOUCH WITH MYSELF
3. I ISOLATED MYSELF.
4. I KEPT 'FLOGGING THE HORSE' RATHER THAN CHOOSING TO PAUSE AND TAKE STOCK.
5. I NEGLECTED MY BASIC NEEDS
6. I DIDN'T QUESTION THE TOXIC SYSTEMIC CULTURE



## COMPASSION AND SELF-COMPASSION AS PROTECTIVE FACTORS

DRE. TANIA SINGER  
SOCIAL NEUROSCIENCE LAB  
MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE - BERLIN

# THE COMPASSION CONTINUUM: A SEQUENTIAL RESPONSE

(Singer, 2018)

## THEORY OF MIND:

TO ATTRIBUTE TO OTHERS  
FEELINGS, INTENTIONS  
AND THOUGHTS IN A  
RATIONAL MANNER



## EMPATHY:

TO RELATE TO THE  
SUFFERING WE WITNESS,  
TO ALLOW EMOTIONS,  
TO BE TOUCHED



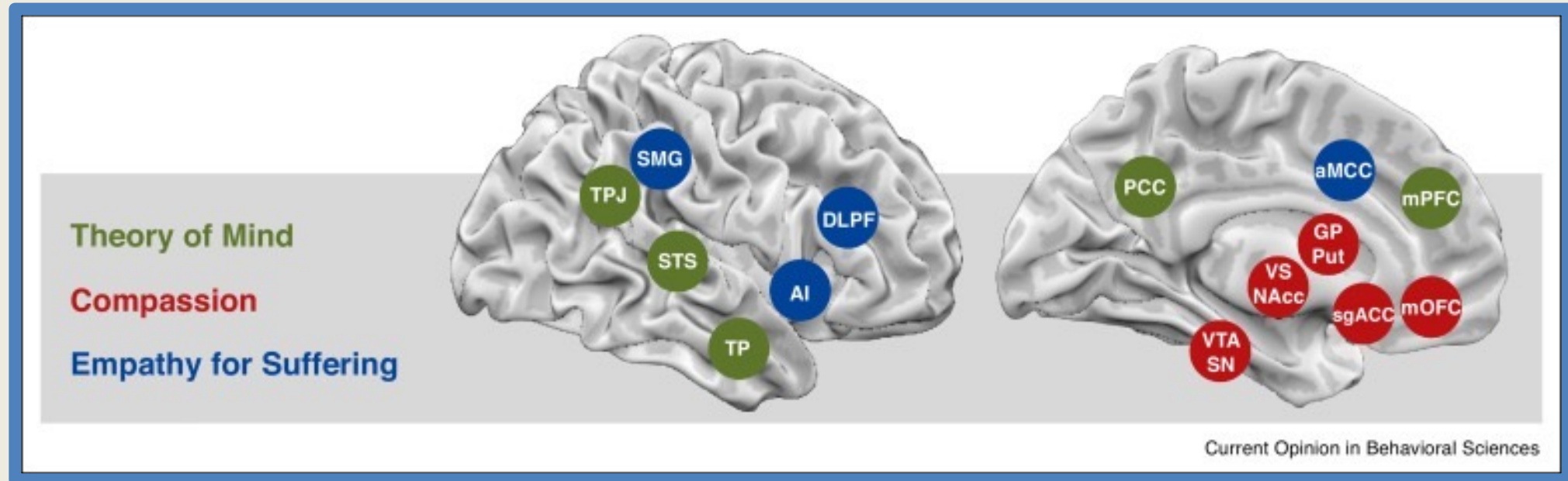
## COMPASSION:

TO BE TOUCHED  
AND TO ACT TO BRING  
SOME COMFORT (EVEN IF  
THE ACTION SEEMS  
MINIMAL) OR TO WISH  
THE PERSON WELL



# EMPATHY AND COMPASSION: DISTINCT PATHWAYS GENERATING DISTINCT EMOTIONS.

(SINGER ET KLIMECKI, 2014; DAVIDSON, 2022; HANSON, 2021; NEFF, 2022;)

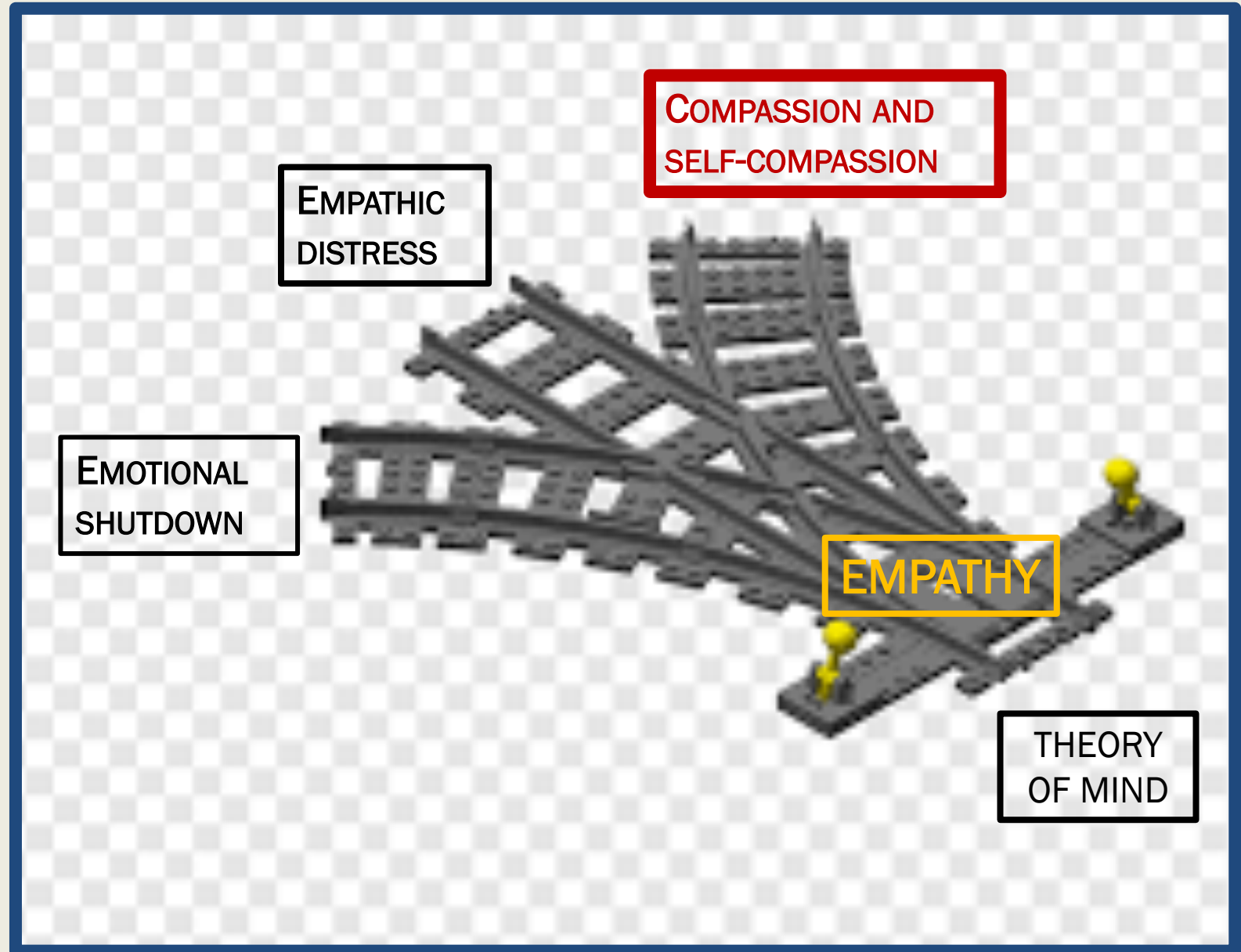


Impacts on the receiver: decreased anxiety and distress, lowered blood pressure, decreased pain perception (50%), increased immunity...

Impacts on the giver: increased oxytocin, decreased cortisol, increased immunity, lifted and stabilized mood ...



THE BRAIN: SEEKING  
THE RIGHT TRACKS



# HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Roter et al (1995)\* 54 sec.

Fogarty et al (1999)\* 40 sec.

Bylund et al (2005)\* 32 sec.

Bensing et al.(2014)\* 38 sec.

Dempsey et al (2017)\* 56 sec.

***Average: 40 seconds***

\* (Cited in Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019)

# THE 30/10 FORMULA



30 seconds  
at the start

1. **RECOGNIZE AND NAME THE EMOTION:**  
'I SEE THAT YOU ARE SAD, ANGRY, DISAPPOINTED...'
2. **VALIDATE AND NORMALIZE THE EMOTION:**  
'UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT'S QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE TO FEEL THE WAY YOU DO.'
3. **DO NOT REDUCE PEOPLE TO THEIR DISTRESS:**  
POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE: 'HE/SHE IS MORE THAN A COLLEAGUE/FRIEND/LOVED ONE WHO IS STRUGGLING'.
4. **FOCUS ON THE COMFORT YOU CAN OFFER:**  
'WHAT COULD I DO TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER?'

10 seconds  
at the end

5. **OFFER ONGOING SUPPORT:**  
'IT'S TOUGH TODAY AND I'M THERE FOR YOU AND WILL BE THERE FOR YOU. WE WILL TRY TO FIGURE OUT A SOLUTION AND WE WILL GO THROUGH THIS TOGETHER.'



WHAT KIND OF  
COMFORT CAN I OFFER  
RIGHT NOW?

# THE SIMPLE QUESTION THAT TRIGGERS THE SHIFT

*(Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019)*



## A WORD ON SELF-COMPASSION

# WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?



It is about « treating yourself with kindness, the way you would do for a close friend... »

*(Neff, 2016; Davidson, 2019)*

Self-compassion includes three key elements  
*(Neff, 2016)*

1. Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment.
2. Common humanity vs. Isolation.
3. Mindfulness vs. Over-identification.

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THE MAIN FACTOR ASSOCIATED  
WITH BURNOUT IN PEOPLE WHO  
DEAL WITH SUFFERING : A LACK  
OF MEANING AND MEANINGFUL  
RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK.

*(TRZECIAK & MAZZARELLI, 2019)*



# AN OPTIMAL SEQUENCE FOR CONVERSATIONS AND MEETINGS

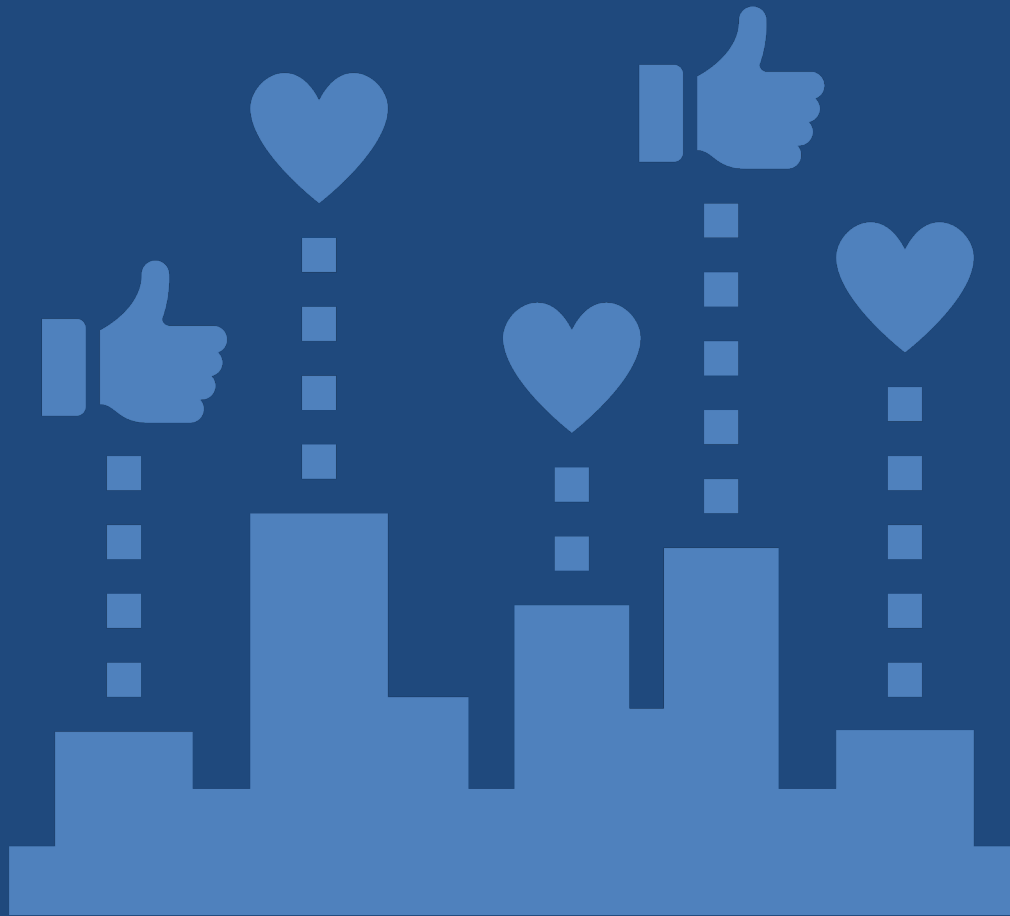
ATTENTION



COMPASSION



GRATITUDE



## CULTIVATING SPONTANEOUS GENEROSITY

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL  
STRATEGIES TO DEFUSE ANXIETY.  
(DAVIDSON, 2019; BURKEMAN,  
2021; SUZUKI, 2021)

AND IT'S CONTAGIOUS.



### AN OPTIMAL COMPASSIONATE ENVIRONMENT

- Finding meaning beyond oneself while respecting basic needs
- Carrying burdens collectively
- Savouring small, healthy pleasures
- Generating positive affects: compassion, gratitude

(Sampson, 2000)



### A SUBOPTIMAL COMPASSIONATE ENVIRONMENT

- Finding meaning beyond oneself while neglecting basic needs
- Carrying burdens alone
- Eliminating small, healthy pleasures from one's life
- Generating negative affects: bitterness, depression

(Mother Teresa & Kolodiejchuk, 2009)

# TO TRULY BRING ABOUT CHANGE: MICRORESOLUTIONS

*(Arnold, 2014; Clear, 2021)*

- WE USUALLY GIVE UP ON RESOLUTIONS BECAUSE THEY RELY ON LARGE-SCALE BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES REQUIRING FREQUENT DECISION-MAKING THAT IS IRRITATING AND EXHAUSTING. (DECISION FATIGUE)
- MICRORESOLUTIONS AIM TO SOLICIT THE REFLEX CENTERS OF THE BRAIN RATHER THAN THE DECISION-MAKING AREAS.

# MICRORESOLUTIONS

*(Arnold, 2014; Clear 2021)*

- A MICRORESOLUTION IS EASY: LITERALLY, A NO-BRAINER.
- A MICRORESOLUTION IS AN EXPLICIT AND MEASURABLE ACTION.
- A MICRORESOLUTION PAYS OFF UP FRONT.
- A MICRORESOLUTION IS PERSONAL.
- A MICRORESOLUTION RESONATES POSITIVELY.
- A MICRORESOLUTION FIRES ON CUE.
- MICRORESOLUTIONS ARE MADE ONLY 2 AT A GIVEN TIME.

TO STRIKE THE IRON  
WHILE IT IS HOT, WHICH  
MICRORESOLUTION  
COULD YOU START WITH?





# THANK YOU



QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?